

https://dspace.org/

Gauteng-based Psychologists' Constructions of Polyamorous Clients

Spilka, Avri

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28611

Spilka, Avri (2018) Gauteng-based Psychologists' constructions of polyamorous clients, , University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28611>

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Gauteng-based Psychologists' Constructions of Polyamorous Clients

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree

MASTER OF COMMUNITY-BASED COUNSELLING

in

Psychology

at

The University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

by

Avri Spilka

378397

Supervisor: Prof Brett Bowman

17 July 2018

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of ..Human..&..Community Development

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Students

I Avri Spilko (Student number: 3782397) am a student registered for Masters in Community Based Counselling Psychology in the year 2018. I hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
- I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this in not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature: [signature] Date: 17 July 2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Brett Bowman, whose insight, support and sense of humour were necessary ingredients in the completion of this research.

I would like to thank the Wits Psychology Department, particularly the MACC staff, for their help and guidance.

To my husband Lee, a debt of gratitude for his hand in the academic alchemy of transforming coffee and anxiety into research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who have cheered me on in great and small ways.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 7

1.1. Chapter Organisation 10

Chapter 2: Literature review 13

2.1. Defining Polyamory 13

2.2. Troubling Normativities 17

2.3. Psychologising Poly Intimacies 20

2.4. Agency & Subversion 23

2.5. The Limits of Polyamorous Possibility 25

2.6. Poly Prevalence 28

Chapter 3: Method 32

3.1. Research Design 32

3.2. Participants 32

3.3. Data Collection 34

3.4. Procedure 34

3.5. Data Analysis 35

3.6. Reflexivity 36

3.7. Ethical Considerations 37

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion 39

4.1. Dyadic Love as Real Love 39

4.1.1. Polyamory as sexualised 39

4.1.2. Dyadic love as true love 40

4.2. The Damaged Individual 41

4.2.1. A traumatic emptiness 41

4.2.2. A primordial instinct 44

4.2.3. Grow up 46

4.2.4. Seen but not heard 49

4.3. The Damaged Dyad 50
4.3.1. A risky investment 50
4.3.2. The right environment for a virus or bacteria 54
4.3.3. It's complicated and difficult 55
4.3.4. Undeclared divorce 58
4.3.5. Breaking up the family 60
4.3.6. Damaged individuals, damaged dyads 62
4.4. Damage Control 64
4.4.1. Psychologist as damage controller 65
4.4.2. The deployment of the contract 65
4.4.3. Contractual negotiation as the production of consent. 67
4.4.4. Fraudulent contracts 70
4.4.5. In theory yes, in practice, no 72
4.5. Troubling Monogamy 74
4.5.1. Broken promises 74
4.5.2. Polymorphous possibility 75
4.5.3. More to it than that 77
Chapter 5: Conclusion 79
5.1. Recommendations 82
5.2. Limitations 82
References 84
Appendices 95
Appendix A: Invitation 95
Appendix B: Participant Information Form 96
Appendix C: Consent Form For Interview 98
Appendix D: Consent Form For Audio-Recording/Transcription 99
Appendix E: Interview Schedule 100

Appendix F: Ethics Clearance Certificate.....101

Chapter 1: Introduction

Polyamory is a relationship practice or orientation rooted in the belief that it is "possible, worthwhile and valid" (Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2009, p. 518) to pursue and maintain romantic, sexual, and/or affective partnerships with more than one person simultaneously (Barker, 2005; Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013; Se´guin et al., 2016; Sheff & Hammers, 2011). In polyamory partners are aware of and have agreed to the existence of other relationships, or the possibility thereof, although levels of transparency and disclosure may vary (Barker, 2011; McCoy, Stinson, Ross, & Hjelmstad, 2015; Se´guin et al., 2016). There are multiple ways in which polyamory can be defined, which speaks to the heterogeneity and diverse expression of this type of relationship configuration (Barker & Langridge, 2010).

Polyamory forms part of an increasing tendency in contemporary societies to question and challenge dominant bodies of knowledge, including seemingly inalienable 'truths' about what can be considered a legitimate expression of intimacy (Barker & Langridge, 2010). Specifically, it troubles the assumption that the height of sexual and romantic love is an exclusive relationship between two people (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). Evidence suggests that non-monogamies like polyamory are common and that only 45 out of 253 societies consider monogamy to be an ideal relationship practice (Rubin, 2001). Yet monogamy is presented as normative. This monogamous norm (termed mononormativity) is represented in Western societies as the universally accepted standard for healthy intimacy, and a benchmark to measure the health of all other relationships (Graham, 2014; Pieper & Bauer, 2006).

The normative status of monogamy relegates polyamory to the margins of intelligibility where it takes up the position of an unusual or deviant form of desire (Finn & Malson, 2008). When healthy love is always already constructed in monogamous terms, the possibility of conceptualising polyamory as a meaningful relationship is constrained and limited (Frank & DeLamater, 2010). As Finn and Malson (2008) note, "the shared way in which we talk about relationships create them and ascribe them meaning, there is always at work a knowledge and power that produce relationships, and ourselves in them, as something in particular and not as anything else" (p. 522).

International research suggests that psychologists position polyamory as a sign of individual psychopathology and/or relationship dissatisfaction (Barker, 2005; Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). Polyamory is not only excluded from common parlance about

relationships, it is also a neglected area in mainstream South African mental health research (Nel, 2014). The study of polyamory is not formally included in curricula, such as in postgraduate or undergraduate psychology and social work modules, continued professional development courses, and internships (Barker, 2011; Williams & Prior, 2015). The inclusion of polyamory in the Psychological Society of South Africa's (PsySSA) Sexual and Gender Diversity Position Statement is relatively recent and has not yet penetrated curricula or in-service training (Victor, Nel, Lynch, & Mbatha, 2014). As such, health care professionals do not have an opportunity to reflect on whether they conceptualise clients from within a normative paradigm, in which the monogamy of their clients is both assumed and encouraged (Graham, 2014). There is no space to question how these assumptions may inform the ways in which polyamory is read and reproduced as something damaging to individual and relational health (Finn et al., 2012).

Within psychology, this discursive construction of polyamory justifies the deployment of psychological interventions to restore clients and their relationships to 'full health'. As a result, polyamorous clients report feeling constrained by the therapist's pre-existing beliefs about the normalcy and health of monogamous desire (Graham, 2014). They report feeling marginalised by misconceptions about what polyamory means and assumptions about its potential dangers (Finn et al., 2012). However, within a climate of mononormativity, the therapeutic arena has both constraining as well as transformative power (Barker, 2005). Whilst psychologists and clients reproduce normative understandings of desire, there is also the possibility to navigate and produce new ways of understanding human desire and intimacy (Klesse, 2017). The 'poly possibility' opens-up new and multiple ways of being and relating to others (Brunning, 2016). As such, the point at which psychology and polyamory meet is a potential site to contest, resist and transform dominant constructions of relationships (Haritaworn et al., 2009).

There is a growing body of work theorising the intersection of psychology and polyamory (Berry & Barker, 2014; Brandon, 2011; Finn et al., 2012; Graham, 2014; Henrich & Trawinski, 2016; Knapp, 1975; McCoy et al., 2015; Morrison, Beaulieu, Brockman, & Beaglaoich, 2011; Se´guin et al., 2016). An extant review of this literature is provided in Chapter 2. This work is particularly significant as normative psychotherapeutic ontologies of health and desire have been identified as a structural barrier to mental health care for polyamorists (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). As such, polyamorous clients may not have access to relevant, appropriate, and non-discriminatory mental health care which constitutes a

violation of their right to dignified care (Victor et al., 2014). However all of this research has been conducted in the Global North. There is no published scholarly research on polyamory in the South African context. Interrogating normative and non-normative constructions of desire is a particularly pressing issue in South Africa. Dominant ideas about what constitutes 'normal' and healthy intimate expression inform high levels of gender inequality, homophobia, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence (Joyner & Mash, 2012; Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008; Speizer, et al., 2009; Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2008; Wubs, Aaro, Mathews, Onya, & Mbwambo, 2013). These lived realities are partly informed by the unexamined dictates of compulsory patriarchal heterosexuality which structures sexuality in terms of normative monogamous, heterosexual and cisgender desire (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This is a mapping of the world in which real relationships are dyadic (monogamous), the dyad is made up of a man and a woman (heterosexual), and the gender identity and expression of both partners is aligned to dominant prescriptions of masculinity and femininity (cisgender). This mapping of the world reproduces and maintains a set of structural inqualities which construct certain subjects as privileged and others as marginalised. Other markers of identity such as race, class and culture intersect with sexuality to further produce lived realities of privilege and oppression. Psychology, as a discipline and body of constructed knowledge, has a part to play in addressing these issues by deconstructing understandings of sexual diversity within the South African context (Nel, 2014). Further, the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) ethical standards of respecting diversity, and Critical Psychology's commitment to social justice urges engagement with issues of exclusion, oppression and inequality (HPCSA, 2008; Naidoo, 2000; Rappaport, 2005). This study therefore addresses a current lack of critical engagement with polyamory in South Africa, and how practicing South African psychologists construct this minority community. As such, six currently practicing psychologists based in Gauteng South Africa were interviewed for this study in July 2017.

The aim of this study was to explore how Gauteng-based psychologists construct polyamorous relationships and identities. The present study is located within a constructionist ontology and discursive epistemology. It assumes that reality is actively produced through discursive practices (like psychological talk) which creates a field of knowledge or map of the world (Parker, 2013). Within this field, only certain kinds of relationships and identies can be understood as normative. This map of reality benefits monogamous coupledom whilst marginalising those who transgress the demands of monogamy (Finn et al., 2012). The issue

of power is therefore foregrounded in the present study's Foucauldian informed discourse analysis (Parker, 2013). A detailed discussion of the method employed in this study is provided in Chapter 3. The analysis pays careful attention to the ways in which monogamy is reinstated by producing polyamory as damaging. Evidence, as well as an extensive discussion, of the ways in which research participants produce polyamory as damaging is provided in Chapter 4.

The present study confirms and expands on previous research on polyamory and other consensual non-monogamies conducted in other parts of the world (Berry & Barker, 2014; Brandon, 2011; Finn et al., 2012; Graham, 2014; Henrich & Trawinski, 2016; Knapp, 1975; McCoy et al., 2015; Morrison, et al., 2011; Se´guin, et al., 2016). Unlike previous studies, this current study deconstructs the ways in which South African psychologists reproduce, maintain and resist dominant and normative discourses about relationship health and desire. This research addresses a current gap in South African academic research about diverse relationship configurations as they intersect with mental health and psychological interventions.

A call to engage with the intersection of health and desire is a recognition of the deeply political nature of psychology, especially when it comes to sexuality (Witherspoon, 2014). Uninterrogated professional ideas and conventions regarding health and desire may sustain systems of oppression (Burton, Kagan, & Duckett, 2012). Critically conscious research is an opportunity to expose, reveal and challenge the hegemony of normative desire and in doing so, to open-up new ways of experiencing love. In asking how South African psychologists construct polyamory, this research also contributes knowledge that counters and interrogates dominant constructions of relationships, desire and pleasure.

1.1. Chapter Organisation

What follows in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) is a detailed review of scholarly work on polyamory which explores the ways in which polyamory is currently defined and conceptualised. The implications of normative constructions of 'healthy desire' are discussed, including the ways in which compulsory heterosexual mononormativity works to produce and psychologise polyamory as problematic and dysfunctional. Reference is made to writers who have explored the possibilities and limits of polyamory's subversion of normative constructions of healthy desire. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the prevalence of

polyamory as well as the significance of conducting critical research on polyamory within the South African context.

Chapter Three (Method) details the method used to conduct this research. This includes an explanation of the constructionist and discursive research design in which the present study is located. The process for sampling, recruiting and interviewing research participants is detailed, including the Foucauldian informed method of analysing the resultant interview transcripts. The chapter concludes with an exploration of how the researcher used self-reflexivity to inform the research process, as well as what ethical considerations guided the implementation of the present study.

Chapter Four (Findings and Discussion) provides a detailed discussion of the analysis of the interview transcripts with research participants, with a particular focus on how a discourse of damage informs psychologists' constructions of polyamory. The chapter begins with how participants construct dyadic love as 'real' partnerships and how this works to articulate polyamorous relationships as less real. Second, the ways in which participants construct the polyamorous subject as a traumatised, primitive, and infantile being is discussed. Third, the ways in which participants construct polyamorous relationships as risky, complicated, and oppressive arrangements which break up marriages and families is analysed. Fourth, the chapter delves into how these constructions justify the need for psychological intervention and damage control. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of how participants simultaneously construct polyamory in celebratory and carnivalesque terms; and the ways in which polynormative regimes of 'true love' are deployed when polyamory is constructed in this way.

Chapter Five (Conclusion) reflects on the implications of participant constructions of polyamory as damaging to individuals, intimate relationships and families. This chapter discusses how these constructions of polyamory reproduce and maintain a hegemonic and dominant construction of desire. Specifically, this chapter examines how participant constructions of polyamory serve to reproduce Western, white, middle-class heterosexual and cisgender monogamy as normative and healthy. The enabling and constraining implications of this 'mononormative tilt' within the field of psychology is also briefly explored. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research as well as a discussion of the limitations of the present study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Defining Polyamory

Polyamory is a heterogeneous relationship category which falls under the broader umbrella term of 'consensual non-monogamy' (CNM) (Conley et al., 2013; Morrison et al, 2011). Polyamorists conceptualise relational ethics and responsibility in terms of all partners knowing about and agreeing to other concurrent relationships (Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2014). Importantly, "while polyamorists may possess similar qualities and engage in similar relationship practices, there is a great deal of diversity within this community" (Morrison et al., 2011, p. 76). For instance, common relationship configurations in polyamory may include a 'primary' or main relationship with secondary or subsidiary relationships (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Alternatively, the configuration may consist of multiple equal partners who reject hierarchically positioning any one relationship as the primary, core or main relationship (Haritaworn et al., 2009).

Whole lexicons have developed to describe the number of people in the relationship and the nature of the relationship between each member in a network. For instance, triads, quads, tribes or families are words used to explain how partners are related to each other (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Polyamorous families, tribes and networks have been conceptualised as a form of kinship "not necessarily dependent on conventional biolegal kin, sexual connections, or even chosen kin ties as previously understood" (Sheff, 2011, p. 487). Sheff's (2011) study compares original data on polyamorous families with data on same-sex families. This move de-centres heterosexual families as the only standard for familial legitimacy and reflects shifting norms regarding the formation of family structures (Sheff, 2011).

Relationship configurations may be 'polyfidelitous' – those involved in the network are not open to taking on additional partners (West, 1996). Alternatively, relationships may be open networks where partners have agreed to the possibility of initiating new relationships or interactions with people not currently in the network (Bergdall & Blumer, 2015). Berry and Barker (2014) note that relationships also differ regarding their "specific terms of mutually-agreed conduct (behavioural 'contracts') or the lack of them" (p. 23). Polyamory emphasises the importance of honest, open and frank communication as a key ingredient to successful negotiation of the contract, and the polyamorous relationship(s) they govern (Conley & Moors, 2014). A willingness to engage in ongoing talk about relationships allows for continued negotiation and re-negotiation of the contract (Frank & DeLamater, 2010).

The negotiation of the contract, and the contract itself, are mechanisms for identifying and disclosing polyamorous sexuality. The polyamorous contract is rooted in the practice of the confession which Foucault describes as "one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (Foucault, 1978, p. 58). In Foucauldian theory, the confession is a technology of power/knowledge. The composite spelling of the term power/knowledge refers to the ways in which knowledge and power are not separate entities but are rather intimately related. Knowledge is not issued in a top down fashion by a distinctive authority. Rather "it is the kind of knowledge that is 'recognised as true', 'known to be the case'. For Foucault, this knowledge can only exist with the support of arrangements of power" (Feder, 2014, p. 56). The production of knowledge or truth (as common sense or expert opinion for instance) always constructs a specific understanding of the world – and not another. This truth about the world produces and maintains a particular set of power relations. In doing so, alternative possible truths are foreclosed. As such, power/knowledge is both productive as well as constraining (Parker, 1992).

A field of power/knowledge produces and makes available certain subject positions. In Foucauldian theory, 'subject positions' can be defined as the different kinds of characters that a particular discourse (set of statements) allows for:

> A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies, 2000, p. 89).

For instance, within a psycho-medical discourse the subject position of therapist and patient are brought into being and made possible. Within this position, the individual who takes up the role of therapist or patient is subjected to the regulating power of discourse (Rose, 1979). They are compelled to speak in certain ways and are unable to speak in other ways. For instance, the therapist speaks with expert authority about diagnoses and treatment, and the patient about their distress and dysfunction. As such, the subjectivity (selfhood) of the therapist and patient are produced in the moment they take up and articulate their subject positions (Davies, 2000).

In their performance of their roles, the talk and activities of both therapist and patient are regulated as both can only ever be articulated or imagined in particular ways and not others. The ways in which objects in discourse are articulated justifies their regulation and surveillance. The practice of confession is a mechanism for both producing and regulating the 'truth' of sexuality. The articulation of sexual peculiarities was a privileged theme of the historically religious confessional space; a practice which is reproduced in other social spaces (like the therapy room) where talk of sexuality is compelled, circumscribed and regulated. From the eighteenth-century Foucault (1978) argues that

> we have since become a singularly confessing society. The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell (p. 59)

As such, the 'truth' of sexuality is produced through the confession; through an incitement to speak about sexuality in ways which justify its surveillance and regulation. Power does not work to repress and oppress the individual's 'authentic' expression of sexuality (Finn & Malson, 2008). Rather, the idea of repression works to conceal the very productive nature of power which compels individuals to articulate and enunciate their sexual truth to psychologists, doctors, and lovers so it can be ordered, regulated, and treated (Rose, 1979).

Part of the production of polyamory lies in the great pains one takes to define what it is and what it is not in a field of power/knowledge. For instance, although often conflated in the literature, polyamory is differentiated from other kinds of CNM configurations like swinging and open relationships (Barker, 2011; Conley et al., 2013; Finn & Malson, 2008). Polyamory is presented as a relationship which places greater emphasis on the agency of individual partners to pursue emotional bonding opportunities than do other forms of CNM (Barker, 2011; Chapman, 2010). While sexual intimacy may be a possible outcome, discourse on polyamorous relationships highlights a concern with the development of emotional intimacy, structuring and characterising relationships as trustworthy, consensual, honest, and open (Morrison, et al., 2011).

In contrast, in open relationships and swinging the emphasis is on recreational sexual activity and deliberate attempts to avoid emotional attachments. Further, there is a

relationship which is considered the ‘primary’ or main dyad which is open to the extent that partners may engage in extra-dyadic sexual relationships, either individually or as a couple (Barker, 2011; Conley et al., 2013; Finn & Malson, 2008). Polyamory is also constructed as different from casual sexual encounters “such as ‘one night stands’, ‘friends with benefits’, ‘fuck buddies’, or ‘booty calls’” (Se´guin , 2017, p. 2).

Polyamory is also distinguished from infidelity or cheating where partners have agreed to be monogamous but where one or both partners betray or break the implicit or explicit agreement of sexual and emotional exclusivity (Conley et al., 2013). Polyamorous self-help authors note that although the term ‘infidelity’ has historically referred to cheating in monogamous relationships, cheating can happen in other kinds of relationships as well (Williams & Prior, 2015). There has consequently been a call to expand the meaning of the term to refer to any betrayal of the relationship agreement, whatever the terms of that agreement may be (Ritchie & Barker, 2006).

Within the South African context, polyamory is more akin to polygamy as they both have a shared focus on long-term relationships and emotional bonding (Van Wolputte, 2016). Zeitzen (2008) notes that all polygamous relationships are polyamorous, although the former usually refers to marriage whilst the latter is informally negotiated between partners. The two may be ideologically different in that polyamory is aligned with queer and feminist ideals, whilst polygyny (a form of polygamy with one man and multiple wives) is patriarchal and heteronormative (Campbell, 2005; Ritchie & Barker, 2007). The hetero-patriarchal structure of polygynous marriage allows South African polygyny to be recognised under the Customary Marriages Act (Stacey & Meadow, 2009). However, this same hetero-patriarchal hegemony in South African limits the possibility of polyamorous relationships being produced as a normative form of marriage. Historically, “the law has tied the formal status of being married to an extensive range of rights, duties, benefits and burdens” (Meyerson, 2011, p. 295). Whilst polygamy is now more visible in jurisprudence, polyamory remains largely invisible to the law – a practice which has been criticised as being out of touch with the variety of contemporary family formations in South Africa (Meyerson, 2011).

Although they share certain qualities, Sheff and Hammers (2011) and Van Wolputte (2016) caution against seeing polyamory and polygamy in essential terms. Within the South African context, polyamorists and polygamists engage with simultaneous and multiple competing hegemonies which are embedded within the differential sexual norms and

boundaries of race, culture, class and gender. Collapsing polyamory and polygamy into a single category risks obfuscating racial and cultural power dynamics and how polyamory, and its associated whiteness, can be constructed as more civilised than polygamy and its associated blackness. It further risks ignoring how race and class constrain and create the ways in which the gendered subject is able (or not) to navigate the landscape of intimate relationships, including access to therapeutic spaces.

The distinctions between these relational categories is "somewhat blurry" (Barker, 2011, p. 284). Frank and deLamater's (2009) anthropological study on a wide range of couples, notes these labels do not reflect the diverse ways in which people manage, experience, and talk about their relationships. Nevertheless, in their comparative study on different relationship categories, Se´guin et al. (2016) recommend researchers "continue to include separate and clear categories of nonmonogamies rather than collapsing them in a single category" as "these relationships are structured differently and research that distinguishes between them may yield more robust data" (p. 14). Further, conducting research on those outside the 'charmed circle' (monogamy, heterosexuality, sex for procreation) is a way for researchers to avoid reproducing normative constructions of appropriate sexual behaviours and identities (Moors & Schechinger, 2014).

2.2. Troubling Normativities

The historical and cultural prevalence of polyamory (and other CNMs) indicates there is great diversity in relationship orientations and structures (Rubin, 2001). Yet there is a pervasive tendency in Western societies to present monogamy as normative and the ideal relationship structure to which all others should be compared (McCoy et al., 2015). Pieper and Bauer (2005) coined the term 'mononormativity' to describe commonly held assumptions that monogamy is normal, natural, optimal, and ubiquitous. Mononormativity has also been described as the 'mononormative tilt' – "a disproportionate and overemphasis on relationships being monogamous" (McCoy et al., 2015, p. 137).

The aspirational value of monogamy is partly rooted in the Western cultural 'Myth of The One' – the expectation that one intimate partner will consistently match and fullfil romantic, intellectual, sexual, and emotional needs over the course of a lifetime (Mitchell et al., 2014). Monogamous love since the 1920s has been increasingly represented as "the thing that will complete us, save us, and make us perfectly happy for the rest of our lives" (Barker, 2011, p. 282). This ideal love story places extraordinary pressure on intimate relationships to

always be harmonious, contributes to relationship dissatisfaction when relationships fail the ideal, and excludes polyamory as a meaningful and possible form of intimacy (Conley & Moors, 2014).

Mononormativity is further located within a sex-negative culture of compulsory heterosexuality which discredits identities and relationships that do not conform to mono- hetero- and cisnormative expectations (McCoy et al., 2015). Sex negativity is defined as a hostile, conservative and moralistic attitude towards sexuality (McCoy et al., 2015). In societies that are sex negative, representations of diverse forms of desire are limited (Page, 2004). Dominant constructions about what constitutes normal human sexuality, like compulsory heterosexuality, are produced and reinforced. Drawing on Queer Theory, Barker (2005) notes the three ingredients of compulsory heterosexuality: (i) Only men and women have intimate relationships with each other (heteronormativity), (ii) there are only two individuals in the relationship (mononormativity), and (iii) men and women are cisgender – they identify with the sex they were assigned at birth and conform to dominant gender role scripts (cisnormativity). Polyamory has the potential to challenge the binaries inherent in these premises, particularly if the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of the individuals involved deviates from cisgender heterosexuality.

Those who transgress compulsory monogamous heterosexuality are often problematised, pathologised and/or criminalised (Morrison et al., 2011). For instance, Barker's (2005) polyamorous research participants speak about the ways in which polyamory is constructed as a form of infidelity, as evil, strange, weird, as a threat to monogamy, and as challenging socially regulated roles. Se´guin 's (2017) study on lay perceptions of polyamory also reveals evidence of negative attitudes towards polyamory. His study thematically examined 482 comments posted on-line in response to three articles about polyamory. Prominent themes included polyamory as unsustainable, perverse, amoral, unappealing, and deficient (Se´guin, The good, the bad and the ugly: Lay attitudes and perceptions of polyamory, 2017).

Conley et al. (2013) also found evidence of stigma towards CNM relationships and a halo effect surrounding monogamy amongst U.S. research participants. To explore public perceptions of monogamy and CNM they drew on contemporary understandings of stigma as a social construct. What a society considers favourable/normative and unfavourable/abnormal is socially produced at specific points in history to maintain the status quo. Normative

attributes are generally created and justified as desirable within discourses of morality and/or health. Favourable characteristics enjoy the halo effect. Those who possess favourable attributes (like monogamy) are seen as superior, dominant, exceptional, and the standard to which other people should be compared.

Conley et al.'s (2013) study found that participants rated monogamy higher on relationship dimensions like quality of the relationship, acceptability, loneliness, sexual riskiness, and also rated monogamy as having other arbitrary benefits unrelated to relationships. Monogamy is seen as possessing a range of benefits

> including an improved or enhanced sex life (e.g. increased frequency and quality of sex), a lower or non-existent risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection, and an increase in relationship quality (e.g. reduced jealousy and increased trust and satisfaction), and these benefits are perceived to be threatened or abolished when non-monogamy is practiced (Se´guin , 2017, p. 2-3).

Simultanesouly, individuals who possess norm-violating attributes (like polyamory) are devalued. Stigma towards CNM "can play an integral role in structural reactions toward social groups, including legal domains" (Conley et al., 2013, p. 5). Consequently, polyamorous individuals "are often forced to negotiate monogamist normativities which pathologize them as untrustworthy partners and dysfunctional parents" (McCoy et al., 2015, p. 137).

Witherspoon (2014) argues that polyamorists experience everyday violence in the form of micro-aggressions. Micro-aggression can be defined as "an expression of bias and discrimination communicated via seemingly insignificant disguised manoeuvres" (Kolmes & Witherspoon, 2012, p. 96). Micro-aggressions accumulate and form a significant source of everyday stress which can be difficult for targets to identify and manage (Witherspoon, 2014). Micro-aggressions can take the form of subtly hostile and oppressive comments, or the absence of inclusivity (Sheff & Hammers, 2011). These micro-aggressions are enacted at a structural level in terms of a notable absence of polyamory from jurisprudence, psychology and medicine which perpetuates mono-normative understandings of intimacy (Sheff & Hammers, 2011). For instance, polyamorists may not legally marry under civil or customary law in South Africa (Victor et al., 2014). Polyamory is also not a designated category in the South African Constitution, meaning that it is not protected from acts of discrimination (in the same way that sexual orientation and gender identity is) – unless individual judges

interpret polyamory as a kind of sexual orientation. Consequently, polyamorous individuals and families are excluded from the protections of family, estate and constitutional law, such as inheritance, parental rights, divorce rights, or having a say in end of life decisions of a partner (Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

Despite the valorisation of monogamy, there is no evidence supporting monogamy as superior to non-monogamy vis-à-vis relationship and sexual satisfaction (Morrison et al., 2011). For example, Se´guin et al. (2016) found that monogamy, open relationships and polyamory were similar on a number of relationship satisfaction dimensions in their sample of 3463 Canadians. In their sample of 284 Canadian polyamorous and monogamous individuals, Morrison et al. (2011) also note few group differences, although polyamorous individuals evidenced greater levels of intimacy than their monogamous counterparts. Moors, Conley, Edelstein, and Chopik (2015) note that individuals in CNM relationships exhibit the same characteristics of securely attached people in monogamous relationships and both "report similar relationship qualities, including high levels of trust, honesty, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction as well as low levels of jealousy" (p. 231).

Queer theorists continually argue that what constitutes healthy sexuality is not writ eternally in Nature's Law, "but changes with the values and norms of a particular society at a particular place and time" (De Block & Adriaens, 2013, p. 277). Increasingly, there has been a move away from a model of pathology and criminality in the study of human sexuality, to a Humanistic model in which consent, responsibility and safety take centre stage (Giami, 2015). The implications of the unsubstantiated stigmatisation of polyamory warrants further interrogation, particularly in the context of mental health care where perception of pathology influences how a client is treated (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016).

2.3. Psychologising Poly Intimacies

The literature suggests that psychologists are often unfamiliar with polyamory because it is excluded from dominant discourses (bodies of constructed knowledge) on relationships, including academic curricula and psychological theory (Barker, 2011; Finn et al., 2012; Girard & Brownlee, 2015). Problematically, a lack of sensitivity and comfort regarding relationship diversity has a deleterious impact on the therapeutic relationship and process (Graham, 2014). For example, Henrich and Trawinski's (2016) study on the therapeutic experiences of polyamorous individuals suggests a reluctance to disclose information about polyamorous relationships in therapy (fear of coming out), feelings of

being marginalised in treatment, and experiencing the therapist as lacking in education and knowledge.

Fin and Malson (2008) argue that CNM relationships cannot be understood as 'real' relationships. They explore the notion of intelligibility in their study on CNM which details the discursive concept of dyadic containment (exclusivity). Dyadic containment is used to legitimise and authenticate monogamous relationships. The architecture of monogamy is reproduced in metaphors of relationships as a primary, dyadic and sacred space – as a home or haven (Finn & Malson, 2008). This space is special precisely because it is exclusive between two people and therefore emotionally and sexually contained. Monogamy is represented as that which protects the couple from the potential dangers of outside forces (Finn & Malson, 2008). Monogamous partners are constructed as ethical, moral and healthy in so far as they navigate and successfully thwart influences from the outside.

Dyadic containment is rooted in the discourse of the Malthusian Couple (Foucault, 1978). Malthusianism is the idea that human population growth is exponential and will inevitably outstrip the food supply required to sustain it (May, 2006). Population growth is therefore kept in check by moral restraints, prohibitions against certain people from marrying and reproducing, and catastrophes which reduce the population size, returning it to a more sustainable level (Luibhéid, 2002). In his analysis of sexuality, Foucault (1978) identifies the Malthusian Couple as one of the four ways in which sexuality is discursively produced. It is a priviledged object in discourse which deploys a particular understanding of sexuality, alongside the Masturbating Child, the Hysterical Woman, and the Perverse Adult (Foucault, 1978). These objects justify the deployment of interventions, explorations, prohibitions, and surveillance (Luibhéid, 2002).

The Malthusian Couple is a means of producing a socially and economically responsible form of sexuality expressed as the heterosexual monogamous dyad (Foucault, 1978). The dyad self-regulates their sexual and reproductive potential in the service of the social body (Luibhéid, 2002). The Malthusian Couple produces children who are socialised to do the same. The family is constructed as a defence that is able to ward off the the threat of uncontrolled population growth and other forces which may threaten the integrity of the social body (Luibhéid, 2002). Protection and policing of the family, and the continued regulation of family health, is therefore justified as necessary for the continued survival of humanity (May, 2006). Anything that disrupts the regulation and containment of the dyad is

necessarily cast as threatening and pathogenic to the dyad, the family and society as a whole (Finn & Malson, 2008). Within this practice of dyadic containment there is a lack of discursive space to conceptualise polyamorous intimacy as valid, meaningful and healthy.

As a result, international research suggests psychologists often assume polyamory is a sign of individual pathology or that something is wrong with the 'core' relationship (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). As polyamory is problematised, the goal of therapy is defined in terms of containing and tolerating a simultaneously frivolous and dangerously unpredictable outside threat (other relationships), which if not properly managed or discouraged, may damage the health of what the psychologist positions as the original or 'core' dyad (Finn et al., 2012; Haritaworn et al., 2009). Any other form of relating is perceived and coded as overwhelmingly chaotic and disruptive (Finn & Malson, 2008). This can be particularly upsetting for polyamorists entering individual or couple's therapy "where the therapist is not aware of their own biases about relationship formations" (McCoy et al., 2015, p. 137).

Psychologists may struggle to cast polyamory in non-pathalogical terms because they lack non-pathologising language to describe it in any other way (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Mononormative discourses and language circumscribe what 'healthy' desire is. This works to marginalise polyamorous identity and relationship possibilities through constrained ways of being (subject positions) that the field of psychological knowledge makes available (Finn & Malson, 2008). This Foucauldian-informed viewpoint acknowledges that power is the ability of a field of knowledge, such as Psychology, to articulate only certain people and relationships as legitimate (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). Rather than being apolitical purveyors of objective knowledge, psychologists are agents of a psychological complex "of discourses, practices, agents, and techniques" (Rose, 1985, p. 9).

Berry and Barker (2014) note that everyday language and convention has great consequences when working with diverse clients. For instance, 'couples therapy' is a discursive practice that presumes a dyadic structure to relationships and excludes other relationship structures as imaginable and worthy of therapeutic assistance. However, whilst psychologists reproduce normative discourses, they are simultaneously subject to the regulatory, disciplinary and oppressive functions of discourse (Rose, 1979). Discourses have productive power – they constitute knowledge on the one hand, whilst simultaneously constituting the subject (the psychologist or client) in regimes of power/knowledge (the field of psychology) on the other. As Foucault notes (1978) "there is no power relation without the

correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 27).

2.4. Agency & Subversion

The regulating power of discourse is never final and there are opportunities for resistance, agency, creativity and transformation. Dissatisfied with the available mononormative vocabulary, polyamorous communities have coined lexicons to describe their feelings and define their relationships (Weitzman, 2006). Ritchie and Barker (2006) note that although polyamory is to some extent constrained by conventional monogamous language of relationships, "alternative languages are emerging which offer new discursive possibilities for the development of polyamorous identities, relationships and emotions" (p. 1). Instead of framing jealousy as something to be avoided by regulating the behaviours that provoke it, jealousy is constructed as something to be unpacked and explored (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Rather than using the word 'mistress', which evokes feelings of betrayal and illicit affairs, polyamorists have created words such as 'metamour' - the welcomed relationship to a partner's other partner (Bergdall & Blumer, 2015).

Evoking this kind of language resists the pathologising and moralising effects of mononormative language and creatively produces subject positions which imbue polyamorists with credibility and legitimacy (Barker, 2005). For instance, Barker's (2005) study explores how polyamorous individuals construct their identity in relation to dominant constructions of sexuality and what implications being polyamorous has for their own sense of self. Barker (2005) conducted a discourse analysis on thirty electronic written interviews with participants who were mainly based in the US, UK and Europe. The study revealed the ways in which participants construct polyamory as an object that troubles and disturbs boundaries that have traditionally ordered monogamous desire and intimacy, like the boundary between friend and lover.

In noting this potential for meaning-making and resistance, theorists caution against viewing polyamorists (and other marginalised subjectivities) in victimised terms (Klesse, 2017). It is important to recognise the pleasure, creativity and agency experienced by polyamorists in the ways they construct identity and navigate social and relational spaces. For instance, in her ethnographic research on polyamorous women, Sheff (2005) notes that engagement in non-traditional relationships enables the expansion of an agentic feminine sexual subjectivity. The potential for women to rework gendered power relations through

polyamory also emerged in Ritchie and Barker's (2006) research with US polyamorous women. Sheff's (2006) ethnographic study with polyamorous men revealed that "poly men attempt to redefine their masculinities and resist the strictures of hegemonic masculinity" (p. 621). The negotiation of polyamory allows people of different genders to explore their own desires and to create relationships that are not necessarily structured by the dictates of patriarchal gender norms. Wilde (2014) theorises that polyamory represents a new framework for recognising and understanding non-binary desire that disrupts hetero-, mono-, and cisnormativities; a framework which she terms 'dimensional sexuality'.

Fin and Malson's (2008) in-depth study of a mixture of monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships reveals the ways in which those who practice CNM construct and justify their desire. Those who identified as CNM construct "sexual or sexual and emotional non-monogamy as a 'better' alternative to 'mono-normativity' and as an effective escape from it, whether for personal or political reasons" (p. 523). Their research participants felt that engagement in CNM represented freedom from the restrictive pressures of monogamy and greater opportunities for personal, sexual and relational development. The participants also articulated that CNM was an expression of political activism against the unrealistic and unnatural dictates of exclusive monogamy which inevitably gives rise to dishonesty in relationships, adultery, and the deterioration of intimate relationships (Finn & Malson, 2008). In contrast, polyamory is constructed as an agentic choice, a means of expressing different aspects of a fluid, complex self with different partners, and as a political project that troubles the oppressive hold of monogamy.

The agency of polyamorous clients and their therapists is echoed by Berry and Barker (2014) in their conceptual paper on existential sex therapy for non-monogamous clients. An existential framework assumes that there is no pre-determined path or criteria for what constitutes a healthy relationship. This allows both therapist and client to use the therapeutic space to re-define and re-deploy the meanings of words traditionally used to describe monogamous love. Words like 'commitment' are reformulated in multiple and productive ways so polyamorous desire is experienced by therapist and client as a legitimate form of fidelity (Wosick-Correa, 2010). The transformation of language therefore presents opportunities for playful and creative meaning-making that challenges traditional understandings of healthy relationships (Keygnaert, 2016).

2.5. The Limits of Polyamorous Possibility

However, within a constructionist paradigm, there is no 'true' form of healthy human desire that is discovered or revealed in the therapeutic encounter. In whatever therapy, there is no escaping the productive power of discourse. In being better informed or in re-deploying the language of desire, the therapist and client are merely able to produce another form of subject for surveillance. Particular constructions or versions of 'healthy' polyamory are reified and normalised to the exclusion of others within new regimes of truth. Fin and Malson (2008) go one step further and argue that non-monogamy fails to theoretically or socially challenge the traditional ideology of monogamous coupledom. Their study contradicts the growing body of theoretical work on non-monogamy which conceptualises polyamory as an actual or potential site of self-invention and transformation. They note that "the practice of dyadic-containment – like every other contained structure be it of personhood, family or society, for example – can be seen as interiorizing relationships (as homes and havens) while territorializing a hostile, chaotic and/or superficial 'outside' territory that is to be avoided on moral and ethical grounds and in the name of a sought-after authenticity" (p. 531).

They argue that monogamous coupledom is continually reinstated in the ways in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTQI) as well as heterosexual non-monogamy is justified, performed and celebrated (Finn & Malson, 2008). Whilst non-monogamous intimacy may have the potential to subvert dominant discourses about intimacy, relationships that venture too far from the monogamous norm are rendered unreal and unintelligible. This 'unrealness' is partly attributable to a mononormative vocabulary of desire which limits the ways in which non-monogamous relationships can be conceptualised and navigated. Although the lexicon of love is continually being contested by non-monogamists (and scholars who write about non-monogamies), the need to be understood as legitimate, credible and real may persist. To guarantee visibility or at least improve one's chances of intelligibility, the discourse of dyadic containment (exclusivity) is therefore reproduced within non-monogamous relationships.

Dyadic containment can be produced in various maneouveres: Partners may agree that certain romantic gestures or sexual acts will not be performed with anyone else, or if they are, they are classified differently. For instance, their sexual interactions are termed 'making love' but sexual interactions with other partners is 'just sex'. A couple may 'open' up their relational space to a third partner who can be evicted from this space if the 'primary' dyad is threatened. These manifestations of consensual non-monogamy ultimately maintain

coupledom as an exclusive space between two people. It also reproduces the dyad as privileged and sacred, and other partners as sexual objects, devalued, or not fully human enough to be a real partner. Binaries and boundaries (between sex and love, friend and lover, monogamy and polyamory) construct an order of desire in which monogamy is privileged and other forms of relating are subjugated. However, there may be no *a priori* boundary between desires that pre-exist the moment of their enunciations and deployments. As Barker (2011) notes, actual distinctions and binaries are "somewhat blurry" and are deployed for the specific purpose of producing and reproducing a particular field of power relations (p. 284).

Barker (2005) also notes the ways in which polyamorists reproduce mononormative discourses in a search for authenticity. In their study, Barker (2005) reveals the ways in which participants normalise polyamory by minimising the differences between monogamy and polyamory. Participants draw on a needs fulfillment discourse which constructs monogamy as an effective mechanism to meet emotional, sexual, and economic needs. Increasingly in the last century, monogamaous partnerships have been presented as the ideal relationship configuration to meet a plethora of needs. Intimate partners are constructed as subjects that both provide resources to meet these needs and subjects that require resources to meet their own needs in return (Mitchell et al., 2014). Barker's (2005) participants argue that like monogamy, polyamory serves the relational function of meeting needs, but state that polyamory does it even more effectively (Barker, 2005).

This construction of intimacy is informed by a capitalist and commodified vision of intimacy in which love is invested in and exchanged between partners in a reciprocoal and equitable fashion. This understanding of love also justifies jealousy as the logical consequence and response to a partner betraying the needs fulfilment agreement by disinvesting resources from their partner and reallocating resources elsewhere. Non-monogamies (consensual or otherwise) are therefore inherent threats to the economy of love where love is a finite and precious resource that can be exhausted and misallocated.

However, this discourse of commodified love is co-opted, reproduced and expanded on as a strategy to construct polyamory as not only intelligible, but as more realistic than monogamous relationships (Conley & Moors, 2014). Within this construction, it is not possible or realistic to expect one partner to fulfill every need that their partner has over a lifetime, and vica versa. Within this logic, infidelity is the inevitable result of an impossible expectation. Polyamorous individuals "may be able to distribute their relationship needs

across multiple partners, thereby lessening this expectation" (Mitchell et al., 2014, p. 329). Polyamory is thereby represented as a justifiable means of diversifying and expanding one's options for fulfillment. Within this logic, engaging in multiple romantic and sexual relationships is ultimately beneficial, healthy and realistic (Conley & Moors, 2014).

Similarly, polyamory is naturalised and normalised through constructions of polyamory as an inherent relationship orientation or identity; as something which the individual subject is born with (Barker, 2011). This is achieved by representing monogamy as an idealised love story that imposes monogamy on a more natural (and therefore authentic) state of polyamory. This construction implies that relationship distress is attributable to the imposition of monogamy. Monogamy, rather than polyamory, is constructed as unrealistic and difficult because it seemingly does not come naturally to people (Brandon, 2011).

Polynormativity further compounds the productive and constraining effects of mononormativity. Polynormativity refers to "new regimes of normativity" reified by meaning-makers located within the polyamorous community, including self-help authors, bloggers, and activists (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, p. 759). Polynormativity puts forward a universalising, individualist and Western Imperial construction of polyamory "at the expense of critiquing structural power relations around race/ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality" (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, p. 759). This poly production fails to account for the ways in which desire is always socially constructed from within power relations, and how these constructions may differ depending on an individual's intersecting experiences of oppression and privilege (Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2009). The lived experience of polyamory is necessarily different from one person to the next depending on how an individual's identity is intersectionally constituted.

Intersectionality is the "notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality" (Nash, 2008, p. 2). This body of work acknowledges that social positioning (like race or class) impacts on one's experience of oppression (Ngoasheng & Gachago, 2017). It further argues that different forms of oppression cannot be separated from each other - one's position or location in the social world is constructed along multiple, overlapping axes of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For instance, sexual orientation, language, race, and disability. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that the conflation of identity (polyamory) with social positionality (gender and race) risks constraining and obfuscating the experiences of people on the margins: "Such narratives

often reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of the more marginal members of that specific social category and construct a homogenized 'right way' to be its member" (p. 195).

Whilst polyamorists and scholars engage with the oppressive effects of mononormativity, there is a resistance to a sustained critique of polynormativity. This is partly fuelled by a fear that any critique of polyamory risks perpetuating mononormative discourses. Polyamorists may not only be produced within mononormative discourses, but may also perpetuate and be subjected to regulating discourses within their own community. Polynormativity reproduces a binary vision of relationships where some manifestations of polyamorous desire are produced as more healthy, moral and manageable than others. This works to homogenise, sanitise and discipline the tensions and complexities of polyamorous relationships. Polyamorists must construct relationships from within multiple and competing mono, hetero, cis, and poly- normativities which enable and constrain what kinds of relationship experiences are imaginable, thinkable and possible (Barker, 2005). The different imaginings of polyamory – as dysfunction, as agentic, or as biologically determined for instance – reveal the contested and contradictory constructions of polyamory informed by various validating strategies.

2.6. Poly Prevalence

Although prevalence studies are incomplete, and conflate different forms of CNM, they do suggest polyamory is a relationship structure that psychologists are likely to encounter in their work. Authors who write on non-monogamies argue that polyamory therefore warrants further academic research, greater awareness amongst health care practitioners, and improved clinical/counselling skill in working with polyamorous clients (Barker, 2011; Berry & Barker, 2014; Finn et al., 2012; Graham, 2014; McCoy et al., 2015). For instance, nationally representative studies in the U.S. suggest that one in five participants had engaged in CNM at some point (Haupert, Gesselman, Moors, Fisher, & Garcia, 2016). Although they targeted monogamous people when recruiting participants for their study, Conley et al. (2013) found that 4% of their sample were non-monogamous. Se´guin, et al. (2016) also note that amongst their sample of 3463 Canadians, 6.8% identified specifically as polyamorous.

Barker (2011) further argues that various forms of covert or unintentional non-monogamy is prevalent amongst monogamous-identified populations: Within the US alone,

40% - 60% of married monogamous couples have had sex with someone other than their spouse (Manley, Diamond, & van Anders, 2015). As monogamy is assumed and any discussion of its boundaries perceived as an argument against its credibility, 40% of young people are unaware of their partner's rules for monogamy and subsequently unintentionally engage in non-monogamy (Warren, Harvey, & Agnew, 2012). Barker (2011) notes that "the norm, even within our own culture, is not really monogamy (which is portrayed as the norm), but various forms of secret non-monogamy" (p. 283).

Most international research on CNM has been conducted on research participants who are LGBTQI and/or gender non-conforming (GNC). Researchers (Morrison et al., 2011; Se´guin et al., 2016) have found that sexual orientation and gender identity appear to be mediators of relationship orientation, with a higher prevalence of polyamory and other CNMs amongst sexual and gender minorities (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Page, 2004; West, 1996). For example, in a sample of 60 Australian bisexuals, McLean (2004) found 60% of men and 52.5% of women were non-monogamous and Se´guin et al. (2016) found that 30.1% of 237 Canadian polyamorists identified as queer.

Consensual non-monogamies in general may be more common amongst sexual and gender minorities because LGBTQI identities already challenge normative relationship scripts, and therefore "they are more inclined to forge their own values and to create new scripts to live by" (Se´guin et al., 2016, p.12). Though more common (although not ubiquitous) amongst LGBTQI populations, polyamory is not unique to sexual and gender minorities. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983), for instance, found that 15-28% of heterosexuals in their sample had polyamorous-like arrangements, and Se´guin et al. (2016) found that 35% of their Canadian sample were heterosexual. Consequently, researchers argue that future research should include diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

The historical and cultural prevalence of polyamory suggests most psychologists are likely to encounter relationship diversity and "the capacity to deal with evolving normative frameworks, and widely variant client identities, is an essential skill for psychotherapists" (Berry & Barker, 2014, p. 22). In the absence of the production of counter-knowledges aimed at disturbing these frameworks, mononormative assumptions within psychology act as a structural barrier to appropriate, relevant and non-discriminatory mental health care for polyamorous people. The current mononormativity of the discipline defines the terms in which polyamory can be understood. It denies clients an opportunity to explore the meanings

of their identity and relationships, and to self-define problems and treatment goals for themselves (Finn et al., 2012). In light of the Health Professions Council of South Africa's ethical standards of respecting diversity, as well as Critical Psychology's commitment to addressing social justice issues (HPCSA, 2008; Naidoo, 2000; Rappaport, 2005), this current exclusionary climate warrants further investigation.

Within the South African context, critical research on polyamory is an opportunity to interrogate the ways in which dominant normative constructions of sexuality and desire inform present lived realities. This is particularly significant considering the high rates of gender inequality, homophobia, intimate partner violence, and gender-based violence in the country (Joyner & Mash, 2012; Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008; Speizer et al., 2009; Wood, Lambert, & Jewkes, 2008; Wubs et al., 2013). These lived realities are partly informed by the strictures of compulsory patriarchal heterosexuality which regulates sexuality in terms of hetero-, mono-, and cis- normativity (Yuval-Davis, 2006). This mapping of the world maintains a set of structural inequalities which constructs certain subjects as privileged and others as marginalised and vulnerable. Issues of race, class and culture intersect with sexuality to further produce South African lived realities of privilege and oppression (Polders et al., 2008). Indeed South Africa consists of pockets of different patriarchies with varying degrees of heteronormative assumptions, regulations and expectations. These multiple patriarchies emerge differently as they intersect with class, race and capital. For instance, the lived experiences of a working class polyamorous woman of colour are structured differently to that of a middle class white polyamorous woman. Nel (2014) argues that psychology as a discipline (including research) should play a role in addressing these issues by advancing understandings of sexual and gender diversity within the South African context.

Since the 1970s, international researchers have investigated polyamory, including ways to improve access to mental health care (Berry & Barker, 2014; Finn et al., 2012; Graham, 2014; Weitzman, 2006). This body of work on polyamory (and other CNMs) represents the decentering of dominant constructions of relationships, and an opportunity to critically engage with the "next moral and legal debate about sexuality and relationships" (Conley et al., 2013, p. 4). However, the majority of this research has been conducted amongst British, American, Canadian, and Australian populations. There is currently no research on polyamory in the South African context, nor on how it is positioned within the

country's mental health field. The ways in which South African psychologists construct polyamory is therefore the question that this research seeks to investigate.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1. Research Design

This research is situated in a qualitative paradigm and is located within a constructionist ontology and Foucauldian-informed discursive epistemology. A constructionist ontology refers to a theory of reality that rejects the idea of an objective reality that is knowable and takes the stance "that the researcher's goal is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (Mertens, 2015, p. 18). A discursive epistemology analyses the historically situated ways that socially positioned agents (such as psychologists) construct objects of knowledge in discourse (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). A Foucauldian variant of discourse analysis attends to how these constructions are implicated in the maintenance and/or disruption of power (Parker, 2013).

3.2. Participants

Participants could be included in the study if they were based in Gauteng, were currently registered with the HPCSA, worked with clients, and could engage the researcher in English. It was not an inclusion requirement that participants have previous experience working with polyamorous clients as the study intended to explore how Psychologists construct polyamory, rather than how Psychologists who routinely work with relationship diversity do so. Currently practicing Clinical, Counselling and Educational psychologists, who are members of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), were emailed an invitation to participate in the research. The inclusion of Psychologists from different scopes of practice was an attempt to recruit Psychology professionals who represent the wide range of client-based practices within the discipline. Polyamory was not defined in the invitation as this may have influenced how participants responded in the interviews. The invitation included a request to circulate the invitation to their networks. First formed in 1994, PsySSA is a professional body which represents South African psychology professionals. Its stated goal is to respond to human development issues within the country. Psychology professionals can join by paying an annual membership fee and citing their registration number with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). PsySSA provides a readily available database of registered psychologists located in Gauteng. This purposive and snowball sampling process provided access to a convenient population of accessible participants who may or may not have encountered relationship diversity in their work (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

Psychologists who were interested in participating emailed the researcher indicating their willingness to be interviewed. After ethical clearance was received, the researcher confirmed times and locations for individual interviews. The resulting pool of respondents provided insight into the contested constructions of polyamory as an object in discourse. The research participants consisted of six psychologists who are currently practicing in the greater Johannesburg and Pretoria area. All participants worked in middle to upper income and urban contexts. Five worked in private practices located in suburbs and one worked in a privatised hospital setting. It is noted that the participants were primarily white which has implications for the constructions of polyamory that were revealed in the data. Specifically, participant constructions of polyamory emerged from a context structured by white, urban, middle-to-upper class capital. This is a context more typified by the norms of the Global North rather than those of the Global South. The constructions of polyamory that emerged in participant interviews may therefore be predominantly regulated and structured by colonial normative frameworks. The researcher originally intended to conduct between five and ten interviews. This range was chosen as there is no South African research on this topic, and it was unlikely that theoretical saturation would be reached after only a few interviews were conducted (Mason, 2010). After six interviews, saturation seemed to be reached. Please see the table that follows for participant details:

Participant	**Registration Category**	**Theoretical Orientation**	**Years in Practice**	**Race**	**Gender**
Participant 1	Clinical	Psychodynamic	15	Black	Man
Participant 2	Clinical	Psychodynamic	5	White	Man
Participant 3	Counselling	Cognitive Behavioural	25	White	Woman
Participant 4	Clinical	Cognitive Behavioural	24	White	Woman
Participant 5	Counselling	Integrative	4	White	Woman
Participant 6	Counselling	Integrative	1	White	Man

3.3. Data Collection

As this study aimed to explore how individual psychologists construct polyamory within language, semi-structured interviews were identified as an appropriate methodological approach for collection of data. Semi-structured interviews are useful in exploring respondents accounts of a specific topic (Mertens, 2015). They can "provide detail, depth and an insider's perspective" which is especially useful when investigating a sensitive topic like sexuality (Leech, 2002, p. 665). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher a degree of flexibility in terms of question order as well as the use of probing questions (please see Appendix E: Interview schedule). The researcher was able to add, omit or adjust questions responsively as the interview progressed. This helped to create a more organic conversation with respondents and ensured questions that the researcher could not predict were also asked and answered (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The questions encouraged participants to talk about how they understood the term polyamory, whether they had current or past polyamorous clients, and how they personally and professionally understood polyamory. These open-ended questions were designed to elicit talk about polyamory in the context of a participant's professional psychological practice. Interviews posed the least number of ethical and logistical challenges. For instance, in focus group discussions participants may have felt more obliged to mimic group consensus (Madriz, 2000).

3.4. Procedure

An invitation to participate in this research, a participant information sheet, an informed consent sheet and an interview schedule were developed for this research in March and April 2017 (please see Appendices A - E). The interview schedule included probing questions as well as some biographical information such as gender and number of years in practice. Ethics approval was confirmed on 6 June 2017 (protocol number MACC/17/009 IH) by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand (please see Appendix F). Participants were contacted in June 2017 and interviews were conducted over July 2017. The researcher travelled to the work premises of participants who were situated in Johannesburg and Pretoria. Interviews were conducted with participants in their offices or therapy rooms which provided ample privacy. Interviews were digitally voice recorded and recordings were transcribed and initially analysed during August, September, October and November 2017. However, iterative analysis continued throughout the writing process. A one-page executive summary of the research will be sent to research participants.

3.5. Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis (DA). DA investigates how socio-historically located discourses "operate as social practices and create the objects, realities, identities and experiences of which they speak" (Finn et al., 2012, p. 207). It is thus useful in exploring how psychologists, in talk about their every-day practice of psychology, meaningfully construct polyamorous identities and relationships, and how they do so in specific ways. The analysis focused specifically on participants' professional identities and theoretical orientations, and did not engage with other aspects of the participants' identities (such as gender, race and class). This study drew on Parker's (1992) guidelines for conducting DA which involves ten phases or twenty critical questions:

First, transcripts were iteratively read and re-read and emergent discursive constructions of polyamory were identified with the focal question of this research in mind. This invoved treating polyamory as an object of knowledge which is created by the particular ways in which research participants talk about polyamory (Silverman, 2000). As such, this stage of the analysis attended to statements about polyamory that appeared in the interview transcripts, as well as the connotations of specific words, similes, and metaphors (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Quotes were selected from the interview transcripts and entered in one column in an Excel spreadsheet. The implications or associations of participant statements were entered in corresponding columns. Second, from an extended list of initial associations, five broad discursive objects or ways of speaking about polyamory were identified. This phase of the analysis involved consultation with the research supervisor and continued re-reading of the transcripts.

Third, the researcher explored the kinds of subjectivities ('damaged individuals' for instance) that these ways of speaking about polyamory enable or constrain (Wilbraham, 1997). This involved an exploration of how individuals or relationships are characterised by particular sets of statements, and how these characterisations allowed or disallowed the subject to speak with authority (Silverman, 2000). Fourth, the different, multiple and contested discourses which construct polyamory were identified and analysed, including how the terminology of health and desire is contested within these discourses (Parker, 1992; 2013). This phase of the analysis was arranged using sub-headings under the main headings for each of the five discursive polyamorous objects.

Fifth, the analysis mapped out the kind of reality that is reinstated through the particular ways in which participants discursively construct polyamory, as well as an exploration of what kind of regimes of truth (such as hetero-, mono- or polynormativity) are maintained when these discourses are deployed (Wilbraham, 1997). Sixth, the analysis referred to other texts, apart from the interview transcripts, to further interrogate the discourses discussed. Parker (1992) suggests that this phase of the "analysis should bring in other readers and listeners, and use their understanding of a discourse to bring out the implicit meanings, the views which are rarely voiced but which are part of that way of talking about things" (p. 11). To this end, the researcher drew on relevant literature to include references to and explorations of other kinds of texts, such as marriage vows, where the identified discourses are present. This part of the analysis illustrates how the discourses which construct polyamory operate as a coherent system of ideas across multiple texts (Hodges, 2018).

Seventh, drawing on relevant literature, the historicity of identified discursive practices was noted to contextualise the current ways in which research participants construct polyamory (Parker, 1992). Eighth, the analysis explored which institutions or sets of ideas (like the institution of monogamous heterosexual marriage) are bolstered or discredited when the identified discourses are deployed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Ninth, the researcher explored who and what is privileged when participants construct polyamory in the way they do, as well as who and what is oppressed, marginalised or subjugated (Wilson, 2018). Finally, the analysis included an exploration of how the identified discourses work in tandem with other dominant discourses to justify heterosexual monogamous desire as normative and to de-legitimise other discourses of desire (Parker, 1992, 2013). The development of the analysis and the structure of the write up was iterative and refined through continual re-writing and re-arrangement of the analysis.

3.6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is "a hallmark of rigorous qualitative research in which the researcher is considered an instrument of the study" (Hoover, 2015, p. 1476). The researcher herself is polyamorous and has worked extensively as a support group facilitator for polyamorists. In terms of researcher reflexivity, this vested personal and professional interest in this research was acknowledged and reflected on to ensure that the researcher remained open to multiple and even unfavourable constructions of polyamory. The researcher's positionality was not deliberately revealed to participants as this may have influenced the ways in which participants spoke about polyamory. It is noted that there was no way to guarantee that

participants were unaware of the researcher's positionality and this was considered in the analysis. Also, like participants, the researcher, as an emerging psychologist, also reproduces and is subject to normative discourses of relationships and psychology. Considering the researcher's closeness to the topic and positionality, emergent discursive constructions of polyamory were discussed with the research supervisor, and careful attention was paid to contested constructions.

In terms of methodological reflexivity, the researcher acknowledges the reproduction of dyadic containment (a discourse being critically questioned by this research) in the form of individual interviews. Further, discourse analysis as an analytical tool has an important limitation, particularly with regards to its inherent circularity. The process of surfacing and critiquing problematic discourses simultaneously reinforces and reifies those same discourses. Although other data collection methods were considered, individual interviews are the least problematic in terms of ethics and logistics. In terms of participant reflexivity, as a student psychologist the researcher holds less professional status than participants and this power dynamic may have resulted in reluctance to ask participants challenging questions. It has also resulted in concerns about professional tensions once this research is made available. A reflective journal was used to monitor hidden assumptions which may have influenced participant disclosure, co-constructed discourses, the researcher's interpretation of the interview transcripts, as well as the researcher's concerns about disappointing participants with what the research revealed.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

As mentioned above, the location of the interviews was private. The therapeutic rooms or offices of psychologists provided a secure venue, so interviews were not interrupted or overheard. All participants had their own room or office, so it was not necessary for the researcher to make alternative arrangements for a private venue. Participants were over the age of eighteen years and are currently registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. They were each given an extensive information sheet about the research, which the researcher went through with them before starting the interview. Participants signed two consent forms – one for participation in the interview and one for audio-recording and transcription of the interview. The information sheet and informed consent forms covered ethical considerations such as benefits, voluntary participation, right to withdraw participation, confidentiality, data storage, further information, psychosocial resources, and sharing of findings.

Participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn without sanction. Anonymity could not be assured as the researcher knows the identity of participants, however participant identities were and will be kept confidential. Direct quotes from transcripts were used in the final write up of the thesis, however to protect identities, participants were coded by number in both transcripts and the written thesis (for example, ‘Participant 1’). Audio recordings and research documents were password protected, stored digitally and will be kept as such indefinitely. As discussion about polyamory may catalyse a need or desire for more information, the URL for the ZaPoly website (which provides resources for further learning) appeared on the participant information form. Further, the details for Lifeline, a toll free hot line, were included in case participants required support for unintended emotional responses following the interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

The question that this analysis addresses is how Gauteng-based psychologists construct polyamory. As a departure point, participants construct 'real' love as that which occurs in intimate partnerships between two people, constraining the possibility for polyamory to be conceptualised as similarly real and meaningful. The polyamorous subject is constructed by participants as a being that is pathologically traumatised, compulsive, primitive, and infantile. Polyamorous relationships are likewise structured by participants as risky, diseased, complex, oppressive to women, and likely to break up families. The pervasive discourse of damage justifies the need for psychologists to control the damage. As such, participants construct the negotiation and deployment of a relationship contract as the best mechanism to contain and regulate the risk that polyamory represents. Participants simultaneously construct a contrasting vision of polyamory; one that is structured in terms of possibility and resistance. What follows is a detailed analysis and discussion of how these constructions of polyamory are produced by participants, and in terms of power, what purpose these particular constructions of polyamory serve.

4.1. Dyadic Love as Real Love

All participants spoke of polyamory in terms of having more than one partner. As Participant 2 says, "*poly meaning many, so many-partnered, this is kind of how I would understand it*". Participant 3 echoes this definition: "*Relationships with multiple partners*". Participant 4 also defines polyamory in terms of multiple partners but specifies that these multiple partnerships occur "*while being in a committed relationship*", implying that commitment ordinarily precludes other partners. This is a distinction that is repeated by Participant 5: "*The idea that you can have different relationships with different people, even if you are in a committed relationship".* Later, Participant 5 qualifies that polyamory is different to casual relationships because *"some form*" of commitment has been created: "*I think what differentiates it from more casual relationships, is that there is some form of commitment that has been negotiated between the parties*". This implies that polyamorous relationships involve commitment, but the nature of this commitment is not as concrete or real as the commitment one would have in an exclusive monogamous relationship.

4.1.1. Polyamory as sexualised. The nature of these multiple partnerships was largely constructed in sexual terms. Participant 1 for instance defines polyamory as "*engagement in sexual activity with multiple partners*". Two participants however did conceptualise the multiple relationships as having an emotional or romantic component. For

instance, Participant 6 defines polyamory in terms of multiple sexual, emotional and romantic partnerships and comments on the sexualisation of polyamory:

> *I think a lot of people often hear the word and they just think of sex with a lot of people. Whereas to me that can be included obviously, but it is more about them having multiple romantic and emotional attachments to multiple partners, as opposed to the ordinary just you only have one person and they only have you*.

As such, all participants defined and produced polyamory as a relationship structure between multiple partners. These partnerships can exist despite the presence of an already committed relationship, perhaps because they are structured by *"some form"* of commitment as well. These partnerships are largely sexual in nature but could also be romantic and emotional.

4.1.2. Dyadic love as true love. Although there are multiple relationships present in polyamory, most participants also spoke about relationships in dyadic terms; as something that occurs between two individuals. These participants construct and position any other relationships as *"outside"* or on "*either side*" of the boundaries of a committed dyadic relationship. As Participant 5 says, "*even though they are in a committed relationship, there are relationships outside of that"*. Participant 3 similarly evokes the image of polyamory as a relationship which happens outside the boundaries of the core relationship when she defines polyamory as "*multiple partners on either side*". This serves to centre the dyad as the primary or privileged relationship. Other relationships are positioned as superfluous or secondary to the primary relationship. This implies that dyadic love is 'true' love, and that love in other kinds of relationships is less so.

This construction is well aligned to 'dyadic containment' as described by Finn and Malson (2008). Dyadic containment is a reinstatement and reproduction of monogamy by producing relationships in terms of territories and boundaries. 'Real' relationships are special and sacred inside spaces, evoked through the metaphor of the home or haven (Finn & Malson, 2008). Furthermore, in keeping with this allegorical analysis, outside of the 'haven' there is a dangerous and threatening territory, and there is a clear boundary which separates these two territories from each other (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). Polyamory is theorised to represent an object that breaches the boundary which protects the dyad from outside threats.

This construction produces healthy and safe relationships in terms of monogamous exclusivity and damage in terms of threats to monogamous exclusivity (Finn & Malson, 2008).

Dyadic containment limits and reduces the terms available to 'talk' about or articulate the discursive universe of polyamory (Parker, 2013). The idea that polyamory is a less authentic articulation of love than dyadic love is the departure point for the production of polyamory and the quality of relationships that the polyamorous subject can experience (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). Most strikingly, this constraint is deployed through the discourse of damage which permeated research participants' talk about polyamory. This is a discourse which constructs polyamory as a damaging object that produces damaged subjects, specifically a damaged individual and a damaged dyad.

4.2. The Damaged Individual

The majority of research participants constructed polyamorous people as damaged subjects. Participants differed in how they justified or explained the damage: Polyamory was attributed to the presence of psychopathology, uncontrollable compulsivity, acting out on primitive instincts, or going through an infantile developmental phase. Whatever the explanation, most participants spoke about polyamorous people as subjects that are in some way unable to function as rational, self-controlled and healthy adults compared with monogamous individuals. The discourse of damage makes available a space for a very particular kind of self; it invites a specific perception of the polyamorous subject: According to participant constructions of polyamory, to be polyamorous is to be an empty, compulsive, primitive and childish individual. The damaged individual is constituted through contrasting discourses or different ways of speaking about polyamory as damaging. These different discourses coalesce and overlap in their constitution of polyamory as damaging and polyamorous people and relationships as damaged.

4.2.1. A traumatic emptiness. For instance, the polyamorous subject is spoken about in psycho-medical terms as empty and devoid of value, esteem and worth; as an incomplete and deficient being:

> *There's loneliness, feeling this emptiness feeling and there is a feeling of ugliness; of not being attractive to attract a partner, or partners who take advantage of you as an older person, cheating on you and not being loyal to you and faithful to you. So, they were feeling worthless and inadequate. It,*

> *these were the people who were feeling very low emotionally and at their life at that stage. And they, out of desperation I think they searched on the internet and say oh, we can do something like this, maybe we will feel affirmed* (Participant 1).

Polyamorous subjectivity is constructed in terms of *"this emptiness feeling*" and "*feeling worthless and inadequate"*. According to Participant 1, the emptiness or *"emotional condition"* of polyamory is brought about by a plethora of psychosocial maladies like low self-esteem, damaged self-worth, depression, loneliness, rejection, betrayal, and/or childhood sexual abuse: *"Most of them were sexually offended* [sic] *when they were still growing up and then it confuses their sexuality and eventually they find themselves in situations like this*. Participant 4 similarly describes an unsatisfied client who sought out therapy:

> *she tried to be committed to and found that it wasn't working. It is not working, and she came to talk to me about separating from her husband and in the conversation, quite a way into the conversation she admitted her husband is gay and she has known it all along…*she *feels there is no real intimacy emotionally or physically. She feels detached from him, distanced from him*.

These negative psychological experiences give rise to a subject who is empty and who desperately seeks validation to fill an inner void.

This empty subject is simultaneously constituted as compulsively needing to fill their emptiness with something that can validate the self and restore it to wholeness and health. Polyamory is produced by some participants as a means to "*deal with the traumas of the past"* (Participant 1) and as a misguided attempt to achieve wholeness. However, polyamory is spoken about as a damaging practice that can only ever provide "*temporary relief*" rather than substantial healing and fulfilment. As Participant 1 notes, "*it remained inadequate to try to satisfy or deal with their emotional condition"*. According to Participant 1, polyamory is like an addictive intoxicant that incites the damaged individual to engage compulsively in sexual behaviour they would otherwise find "*morally reprehensible"*. They are, as Participant 1 says, *"trapped"* in a desperate but futile search for permanent completeness. Their searching is constituted as lacking in agency and self-determination, which is something that "*others*" (the expert) know to be true – "*So*

mostly it's just to do with kind of emotional conditions rather than a choice really. People think that it's a choice, but others know that they are trapped" (Participant 1).

According to some participants, polyamory only momentarily fills the compulsive subject's wounded self. It ultimately "*exacerbates the feeling of worthlessness and depression"* (Participant 1). The individual remains empty, but even more so than before as the person acted against their morality - *"if you're a moralistic person you feel like, I slept with many people, I shouldn't have done that. So, you also regret again, the more you regret, the more you exacerbate the feeling of worthlessness and depression"* (Participant 1). Compulsively engaging in behaviour which they personally believe to be immoral induces shame, guilt, and regret which further empties and damages the individual, spurring on renewed need to find relief. Participant 2 likens polyamory to heroin addiction and how the pressures to behave in a moral (monogamous) manner are overwhelmed by the desire for the intoxicant: *"You can state-sanction monogamy but there's nothing you can do about it. It's kind of like if a heroin addict wants to use heroin they're going to fucking use heroin, there's nothing you can do about it"*. Some participants thus articulate polyamory as a temporary easing of psychic distress, which ultimately spurs on a self-perpetuating cycle of damage that fails to offer substantial fulfilment.

Both emptiness and compulsivity serve to constitute the polyamorous being in pathological terms; as a psychologically and emotionally damaged person. Polyamory is here both the consequence and cause of psychopathology – the damage pre-exists the polyamory but is worsened and perpetuated by polyamory. This discourse of psychopathology may be informed by the professional identity of some participants. Participant 1 and Participant 2, for instance, are both Clinical Psychologists who ascribe to a Psychodynamic theoretical approach. Within a field of Clinical Psychodynamics, objects of knowledge are constructed in terms of health and pathology, which produces a discursive order of social subjects categorised by the relative presence of damage (Fox, 2008). The present study echoes previous research that polyamorous individuals are constructed as pathologically damaged (Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013). Finn et al. (2012) for example have similarly noted that dominant discourses about healthy psychosexual development may render polyamorous identities visible or at least only conceivable in pathological terms. This works to position polyamorous subjectivity as mentally unstable, and polyamorous individuals as

incapable of speaking as legitimate subjects, or only able to speak from the position of dysfunction (Barker, 2011).

The production of polyamory in terms of the damaged individual may be informed by discourses of the mentally ill patient and pervasive myths about the nature of their sexuality (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). These myths construct patient sexuality as infantile, primitive, dangerous, impulsive, exaggerated and morally deviant (Dobal & Torkelson, 2004). The mentally ill are not seen as individuals capable of making autonomous decisions about their intimate, reproductive and sexual desires, and are often viewed as sexually simple, animalistic and/or child-like (Tiwana, McDonald, & Völlm, 2016). Within this logic, if polyamory was an authentic and healthy expression of sexuality, the individual would not have entered the therapy room - "*if it was satisfying her, she wouldn't have landed in here*" (Participant 1). Participant 5 similarly notes that *"I think often they come because they have been referred by the doctor for stress. And then when you start to dig deeper, there is all these complexities"*.

The damaged individual is a discourse which is elaborated on in other psychiatric and psychological texts (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). For instance, psychiatric care facilities have a 'no sex' policy which forbids sexual activity amongst in-patient populations (Dobal & Torkelson, 2004). This 'no sex' policy assumes that mentally ill patients cannot act in their own or another's best interest, are vulnerable to being sexually exploited, or are at risk of sexually exploiting another patient (Bartlett, Mantovani, Cratsley, Dillon, & Eastman, 2010). Attempts at consensual sexual activity by patients is therefore treated as inappropriate and something that psychiatric/psychological staff need to prevent (Dobal & Torkelson, 2004). The 'problem' is framed as a need to control patient sexuality.

4.2.2. A primordial instinct. In evolutionary discourse, polyamory is constituted as an eruption of the human primitive bio-sexual impulse to mate, reproduce and propagate the species. As Participant 2 says,

> *I would assume that if [monogamy] was the primary goal of humans for whatever reason, whether it's divinely inspired or evolutionarily put forth, I would assume then it [polyamory] would just turn off…we know of evolution at the very least the goal is not monogamy, the goal is adapt or die - survival, procreation, move on, adapt, die, survival, procreation.*

This discourse constitutes the polyamorous individual as a primitive animal who is driven and motivated by a sexual instinct to reproduce. Desire, in evolutionary terms, does not "*care whether you're monogamous or polyamorous…it just wants to go forward*".

Participant 2 traces the origins of desire back hundreds of thousands of years imbuing polyamorous desire with primordial and original authenticity: "*Say between one-hundred-thousand and two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand years ago the idea of monogamy occurring then is unlikely to me".* Participant 5 similarly notes *"polyamory seems to be, it has been around forever*". The contemporary civilising forces of monogamy are presented as having failed to curtail or evolve the polyamorous individual's primitive sexual instincts. Within evolutionary discourse, polyamory is naturalised and essentialised as biological truth (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Previous research and theoretical work on polyamory has similarly noted how biological essentialism is employed as a discursive strategy to authenticate polyamory (Finn & Malson, 2008). This is achieved by constituting polyamory as a more natural state than monogamy and monogamy as a futile and unrealistic imposition on human desire (Barker, 2011).

As suggested in previous research, in the present study the imposition of monogamy on a more 'natural' polyamorous state is presented by at least two participants as an explanation for the high rates of infidelity in monogamous relationships (Brandon, 2011; Finn & Malson, 2008). As Participant 2 notes, "*if monogamy was so innate to humankind, why is that the highest reason for divorce and problematic relationships?"*. Naturalisation is a discursive mechanism that serves to normalise polyamory as pre-determined, by Nature's Law or Divine Design. Here, Participant 2 constructs the polyamorist as a person who is authentic in their sexual and romantic love. Polyamory is thereby produced as the original and truest articulation of human desire, and therefore as inherently healthy.

However, this discourse simultaneously devalues the polyamorous individual as a social failure and a being that is not able to overcome biology (nature) through will power and self-control (nurture):

> *However, as most things do, they kind of leave out the nature of a human being and it's not to say that people can't be monogamous, but it would in my mind require conscience, active effort in terms of remaining so* (Participant 2).

The polyamorous individual is represented by a number of participants as a person who is unable to manage and maintain the *"conscious, active effort"* (Participant 2) required to remain monogamous. This wording implies that polyamorous people are unconscious, passive and idle, which allows "*the nature of a human being"* (Participant 2) to emerge and overcome the nurturing provided by the socialisation process. As Participant 6 similarly notes, *"at least for western ideology it [polyamory] has become a bit of a taboo thing in the last few centuries"*. The polyamorist is thereby constituted as more animal than human, or a reversion to a more animal-like state – as more nature than nurture. This representation of polyamory constitutes both adulterers and polyamorous individuals as symptoms of the same failure to suppress a primitive sexual instinct in service of civilisation.

According to some participants, the polyamorist can only speak as a primitive creature that is neither aware of or in control of its biological imperatives. Alternatively, the polyamorist can speak as a self-aware but apologetic subject. Participant 1, for instance, presents the polyamorist as cognisant of their own failure to control their sexual impulses and to properly manage their desire: *"They feel morally reprehensible that's why they'll do it into the corners and also engage into some kind of intoxicating influence"*. According to Participant 1, although the polyamorist cannot help themselves, they are aware they are acting in an immoral manner. That is why, as Participant 1 says, *"they'll do it into the corners"* where their sexual behaviour is hidden from view, and why they "*also engage into some kind of intoxicating influence"* so their behaviour is also hidden from their own moral conscious awareness. This depiction of the apologetic polyamorous subject calls on the polyamorist to experience shame and guilt for not channelling their primitive sexual desire into monogamous coupledom, much like the adulterer. The implication here is that those polyamorists who defend their sexual behaviour are "abject sexual citizens" unable to be understood as legitimate within mono-normative societies (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, p. 761).

4.2.3. Grow up. Polyamory is also produced by some participants as a pleasure-seeking stage of development characterised by (largely sexual) exploration and discovery. Participant 5 comments that

> *the other thing that really strikes me is a lot of sexual – what is the word for it?... Exploration. Experimentation A lot of that…just like all sorts of different*

> *things that she enjoyed – was partly that. Exploring all sorts of different things*.

Some participants construct polyamory as a stage of development which the polyamorist must ultimately emerge from to be initiated into adulthood: "*Well let's say at some point you're in a developmental stage when having multiple partners is more preferable that in other developmental stages*" (Participant 2). The nature of this developmental stage seemed to also be gendered. According to Participant 1, for instance, for straight men polyamory is produced as an appropriate and even welcomed expression of a developing masculine sexuality: *"He said he doesn't want to get married and he's doing quite well. They were doing it willingly…just for pleasure…people who just want to explore, those ones are not depressed by anything"*. This implies that men can be polyamorous, and not damaged, as long as they are still unmarried. This is a construction of the polyamorous (boy) child at 'play'; a being that explores the possibilities that the world of sexual pleasure has to offer. As Participant 1 says, he plays "*just for pleasure*" and "*exploration*", which suggests that this is something he is welcome to do until he gets married.

According to Participant 1, the polyamorous (girl) child 'plays' for different reasons:

> *They will just say, hey, we did this, we, and put it as part of our experience and won't do it again because it's not right but we enjoyed it, whatever, so that they can participate in social conversations as though we all, although we all did something like this where we engaged in this kind of activity, but we've overgrown it. So, whether the girls can talk this way, also it's like being initiated and grown out of something to say I also did it and so I'm part of the pack*.

Unlike the poly boy child who pursues pleasure for pleasures sake, the poly girl child's motivation for exploration is presented as a desire to later "*participate in social conversations*" about her youth. Her desire is constituted as social rather than sexual. As Participant 1 argues, the poly girl child 'plays' to say, "*I'm part of the pack"* because she tried polyamory. Here polyamory is presented as a form of "*initiation*" (Participant 1) that the poly girl child must pass through, so she is guaranteed acceptance, status and belonging within circles of adult women.

For young unmarried men polyamory is produced by some participants as a natural expression of virile masculinity which they engage in for the purposes of exploration and pleasure (Sheff, 2006). For young women, who are the objects of the men's desire, polyamory is constructed as something they engage in for status and acceptance amongst their peers. However, according to some participants, this polyamorous child at some point must grow up and enter a more mature developmental stage; one that is characterised by a monogamous marriage and a stage in which a single partner is preferred. Here marriage is constructed as a monogamous, cisgender and heterosexual event; and not as any other kind of event. This enunciation of marriage serves to regulate marriage in terms of dominant cisgender, monogamous and heterosexual norms (Sheff, 2011). The type of self that this construction invites is a young child who is called on to master the challenges of a developmental stage and successfully grow up into a cisgender, heterosexual and monogamous adult that can enter a marriage. As Participant 1 notes, the boy child who did not want to get married must "*bury*" polyamory in his past. He must let it go as one of his experiences "*of growing up rather than something that one enjoys*" (Participant 1) as a married monogamous adult man .

Likewise, according to Participant 1, the girl child is also asked to put polyamory away; to surrender the mischiefs of childhood. She may have enjoyed it at the time, but to enter adulthood she must admit that she "*won't do it again because it's not right"* and promise that she has *"outgrown it"* (Participant 1). Within this articulation the poly child is invited to speak about the play and pleasures they discover in their exploration. However, neither the boy or girl child can speak about their experiences of mature meaningful connection. The final discursive injunction on this child is to 'grow up'. The idea that polyamory is more playful than serious echoes Fin and Malson's (2008) study which suggests polyamory is conceptualised as frivolous. The implication is that the poly child's voice can only be taken seriously and heard if it demonstrates its own maturation by speaking about successful development into hetero- and mono-normative adulthood. The heteronormative scripts which inform the gendered construction of polyamorous subjectivity also speaks to how the polyamorous subject position is intersectionally constituted along the axis of gender (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The construction of polyamorous people as damaged infantile individuals may be informed by discourses that produce childhood. Childhood is a social construction that is continuously reinvented and redefined in ways which are historically contextual (DeMause,

1995). Childhood during the eighteenth century, for instance, was portrayed as a time of innocence (Prinsloo, 2003). During the nineteenth century children were regarded as fundamentally immoral and in need of discipline, whilst more modern views include childhood as a site of potential mental health problems which require psychological intervention (Jewkes, 2004). These different constructions of childhood justify the need for surveillance, control and intervention by adult agents, like parents, teachers and psychologists (Ariès, 1973; Bhana, 2006; Carrington, 1991; Prinsloo, 2003). Children are produced as a special category of person who represent the future, and "are frequently used as a kind of measuring stick or social barometer with which to test the health of society more generally" (Jewkes, 2004, p. 58). If they are depicted as engaging in sexually deviant behaviour it is frequently taken as a symptom of a society in moral decline (Jackson & Scott, 2015). Although the damaged individual of polyamory can explore and experience pleasure, it must ultimately stop playing around and grow up, because "*it's not right"* (Participant 1).

4.2.4. Seen but not heard. The root of the damage may be psychopathological, evolutionary or developmental in nature, but in all these cases the polyamorous person is unable to speak as a mentally sound and reasonable adult (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). The behaviour, thoughts and feelings of this damaged individual can be observed but cannot be taken seriously. These discursive manoeuvres all serve to devalue, problematise and discredit polyamory as a legitimate way of being in the world by positioning polyamorists themselves as damaged, primitive and immature people (McCoy et al, 2015). The constitution of polyamory as damaging and polyamorous people as damaged presents a picture of the world in which sexuality must be treated, regulated and parented lest it cause damage (Foucault, 1978).

This depiction justifies the surveillance and regulation of polyamory in the interests of restoring the damaged individual to health - or at the very least, minimising the damage (Rose, 1979). It simultaneously represents monogamy as the pinnacle of individual healthy evolution and development. This presentation of desire and health is a reinstatement and reinforcement of mononormativity; the commonly held assumption that monogamy is normal and optimal (McCoy et al., Stinson, Ross, & Hjelmstad, 2015). More broadly, it reinforces compulsory heterosexuality (Barker & Langridge, 2010). This is a world in which health, rationality and adulthood are guaranteed when an individual embodies heterosexual and cisgender monogamy. Likewise, the opposite is true when an individual transgresses

compulsory mono heterosexuality and embodies a sexuality which is different (Conley et al., 2013; Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013).

The discourse of the 'damaged individual' is an oppressive narrative that maintains the hegemonic dominance of compulsory mono- and heteronormativity as the only legitimate, healthy and acceptable expression of human desire and intimacy. The construction of polyamorous people as damaged is congruent with previous research on people who exhibit non-normative desire. For instance, Se´guin 's (2017) research suggests polyamorists are constructed as deficient, whilst Conley et al.'s (2013) study reveals the ways polyamorists are perceived as dysfunctional. Barker (2005) and McCoy et al. (2015) have similarly noted that within sex negative cultures, relationships that challenge mono, hetero, and cis-normative expectations are discredited, pathologised and problematised.

4.3. The Damaged Dyad

Polyamory as a damaging object also constitutes a specific relational subject - the damaged dyad. Just as polyamory is presented by the majority of participants as a damaging force that harms individual health, polyamory is similarly presented as a damaging force that harms the health of relationships (where 'real' and healthy relationships are always already constructed as dyadic). Most participants locate this damage in the risk of loss, exposure to disease, in complexity or difficulty, or the polyamorous relationship endangering the safety of children and the family. Here, polyamory is conceptualised as a dangerous threat to the safety, security and serenity of the couple and the family, usually guaranteed by monogamy. Economic, medical, psychological and familial discourses are deployed to constitute the dyad as damaged or at risk of becoming damaged - although in different ways and for different reasons.

4.3.1. A risky investment. According to the majority of participants, the polyamorous relationship is presented as a risky or damaged 'investment'. For instance, Participant 1 describes a client's marriage as an investment which is *"cut"* when the client's husband marries a second wife: *"He's going to have a cut in the marriage…she gave you most part of her life, she's invested in you to build your wealth to where you are"*. This implies that marriage is an investment which is damaged when polyamory is practiced. The polyamorous relationship is represented as lacking in the types and volumes of resources and assets to make the relationship a secure investment. Within an economic mapping of the world, assets and resources are valuable precisely because they are finite

commodities. Resources in relationships are similarly presented by most research participants as precious commodities which are finite in nature. These participants mentioned various kinds of relational commodities which are taken as signifiers of desire. These included "*time*" (Participant 4), "*commitment* (Participant 5), "*love*" (Participant 6), "*attention*" (Participant 1), "*money*" (Participant 1), "*intimacy*" (Participant 4), "*sharing*" (Participant 5), and "*sex*" (Participant 1 and 2). The possibility of their depletion imbues these assets, and the relationship they are invested in, with value.

Within this logic, the presence of an additional relationship implies that resources have been withdrawn from the dyad and spent or used up elsewhere. This reduces the quantity of assets available to the core dyad. As Participant 5 notes, *"you are missing out"* on something precious when your partner shares intimacy

> *with someone else, but not with you"*: *"Jealousy, or just like that sense of you are missing out, or there is just a part of that, that you don't know. Which I mean really doesn't make sense, because your spouse goes to work or all these things – it has all these relationships that you don't know of. But it feels very intimate this…And sharing that part of you with someone else, but not with you.*

Here, polyamory is constituted by most participants as a move which damages the quality of investment in the primary dyad.

According to most participants, this provokes a range of negative responses such as jealousy, insecurity and loss – emotions which are viewed as damaging to the wellbeing of the couple, making polyamory a very risky venture. As Participant 4 comments, polyamory is *"risky"* because involvement in other relational investments can provoke "*feelings of jealousy or uncertainty or insecurity*":

> *Well, in that human emotions get involved. You know what if one of them developed feelings of jealousy or uncertainty or insecurity and wanted to stop it and the other person got very involved. So, ja, and I still think it is risky from that perspective*.

Participant 2 constructs polyamory as something which can provoke even more serious and violent damage like "*death"* and *"murder"*: *"It [monogamy] does try to avoid a lot of jealousies in certain ways, crimes of passion, it [jealousy] could lead to death, murder, these kind of things, it doesn't always but it can"*. Jealousy is depicted as the

inevitable, insurmountable and destructive consequence of polyamorous relationships that are not similarly likely in monogamous 'investments'.

Alternatively, the dyad is represented by the majority of participants as an already weak investment that lacked assets in the first place. For instance, Participant 4 describes a relationship in which "*there is no real intimacy emotionally or physically*" which is why her client "*went into the affair in the first place*". Although this psychologist is speaking about an affair rather than polyamory, she notes that this deficit in relational assets is like polyamory - it "*kind of relates in a way to this*":

> *She loves her husband. She has no doubt that he loves her and there had been no real issues in the marriage apart from the fact that she feels there is no real intimacy emotionally or physically. She feels detached from him, distanced from him and that's why she went into the affair in the first place, and she wants more intimacy in her marriage, in a relationship. She is not interested in marriage anymore, but she wants that, but that kind of relates in a way to this you know, for me.*

Polyamory is constructed as the inevitable search for a more viable and fulfilling investment. The primary relationship is produced as damaged and polyamory is produced as a symptom of this damage. According to most participants, the dyad is no longer a secure investment within the economy of desire. The individual loses precious relationship assets which they would have otherwise had access to, which is also a comment on their value.

However, the economic discourse also produces a contradictory representation of polyamory as surplus rather than deficit. One in which the dyad is a particularly robust investment that has an abundance of assets. Here the dyad is constructed by several participants as containing an excess amount of resources that contribute to the health of the couple – maturity, trust, openness, communication, self-esteem, and security. As Participant 4 comments, there is not just some of these assets, there is an abundance ("*a lot*") of these assets in a functional polyamorous relationship:

> *Let's start with the one that's working, I would understand that there is a lot of security in the relationship and the people really, the partners trust each other, the partners trust each other and there is a maturity, an emotional maturity involved, and I think that the people obviously would be open.*

Participant 4's wording implies that polyamorous partners can 'afford' to spend resources elsewhere without damaging the value of the dyad.

The issue of affordability is echoed by Participant 1:

> *In my Pede culture where I come from in Limpopo, the only condition a man will be allowed to marry more than one wife is if they must prove ability of, affordability that he can be able to look after two sets of families*.

In referencing *"affordability"* Participant 1 constructs polyamory in terms of one's relative class positioning. The use of economic terminology implies that polyamory is a matter of belonging to the middle or upper class who can afford to take risks because they already have access to surplus assets. Here, polyamory is constructed by Participant 1 as a marker of wealth and excess. Polyamory is simultaneously produced as unimageable and overly risky for those social subjects categorised as 'middle class', 'working class' or 'poor'.

Where there are surplus assets, the people involved in the relationship "*obviously would be open"* (Participant 4) to polyamory because the relationship is a sufficiently robust investment that the relationship can afford to be open to potentially risky and alternative ventures. Polyamory is not presented as a safe investment, rather the presence of surplus assets reduces the risk that polyamory represents. At the same time, this dyad is represented by several participants as unique, special and extraordinary. Polyamory "*would be much more challenging for some people, I think for some people they are just fundamentally more insecure"* (Participant 4). This again positions polyamory as non-normative and monogamy as normative.

Within an economic, commodified and capitalist vision of love, the polyamorous relationship can never be a meaningful, fulfilling and valuable relationship for the 'ordinary' person. According to most participants, it can never claim the status of a good and sound investment in the same way that monogamy can. It is always "*risky from that perspective*" (Participant 4). As Participant 2 notes, it cannot protect the dyad from "*jealousies*" and "*crimes of passion*" which could potentially "*lead to death, murder, these kinds of things"*. This articulation of polyamory implies that its stakeholders (intimate partners) are irresponsible, risky, unwise or selfish investors that cannot be trusted to properly look after one investment. This depiction of polyamorous relationships serves to reproduce an economy of desire in which polyamory is positioned as a dangerous and risky investment compared to monogamy. This finding is echoed by both Se´guin (2017) and Conley et al.'s (2013)

research. Their research suggests people assume monogamous relationships reduce the likelihood of jealousy and are more satisfying than CNM relationships. Their findings further indicate that people assume these benefits are seemingly jeopardised when people practice polyamory.

4.3.2. The right environment for a virus or bacteria. Within a medical discourse, one participant constructed the dyad as diseased or at risk of becoming diseased with sexually transmitted infections – it is a potential site for "*unprotected sex*" which is the "*right environment for a virus or bacteria*" (Participant 2)*:*

> *On a side note I would say protection, protection, protection…unprotected sex is…the right environment for a virus or bacteria of various kinds, which can be very damaging, impact on fertility later and impact on your life-span potentially and impact on your well-being…and then the well-being of your say primary partner if you have a primary partnership, it can then affect that person as well, as well as being able to donate blood and things like that which could save other people's lives*.

Here, polyamory is constituted as pathogenic disease vector which corrupts the health of the dyad.

This discourse speaks about an at-risk relationship that is vulnerable to infection; or a relationship that is already diseased and therefore unhealthy to the individual, couple and society. According to Participant 2, an infected polyamorous individual transmits the pathogen on to their partner, damaging the partner and the dyad in the process. Further, polyamory as a potential disease vector places the social body at risk, as the polyamorous relationship is no longer able to support the continued health of society. Polyamory is therefore presented as negatively impacting on "*fertility*", "*wellbeing*", "*lifespan*", the *"well-being of your say primary partner"* and "*being able to donate blood and things like that which could save other people's lives"* (Participant 2). The subjectivity that this portrayal allows is an individual who is reckless with their own and other people's health and who engages in behaviours which are unnecessarily dangerous. This is an individual who must go to great lengths to prove they are aware of the risk for infection and are taking the necessary precautions to protect the health of the relationship.

The bio-medical construction of polyamory paints a picture of the world which is categorised according to what is considered healthy and safe, and what is considered

pathogenic and dangerous (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). This discourse intersects with broader discourses about sexuality which produce normative sexuality as safe and non-normative sexuality as likely to lead to disease. Dominant discourses about healthy desire often constitute non-normative sexual desire and relationships as the very thing responsible for the transmission of disease (Robinson, 2017). Again, this is a finding echoed by both Se´guin (2017) and Conley et al.'s (2013) research which suggests people assign a range of benefits to heterosexual monogamous relationships (like reduced likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted infection) which are not similarly assigned to polyamory. These same discourses have historically presented gay relationships as pathogenic and dangerous; as a kind of sexuality responsible for the transmission of HIV (Robinson, 2017). Like the polyamorous person who is constituted in economic discourse, the polyamorous person in the bio-medical discourse who objects to this portrayal is labelled as reckless and irresponsible.

According to Participant 2, to be considered safe and responsible, the polyamorous individual must capitulate to the discursive pressure of the medicalising gaze. As Participant 2 insists, "*protection, protection, protection!"* The polyamorist must step into the role of the person who carefully regulates their desires and sexuality. They are called on to demonstrate the special precautions they will deploy to minimise the potential harms of their polyamorous desire, so the health of the relationship is protected (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). It is only if these precautions are deployed and maintained that the polyamorous relationship can enjoy some semblance of acceptability and health – not because it is acceptable and safe, but because it engages in an acceptable level of harm reduction (like using condoms and getting tested). These protective practices reinstate the boundary broken by polyamory which separates the dyad from outside dangers (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). This is a discursive demand that is not made of the monogamous individual whose relationship is constituted as already protected from infection and damage because it is sexually exclusive.

4.3.3. It's complicated and difficult. Polyamory is also constituted by the majority of participants as a complexifying force which destroys the simplicity provided by monogamy – where simplicity and ease is presented as relating to a single partner and needing to meet only one person's needs: "*It just becomes more complex when you're in a polyamorous relationship"* (Participant 4). The complexifying force of polyamory creates a troubled dyad that is emotionally dis-eased; one which is difficult, complicated and messy. Participant 5 comments, *"there is a feeling that it must be difficult. It must be*

difficult… I can't but always help but have this like reticent feeling. Like complicated, oh messy". This *"reticent feeling"* that Participant 5 *"can't but always help"* experience evokes a sense that polyamory's complexity results in inevitable discomfort, even for those just thinking about it.

Most participants articulate polyamory as that which disturbs the emotional peace of the dyad. This peace is represented as disturbed by the presence of multiple people and relationships, and a multiplicity of needs which must be identified, balanced and fulfilled:

> *Even he seemed a bit troubled by it, not troubled in any sort of sense of morality or a commitment sense, but it became complicated because he had to balance everybody's needs out and there were complaints from both sides. So those were the kind of issues there, a bit of resentment there, spent too much time there and should be here all the time, visa versa you know* (Participant 4).

Within an economy of needs and resource allocation, the majority of participants conceptualise the polyamorist as an individual who must constantly work to balance demands. This implies that polyamory is an impossible attempt to use a finite supply of resources (like time and attention) to meet a set of demands which outstrips available resources. Further, resources are then not available for the primary relationship, dyad or family. It is as if the ordinarily uneventful home of the couple is invaded by a plethora of guests who must be looked after, but whose care exhausts the couple. Polyamory is constructed as a troubling disruptor of the quotidian requirements of every-day life, exponentially multiplying demands on partners. As Participant 6 says "*if we are going to add on more people, logic kind of says it should take more work".*

According to most participants, other relationships or a desire for other partners, presents a series of psychosocial stressors which negatively impact on the psychological health of the dyad. Further, polyamory is constructed as an unsanctioned relationship structure which places additional stress on the couple. These stressors would ordinarily be eased by the assistance of a support network (cultural, religious, legal or social) if the relationship was monogamous:

> *It becomes difficult because most things are structured in a monogamous manner that includes tax law, that includes marital law, child custody stuff, a lot of stuff is designed in a particular way in which it's geared towards and beneficial of those who desire a monogamous relationship"* (Participant 2).

However, the dyad is represented as isolated from potential help because of their difference. They are excluded from legal protections like *"tax law",* "*marital law*", and "*child custody stuff"* (Participant 2) and consequently inhabit a lawless territory.

As Participant 5 comments, they are excluded from the cultural, social and religious support of the conservative majority: *"You know in our society generally we have a very conservative society, so I mean there are even large sections of the society where sex before marriage is still frowned on, never mind going into something like this"* (Participant 5). In this construction of "*conservative society*", non-normative sexual expressions like premarital sex are "*frowned on*" or condemned. Polyamory is represented here as something so far outside the norm (*"never mind going into something like this"*) that it is unreasonable to expect the moral majority to condone and support it. This lack of visibility and inclusion within culture, morality and jurisprudence produces polyamory as isolated and unsupported. The polyamorous partnership must therefore navigate the challenges of intimacy and desire on their own.

Within this discourse of complexity and difficulty, the polyamorous relationship is invited to speak about the difficulties and complexities of being polyamorous (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). In speaking about its complexity, the partners have an opportunity to bring order to the chaos and to restore the relationship to some semblance of simplicity and health. The partners are asked to carefully lay out all the ways in which their poly desires makes everyday life less peaceful, more emotionally troubling and how difficult it is to balance and meet multiple needs - because "*it just becomes more complex when you're in a polyamorous relationship"* (Participant 4). According to Participant 4, this request is amplified when only one partner in a relationship identifies as polyamorous in which case polyamory is not "*necessarily a happy arrangement for both partners"*. This polyamorous partner is constructed as guilty of bringing unnecessary complexity and difficulty into the relationship.

The implication here is that the more the damaged dyad can account for its damage, the more possible it is to regulate and manage the difficulty that polyamory introduces into this once happy arrangement. Those who object to the complexity of polyamory are discredited by designating them as psychologically unaware or in denial about how difficult polyamory truly is – the polyamorous person may not readily admit to how difficult polyamory is, but the observer can see that "*he seemed a bit troubled by it"* (Participant

4). The discourse of difficulty and complexity presents an image of the world that is categorised by desires which are easy and simple, and ones which are complicated and difficult and therefore psychologically damaging (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). Here polyamory is categorised as the latter, while monogamy is classified as the former. This categorisation maintains the position of monogamous relationships as normative and ideal (Brunning, 2016).

4.3.4. Undeclared divorce. Within a marital discourse, some participants construct the polyamorous partnership as disingenuous; as *"undeclared divorce"*. For instance, Participant 1 speaks about a client who became depressed after her husband married a second wife: *"It's like undeclared divorce that which you have done, which is unfair, that's why she's feeling this"*. Here, polyamory is constructed by some participants as an unvoiced pronouncement that the marriage has ended. Since it is unvoiced, the wife is unable to script a formal response that would allow her to exit the marriage and pursue another relationship: *"She still feel trapped…she cannot freely see other partners because she's still bound by the marital and cultural expectations of still being loyal and faithful"* (Participant 1). The polyamorous wife is represented as a *"trapped"* and *"bound"* woman that continues to perform the role of *"loyal and faithful"* wife to a husband that has covertly left the marriage without releasing her from it. The introduction of a new wife is presented as a husband's means of enacting power and control over the first or *"senior"* wife; "*to cut her to size"*. Polyamory (as polygamy) is constructed as a silent message which *"undermines a senior wife who is disrespectful and not submissive"*. The polyamorous partnership is constructed as *"unfair"* entrapment of disempowered women in a disingenuous marriage by privileged men.

At the same time, discourses of cultural law intersect with a marital discourse to construct polyamory as legitimate (Meyerson, 2011). More specifically, within South Africa, it is possible to conceptualise polyamory as an authentic marital relationship when it is presented as polygamy: "*In certain cultural traditions in South Africa, and this is why it makes it quite unique, is that polygamy is permitted in certain cultural laws"* (Participant 2). This sentiment is echoed by Participant 1 who comments that *"in African culture, I mean it's legitimised in some way"*. Here, cultural and marital law is employed as a validating strategy which re-articulates multiple partners as permissible marital spouses: *"If you have a third wife and you sleep with your third wife, is it adulterous on your first wife? No, I guess with a question mark there somewhere, because they're still your*

wife" (Participant 2). The illegitimate subject position of adulterer or mistress is re-structured in terms of the legally and culturally sanctioned position of wife. At the intersection of cultural, legal and marital discourse, polygamy is constituted as an endorsed and credible relationship (Stacey & Meadow, 2009).

However, this credibility is simultaneously constructed as contested and suspect. As Participant 2 comments, there is a *"question mark there somewhere"*. The question of polygamy's authenticity as a 'real marriage' is evoked where the discourse of religion intersects with discourses of marriage, law and culture:

> *If that person is your third wife and that person both appeals to ancestry as well as Christianity, which technically you shouldn't do because in the Bible, you shouldn't worship witchcraft, and the Sangoma is necessarily part of Ancestry typically, and which means…you practice witchcraft, so to fuse the two together is a bit problematic in all honesty* (Participant 2).

Here, monogamous Christian marriage is constructed as 'real' marriage because it is ordained by Biblical Law. This implies that other kinds of marriages, reified by other kinds of Divine Law, are less authentic and real - like polygamous marriages that are ordained by Ancestral Law.

According to some participants, polygamy represents a *"problematic"* fusion or *"amalgamation"* of conflicting and appropriated belief systems: *"There's been the cultural appropriation of religions and cultures so let's just say it's an amalgamation of something"* (Participant 2). The internal inconsistency of this amalgamation reiterates the construction of the polygamous relationship as disingenuous. Although at first glance it appears to be a legitimate marriage, it does not sincerely adhere to the expectations of 'real' marriages (Van Wolputte, 2016). Within the South African context, this construction of polygamy reinstates Western Christian heteronormative monogamous marriage as normative and healthy. It simultaneously positions African polygamy as disingenuous and oppressive to women (Campbell, 2005). Here, a colonial 'truth' about relationships is maintained, which positions African non-monogamies as problematic and Western Christian monogamy as ideal. This 'truth' privileges the whiteness associated with Western Christian monogamy as more 'civilised' or 'progressive' than the blackness associated with African non-monogamies (Sheff & Hammers, 2011). This finding is echoed in previous research on polyamory within the African context which reveals that African iterations of polyamory are frequently

depicted as backward and oppressive to women (Van Wolputte, 2016). This representation of polyamory works to privilege Western Christian white heteronormative monogamous marriage as a more egalitarian, healthy and civilised option (Barker & Langridge, 2010; Van Wolputte, 2016).

4.3.5. Breaking up the family. Within a discourse of 'broken homes', polyamory is constituted as a force which damages the family. This is a finding which has been confirmed by Sheff (2011) in her longitudinal research into polyamorous families and the impact polyamory has on children. She has repeatedly noted that heterosexual monogamy is deployed as the only standard for familial legitimacy (Sheff, 2011). The maintenance of the monogamous family unit is produced as the proper and healthy site for the rearing of likewise proper and healthy children. It acts as a container, protecting children from dangerous outside influences, like the sexual activities of adults, strangers, and general disruption to the home life they are familiar with. Polyamory is constructed as a perforation of the boundary separating the interior space of the family from outside threats (Finn & Malson, 2008). The implication here is that if polyamory accesses the family, the result is a 'broken home'. Participant 4 alludes to the power of polyamory to damage the family when she comments "*very often there are children involved or a family involved, and they don't want to break up the family*". Polyamorous adults who are considered as not taking care to preserve the integrity of the family are presented as irresponsible or dysfunctional parents, and their children are represented as endangered or damaged. In the discourse of 'risky investments', the family is presented as a valuable investment which contains important assets for the healthy development of children – like familiarity, security and predictability.

Polyamory is constructed as a threat to the security of this investment, making it a risky move: "*What are the risks involved in terms of our relationship and our marriage, because in those cases there was a marriage and there were children"* (Participant 4). Polyamory is constituted as provoking feelings of loss and betrayal in children. Participant 4 recounts the feelings of children from a polygamous marriage, who *"felt it as a betrayal, their father wasn't committed to them and if their mother suffered they blamed the father because he had other wives".* The boundary protecting the family is represented by most participants as ruptured, letting dangers in and existing assets out. Women in polyamorous relationships are fashioned as betrayed and hysterical mothers; maternal figures reduced to "*suffering either emotionally or financially"*

(Participant 4). Men are positioned as philandering fathers, as in non-monogamous set ups *"it wasn't necessarily a happy arrangement for both partners and it was usually the man, it was always the man who had other wives or other official partners, families*" (Participant 4). Their children are thereby constructed as abandoned and exposed to the sexual proclivities of the adult world. Within a discourse of broken homes, cisnormative and heteronormative depictions of masculinity and femininity are reproduced. Masculinity is represented as sexually active and virile, and femininity as the passive and suffering recipient of masculine sexual excesses.

Within the discourse of 'broken homes', this broken family, particularly the child, is invited to speak about its brokenness and the ways in which it attempts to fix and fill the cracks effected by polyamory. Childhood is here depicted as a period of vulnerability and the modern family as the child-centred site necessary for the ongoing protection of the vulnerable child (Ariès, 1973; Bhana, 2006; Carrington, 1991). This construction of the family justifies the policing and regulation of cisgender, monogamous and heterosexual coupledom. As such, parents are invited to speak of the ways in which they will regulate their own sexuality and safeguard access to their children. The constitution of the child and family as broken, and the injunction to confess the details of this brokenness, is the mechanism of surveillance which allows for continued regulation of sexuality in the interests of the mono-, cis- and hetero-norm (Donzelot, 1997). Polyamorous parents thus enter therapy to find "*a working way with a solution to this"* (Participant 4). This is akin to the discourse around what parents are expected to do when a divorce happens. Participant 1 in fact calls polygamy "*undeclared divorce"*. There is thus a discursive injunction on the polyamorous parent to describe the ways in which the quotidian activities of the family will be protected from polyamory. They must discuss "*the children and access, and how the children are sort of integrated into it"* (Participant 5). They must account for and detail the ways in which they will manage the child's exposure to the disrupting influence they have brought into the household and how it disorganises the every-day family life. How, for instance, will they explain the absence of a parent at the dinner table? As Participant 5 notes, "*the kids were starting to ask about where Mom would go and that was becoming – not an issue, but it was something"*.

For most participants, a familiar and comforting silence organises the expected everyday routines and practices of the intact monogamous family. However, the broken polyamorous family must clearly identify and describe the ways in which it re-organises

itself. It must articulate and manage the "*something*" that Participant 5 speaks of. Those who reject the idea that they have placed the family at risk are reprimanded for putting their desires first and thinking only of themselves. As a result, "*adult children coming out of polyamorous relationships have been very angry*" (Participant 4):

> *Interestingly the children, adult children coming out of polyamorous relationships have been very angry and I guess that has to do with their own expectations. They were angry, and, in each case, it was the father who had other wives and they're angry. They felt it as betrayal, their father wasn't committed to them and if their mother suffered they blamed the father because he had other wives and they saw the mother suffering either emotionally or financially or whatever, the way they construed it in their own minds and interpreted it and they felt it wasn't right*.

According to some participants, damage to children is constituted as an awareness that there was an unfair distribution of resources that symbolised the devaluation of their family unit, particularly a devaluation of the mother. Here, the polyamorous parent is constituted as a parent who lacks *"commitment"* (Participant 4) to the wellbeing of their children. This implies that polyamorous parents are undevoted parents who place a desire for *"other wives"* (Participant 4) above the integrity of the child's home. The discourse of 'broken homes' reinstates a monogamous and heteronormative picture of the world. The monogamous and heteronormative family unit is reproduced as the mechanism for containing adult sexuality and directing its libidinal excesses into the task of having and raising healthy children.

4.3.6. Damaged individuals, damaged dyads. Polyamory is constructed by most participants as a damaging influence which produces a traumatised, empty, primitive and infantile individual. The majority of participants articulate polyamory as a damaging force which breaks the boundary protecting the dyad from devaluation, disease, difficulty, disingenuousness and brokenness; a boundary which would otherwise be maintained by monogamy. Polyamory is thus constituted by most participants as a damaging object that produces a damaged individual as well as a damaged dyad. This representation of the damaged individual and relationship of polyamory is located within a broader discourse of sexuality and the production of the Malthusian Couple as the bastion of healthy adult

coupledom; a love story which is deployed through social technologies like law, economy, medicine, psychology and the family (Foucault, 1978).

As the healthy sexuality of the Malthusian Couple is produced and deployed at economic, psychological, medical and familial sites of socialisation, it is unsurprising that polyamory's damaged subjects are likewise produced and deployed at these discursive sites (Foucault, 1978). The deployment of polyamory's damaged individual and relationship justifies and reinforces the institution of heterosexual monogamous marriage, and a variety of other medico-legal and psychological institutional practices which support monogamous coupledom (Brunning, 2016). This includes practices like cultural, social and religious rites of passage into adulthood, legal civil unions, and legal wedding ceremonies (Sheff, 2011). Individual, couples and family therapy, as institutional practice, also support monogamous coupledom. Therapy is a sanctioned confessional context that shapes, reproduces and reifies discourses of damage (Foucault, 1978). Within this context the therapist is constructed as the expert other tasked with ensuring that clients become healthy adults who can enter into monogamous coupledom or ensuring that dysfunctional relationships/families are restored to monogamous health.

The construction of polyamorous clients as damaged justifies psychological intervention. Indeed, psychologists often assume that polyamory represents a fear of intimacy, unhealthy attachment styles or dissatisfaction with existing marriages or partnerships (McCoy et al., 2015). For instance, Knapp's (1975) study on attitudes of marriage counsellors revealed that one third of the sample believed non-monogamists had some form of personality disorder and approximately 20% would attempt to encourage clients into (heterosexual) monogamy. Finn et al's (2012) study reveals that 'well-meaning' therapists characterise non-monogamy as motivated by a desire for excitement and risk rooted in some form of deficit in the 'primary' or 'core' relationship. Mononormativity therefore intersects with other dominant discourses about normativity. This reproduces and maintains a version of history in which cis-, hetero- and mononormative desire is sanctioned and produced as aspirational, normal and credible, and simultaneously a version of history in which non-normative desire is discredited (Barker & Langridge, 2010).

Psychological theory regarding what is a healthy relationship is both an instrument and effect of this history (Burton, Kagan, & Duckett, 2012). Religion has historically reproduced and maintained hetero- and mononormativity by positioning procreative

monogamous desire as divinely ordained, and non-monogamous and non-reproductive desire as sinful (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). This positioning and production is re-articulated in the medicalisation and psychologisation of sexuality through the language of health and illness (Foucault, 1978). The damaged individual and relationship of polyamory is a particular production of the 'truth' of sexuality which is authenticated through social science discourses. Bowlby's (2008) attachment theory, for instance, is a form of social science which presents exclusive monogamous coupledom as the ultimate realisation of developmental health and as the appropriate and authentic context for intimacy (Barker, 2005; Conley et al., 2013). As such, many people equate psychological health and maturity in relationships with sexual and emotional exclusivity (Moors et al., 2015). Fin et al (2012) argue that "a monogamous-like emotional exclusivity or bondedness remains by and large naturalized and privileged as the highest experience of human relationships" (p. 521). As such, when polyamory appears, the psychological health of the individual is questioned and interrogated – as is the health of the relationships they form. This is echoed by Weitzman (2006) and McCoy et al. (2015) who note that polyamorous individuals believe therapists centre polyamory as the therapeutic focus and attribute distress to their relationship configuration, regardless of the presenting issue.

4.4. Damage Control

The damaged individual and the damaged dyad calls into being a specific kind of respondent or observer. This is the discursive space produced by and made available to the psychologist. The psychologist's role is partly created by the very arrival of the individual or partners in therapy. Seeking out treatment signals or suggests the presence of damage, and also the need for someone who is able to observe, diagnose and treat the damage (Rose, 1979). The psychologist is thereby incited to embrace the role of concerned or pastoral healer capable of intervening and providing guidance (Foucault, 1978). The positioning of the psychologist in this manner is not unique to polyamorous clients. However, what is unique is how the presence of polyamory represents damage, and how this departure point informs, directs and articulates the choice of intervention (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). All research participants spoke about the ways in which they assist clients to control the damage that polyamory does to individuals and relationships, most significantly by helping the polyamorist figure out a relationship contract. As such, all participants detail the contract as an important focus of clinical attention which is produced through the process of negotiation.

The violation of this regulating contract, as well as the limitations of its control, are simultaneously constructed as clinical concerns.

4.4.1. Psychologist as damage controller. Within a discourse of 'damage control', psychologists are constituted by all research participants as the damage controller. The psychologist is represented as a useful guide, able and willing to assist the polyamorous person to manage the damaging effects of polyamory. As Participant 2 says, "*I can only offer guidance in terms of how it might be usefully managed, so people don't get emotionally hurt"*. The psychologist is concerned with *"only"* one question: "*The only important thing, are they living a life that works where they don't damage other human beings and if they're happy with it?"* (Participant 3). The word "*only*" in both these statements signifies that the task of the psychologist is solely to ask how best to manage the damage polyamory may cause - and not to ask other kinds of questions.

According to all participants, the psychologist *"only"* cares about how to control the damage, not what their client's sexual identity or behaviour is: *"I don't care what people do. I don't care how they identify themselves. I don't care how they see themselves"* (Participant 3). Damage control is presented as the relevant business and work of the psychologist, not dictating to clients how to behave in their sexual or romantic affairs. *"I don't care what your favourite position is or who your partner is or what orientation you are. I don't care and it's really not relevant to me and it's none of my fucking business in all honesty*" (Participant 2). These declarations of what participants in *"all honesty"* care or do not care about positions the psychologist as a non-judgemental and ethical professional solely interested in preventing damage. An appeal to impartiality works to legitimise the psychologist as an expert and authority. This construction moves the psychologist's politics out of view, where they cannot be questioned or interrogated.

4.4.2. The deployment of the contract. The most significant form of damage control that emerged in the interviews was the creation and deployment of a relationship 'contract'; a set of rules which govern conduct. Within a discourse of damage control, the contract is produced by all participants as the mechanism which makes partner expectations and needs visible and explicit. As Participant 5 notes,

> *the word is contract… some sort of sense of we are on the same page…I suppose that could work, and that perhaps is where I am talking about the*

> *communication and the contract, for the couple as well – is that sense of containment.*

The contract is erected *"just to prevent hurt… for me prevention is better than cure and the practical rules…as well an emotional understanding of why those rules are useful to have"* (Participant 2).

According to all research participants, once polyamorous desire is explicitly detailed, it is possible to ascertain if partners are in agreement about their expectations and needs – whether they are on the "*same page*" (Participant 5). This incitement to confess the details of polyamorous desire is informed by the psychotherapeutic model which has historically been constituted as a site of healing and normalisation. Through the normalising potential of the therapeutic space, and the normalising gaze of the therapist, therapy (as confession) is central to the constitution of sexual norms and their transgressions. Polyamory that involves confession and contracting of desire is constructed as a polyamory "*that could work*" (Participant 5) because the structure of the relationship is observable to partners (and the psychologist). By implication, polyamorous desire that is not confessed and contracted cannot work. Once poly desire is made explicit, intelligible and understandable, it is possible to contain, survey and regulate it. Adherence to the contract is particularly significant and important as it protects the privileged dyad from the potential threats that polyamory signifies.

Participants all remarked that major damage emerges when partners fail to uphold the terms of this contract or fail to adequately negotiate the contract in the first instance:

> *The major problem, however, comes in when both parties break the rules of their relationship…Understand it's just going to get really tricky, really messy, people are going to get really hurt…it's when there's a breach of a contract, that's when I've seen a shit-storm* (Participant 2).

This implies that if the contract is violated, the dyad is left vulnerable to the effects of polyamory. Words like "*break*", "*shit storm*", "*destroys*", "*hurt*" and "*messy*" evoke an image of immanent destruction and damage; almost like the dyad is exposed to the destructive forces of a natural disaster. As Participant 3 says, *"breaking contracts destroys relationships"*.

According to all participants, to be considered healthy and safe, polyamorous relationships must demonstrate the presence of this contract and their willingness to uphold it (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). The construction of the contract as a form of damage control echoes previous research on polyamory which presents the contract as a mechanism for ensuring the continued longevity and health of the relationship (Berry & Barker, 2014). As such, the psychologist is invited to speak of the ways in which they will help the polyamorist contain and control the potential damage of polyamory through the deployment of the contract. The polyamorist is entreated to join the psychologist in this enterprise, through the practice of confession (Foucault, 1978). The subjection to the technology of confession imposes an ensemble of what Foucault terms 'moral orthopaedics'. Moral orthopaedics are "a set of sets of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies" (Foucault, 1985, p. 25). In this articulation, the prescriptive agency is the discipline of Psychology which demands that both therapist and patient comply with a moral injunction to mitigate harm. Within the discourse of damage control, the contract is thus positioned as a legitimate and moral intervention that the psychologist prescribes and the client must engage in. The complexity of polyamory can thus be sanitised, curtailed and brought to book (or at least onto a shared page of understanding) through the deployment of a governing contract which mitigates potential hurt. It is then possible to position those who object to the contract, or those who do not agree to adhere to its terms, as being unreasonable and disingenuous.

4.4.3. Contractual negotiation as the production of consent. According to all participants, the contract is produced through the process of communication and negotiation - practices which generate agreement and consent between partners. According to these participants, it is not enough to have a shared understanding of the rules that govern the relationships, one also needs to ensure that partners "*agree*" to follow them: "*You need to agree on it though, that's the thing otherwise there's no point in having the rule, right?*" (Participant 2). The negotiation process opens-up the possibility of ensuring that partners agree to the terms of the contract and is a way of producing and guaranteeing consent.

The polyamorist is thus incited to communicate; to confess every nuance of their desire; to detail the truth of their wants, expectations and needs: *"Decide what you want, talk about it, set reasonable rules and accept them"* (Participant 3). The Cognitive-

Behavioural theoretical orientation of Participant 3 may inform the construction of consent and the contract which are constituted as the 'rational' communication and negotiation of polyamorous thoughts and behaviours. The more the polyamorous subject is able to "*talk about it*", the more they are able to be understood and to negotiate agreement and consent. According to most participants, the contractual obligations of the polyamorous subject need to be made explicit because the risk of damage is so high. Polyamorous subjectivity must therefore confess its secret workings until it becomes knowable and defined:

> *I think you agree on things, things develop, things change…how do they define that, how they are working, motivating it, what works for them, what doesn't work for them…what can one do to make this functional, make it work, that they really care about it?* (Participant 3).

Functional polyamory is functional because it has been carefully communicated and negotiated; its dangers have been contained within the regulating dictates of the contract.

In this construction of sexuality, there is a depth and interiority to human sexuality and desire, particularly non-normative desires like polyamory (Foucault, 1978). It has a motivation and reason for being which is not readily apparent to the observer. It is therefore necessary to interrogate and unpack this motivation, to better understand it. This construction of poly sexuality is echoed in previous research which describes the necessity for deep introspection to more effectively surface implicit and explicit needs, expectations, emotions, thoughts, assumptions and reservations (Haritaworn et al., 2009). Multiple sources also speak about the importance of developing emotional maturity and a vocabulary which allows polyamorists to give voice to intra-psychic material that may be unprocessed, difficult to articulate, or impossible to word if one has only been exposed to the language of monogamous relationships (Barker, 2005). Ongoing talk, introspection and communication skills are presented in the literature on polyamory as essential for the construction of transparent, trustworthy and workable relationship contracts (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016).

The incitement "*to talk about it*" and to uncover what polyamorous subjectivity "*really cares*" about is the condition for the 'truth' of healthy polyamory (Foucault, 1978). This implies that the intelligibility of polyamory rests on the individual's ability to be honest about what they really want (Wosick-Correa, 2010).

By ensuring understanding, polyamory is brought into view on the negotiating table where its potential for damage can be regulated and contained (Rose, 1979). To be legitimate and credible, polyamorists must engage in fervent communication, negotiation and contracting so consent is produced and assured. The polyamorist is invited to speak about the minutiae of their desires and the specifics of their agreements with their partners (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). Damage to the individual and damage to the relationship is reduced if and only if the individual and couple perform consent. Those who fail to engage in contractual negotiation are marked as unethical because they have not determined whether their polyamory is consensual.

The deployment of the contract also serves a double purpose - to re-locate polyamory within the order of acceptable and unacceptable desires (Foucault, 1978). The presence of a contract differentiates polyamory from cheating. As Participant 3 says, polyamory *"is not having affairs where contracts are broken. These are agreed ways of living*". The emphasis on contractual agreement is echoed by Participant 4, *"both partners understand and both partners agree to this… so it is different as from cheating"*. Within the purview of the contract, partners are able to define the terms of the relationship, such as what partners understand by terms like commitment, love and family:

> *I think what it differentiates from, sort of more casual relationships, is that there is some form of commitment that has been negotiated between the parties. Whether it is implicitly or explicitly, negotiate…okay we agree to, whether it is just for financial reasons to be a family. Or you know love, or whatever the word is that comes into it* (Participant 5).

This statement reiterates the assumption that commitment, love and family are synonymous with monogamy, and that the expression of these things in polyamory is essentially different. So much so that polyamorous expressions of commitment, love and family must be negotiated into existence and may require an entirely different vocabulary. The polyamorous subject must come up with "*some sort*" of alternative, and name "*whatever the word is"*. Whilst polyamory is positioned as more acceptable than cheating and more meaningful than casual relationships, it is simultaneously constructed by the majority of participants as a facsimile of monogamy. It only approaches authentic commitment, love and family, but ultimately falls short because it is not an exclusive arrangement between two partners.

The injunction on polyamory to produce a contract obscures the discursive contract (set of assumptions) which produces monogamous relationships. The socially constructed assumptions of monogamy escape identification and interrogation (Finn & Malson, 2008). As a result, the terms of monogamous relationships are naturalised as the *a priori* template for all human relationships (Wilbraham, 1997). Within mono-normativity, monogamous relationships are always already intelligible, consensual, healthy and acceptable. Monogamy becomes a taken for granted reality whilst non-normative desire must explain itself (Brunning, 2016). The idea that contracts are important when it comes to polyamory echoes previous research on polyamory which emphasise contracting as a mechanism of producing consent and damage control (Barker, 2005; Conley & Moors, 2014).

4.4.4. Fraudulent contracts. The negotiation of a relationship contract is presented by all participants as a promising intervention at a psychologist's disposal. However, some participants simultaneously constitute the contract as fraudulent. The quality of the contract rests on the capacity of the individual to be truthful when negotiating the rules governing their relationship. However, according to several participants, the willingness to be entirely honest may be compromised by *"unknown"* motivations and behaviour which are in some way inauthentic because the person is *"pretending"*, they *"hide"* and they are not *"open"*:

> *People have motivations that are unknown even to themselves about how they do things, and somebody finds themselves in a situation and it is easier to go on pretending or to hide or not to be as open because the other person they realise might get hurt now* (Participant 4).

According to some participants, desire that is unknown, hidden, false and closed cannot be articulated, communicated and negotiated.

This concealed desire cannot be made explicit or visible, and therefore cannot be brought into the negotiation process: "*I understand it's going to be incredibly messy if the rules that you've established in your relationship get violated or the assumed rules are not explicitly stated and then get violated"* (Participant 2). Honest communication is not guaranteed – *"sometimes those things are articulated, but sometimes they are not"* (Participant 5). This implies that the quality of the contract, and the consent it produces, becomes compromised and suspect. It cannot be trusted as a

sign of mutual understanding, meaning someone has the *"wrong impression"* about the terms of the relationship:

> *I can imagine that if there is a polyamorous group going on and one partner cannot be as open with the other and the other partner gets the wrong impression that there is more of a commitment going on than those sorts of feelings that can also arise* (Participant 4).

In this articulation of the contract, the presence of 'real' consent is brought into question.

This also calls into question how protected people truly are from being *"bamboozled"* or *"manoeuvred"* into polyamory. As Participant 4 wonders: "*I wonder to what extent, one of the partners might at any time feel a little bit bamboozled into it and would it be easy for them to speak up and express concerns".* She later wonders

> *if one of the partners felt manoeuvred into this and felt that they need to, they might enter it in a bit of denial about, I can do this, it is okay and later on there would be feelings and insecurity and jealousy coming up.*

Within this construction of polyamory, the deployment of the contract ultimately does not protect people from the damage polyamory represents, as hidden forces make the contract fraudulent.

Healthy and consensual polyamory is relegated to the margins of theoretical possibility where its practicality remains questionable: "*Theoretically I think it can work very well…In practice I wonder to what extent it does work"* (Participant 4). This construction of polyamory as damaging, despite attempts to control the damage, undermines any possibility for the expression of healthy polyamory. In a mono-normative discursive order of things, people can fantasise and theorise about polyamorous desire, but when they practice it, damage will inevitably ensue – "*theoretically, yes, in practice, no"* (Participant 4).

The polyamorous subject is compelled to speak, but this subject's capacity to communicate honestly is constructed as always already curtailed. The damaged individual and damaged dyad of polyamory can only ever speak in damaged ways. No matter how much they communicate, what they say may not be the 'whole' truth. According to several participants, a wish to practice an authentic polyamorous relationship is undercut by invisible

forces of human nature, whether they are intra-psychic (denial) or interpersonal (fear of losing a relationship):

> *Just because there is an explicit understanding and discussion it doesn't mean the difficulties aren't going to arrive. It is not going to be this glorious; we're all okay with each other whatever we do. You know human nature, it doesn't work like that* (Participant 4).

The agency of the polyamorous subject is presented as compromised – there is always some invisible force outside of their control and awareness that directs their desire.

The psychologist's attempts to manage damage are likewise constructed as undermined by forces outside of their control. The polyamorist who insists that they are honest is dismissed as lacking insight into their own denial. Their honesty is fraudulent, and the healthiness of their relationships suspect. The psychologist who takes this person's talk at face value is naïve and gullible. In the final analysis, the polyamorist is produced as a monogamist in disguise, unable to be honest *"because that might threaten, if there is a core committed relationship it might threaten that"* (Participant 4). According to Participant 4, in an unconscious attempt to protect dyadic love, partners may not communicate their concerns. The discourse of the fraudulent contract is a reminder that polyamory should remain in the realm of theory, as in practice or in reality, it is impossible to contain its damaging impact. This is a finding that expands on previous research which has suggested polyamory is perceived as 'unrealistic' (Conley et al., 2013; Se´guin , 2017). The present study provides insight into how polyamory is discursively constructed as unrealistic.

4.4.5. In theory yes, in practice, no. Within a discourse of damage control, the psychologist is presented as a guide solely focused on mitigating the harm caused to and by the damaged polyamorous individual and relationship (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). The most compelling intervention deployed by the psychologist is a contract which produces non-monogamy as consensual and contains its potential damage (Rose, 1979). However, due to invisible intra and interpersonal forces, the contract is simultaneously constructed as fraudulent. This implies that functional polyamory is a pretence which relegates healthy polyamory to the realm of the theoretical. This construction of polyamory is informed by broader discourses of sexuality, specifically a reproduction of the monogamous and married Malthusian Couple as the most functional and realistic container for human desire (Foucault, 1978).

Considering monogamous marriage vows are the 'ultimate' relational contract, it is used by experts as a standard to measure the potential harms of other kinds of relationship contracts, like the polyamorous relationship contract (Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2009). This is perhaps why the polyamorous relationship contract is constructed as lacking in credibility and as ultimately fraudulent – it is and never will be a set of monogamous marriage vows. This depiction of what is trustworthy and what is fraudulent reinforces a heteronormative and mononormative ontology, in which the monogamous heterosexual partnership (especially marriage) is put forward as the most legitimate, realistic and safest relationship agreement (Frank & DeLamater, 2010). The discourse of 'damage control' serves to obscure how monogamous partnerships have been used historically as the yardstick for functional, realistic relational health within psychology (Rose, 1979). This manoeuvre disguises the deeply political project of psychology (Burton, Kagan, & Duckett, 2012).

Perlin (2009) notes that "sexual behavior is inextricably intertwined with custom, tradition, and taboo" (p. 484). This embeddedness is hidden by the idea that psychologists are impartial guides. The mental health professions have been implicated in maintaining a culture of sex negativity by medicalising, pathologising and treating sexualities that fell outside of socially sanctioned norms (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). A major critique of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) is that it fails to "differentiate between mental illness and socially nonconforming behavior that, although seemingly deviant, is psychologically sound" (Kamens, 2011, p. 38). Psychology is implicated in reproducing and maintaining fields of knowledge/power that benefit some, whilst subjugating others. This is most especially achieved by defining non-normative desires as damaging, which justifies a range of interventions to control the damage (Foucault, 1978).

In response, polyamorists, sexual rights activists and scholars attempt to produce counter-knowledge which 'proves' polyamory can be practiced in a healthy and functional manner (Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2009). In response to the discourse of damage control, they deploy the authenticating mechanism of the contract to present polyamory as a consensual agreement between partners. As such, the negotiation of relationship contracts detailing acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is prevalent within the literature on ethical non-monogamy (Bergdall & Blumer, 2015). These attempts to depict polyamory as a safe, healthy option are simultaneously undermined by the discourse of the 'fraudulent contract'. When the contract is presented, the response is "*in theory yes, in practice no*".

4.5. Troubling Monogamy

Most participants conceptualised polyamory as a practice that reveals and challenges assumptions about monogamy. Perhaps the most troubling revelation that polyamory incites is the failure of monogamy to protect people from damage, particularly the hurt that arises from instances of infidelity. These moments of troubled revelation interrogate the privileged status and inevitability of monogamy. Desire is re-constituted as fluid and polymorphous, opening up the possibility for polyamorous relationships to be seen as something other than damaging – as liberation from the norm, creative self-determination, and as opportunities to expand or redefine the terms of relationships.

4.5.1. Broken promises. In positioning polyamory as damaging, a contrasting image of monogamy was repeatedly evoked by most participants. Within a heteronormative and mononormative ideology, monogamy is produced as a protected safe-haven which guarantees the health and safety of individuals, couples, families and society. Monogamy is conceptualised as the promise of a *"wonderful family"* (Participant 4) and by extension, a wonderful life. However, there were moments during the interviews in which most participants produced a less idealised image of monogamy. In this alternative vision, monogamy breaks its promise of idyllic contentment and its guarantee that the dyad will remain exclusive.

As Participant 4 comments *"once in a monogamous relationship doesn't mean it is going to work really well and that's why you get cheating"*. It is in these moments that polyamory works to reveal and question the assumptions that monogamy is a better option than polyamory (or any other kind of relationship):

> *So challenging that sort of notion of okay we have this wonderful family, we make this promise to you whether it is in a Christian faith or whatever faith. And yet there is an infidelity and then the impact it has and the wounds it creates* (Participant 5).

According to Participant 5, monogamy is constituted as a broken promise which fails to honour the trust placed in it. It does not make good on its assurances that exclusivity will thwart damage - the wounding of infidelity, insecurity, jealousy, and betrayal. The monogamist is invited to speak about a loss of faith in a once held conviction. This is a space in which the order of things is revealed as constructed and in-flux: *"The*

perspective where I am now is that. I mean I don't actually know what commitment is. It changes and it shifts" (Participant 5).

The discourse of 'broken promises' maps a troubled picture of the world in which the inevitability of monogamy is challenged and questioned, even if it is difficult to do so:

> *I have been raised to believe and conditioned to believe that a couple has certain commitments to each other. So I find this quite difficult then to like think – well actually we can stretch those boundaries, and we can have a commitment that we have other relationships* (Participant 5).

Faith in the divinely ordained safety of monogamy is disturbed:

> *This idea that you had to have a heterosexual couple relationship. That you got married when you were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen and then stayed married. All of that has been challenged. So, where the relationships are breaking up, whether they are then looking at different ways to make this relationship work* (Participant 5).

This disturbance opens up a space to explore different ways to create relationships

4.5.2. Polymorphous possibility. At the boundary of the broken promise of mononormative heterosexuality, some participants articulate desire as polymorphous - and polyamory as a possible way *"to make this relationship work"* (Participant 5). Within a discourse of polymorphous possibility, polyamory is constituted as resistance to the constraining effects of dominant and normative constructions of relationships. It is a way to *"break the mould"* and discover new potential ways of relating:

> *These people can break the mould …I suppose – You know I think we have these social expectations of what relationships should or shouldn't be. And the last century has shown us that – they don't have to be heterosexual. They can be things other than heterosexual relationships. So already we kind of took the social definition and we said no, no that is not quite right. There is more to it than that…Now we are starting to break away from that and go well we don't really need to follow the social idea, because just someone says so. Let us see if it works* (Participant 6).

There is the spirit of liberation in this construction of polyamory. This is a presentation of polyamory which rejects the dominant social definition of healthy relationships, and *"said no, no that is not quite right"*. Here, polyamory is constructed by some participants as an articulation of refusal; a denial of the 'truth' of mononormativity. In this moment the social subject can argue against the assumption that monogamy is ideal and insist that "*there is more to it than that".*

Within this construction of polyamory, the polyamorist is invited to speak as an agentic being with creative and transformative potential. The polyamorist is constituted as a self-determined being that actively and consciously chooses how they want to love: *"It's an acceptance that human beings are human beings and by the nature of being a human being you get to choose how you want to live for the most part"* (Participant 2). This is a different voice to that of the damaged polyamorous individual or relationship. Within the discourse of polymorphous possibility, the psychologist is also able to contest and resist mononormative regimes of desire. This resistance may arise at the intersection of participant professional subjectivity and the discourse of polymorphous possibility. Participant 5 and Participant 6, for instance, are both Counselling Psychologists who ascribe to an Integrative theoretical orientation. This is an epistemological stance rooted in a phenomenological way of producing knowledge; one which priviledges the subjective experiences of individuals (Larson, Brooks, & Loewenthal, 2012). It rejects hegemonic assumptions about what is normal and abnormal, and is critical of diagnostic categories that pathologise human behaviour. Within this field of power/knowledge, the polyamorous subject is constructed as a 'unique individual' and celebrated as a manifestation of human diversity (Berry & Barker, 2014).

This enabled moments in which some participants re-defined the boundaries and terms of 'healthy' relationships. Participant 6, for instance, re-defined what commitment in relationships could mean. Her previous definition of commitment as exclusivity and simplicity is transformed into commitment as some form of complex, messy togetherness:

> *The thing for me is that we are together in a positive way. But it is not always positive, but there is a bond. So ideally commitment means that there is some*

> *kind of a bond. Yes. Even if it is complicated, messy and you are staying together because of other reasons* (Participant 5).

Through the discursive gestures of liberation, resistance, and redefinition, polyamory is presented as possible.

Barker (2005) argues that these moments of redefining the ways in which people speak about intimacy is part of a broader transformation of desire and relationships in post-modern society. It is "an extension of the general move towards love relationships being based on equality in terms of choice, desire, trust, and compatibility rather than on tradition or arrangement" (Barker, 2005, p. 78). As such, polyamory is constituted by some participants as a Humanistic celebration of difference and diversity, as well as the carnivalesque transgression of sexual convention that is *"complicated and messy"* (Participant 5). Where the discourse of celebration and the carnivalesque intersect, the polyamorous subject is represented as a site of *"complicated and messy"* (Participant 5) and *"risky"* (Participant 4) individual choice, desire, pleasure and expression. Polyamory is produced as a bodily site at which some form of 'authentic' relating emerges from the suspension of mono-, hetero- and cisnormative safety and order (Lachmann, Eshelman, & Davis, 1988). Here polyamory is constructed as that which works to reveal and *"break the mould"* (Participant 6) of sexual normativity.

4.5.3. More to it than that. When monogamy is troubled, the polyamorist is constructed with a celebratory voice (Klesse, 2017). The polyamorous subject is able to claim credibility. This legitimacy is structured in terms of the polyamorist's capacity for individual creativity and resistance of the social definition of health and desire (Barker, 2005). This more celebratory construction of polyamory is echoed in previous research which notes that "polyamory opens up a new vista of understanding for how individuals and couples explore the balance between own independence and connectedness with others" (McCoy et al., 2015, p. 137). As illustrated by some participants, the psychologist is likewise enabled to join the polyamorist in questioning and interrogating what is considered normal (Berry & Barker, 2014). In doing so, the psychologist is able to construct the non-normative client in ways which are non-pathologising (Henrich & Trawinski, 2016). The discourse of polymorphous possibility presents a fluid image of desire and health, and one in which multiple

forms of healthy relationships are imaginable (Brunning, 2016). Those who object to this production of polyamory are criticised for lacking imagination.

Previous research has also found that despite an overall denigration of polyamory, there are moments in which polyamory is construed in more positive terms. Se´guin ’s (2017) study for instance found that lay peceptions of polyamory were largely negative, however more positive themes of polyamory as valid, beneficial and acceptable were also evident. The present study also echoes previous work that has pointed to the ways in which polyamory troubles monogamy, and the implications of this discursive position (Barker, 2005). Polyamory can be understood as a kind of ‘border sexuality’constituting and producing a hybridised social subject that dwells at the limits of normativity (Klesse, 2017).

At the jucture and boundary of subjectivity, polyamory has productive power to trouble, expand, question and transform how we understand relationships (Finn & Malson, 2008). However, this counter knowledge also constructs a polyamorous subject that is subject to the regulating power of surveillance within a new regime of truth and knowledge; within a polynormative rather than a mononormative gaze (Haritaworn et al., 2009). Although the discourse of polymorphous possibility constructs polyamory in fluid and creative terms, it is nevertheless still a discourse of desire, love and pleasure. A such, it produces a specific version of polyamory, which simultaneously excludes other possible articulations (Barker & Langridge, 2010). Within the discourse of polymorphous possibility, possibility itself is always already circumscribed.

The enabling and constraining power of polymorphous possibility is elaborated on in queer texts which celebrate diversity and difference when it comes to matters of desire (Barker & Langridge, 2010). It is a discourse which contests the pervasive assumptions of hetero- and mononormativity, whilst simultaneously reinstating different kinds of normative assumptions. It provides a critical moment to insist that in matters of discourse and desire, there is no underlying authentic and empirical truth to human relationships. There is always *“more to it than that”*: The ‘truth’ of desire is produced through multiple and competing social constructions within a field of power/knowledge that designates certain relationships and identities as intelligible and others as unimaginable.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In Foucauldian terms, power is the ability of a field of knowledge, such as Psychology, to articulate only certain people and relationships as legitimate (Foucault, 1978). As such, part of the project of critical inquiry is to question how and why knowledge is constructed in the way that it is (Parker, 2013). The purpose of critical research is to reveal what vision of the world is reproduced and maintained through the ways in which we speak about certain objects. It represents an opportunity to interrogate how the 'truth' of sexuality is produced and constructed, and for what purpose (Brunning, 2016). Thus, the present study interrogated how Gauteng-based psychologists construct polyamory, a form of non-dyadic desire. This was a moment to explore the multiple social constructions of polyamory and how psychologists, as social agents, construct objects of knowledge in discourse (Rose, 1979). Further, this study was an opportunity to reveal how these constructions are implicated in the maintenance and/or disruption of hegemonic and normative understandings of desire and health.

As a departure point for the intelligibility of polyamory, it is important to consider that most research participants constructed 'real', healthy and committed love as dyadic, exclusive intimacy between two partners. The majority of participants understood polyamory as a non-exclusive and largely sexual form of intimacy between multiple partners. Within a discourse of dyadic love, the possibility of imagining polyamory as a real and committed relationship is constrained and limited. The implication that polyamory is not a real relationship works to conceal the production of monogamy as the standard measure of healthy intimacy (Finn & Malson, 2008). The normalcy of monogamy is moved out of view where its assumptions cannot be questioned.

Instead, a discourse of damage is deployed and informs multiple constructions of polyamory as unhealthy for individuals, couples, families and society. It should be noted that the every-day talk of psychologists is located within a psychological complex of discursive practices that are heavily informed and influenced by medico-psychological ways of producing knowledge about the world (Rose, 1979). In entering the therapeutic room and seeking treatment, the polyamorous individual is immediately subject to the psychologising and medicalising gaze which orders the social world in terms of health and pathology (Parker, 2013). The ways in which participants construct polyamory as damaging demonstrates the productive power of psychology as a field of knowledge to articulate only certain people and relationships as healthy (Rose, 1979).

The discourse of damage constructs the polyamorous subject as a damaged individual. According to most participants, this is a subject that is characterised by a traumatic emptiness, compulsivity, an eruption of primitive instincts, and failure to master a developmental phase and grow up into a healthy adult. The damaged polyamorous individual is constructed as a subject that is unable to form an authentic and healthy relationship. Instead, most participants construct and articulate polyamorous relationships as damaged. The discourse of damage intersects with economic, psychological, medical, marital and familial discourses to construct different iterations of the damaged polyamorous relationship: A risky investment, vulnerable to infection, complicated and difficult, as undeclared divorce, oppressive to women, and as likely to result in broken homes.

These representations of polyamory produce and reproduce a world in which health is only guaranteed when an individual conforms to the prescriptions of heterosexual and cisgender monogamy (Barker & Langridge, 2010). Monogamous coupledom is reinstated as the pinnacle of healthy and real love (McCoy et al., 2015). The 'mononormative tilt' within psychology creates an already constrained discursive space in therapeutic environments for individuals and couples who identify as polyamorous (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). The possibility for the polyamorous client to speak of themselves and their relationships as authentic and healthy is foreclosed. Their identity and relationships are psychologised as evidence and symptoms of damage.

This depiction justifies the surveillance and regulation of polyamory in the interests of restoring the damaged polyamorous individual and relationship to health (Foucault, 1978). The policing of polyamory is enacted through an intervention which at first seems most likely to control the damage - a relationship contract which ensures that the risks of polyamory are contained (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). However, this contract is ultimately shown to be fraudulent which undermines efforts to control damage. Psychologists as such construct polyamory as possible in theory only, but in practice as a relationship structure which will inevitably lead to damage, despite efforts to intervene.

The discourse of damage control is amplified and elaborated on in one of the most hegemonic relationship contracts – marriage vows. The marital contract ensures that the couple's reproductive capacity and labour are self-regulated in the interests of broader society. When polyamory appears, the safety of the dyad and society in general is threatened.

Marriage vows, as the template for relational contracts, intersect with the deployment of other contracts which regulate the practice of psychologists (Rose, 1979). Specifically, the deployment of the Hippocratic Oath, a contract which demands that ethical health professionals concern themselves with doing no damage and ensuring that others do the same. This maxim appears in several texts which govern the field of psychology, and which reify psychology as a profession (such as the ethical codes of the Health Professions Council of South Africa). At the intersection of marriage vows and the Hippocratic Oath, there is a discursive injunction on South African psychologists, in terms of professional ethics, to protect the dyad and society from the threat that polyamory represents.

However, this study also points to the ways in which psychologists are able to resist hegemonic depictions of mononormative coupledom. Within participants' talk about polyamory, a contested depiction of polyamory emerged which contradicts the construction of polyamory as damaging. This alternative imagining represents polyamory as revelation, liberation, agency and self-determination. This opposing presentation of polyamory emerged in reflexive moments in which some participants questioned the assumptions of monogamy. In these moments, the dominant construction of monogamy as exclusive and healthy is troubled by conflicting images of monogamous lived realities of infidelity.

Here, monogamy's promise and guarantee of safety from hurt is broken. The realness of monogamy is called into question, which allows other kinds of intimacy to be conceptualised (Barker, 2005). In this moment, the assumptions of normative coupledom are revealed as constructed, changeable, and historically contextualised. Within a vista of polymorphous possibilities, polyamory is not only presented as imaginable, but also as meaningful, healthy and legitimate (Finn, Tunariu, & Lee, 2012). However, the liberated polyamorous subject is not free of surveillance. Rather, it is produced, regulated, and contained within a polynormative regime of truth; one in which the 'healthy' or 'real' way to be polyamorous is always already circumscribed (Barker & Langridge, 2010).

Polyamory is thus not necessarily a guaranteed opportunity for resisting hegemonic constructions of desire. Rather, the possibilities for how people experience themselves and others emerge at the boundaries between contested constructions of desire, love and intimacy; (Finn & Malson, 2008). At these boundaries, unassailable 'truths' about what can be considered a legitimate expression of intimacy are revealed as constructed for particular purposes. This is a reminder that psychology is a body of constructed knowledge which

maintains the status quo by producing certain forms of desire as healthy, and others as damaging. The task of critical research is therefore to continually ask why and how desire is produced in one way, and not another.

5.1. Recommendations. A potentially fruitful avenue of research is to explore the ways in which therapist positionality informs the construction of polyamory. This may reveal how the therapist's gender, race, culture, religion, theoretical orientation and professional scope of practice inform the ways in which they construct polyamorous clients and relationships. Further, future researchers may wish to interrogate how polyamorous clients (rather than psychologists) construct polyamory. Discourse analysis of interviews with polyamorous clients about their therapeutic experiences may reveal the ways in which polyamorists themselves make sense of their own subjectivity within a therapeutic context of hetero-, cis- and mononormativity. This may show up the ways in which polyamorous clients reproduce or resist dominant polynormative and mononormative constructions of healthy desire.

Regarding recommendations for policy and practice, the findings of this study signal the need for therapists to cultivate a critical awareness of the ways in which monogamy is reinstated as normative in the therapeutic context. It seems important that therapists critically engage with seemingly inalienable truths about what constitutes a healthy relationship. This is a call to psychologists to interrogate their personal, professional and theoretical assumptions about relationship configurations, so these assumptions can be brought into view for examination. This may help de-centre normative therapeutic frameworks which pathologise polyamory as damaging and centre polyamory as a clinical focus. Academic and professional training of Psychologists may represent an opportunity for emergent psychological professionals to critically engage with what is considered 'normal' intimate relationship and why. As such, it is recommended that a critical and more diverse approach to intimacy be included in curricula and in-service training. Finally, to disrupt normative therapeutic frameworks, psychology professionals may consider deploying more inclusive language in their practice of psychology, for instance by re-terming couple therapy as partnership therapy.

5.2. Limitations. The findings of this research are limited to a particular moment in South Africa's history, and the particular subjectivities of participants and researcher: Firstly, the majority of research participants were white. The whiteness of participants may have

informed and produced a particular racialisation of polyamory that was not offset by a more racially diverse group of participants. Secondly, the researcher co-produced the data that was analysed and discussed in the present study by conducting individual interviews with research participants. As such, the researcher's own subjectivity and positionality poses a limitation in that the researcher is both the co-creator and analyst of the data. Thirdly, the researcher's identity as a Counselling Psychologist (rooted in a Humanist and phenomenological way of knowing about the world) may have resulted in the researcher dismissing or minimising the significance of pathologising discourses which are more dominant within bio-medical clinical psychological approaches. Similarly, the positioning of the researcher as a 'student' psychologist and participants as 'qualified' worked to create an imbalance of power within the interview dynamic which may have constrained the terms in which the interview was conducted. Finally, the analysis and discussion of the interview transcripts was highly selective – the analysis focused on participant's identities as psychologists but did not attend to how other intersecting aspects of participant identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class) may have informed their constructions of polyamory.

References

Ariès, P. (1973). *Centuries of childhood.* New York: Jonathan Cape.

Barker, M. (2005). This is my partner and this is my...partner's partner: Constructing a polyamorous identity in a monogamous world. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 18*, 75-88. doi:10.1080/10720530590523107

Barker, M. (2011). Monogamies and non-monogamies: A response to ‘‘The challenge of monogamy: bringing it out of the closet and into the treatment room’’ by Marianne Brandon. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 26*(3), 281-287. doi:10.1080/14681994.2011.595401

Barker, M., & Langridge, D. (2010). Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent research and theory. *Sexualities, 13*(6), 748-772. doi:10.1177/1363460710384645

Bartlett, P., Mantovani, N., Cratsley, K., Dillon, C., & Eastman, N. (2010). ‘You may kiss the bride, but you may not open your mouth when you do so’: Policies concerning sex, marriage and relationships in English forensic psychiatric facilities. *Liverpool Law Review, 31*, 155-176. doi:10.1007/s10991-010-9078-5

Bergdall, M., & Blumer, M. (2015). Book review: More than two: A practical guide to ethical polyamory, by Franklin Veaux. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 27*, 40–45. doi:10.1080/08952833.2015.1005963

Berry, M., & Barker, M. (2014). Extraordinary interventions for extraordinary clients: Existential sex therapy and open non-monogamy. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 29*(1), 21–30. doi:10.1080/14681994.2013.866642

Bhana, D. (2006). The (im)possibility of child sexual rights in South African children's accounts of HIV/AIDS. *IDS Bulletin, 37*(5), 64-68.

Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1983). *American couples: Money, work, sex.* New York, NY: William Morrow and Company.

Bowlby, J. (2008). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development.* U.S.A.: Basic Books.

Brandon, M. (2011). The challenge of monogamy: Bringing it out of the closet and into the treatment room. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 26*(3), 271-277. doi:10.1080/14681994.2011.574114

Brunning, L. (2016). The distinctiveness of polyamory. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 1-19. doi:10.1111/japp.12240

Burton, M., Kagan, C., & Duckett, P. (2012). Making the psychological political – challenges for community psychology. *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice, 3*(4), 1-11. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/1193450/Making_the_psychological_political_challenges_for_community_psychology

Campbell, A. (2005). *How have policy approaches to polygamy responded to women's experiences and rights? An international, comparative analysis.* Canada: Final Report for Status of Women Canada. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=1360230

Carrington, K. (1991). Policing families and controlling the young. *Journal of Australian Studies, 15*(31), 108-117.

Chapman, M. (2010). *What does polyamory look like?: Polydiverse patterns of loving and living in modern polyamorous relationships.* New Mexico: iUniverse.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). Qualitative research guidelines project. Retrieved from http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html

Conley, T., & Moors, A. (2014). More oxygen please!: How polyamorous relationship strategies might oxygenate marriage. *Psychological Inquiry, 25*, 56–63. doi:10.1080/1047840X.2014.876908

Conley, T., Moors, A., Matsick, J., & Ziegler, A. (2013). The fewer the merrier?: Assessing stigma surrounding consensually non-monogamous romantic relationships. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy, 13*(1), 1-30. doi:10.1111/j.1530-2415.2012.01286.x

Davies, B. (2000). *A Body of Writing, 1990-1999.* California: Rowman & Littlefield.

De Block, A., & Adriaens, P. (2013). Pathologizing sexual deviance: A history. *Journal of Sex Research, 50*(3-4), 276–298. doi:10.1080/00224499.2012.738259

DeMause, L. (1995). *The history of childhood.* New Jersey: Jason Aronson.

Dobal, M., & Torkelson, D. (2004). Making decisions about sexual rights in psychiatric facilities. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing, XVIII*(2), 68-74. doi:10.1053/j.apnu.2004.01.005

Donzelot, J. (1997). *The Policing of Families.* Maryland: John Hopkins University Press.

Feder, E. (2014). Power/knowledge. In D. Taylor (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Key concepts* (pp. 55-70). New York: Routledge.

Finn, M., & Malson, H. (2008). Speaking of home truth: (Re)productions of dyadic-containment in non-monogamous relationships. *British Journal of Social Psychology , 47*, 519–533. doi:10.1348/014466607X248921

Finn, M., Tunariu, A., & Lee, K. (2012). A critical analysis of affirmative therapeutic engagements with consensual non-monogamy. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 27*(3), 205–216. doi:10.1080/14681994.2012.702893

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction.* USA: Random House.

Foucault, M. (1985). *The Use of Pleasure.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Fox, D. (2008). Confronting psychology's power. *Journal of Community Psychology, 36*(2), 232–237. doi:10.1002/jcop.20233

Frank, K., & DeLamater, J. (2010). Deconstructing monogamy: Boundaries, identities, and fluidities across relationships. In M. Barker, & D. Langdridge (Eds.), *Understanding Non-Monogamies* (pp. 9-22). New York, NY: Routledge.

Giami, A. (2015). Between DSM and ICD: Paraphilias and the transformation of sexual norms. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 44*(5), 1127-1138. doi:10.1007/s10508-015-0549-6

Girard, A., & Brownlee, A. (2015). Assessment guidelines and clinical implications for therapists working with couples in sexually open marriages. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 30*(4), 1-13. doi:10.1080/14681994.2015.1028352

Graham, N. (2014). Polyamory: A call for increased mental health professional awareness. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 43*, 1031–1034. doi:10.1007/s10508-014-0321-3

Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (2000). Analysing interpretive practice. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 487-508). California, United States: SAGE Publications.

Haritaworn, J., Lin, C., & Klesse, C. (2009). Poly/logue : A critical introduction to polyamory. *Sexualities, 9*(5), 515-529. doi:10.1177/1363460706069963

Haupert, G. M. (2016). Prevalence of experiences with consensual non-monogamous relationships: Findings from two nationally representative samples of single Americans. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 20*, 1-17. doi:10.1080/0092623X.2016.1178675

Henrich, R., & Trawinski, C. (2016). Social and therapeutic challenges facing polyamorous clients. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 31*(3), 1-15. doi:10.1080/14681994.2016.1174331

Hodges, A. (2018). Intertextuality in discourse. In D. Tannen, H. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2 ed., pp. 42-61). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Hoover, S. (2015). Qualitative researcher reflexivity: A follow-up study with female sexual assault survivors. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(9), 1476-1489. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss9/10

HPCSA. (2008). *General ethical guidelines for the health care professions.* Pretoria: HPCSA.

Jackson, S., & Scott, S. (2015). A sociological history of researching childhood and sexuality: Continuities and discontinuities. In E. Renold, & R. Egan (Eds.), *Children, Sexuality and Sexualization* (pp. 39-55). Palgrave Macmillan.

Jewkes, Y. (2004). *Media and crime.* United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.

Joyner, K., & Mash, R. (2012). Recogonising intimate partner violence in primary care: Western Cape. South Africa. *PLOS ONE, 7*(1), e29540. doi:10.1371/ journal.pone.0029540

Kamens, S. (2011). On the proposed sexual and gender identity diagnoses for DSM-5: History and controversies. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 39*(1), 37-59. doi:10.1080/08873267.2011.539935

Keygnaert, I. (2016). In search of the third eye, when the two others are shamefacedly shut? Comment on "Are sexual and reproductive health policies designed for all? Vulnerable groups in policy documents of four european countries and their involvement in policy development". *International Journal of Health Policy and Management, 5*(5), 325–327. doi:10.15171/ijhpm.2016.16

Kincheloe, J., & McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2 ed., pp. 279-313). London: SAGE Publications.

Klesse, C. (2017). Theorizing multi-partner relationships and sexualities - Recent work on non-monogamy and polyamory. *Sexualities, 0*(0), 1-16. doi:10.1177/1363460717701691

Knapp, J. J. (1975). Some non-monogamous marriage styles and related attitudes and practices of marriage counselors. *Family Coordinator*, *24*(4), 505–514.

Kolmes, K., & Witherspoon, R. (2012). Sexual orientation microaggressions in everyday life: Expanding our conversations about sexual diversity: Part I and II. *Independent Practitioner*, 96-101. Retrieved from www.drkkolmes.com/docs/kolmes.witherspoon.microaggressions.pdf

Lachmann, R., Eshelman, R., & Davis, M. (1988). Bahktin and carnival: Culture as counter-culture. *Cultural Critique, 11*, 115-152. doi:10.2307/1354246

Larson, P., Brooks, O., & Loewenthal, D. (2012). Counselling psychology and diagnostic categories: A critical literature review. *Counselling Psychology Review, 27*(3), 55-67.

Leech, B. (2002). Asking questions: Techniques for semi-structured interviews. *Political Science and Politics, 35*(4), 665-668. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/1554805

Luibhéid, E. (2002). Birthing a nation: Race, ethnicity and childbearing. In *Entry denied: Controlling sexuality at the border* (pp. 55-76). Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in Feminist research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2 ed., pp. 835-850). London: SAGE Publicationa.

Manley, M., Diamond, L., & van Anders, S. (2015). Polyamory, monoamory, and sexual fluidity: A longitudinal study of identity and sexual trajectories. *Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity, 2*(2), 168-180. doi:10.1037/sgd0000098

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11*(3), Art. 8. Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs100387

May, T. (2006). Genealogical histories of who we are. In *The philosophy of Foucault* (pp. 61-95). New York: Routledge.

McCoy, M., Stinson, M., Ross, D., & Hjelmstad, L. (2015). Who's in our clients' bed? A case illustration of sex therapy with a polyamorous couple. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 41*(2), 134-144. doi:10.1080/0092623X.2013.864366

McLean, K. (2004). Negotiating (non) monogamy: Bisexuality and intimate relationships. *Journal of Bisexuality, 4*(1-2), 83-97. doi:10.1300/J159v04n01_07

Mertens, D. (2015). An Introduction to research. In D. Merten (Ed.), *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative mixed methods* (pp. 1-46). United States: SAGE Publications.

Meyerson, D. (2011). Who's in and who's out? Inclusion and exclusion in the family law jurisprudence of the constitutional court of South Africa. In S. Woolman, T. Roux, & D. Brand (Eds.), *Constitutional Court Review 2010 - 2013* (pp. 295-316).

Mitchell, M., Bartholomew, K., & Cobb, R. (2014). Need fulfillment in polyamorous relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 51*(3), 329–339. doi:10.1080/00224499.2012.742998

Moors, A., & Schechinger, H. (2014). Understanding sexuality: Implications of Rubin for relationship. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 29*(4), 476-482. doi:10.1080/14681994.2014.941347

Moors, A., Conley, T., Edelstein, R., & Chopik, W. (2015). Attached to monogamy? Avoidance predicts willingness to engage (but not actual engagement) in consensual non-monogamy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 32*(2), 222–240. doi:10.1177/0265407514529065

Morrison, T., Beaulieu, D., Brockman, M., & Beaglaoich, C. (2011). A comparison of polyamorous and monoamorous persons: Are there differences in indices of relationship well-being and sociosexuality? *Psychology & Sexuality, 4*(1), 75-91. doi:10.1080/19419899.2011.631571

Naidoo, A. (2000). Community Psychology: Constructing community, reconstructing psychology in South Africa. *Inaugural Lecture*. University of Stellenbosch.

Nash, J. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review, 89*(1), 1-15. doi:10.1057/fr.2008.4

Nel, J. (2014). South African psychology can and should provide leadership in advancing understanding of sexual and gender diversity on the African continent. *South African Journal of Psychology, 44*(2), 145-148. doi:10.1177/0081246314530834

Ngoasheng, A., & Gachago, D. (2017). Dreaming up a new grid: Two lecturers' reflections on challenging traditional notions of identity and privilege in a South African classroom. *Education as Change, 21*(2), 187–207. doi:10.17159/1947-9417/2017/2479

Page, E. H. (2004). Mental health services experiences of bisexual women and bisexual men: An empirical study. *Journal of Bisexuality, 3*(1-2), 137–160. doi:10.1300/J159v04n01_11

Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual Psychology*. London: Routledge.

Parker, I. (2013). Discourse analysis: Dimensions of critique in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 10*(3), 223-239. doi:10.1080/14780887.2012.741509

Perlin, M. (2009). "Everybody is making love/or else expecting rain": Considering the sexual autonomy rights of persons institutionalized because of mental disability in forensic hospitals and in Asia. *Washington Law Review, 83*(481), 481-512. Retrieved from https://ssrn.com/abstract=1337164

Pieper, M., & Bauer, R. (2006). 'Polyamory and mono-normativity – Results of an empirical study of non-monogamous patterns of intimacy'. *(unpublished article).*

Polders, L., Nel, J., Kruger, P., & Wells, H. (2008). Factors affecting vulnerability to depression among gay men and lesbian women in Gauteng, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology,, 38*(4), 673-687. doi:10.1177/008124630803800407

Prinsloo, J. (2003). Childish images. The gendered depiction of childhood in popular South African magazines. *Agenda, 17*(56), 26-36. doi:10.1080/10130950.2003.9676018

Rappaport, J. (2005). Community Psychology Is (thank God) more than science. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*(3/4), 231-238. doi:10.1007/s10464-005-3402-6

Ritchie, A., & Barker, M. (2006). '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. *Sexualities, 9*(5), 584–601. doi:10.1177/1363460706069987

Ritchie, A., & Barker, M. (2007). Hot bi babes and Feminist families: Polyamorous women speak out. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review, 8*(2), 141–151. Retrieved from http://oro.open.ac.uk/id/eprint/17251

Robinson, B. (2017). Doing sexual responsibility: HIV, risk discourses, trust, and gay men interacting online. *Sociological Perspectives*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317045984_Doing_Sexual_Responsibility_HIV_Risk_Discourses_Trust_and_Gay_Men_Interacting_Online

Rose, N. (1979). The Psychological complex. London, UK: LSE Researcher Online. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2012.741509

Rubin, R. (2001). Alternative family lifestyles revisited, or whatever happened to swingers, group marriages and communes? *Journal of Family Issues, 7*(6), 711-726. doi:10.1177/019251301022006003

Se´guin, L. (2017). The good, the bad and the ugly: Lay attitudes and perceptions of polyamory. *Sexualities, 0*(0), 1-22. doi:10.1177/1363460717713382

Se´guin, L., Blais, M., Goyer, M., Adam, B., Lavoie, F., Rodrigue, C., & Magontier, C. (2016). Examining relationship quality across three types of relationship agreements. *Sexualities, 0*(0), 1-19. doi:10.1177/1363460716649337

Sheff, E. (2005). Polyamorous women, sexual subjectivity and power. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 1-34. doi:10.1177/0891241604274263

Sheff, E. (2006). Poly-hegemonic masculinities. *Sexualities, 9*(5), 621-642. doi:10.1177/1363460706070004

Sheff, E. (2011). Polyamorous families, same-sex marriage and the slippery slope. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 40*(5), 487-520. doi:10.1177/0891241611413578

Sheff, E., & Hammers, C. (2011). The privilege of perversities: Race, class and education among polyamorists and kinksters. *Psychology & Sexuality, 2*(3), 198-223. doi:10.1080/19419899.2010.537674

Silverman, D. (2000). Analyzing talk and text. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2 ed., pp. 821-834). London: SAGE Publications.

Speizer, I. S., Pettifor, A., Cummings, S., MacPhail, C., Kleinschmidt, I., Helen, V., & Rees, H. V. (2009). Sexual violence and reproductive health outcomes among South African female youths: A contextual analysis. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(2), 425-431. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2008.136606

Stacey, J., & Meadow, T. (2009). New slants on the slippery slope: The politics of polygamy and gay family rights in South Africa and the United States. *Politics & Society, 37*(2), 167-202. doi:10.1177/0032329209333924

Tiwana, R., McDonald, S., & Völlm, B. (2016). Policies on sexual expression in forensic psychiatric settings in different European countries. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 10*(5), 1-11. doi:10.1186/s13033-016-0037-y

Van Wolputte, S. (2016). Sex in troubled times: moral panic, polyamory and freedom in north-west Namibia. *Anthropology Southern Africa, 39*(1), 31-45. doi:10.1080/23323256.2016.1147967

Victor, C. K., Nel, J., Lynch, I., & Mbatha, K. (2014). The Psychological Society of South Africa sexual and gender diversity position statement: contributing towards a just society. *South African Journal Of Psychology, 44*(3), 292-302. doi:10.1177/00812463

Warren, J. T., Harvey, S. M., & Agnew, C. R. (2012). One love: Explicit monogamy agreements among heterosexual young adult couples at increased risk of sexually transmitted infections. *Journal of Sex Research, 49*(2-3), 282-289. doi:10.1080/00224499.2010.541952

Weitzman, G. D. (2006). Therapy with clients who are bisexual and polyamorous. *Journal of Bisexuality, 6*, 137-164. doi:10.1177/1363460706069963

West, C. (1996). *Lesbian polyfidelity.* San Francisco, CA: Bootlegger.

Wilbraham, L. (1997). The psychologization of monogamy in advice columns: Surveillance, subjectivity and resistance. In A. Levett, A. Kottler, E. Burman, & I. Parker (Eds.), *Culture, Power & Difference: Discourse Analysis in South Africa* (pp. 65-82). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Wilde, J. (2014). Dimensional sexuality: Exploring new frameworks for bisexual desires. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 29*(3), 320-338. doi:10.1080/14681994.2014.919377

Williams, D., & Prior, E. (2015). Contemporary polyamory: A call for awareness and sensitivity in social work. *Social Work, 60*(3), 268-270. doi:10.1093/sw/swv012

Wilson, J. (2018). Political discourse. In D. Tannen, H. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2 ed., pp. 775-794). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Witherspoon, R. (2014). The everyday oppression of polyamorous people: Microaggressions, minority stress, and stigma. *2nd Annual International Conference on the Future of Monogamy and Non-Monogamy,,* (pp. 1-26). Berkley. Retrieved from https://ryanwitherspoon.com/research/

Wood, K., Lambert, H., & Jewkes, R. (2008). ‘Injuries are beyond love’’: Physical violence in youth South Africans' sexual relationships. *Medical Anthropology, 27*(1), 43-69. doi:10.1080/01459740701831427

Wosick-Correa, K. (2010). Agreements, rules and agentic fidelity in polyamorous relationships. *Psychology and Sexuality, 1*, 44-61. doi:10.1080/19419891003634471

Wubs, A. G., Aaro, L., Mathews, C., Onya, H., & Mbwambo, J. (2013). Associations between attitudes toward violence and intimate partner violence in South Africa and Tanzania. *Violence and Victims, 28*(2), 324-340. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.11-063

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Intersectionality and Feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 13*(3), 193-209. doi:10.1177/1350506806065752

Zeitzen, M. (2008). *Polygamy: A cross-cultural analysis.* New York: Berg.

Appendices

Appendix A: Invitation

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Invitation to participate in research

Hello!

"Gauteng-based psychologist's constructions of polyamorous clients"

I am conducting research about polyamory as part of a Masters study in Psychology. I would like to invite you to participate in an interview in which we will discuss how you understand polyamory. This research will fill a current gap in our academic knowledge about polyamory.

The interview would take around 45 – 60 minutes and is very informal. I can travel to your location to do the interview. Your identity will be kept confidential.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to research on polyamory in the South African context.

If you are willing to participate please email or call me (info@avrispilka.co.za / 072 544 2348) and we will arrange a time and location that suits you. The supervisor for this research is Dr Brett Bowman who you can contact via +27 (0)11 717-8335, or Brett.Bowman@wits.ac.za.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Avri Spilka

Appendix B: Participant Information Form

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Dear Potential Participant,

Thank you for considering to take part in this research. This document gives you information about the research.

- **What is the research about?**

This research explores how South African Psychologists understand polyamory. The researcher, Avri Spilka, is a student who is doing her Masters in Community-Based Counselling at Wits University in Johannesburg.

- **What will be expected of me if I agree to participate?**

You will be expected to make time for one individual interview any time between April and June 2017. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will be audio recorded. The researcher will travel to a location of your choosing, such as your work or home, to conduct the interview. This location needs to be quiet and private.

- **Will my participation be kept confidential?**

Yes. Your participation will be kept confidential, your name will not appear in research documentation or the final write up of the research. The voice recording of the interview as well as research documentation will be stored securely and password protected. Only the researcher will know your identity.

- **What are the benefits of participating in this research?**

The results of the research, which will be released to you, may help the researcher learn more about how psychologists feel about polyamory. Your participation may benefit others by helping to fill a current research gap on polyamory in the South African context. To learn more about polyamory, please log onto www.polyamory.co.za

- **Can I stop my participation at any time?**

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation until the thesis is submitted. If you would like to discontinue your participation, please let the researcher know.

- **Is any assistance available if I am negatively impacted by this research?**

The researcher will assist you with any referral you may need if you are negatively affected by taking part in this research. If you need support please contact Lifeline - a toll free help

line. The number for Lifeline Johannesburg is 011 728 1331. The number for Lifeline Pretoria is 012 804 1853.

- **What if I have questions/complaints?**

  Please contact Avri Spilka on 072 544 2348 or email her at info@avrispilka.co.za. Alternatively, please contact the Supervisor for this research, Dr Brett Bowman on +27 (0)11 717-8335, or via Brett.Bowman@wits.ac.za.

  If you feel you need more information following the interview, you may contact ZaPoly (via www.polyamory.co.za) who will address your questions.

Warm regards,

Avri Spilka

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

Appendix C: Consent Form For Interview

Informed Consent Form (Participation in interview)

I, _____ provide Avri Spilka consent to interview me as part of the study exploring how psychologists understand polyamory.

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

I understand and agree with the following:

- All information I provide will be kept confidential/private.
- I may be directly quoted in the final report, in which case a number will be used to protect my identity
- No identifiable information of mine will be used in the write up of the report
- My participation is voluntary and I may stop taking part in the study at any point
- I may refuse to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable
- There are no anticipated risks for this study
- The results of this study will be compiled in the form of a research report which serves as partial fulfilment of the researcher's Masters degree in Psychology.
- I may ask for a feedback sheet after the research is completed.

Consent to take part in the semi-structured interview conducted by Avri Spilka:

Signed:_____ Date:_____

PSYCHOLOGY
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050 • Tel: 011 717 4541 • Fax: 011 717 4559 • E-mail: psych.SHCD@wits.ac.za

Appendix D: Consent Form For Audio-Recording/Transcription

Informed Consent Form (audio-recording of interview)

I, _____ provide Avri Spilka consent to audio-record and transcribe my interview for the purposes of data analysis, as part of the study exploring how psychologists understand polyamory.

I understand and agree with the following:

- The interview will be audio-recorded and the recording will be transcribed into a text document.
- The recordings will only be heard by the researcher who interviewed me. All identifiable information will be removed from the transcript.
- The recordings and electronic transcriptions will be stored under password protection.

Consent for interview to be audio-recorded:

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Site:	Date:
Number:	Specialisation/scope:
Number of years in practice:	Theoretical orientation:
Gender:	Religious affiliation:
Race:	Culture/ethnicity:
Start time:	End time:

Instructions:

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the research (*my name is Avri Spilka and I am exploring how psychologists understand polyamory)*
- Ensure respondent signs the informed consent sheets
- Check recording equipment is switched on when you start and ensure you have paper and pen to note any deviations from this schedule, as well as body language
- Ask the participant for demographic details – scope/specialisation, number of years in practice, etc.
- After the interview, thank the respondent and ask if they would like to be invited to the feedback session in July 2018, or to receive the video and text summary only.

Questions:

(Question 1): What do you understand by the term 'polyamory'?

Probes: *Have you ever heard of the term before? In what context did you hear about it?*

(Question 2): Have you ever had a client who was/is polyamorous?

Probes: *What was your impression of the client? How did you feel when they came to see you? What was the presenting issue? How did you know they were polyamorous? If you've never had a polyamorous client, have you had clients who were not monogamous? What did their relationship look like? How did you feel about it?*

(Question 3): How do you personally understand polyamorous individuals and their relationships?

Probes: *Why do you think someone would identify as polyamorous? Do you think it's possible to have a successful polyamorous relationship? How do you understand a successful relationship? Can you describe what you imagine a polyamorous relationship looking like?*

(Question 4): Professionally, how does your knowledge about psychology help you understand polyamory?

Probe: *In terms of your theoretical orientation, how do you make sense of a polyamorous person or relationship?*

Appendix F: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/17/009 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Gauteng-based Psychologists' constructions of polyamoros clients
INVESTIGATORS	Spilka Avri
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	06/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 06 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Dr Hugo Canham)

cc Supervisor: Prof. Brett Bowman
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10th floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES