

https://dspace.org/

A study of sexual relationships as a form of social institution in post-apartheid South Africa

Radebe, Nompumelelo Zodwa

2012-08-15
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11763

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

A Study of Sexual Relationships as a Form of Social Institution in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Nompumelelo Zodwa Radebe

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts in the department of Social Anthropology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Coursework)

Johannesburg, 2012

Abstract

This thesis examines sexual relationships as a form of social institution. Relationships are a growing phenomenon in South African context as there is low rate of marriage and high divorce rate. This trend of relationships poses a challenge on existing structures that are responsible for sustaining society, such as marriage and kinship. Understanding relationships becomes critical as they challenge the basic fabric of the society and also impact on gender inequalities and the transmission of HIV.

The ethnographic study that observed two couples for eight months, conducted in-depth interviews with 19 people, and two focus groups allows me to draw these conclusions:

1. Relationships are fluid, and they cannot be easily defined. Because of this fluidity they provide people with a space to break societal rules, such that they can make their own choices, therefore relationships provide some people with 'freedom'. However, not everyone interviewed preferred relationships.
2. Marriage is valued. Both males and females wanted to get married. However, men postponed marriage to later in life. Marriage provides women with an ability to control men with support from extended families and because of this, many women viewed marriage as providing security.
3. Safe Sex depends on the context of a relationship and the meaning attached to it. If sex is viewed as an act of expressing love not pleasure, the couple is more likely to practice unsafe sex. This research therefore concludes that all social groups in South Africa are at risk of contracting HI Virus.
4. Lastly, the role that a researcher plays in research is critical as it can affect the results and the interpretation thereof.

This research demonstrates that relationships provide people with the space to explore life and can be used as a survival tool. It further suggests that sex qualifies a relationship as it plays a critical role in the definition of relationships. I argue that societal values and the context people find themselves in influence the decisions people make in relationships. This research report contributes to gender, and HIV/AIDS literature as it examines the role of culture in heterosexual relationships.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Coursework) in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other University.

Signature:…….

Date:……

Acknowledgement

Ngibonga oBhungane, oMthimkhilu, Omashiya amahle angathi awenyamazane, Ondlubu zamila endaweni, Amangelengele anzipho ezinde ngokuqhwayana, for watching over me.

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor R. Thornton, who did not only supervise my academic work but also my social welfare. Because of his support I was able to get funds from AIDS Research Institute (ARI) that made my research work possible. But most importantly, I would like to thank him for giving me space to express my views without being intimidated. I am also grateful to NRF scholarship that helped in financing my tuition and accommodation fees.

To my mother uma Nxumalo, *isangoma asangenwa ngabaphezulu ezinye zingenwa abaphansi, uchakide ophephela ezulwini abanye bephephela emigodini,* thank you, for it is your strength, wisdom and guidance that sustained me. My siblings for your unequivocal support and encouragement thank you. My daughter, *ifutha lika Zodwa*, my miracle thank you for being such a blessing, and always know that *umama uyakuthanda.* My friends and colleagues who contributed (directly and indirectly) a great deal towards this work; your insight informed this research and is highly appreciated. Last but definitely not least my gratitude goes to my informants who allowed me to come to their lives and dedicated their time, shared their experiences, I hope this research gives you a voice

Contents

Abstract i
Declaration ii
Acknowledgements iii

Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1 Introduction 2
1.2 Research site 5
1.3 Literature review 5
1.4 Chapter outline 11

Chapter 2: Methodology
2.1 Introduction 14
2.2 Data Collection Techniques 14
2.3 Sampling 23
2.4 Capturing of Data 25
2.5 Rapport 26
2.6 Ethical Issues 26
2.7 Limitations and Challenges 28
2.8 Analysis and Research 29
2.9 Conclusion 30

Chapter 3: Understanding of Relationships
3.1 Introduction 31
3.2 Definition of Relationships 31
3.3 Are There Types of Relationships? 42
3.4 What Qualifies a Relationship? 45
3.5 Conclusion 50

Chapter 4: Critical Analysis of Relationships within South African Context
4.1 Introduction 51
4.2 Marriage is Valued 51
4.3 Relationships as a platform to explore and to find oneself 64
4.4 Manifestation of Power in Relationships 71
4.5 The contestation of power in relationships 77
4.6 Conclusion 82

Chapter 5: Impact if Relationships in the Spread of HIV and AIDS
5.1 Introduction 85
5.2 South Africa context 86
5.3 Sexual negotiation 88
5.4 Condom negotiation 96
5.5 The struggle against AIDS continues 108
5.6 Conclusion 110

Chapter 6: Struggles in Representation
6.1 Introduction 111
6.2 Self Reflection 112
6.3 My understanding of Relationships 113

6.4 Impact of Experiences on Data collection 121
6.5 Self Realization 123
6.6 Ambiguities in Research 126
6.7 Conclusion 127

Chapter 7: Conclusion 128

Bibliography 138
Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form 145
Appendix 2: Informants' profile 155

Dedication

I dedicate this piece of work to Mduduzi Aaron Mashiyane, the gift you gave me is priceless, and the memories will last forever. Love you always

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. 1 Background of the study

When Mercy started working, she decided to move in with her boyfriend of three years. The main reason behind this was that she wanted to save rent money. The situation was all the more ideal, as, not only could she save money, but she could also be with someone who meant the world to her. She bought furniture for the apartment and the two were even planning to get married. Sadly, the boyfriend passed away in a car accident a year after they moved in together. That was the beginning of Mercy's 'nightmare', as she put it. In the aftermath of her partner's death she learnt that he had had a 'steady girlfriend' who was known by his family, and was also in the car during the accident. When the family members arrived at her residence, they took everything in the house: all the things she had bought. She tried to explain to the family about her relationship with their relative and that the furniture was hers, but they retaliated by stating that any woman could claim to have had a relationship with him, and they, consequently, questioned how they would know that she was telling the truth.

In addition to the pain of losing her partner, Mercy had also recently discovered that she was pregnant - she had planned to tell her partner about the pregnancy on the day of his death. As the situation stood now, she was going to have to bring this child up alone, as she could not go to her boyfriend's family with this information. Due to the fact that they doubted her when she told them about the furniture, she thought that they would not believe her if she told them about the child. Mercy's story is not unique: it is simply one of many examples that depict the challenges that exist in

relationships. This study will attempt to show how various issues are dealt with in the context of relationships.

The aim of this research is to explore what the concept of 'relationship' means to people. This will be done in an attempt to understand the sexual and reproductive culture of relationships outside of marriage in contemporary South Africa. The main question that this study will seek to address is how the concept of marriage, kinship and 'relationships' relate to each other in social practice and cultural concept. Secondly, this study will ascertain how relationships can be understood as a form of social institution.

The widely-used term 'relationship' is not defined or structured in common speech, but is a basic element of social/sexual structures and networks, and is, thus, an 'institution'. Social anthropologists and sociologists have studied and focused on kinship and household structure, but this usually implies dealing with stable productive, legal and conjugal relationships that are spatially and temporally defined. However, studies show that stable marriages are deteriorating, as there is a low and falling rate of marriage in contrast to a high and rising divorce rate, as Van der Vliet reveals in her study conducted in 1984. Van der Vliet further argues that, "it is clear, that the institution of marriage and the nature of male-female relationships are in a state of ferment" (1984:15). It appears that this situation remains unchanged today, and rates of marriage are lower today than they were in 1984[1].This argument is supported by the statistics that show family breakdown as a major problem in South Africa (South African Institute of Race Relations: 2001). Today, the divorce rate is

[1] Study conducted by Thornton, Nkuna, Magoseng and Kgotleng in three different provinces namely: Northwest, Limpopo and Mpumalanga, shows the high rate of unmarried people. See table.

escalating especially amongst Africans. Statistic South Africa reveals that in 2000 the number of divorce cases was 7623 and in 2009 the number is 10528, and 34,2% of divorces came from African population. This indeed shows that marriages among Africans are becoming difficult to sustain.

The following table is a summary of marital status existing in the areas in which Thornton, Nkuna, Magoseng and Kgotleng (2001) conducted their survey. It shows very high rates of 'unmarried' people in these areas. The average percentage 'not married' is 61%, ranging from 52% to 69%. These results are based on data obtained from 1,110 respondents in three Provinces and across four language groups.

	Taung, Northwest Prov.		Mafikeng, Northwest Prov.		Dan, Khujwana, Petanenge, Limpopo Prov.		Emjindini-Barberton, Mpumalanga		Mafefe & Phahla Manoge, Limpopo Prov.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
not married	109	62.3	78	69.0	177	52.2	224	66.9	81	54.7
Married-traditional	32	18.3	6	5.3	113	33.3	68	20.3	67	45.3
Married - Magistrate	22	12.6	8	7.1	38	11.2	30	9.0		
Married-Church	12	6.9	21	18.6	11	3.2	13	3.9		
Total	175	100.0	113	100.0	339	100.0	335	100.0	148	100.0

Table 1. Marital Status for eight South African communities, 2001.

Kinship and stable household structures seem to be replaced by multiple conjugal relationships or serial monogamy. As Swartz (2002) argues, relationships are being accepted as a social institution due to the fact that marriage appears to have lost its role as the exclusive domain for socially legitimate childbearing in South Africa.

Thus, these relationships seem to constitute a network that provides social identity, as well as economic, social and emotional security. This change raises many concerns related to the spread of HIV/AIDS and the re-organisation of social structures (in addition to various other issues which will not be covered by this research, in an attempt to maintain its focus). The main question is how the network of relationships constitutes a structure of social life and what impact this may have on the issues of HIV transmission and AIDS. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the cultural meanings that the youth of South Africa attach to these unstable conjugal and reproductive relationships, as well as to investigate the social and economic consequences of this sort of social/sexual 'institution'.

Furthermore, there is also a need to understand the role and meaning of marriage for those who still choose to marry. Wilsworth argues that marriage is also used as a strategy for survival and "there is an emphasis on essential 'we' in a group rather than individual terms" (1980: 366). But also, marriage can be viewed as a natural phenomenon, Wagner supports this as according to him marriages are not "made"; they follow, of "flow" (1977: 624). Marriage therefore is the institution that people cannot live without while on the other hand cannot to live within it.

The above argument contradicts Van der Vliet's observation that being single for women was a strategy against poverty. However, Giddens (1992) sees the low rate of marriage as a result of the societal shift towards equality: for him sexual equality challenges the cultural norms and this has an impact on relationships and marriages. This study will, thus, attempt to ascertain whether Giddens' observation is true for

South Africa, as well as what other reasons there are for being single or getting married, and what role sexuality plays in these decisions.

Van der Vliet (1990:219) concluded that the reason why women choose to be single is that men are 'traditional' and women are 'modern'. However, Van der Vliet's argument overlooks the decisions that men make. She implies that it is only the women who make the decision to be single. There are no studies that have been done on men to get an understanding of their attitudes: if their attitudes towards marriage have changed, and if so, how they have changed. Men have always been the ones who have had access to the economy, more so than women, and South African marriages are automatically contracted in community of property unless a special arrangement[2] has been made. The implication of this in marriage has not been adequately researched. Hence, it is important to find out if relationships are indeed a growing phenomenon. If they are, the questions that need to be tackled include: why this has come about; what are the consequences that can be expected; whether or not these consequences are desirable and, if they are not, what can be done to alleviate them (Van der Vliet, 1984:16).

1.2 Research site

This research was not conducted in one particular area, although originally I proposed to conduct it in Braamfontein. Ideally, to achieve the aims of this research it would be necessary to observe all categories of society, as this research argues that the problems of relationships affect society at large. Hence, this research does not focus on any particular social category, as I assume that the problem it addresses goes

[2] http:// home-affairs.pwv.gov.za/civil marriage

beyond racial and economic categories. This research gathered informants from different places around Johannesburg, but there was no focus on one area. The informants who were available when needed and who were willing to participate in the study guided the research.

1.3 Literature review

The point of departure for this study is how people define relationships. *Lovelife,* in one of its adverts that was on the billboards in 2002, 2003 and 2004, asks the question: "Is this your relationship?" The first question that arises is this: how do we begin to talk about relationships if people do not have a similar understanding of the concept? It is, thus, important to have a clear understanding of what this term means to people, in order to address issues that are connected to relationships. Thus, understanding people's interpretations forms an integral part of this research.

Social sciences have studied marriage, as well as the 'normal' structures of kinship and household that result from this institution, a great deal, while very little research has been done on non-marital relationships. The structures that have been studied are restrictive as Johnson points out that kinship is based on excluding to create homogeneity (Johnson, 1989). However, a discipline such as psychology looks at relationships as a basis for psychological health, while Sociology and Social Anthropology look at marriage as the basis of the society. This research will, thus, integrate the literature from different disciplines. As Streeten (1981) suggests, interdisciplinary approaches are most useful in addressing problems.

In order to understand the whole concept of relationships we must understand the social categories that this concept forms. The categories that this study will examine are: monogamy; married men with multiple partners; married women with multiple partners; unmarried men with multiple partners; unmarried women with multiple partners and serial monogamy. Thus, the question is: What is meant by the term 'relationship' as opposed to what is meant by the term 'marriage'? In order to address this question, this research will attempt to determine the *ideal*, as well as the *practical*, reasons that cause individuals to enter marriage or relationships. As Quinn notes, culture cannot be treated independently of what individuals think about it (1982: 197).

George Simmel argues that, "Most relationships among men can be considered under the category exchange" (1930 ed 1971: 43). This implies that people engage in relationships, expecting some kind of exchange. Reohr, a psychologist, supports this as he states: "Society is a structure that has been built through reciprocity, the exchange of available personal and material resources" (1991:72). As Mauss (1954) suggests, reciprocity is an obligation that binds the two parties. If relationships are based on reciprocity, this suggests that people involved have no control over them. Simmel (1997) argues that human beings are social creatures; thus what people do is the product of the society in which they live. Strathern adds to this by arguing that, although social relationships may appear to respond to and deal with natural fact, those facts are also cultural facts and constructs, which are themselves socially or culturally motivated (1992: 28).

However, the above literature suggests that relationships maintain society because people depend on each other. Thus, according to Reohr, relationships exist because people need to survive: people give something to get something. However, Reohr admits that people do not reciprocate equally. He states that "at times of being more or less able to engage in reciprocal action. Reciprocity is a value and something that people must work towards as well as something to practice" (1991:78).

Duck (1973) adds to Reohr's argument that in relationships there are complexities, as people do not contribute to the relationship equally. Simmel argues that relationships are the product of culture, and will, therefore, reflect the complexities of culture. Thus, relationships consist of inequalities that are the product of society; yet, at the same time, they reinforce these inequalities. As Hsu states, "it is in societies with husbands-wife and brother-brother dominated kinship systems that the problem of authority is most acute" (1971:24). However, according to Hsu, the individual who is a product of such a system tends to resent authority or regard it as an obstacle to be overcome by all means. This could be one reason why society has so many problems, as individuals try to rebel against authority. Hence, Hsu correctly argues that despite the fact that the nuclear family in which individuals grow up provides them with the structures and content for social interaction from their early years, it cannot serve as the basis for action in the wider human arena. This, clearly, shows that individuals are not passive products of society, but, rather, are actively involved in the creation of norms and values.

Quinn supports the above argument in her study conducted on American married couples. She reveals that the word 'commitment' is a concept, as the couples had

different connotations for the word itself. Some couples used ‘commitment’ to mean a ‘promise’, others used it to mean ‘dedication’, while others interpreted it as ‘attachments’. This shows that individuals both interpret and construct culture in the process of using it. But also the changes in the society contribute to the meaning people attach to cultural practices. For instance, when the position of both genders change in the society, their views on relationships change too.

All authors dealing with this subject insist that family shapes relationships. This assertion necessitates looking at the basis that forms a family: marriage. According to Nanda, marriage refers to the customs, rules and obligations that establish a special relationship between a sexual, cohabiting adult male and female; between them and any children they produce, as well as between the kin groups of said husband and wife. Both marriage and family have cultural patterns (1987:205).

For Nanda, the key words when defining marriage are: customs, rules and obligations. These words differentiate marriage from relationships. Thus, Nanda distinguishes marriage as a legal institution and relationships as non-legal but still ‘institutionalised’. However, it may be naïve to argue that relationships have no obligation, as Mauss points out. Keesing similarly argues that social relationships are the composite of social organisation. They are both patterns of behaviour and conceptual systems (1976:230). Thus, for Keesing, “one has to make sense of kinship to make sense of anything else” (1976:236). Nanda argues “in most societies marriage is important because it links the kin groups of married groups” (1987:212). Thus marriage leads to kinship, which is also a basis for society, as it governs behaviour of

those that belong to it. But what happens when a marriage is very weak and fragmented? How can we account for kinship then?

Hammond-Tooke defines kinship as something that "links people through both biological descent and marriage; the descent aspect involving relationships on both the father and the mother side of the family" (1993:101). Thus, kinship gives people identity and a sense of belonging. According to Nanda "kinship systems are cultural creations that define and organise relatives by blood and marriage" (1987: 255). Therefore, kinship reinforces marriage, as it is a basis of society. As Hammond-Tooke argues: "the basis of the kinship systems is the nuclear family and it is from family that all kinship systems derive their structure" (1993:103).

Haviland strongly supports Nanda's argument that marriage is cultural, implying that it is culturally constructed. However, Haviland further suggests that even though marriage has changed, it definitely still exists. He argues that, "over 50% of first marriages in the US end in divorce and most divorced people ultimately remarry" (1996:225). This has other implications, as it reveals that people do not stick to one sexual partner. Haviland stresses the idea that "a form of marriage that is becoming increasingly common in North American society today is serial monogamy in which the man or the woman marries a series of partners in succession" (1996:232). If this is, in fact, the case, it raises some serious concerns, as there are major steps that need to be taken in addressing the issue of AIDS. Haviland also suggests that economic factors contribute towards the idea that people divorce and remarry. This research will also aim to determine the impact of socio-economic factors on relationships. Haviland argues that, "one solution for unmarried women is to marry (often remarry) in order to

get the assistance of another adult" (1996:231). For Haviland "in western societies economic considerations are of major concern in arranged marriages love follows rather than precedes marriage, marriage serves to bind two families as allies"(1996:237). According to Haviland, economic considerations therefore play a very significant and important role in marriages. This research will, thus, critically look at the impact these western ideas have in the African context, as Haviland further argues that this is a western way of marriage.

However, according to Hammond-Tooke, there are other reasons for taking the route of marriage. He argues that "marriage's primary biological function is to produce children, new members of society, and to ensure that the human needs of sexual intimacy and psychological and physical comfort are met" (1993: 117). Contrary to Hammond-Tooke's view of marriage, these needs have been largely met outside marriage today. Thus, marriage no longer seems to provide anything unique or essential and this could be the reason of the falling rate of marriage. Hammond-Tooke argues "the procreation of children was so important for survival of the group and the involvement of both families in the marriage so great that the emphasis was on the existence of the alliance, rather than on the happiness of the couple" (1993:128). This explanation may help to explain the situation of the present society, where people seek happiness, not 'alliance', in marriages, and this is a historical change.

The above literature suggests that relationships are like kinship, meaning relationships have particular structures. As Strathern argues, "unless a relationship is grounded in some intrinsic or natural connection, then Euro-Americans are likely to think of it as artificial, and to be thought artificial is to be open to uncertainty" (1992: 30). This

suggests that relationships are a form of social institution. This research will attempt to interrogate these structures if they do, in fact, exist, and will also attempt to find the difference between kinship, marriage and relationships in an attempt to understand relationships as a form of social institution.

1.4 Chapter outline

The following chapter deals with my methodology. It discusses the methods I used in collecting data, as well as the pros and cons of the selected methods. In addition, I relate the changes I experienced as a researcher, and then discuss how these might have impacted on the research. This chapter highlights the importance of data collection techniques in an attempt to show the impact of methodology in research. Furthermore, I argue that a researcher is an important tool in the research process and it is, therefore, critical for a researcher to be thoroughly prepared for the field.

Chapter three outlines the 'folk' model of what constitutes 'relationships' and their meaning for the informants. It interrogates the concept of 'relationship' as it is understood by informants. In this chapter, I highlight the importance of context as it shapes people's perceptions and attitudes in relationships. This chapter defines relationships by looking at aspects that qualify relationships, as people have different understandings of the concept of relationships.

Chapter four shows that relationships are a form of social institution. This chapter depicts the role of relationships in society, as well as how they should be viewed. What emerges in this chapter is that, amongst other things, relationships provide freedom of choice, which is critical in contemporary society. Relationships have

become a trend and they occur within and outside marriage and are, thus, part and parcel of most people's lives. However, marriage proved to be still a valuable aspect of life.

HIV and AIDS are rated amongst the most serious problems facing South Africa. Chapter five focuses on the role of relationships in the spread of the epidemic. This chapter reveals that relationships cannot be viewed in isolation when one addresses the issue of HIV and AIDS. Context becomes critical when looking at behavioural change. Thus, the impact of relationships in the spread of HIV and AIDS could not be dealt with in great depth. What emerges in this chapter is that people have particular rationalities in understanding HIV and AIDS and its distribution. The meaning people attach to sex determines whether the sexual practices will be the safe one or not.

Chapter six addresses the challenges that I came across in the field. It then looks at the impact that these challenges might have had during my data collection. This chapter goes on to examine the role that a researcher plays in interpreting data. It highlights the importance of self-reflection in the process of research to eliminate subjectivity. One of the main conclusions that this research makes is that relationships are a product of socio-economic and political problems and thus entwined in these social conditions.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This study was a journey with various phases. The first phase of this study was to find literature on the subject, and, subsequently, produce a proposal. The second phase was the actual research that was conducted for ten months in a period of 3 years, which exceeded the time limit originally planned for the research. The time extension was due to unforeseen circumstances. The field unfolded in such a way that it demanded me to spend more time grasping the issues that were introduced. I do believe that the extended period spent in the filed contributed extensively to this study.

2.2 Data collection techniques

Different techniques were employed during this study, in order to triangulate the findings. I discuss every technique used in order to show its strength and weakness, as well as to show validity of the findings.

Ethnography

Anthropology is 'philosophy with people'. Busken (2003) argues that in qualitative research the contextualisation of the process of knowledge construction is emphasised. The context of the informants becomes a critical point for this study, as the study aims to understand meanings that people attach to their everyday lives and how they make sense of them. Haviland supports this as he argues, "in employing a scientific approach, anthropologists seek to produce useful generalisation about humans and their behaviour and to arrive at a reasonably objective understanding of human diversity" (1996:8). Hence, fieldwork is an important tool for anthropology, as it can provide a space wherein we can understand everyday life. According to Hastrup

"the essence of fieldwork is to learn another world by way of experience: it is shared social experience in the field that is the foundation of anthropological knowledge" (1997: 356). For Hastrup, fieldwork provides a chance to share a communicative space that enables anthropologists, by way of imaginative investment, to comprehend at least part of other people's motives. This phenomenon in anthropology is called 'cultural relativism' - to understand phenomena in their natural context and from the point of view of the natives. This is in contrast to 'ethnocentrism', whereby one culture is seen as being superior to another. Two views can be discerned from an exploration of any one problem: the *etic* point of view which is an imposition of one culture's 'truth' on another and the *emic* view which is an understanding of a particular culture in its own terms. Anthropology is aware of this dichotomy, and seeks to emphasise the latter.

Historically anthropology was the study of the 'exotic other'. Anthropologists who do fieldwork at 'home' have, thus, been perceived as not being 'real' anthropologists. Rodriguez argues, "As a 'homegirl' I have been socialized into the historic realities, cultural values, and linguistic norms of black southern life" (1995: 235). This could be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage in that one has been exposed, in ones day-to-day life, to the realities of the subject of inquiry. One is schooled, without even being aware of it, in the subtleties of the community under study, as one is part of that community – hence, the 'homegirl' phenomenon. On the other hand, studying ones own community could be a disadvantage in that one might be tempted not to dig deep because 'one knows these things – they form part of common sense and knowledge'. But then, one is also a scholar who has been primed and trained to be aware of this. One's training is one factor that might provide a

distant lens through which to view phenomena from a different angle. Therefore, one becomes an outsider amongst ones own people. In this vein, doing research at home does not guarantee one rapport and access, which are essential elements in qualitative research. While anthropology is a craft that is dependent on building and gaining the subject's trust, it is also a science that cautions one to stay 'objective' in situations where the subjective might prevail. When a 'homegirl' studies her own people she assumes another identity – that of an outsider looking in. These dynamics, emanating from one studying ones own people, have been summarized as 'distance-near and distance-far' in anthropology. A native anthropologist, as does a foreign anthropologist, has to be open to new ways of seeing and perceiving, and do away with pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes. This process is facilitated by writing down ones thoughts in the morning (morning pages) which help to purge thoughts that might contaminate and confound data as it unfolds in the field. Field notes, in the Geertzerian tradition of thick description, allow one to unpack phenomena beyond their obvious appearance. In this research I sought to reconcile what people say they do and what they actually do, by triangulating different methods in qualitative research.

During my fieldwork, different techniques that were used in the study included participant observations, casual conversation, in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies, and skills that were developed during the research process. The main aim of this variety of techniques was to cover all the gaps that I could have overlooked. Thus, as issues were tackled from different angles, gaps were, subsequently, minimised in this study.

Participant observations

Participant observation "is the foundation of cultural anthropology and involves getting close to people, making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives" (Bernard, 1995:136). During participant observation you become part of the people, because you participate in all their activities. Barnard (1995) suggests that participant observation helps to attain the highest validity when formulating questions and conclusions. I believe that participant observation helped me in obtaining information, as I was actively participating with people in their activities; this situation made them less aware of my presence and allowed them to be themselves. I observed the roles that people assume in the relationship and most informants never spoke about those roles. I believe that being there most of the time helped me in accessing that information that I was not given. Silverman (1999) sees this as a positive way of attaining information.

For this study, participant observation was a key tool, as most of the information was gathered through this method. However, it had its limitations, such as time constraints. Thus, I could not observe some of the activities that I think could have contributed to this study. For instance, one couple that I used as my case study, have decided to get married, and I just wonder if their relationship would change after marriage. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I could no longer stay in the field. Yet, sufficient information was gathered for this study.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted, whereby I interviewed people in a form of conversation: the informant would lead the conversation and the only thing I did was

direct the interview. I used the free attitude interview, which is described as a 'non-directive controlled depth interview' (Busken, 2003: 1). The purpose of this was to probe at the deeper level of the informants, where they would talk about the norms of society and incorporate these with their own thoughts. The method of interviewing seemed to be important because, during these interviews, I obtained information that I had not attained even after six months of being in the filed. For instance, with Thandi[3], who is 34 years old and has three daughters (aged 12, 2 and 6months). She stays with her boyfriend in a room in Orlando West (Soweto); she is not working and is a Matric dropout. She talked about her needs in a relationship, which were in contrast to societal norms, and she became aware of her beliefs during that interview. This interview was very emotional, but I believe that it was therapeutic for the informant.

My interviews were in-depth. What I aimed to achieve with this tool, was the life history, reproductive and sexual history of the informants. Therefore, I had a set of questionnaires that I used as my guide. These included the following:

- The background of the informant
- Definition of a relationship
- What are the norms and rules of relationships
- If one is not living with the partner, where does the relationship take place and how much time does the couple spend together
- If the couple does live together, how are the responsibilities shared
- How is the family involved

[3] The boyfriend works at a supermarket in Sandton square. The two older children live with her parents in Jabulani (Soweto), while the youngest lives with her.

- What are the expectations of the relationship, such as happiness, escape, hurt and damage
- If the respondent has multiple partners, what are the benefits
- How issues of property and the household are handled
- How the ending of a relationship is negotiated

The main aim of these guidelines was to provide me with a platform to ask about the respondents' personal history. These questions were not written down, as I rather chose to wait for an opportunity to reveal itself, whereby I could tackle those issues raised in the questions. I cannot say my guide was unstructured *per se,* as I did structure the interview; but the questions were not posed in a structured format. In other words, I followed Busken's argument that "the structure should accommodate the interviewee in her free exploration of her views and not reflect ideas (or hypothesis) of the interviewer" (2003: 5). In-depth interviews contributed much towards this study, as I was able to expose some of the informants' emotions, which, in turn, revealed their norms and values, and this is the crux of this study: to understand the role of relationships, how they contribute to our society and how they are instituted.

Focus groups

The study consisted of one male focus group, with seven men between the ages of 19 and 24. I also had one female focus group of five women between the ages of 17 and 22. I conducted these focus groups at the beginning of this study, as I wanted to explore people's perceptions and views on relationships. The reason I used this method is because I believe that, sometimes, people open up if they hear other people

speaking, as there are people who might have been reserved when I interviewed them individually. I tried to make my focus groups as homogenous as possible, so that the individuals would not intimidate each other. In this instance, I considered age, gender and level of education.

I recruited these two focus groups through a friend who stays in Jabulani (Soweto), after explaining to her the kind of people I was looking for. The focus groups that I conducted were very fruitful, as informants were very open with regards to talking about issues, even though some of the information was not really relevant for my research. For instance, the male focus group decided to talk about women and specifically mentioned all the negative aspects of women. These men in the focus group did not want to talk about their personal relationships, while their female counterparts openly referred to their personal relationships, dislikes and likes.

Casual conversation

This method raised some ethical issues, as there were times when informants would share information about other people, and some of the stories they told me were relevant to the study. At times, I would be invited to meet their friends and the friends would start telling me about their relationships. This means that sometimes I received information without asking people for their consent and without having an opportunity to introduce the study. Although casual conversation came without these challenges, I did, however, acquire valuable data through this method and, subsequently, continued gathering data using this method. I spent most of the time in the field doing participant observation, thus casual conversation became an important tool. Most of the information was gathered using this method, as, often, informants

would be relaxed during a conversation with me, as they were not thinking about what to do. Other methods were used to validate the information gathered using this method.

Case studies

I had two key informants who became my case studies: Zanele and her boyfriend Sfiso, and Xoli and the father of her child, Kgomotso. The reason these informants became my case studies, was because of their willingness to participate in the study. They showed enthusiasm in the research and were always available. Furthermore, their lifestyles seemed interesting as they were different to each other, and I thought I would gather rich data.

CASE STUDY 1

Zanele has a BA degree and is working in a company in Midrand. She does not have any children. She stays with her parents and has turned 26 this year (2002). She has a boyfriend, Sfiso (her first boyfriend), and they have been going out since 1995 (for 8 years). I started this research in November 2002, and Sfiso and Zanele seemed to be happy in their relationship. They went on holiday to Cape Town in December for two weeks. Zanele is from a traditional family, while Sfiso's family is not that traditional. Their backgrounds are very different. Sfiso comes from a well-off family: he only started working in 2002, and until then was paid an allowance by his family. Furthermore, Sfiso's family knows about Zanele, as she visits frequently, and they do not seem to have a problem with this. Zanele started working in 1999 and, according to her, this strained their relationship, as she thinks that Sfiso felt threatened by her. She said things were not going well for the three years before he secured a job. However, even after that, things were not perfect, as Zanele felt that she wanted their relationship to grow. The beginning of 2003 was not a good time for this couple. There were times when I would feel like a counsellor to Zanele and sometimes I would feel I was an icebreaker between the two. Zanele felt that she did not see the point of their relationship and she wanted to know whether or not Sfiso was serious about her.

Sometimes they would talk about this topic in my presence; it would become very tense and Sfiso would avoid the subject. A friend of Sfiso's was married in March this year. After that wedding Sfiso told Zanele that his friend had asked him why he was not getting married, because if he was waiting for the right time it would never come - according to his friend, the right time is the present. I guess that was Sfiso's way of proposing to Zanele, but she did not get the message. Instead, she became increasingly worried as she thought this was Sfiso's way of telling her that he was not serious about her. Two weeks after that incident Sfiso proposed and Zanele phoned to tell me, as she was so excited. Clearly, Zanele wanted to get married; she did not hide this and she was always upfront about the subject. This couple eventually did get married in December 2006 and I was one of the 'VIP' in the wedding. They now have two sons together.

CASE STUDY 2

Xoli (28 years old in 2002) has a 2-year-old son and is staying in her own house. She has a BA(ed) degree and is working for the NGO. She lives with the father of her child, Kgomotso, who is three years younger than her. When I started the study they were not living together, as they had problems. According to Xoli, it was Kgomotso's family that were making their life difficult. Kgomotso's mother felt that Xoli was too old for her son and that he still had to enjoy his life. However, Kgomotso did not have a job, and he had to come to Johannesburg, in order to seek employment. Xoli said he could come stay with her, as he is the father of her child. At first Xoli told me that she was doing this for her son, as she felt that her son has a right to have a father. Xoli is also not from Johannesburg: she comes from Mpumalanga province, and is here because of work. Thus, her family is not involved in her life much, as she stays alone. However, her mother is aware that she is staying with the father of her child as she sometimes visits her. This couple has many ups and downs as Kgomotso is not working and Xoli suspects that he is cheating on her. This was very painful for Xoli as she is doing everything for him, yet he still cheats. Furthermore, Kgomotso does not help with the housework. Xoli believes this is because he is from Limpopo province and he thinks that, as he is the man, he should not do housework. In June 2002 Xoli said she decided to chase him out of her home, as he was 'good for nothing'. Xoli remained single for a while and then started dating different people but in 2004 she

met Alex whom she married in 2007. But her relationship with Alex does not form part of this research.

Case studies played a very crucial role in, and formed a major part of, this study. Most of my time in the field was spent with these informants and I ended up becoming their friend, and even an extended family member. Participant observation was incorporated with case studies, as there were weekends during which I spent with these informants. The informants went about their lives normally and this became critical, as it determined how trusting they would be towards me. The case studies provided me with an opportunity to triangulate the information obtained, as there were formal conversations that I recorded, in addition to casual conversations and participant observation.

2.3 Sampling

Informants for this research were recruited in the form of convenience sampling. Initially, I planned to interview individuals from all the races that exist in our country. However, it was difficult to access individuals from various races and, consequently, only one race was researched. This was one of the limitations of this research. I used convenient sampling - or snowball sampling – whereby, I initially used informants that I know personally, and they directed me to other informants. I moved from convenient sampling to purposeful sampling, whereby I interviewed the people that the initial informants directed me towards, and I felt that they would contribute positively towards this research. The last sample for this research was the group that was interviewed in order to compensate for the gaps I identified in the study.

The sample

The focus of this research was to examine the 'relationship' networks amongst young people between the age of 21 and 30. However, I had two informants who were outside of this age group. They were 31 and 32 years of age, respectively, and I decided to include them, as I believe that the information they would provide would be valuable for this study. Participants were chosen according to their personal attributes: specifically, they were chosen if they showed enthusiasm to participate, and were people who seemed to be outspoken. I believed this would make it easier to gather more information. I selected my informants as a 'convenience' or used a 'snowball' sample.

This study interviewed 8 unmarried females and 4 unmarried males who were or had been in relationships. Two married females were also interviewed, as well as one married male. As mentioned above, some informants were interviewed with the purpose to answer the questions that were emerging in the field. I also interviewed four older women (aged 59, 62, 63, and 67). The reason behind interviewing these informants was to explore the point of view of the older generation, in order to ascertain how they view the new forms of relationships. Furthermore, I conducted two focus groups consisting of 7 males and 5 females. Two unmarried female informants were also part of case study.

These informants differed from, but were also similar to, one another. They were similar in that they were all Africans, and most of them were from Soweto, although some of them no longer live in Soweto. They were different in that they have different

levels of education, which, consequently, resulted in the variation of their economic statuses.

2.4 Capturing the data

Different methods of capturing data were employed in this study. The techniques that were used were as follows:

Tape recorder

I used a tape recorder to try and capture everything that the informants said, and this allowed me to concentrate more on the interview. If, however, informants did not feel comfortable with the tape recorder I did not use it; instead I wrote while the informant spoke. Lizeka[4], for instance, seemed to be uncomfortable with the tape recorder during her first interview and I, therefore, did not use it. However, in the second interview, she was relaxed enough to allow me to use the tape recorder.

Field notes

Every time I had the chance of writing field notes I did so, and at times I even wrote them while travelling back home in the taxi. This was an important tool of capturing data, as I spent most of my time doing participant observation; thus, field notes were the only method I could use to capture all that data. To improve my field notes I used a 'field diary' in which I would jot down my thoughts. This diary helped me extensively as, in the process of writing, I could see my thoughts on this data as I received it. This became important as I realised that the more time I spent in the field, the more I became aware of myself, and understood what people were telling me.

[4] Is a 25 year old with two daughters, aged 5 and 2 respectively, and is cohabiting with her partner. They are both from the Cape Town

2.5 Rapport

Conducting research at home does not, necessarily, guarantee one rapport. Some of the people I interviewed were people I knew, but as soon as I mentioned that I was doing research, they became nervous. Gaining their trust, therefore, became important, and participant observation played a critical role in developing a rapport with my informants. During my stay I tried to learn as much as possible from informants in order to avoid behaving inappropriately.

2.6 Ethical issues

The main ethical issue for research is to 'do no harm'. I made sure that I did no harm to my informants, by abiding by the rules of research ethics that I acquired from the research office.

Informed consent

To make sure that these ethical rules were followed I provided my informants with informed consent forms, which I read to them, and also allowed them to read for themselves, in order to ensure that they clearly understood why they were being interviewed. The informed consent form explained that the purpose of this study was purely academic, and the informants were not going to benefit from it. The participation was entirely voluntary and if they did not want to participate they had a right to say so. Furthermore, even if they agreed to participate, they were not forced to answer all the questions. There is a copy of the drafted informed consent form that was read to the informants attached to this thesis.

Confidentiality

I emphasized and assured confidentiality to my informants. This was important as some of the informants knew each other and I had to keep whatever they told me confidential. However, this was a challenge for me, at times, as one of the tools I learnt from my experience was that when you want get more information, you tell the informant what other people are saying. In this instance, I could not use that tactic, as some informants would be able to identify who said what. Thus, I had to be careful to respect my informants' confidentiality. I, therefore, used pseudonyms for all the informants, in order to protect them.

Incentives

I did not give incentives, although when I visited my informants I would take them something, especially if I was to spend a weekend with them. In order for the informants to understand my role, I explained to them that I was a student and that the study was part of the requirements I needed in order to attain my degree. The informants who took part in focus group discussion were given R30-00 each to cover their travelling expenses.

2.8 Limitations and challenges of the research

I conducted my research at home, with people I grew up with in Soweto. This had advantages as well as disadvantages. One of the advantages was that I could speak the same language as these people. However, there were other challenges, as Rodriguez argues, "as a 'homegirl' I have been socialized into the historic realities, cultural values, and linguistic norms of black southern life" (1995: 235). She further argues, that "it is critical for black feminist anthropologists to examine those issues we take

with us to the field that are specifically related to personal history, self-identity and our own perspective about the purpose of modern anthropology" (1995: 235). I have previously argued in this chapter that I was aware of myself; this implies that I was aware of my role as a researcher, and I was also aware of my preconceived ideas. Rodriguez argues "awareness of these underlying themes contributes to a richer field experience for the native ethnographer" (1995: 237).

This research tries to address a very complex issue. Time constraint was also a limitation, as data was to be collected for only ten months. The first two months were an exploratory phase; this implies that I spent eight months in the field. The target group for this research is wide, as the research argues that the problems of relationships go across all borders. However, only one group was researched, and, therefore, race, age and class became my restrictions. As I argued in my proposal that the issue of 'relationships' affects the community at large, I believe that the issues that are presented in this study are not unique to the group of people I interviewed, but also to the community at large.

2.8 Analysis and writing

I used grounded theory to analyse data - this does not test a hypothesis, but, rather, sets out to find what theory accounts for the research situation as it is (Glaser, 1978:3). According to Glaser (1978), grounded theory aims to understand the research situation and to discover the theory implicit in the data. Analysis, thus, began when I started with research, as I constantly tried to make sense of what was happening in the field: I wrote field notes of my thoughts and of what was happening. Thus, I began

with categorising the themes that were emerging during the process of the collection of data.

In the process of this research I learnt that research is not only about informing the debates, but also contributing something to the lives of informants. Hence, it became a responsibility for me to write a report that would not only qualify as academic work, but would also help the informants be able to make sense of their situations, and, possibly, manage their situations better (Glaser, 1978: 21). Using grounded theory to analyse my data made this possible.

Writing up this thesis, thus, became a challenge, as I wanted to make sure that I did justice to my data while, simultaneously, honouring my informants. This is not just a piece of work: real lives and voices are captured in this thesis. I try to make sense of this data with respect to what the informants told me. This is the standard against which I would like my thesis to be judged, and failure to do so will mean the failure of my thesis.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at all the methods that were used in this study, in an attempt to show the validity of the findings of this research. It further shows the transformation I underwent during this research. Doing this research was a real journey for me, during which I grew and became proud of myself, as I learnt to be a researcher. Doing meaningful research at home counters some of the ethnocentric points of view, which dominate social science research, especially in ‘quick and dirty’

applied research. The following chapter is about understanding the views and definition of relationship from the informants' points of view.

Chapter 3: Understanding the Concept of 'Relationships'

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores people's understanding and definition of the concept 'relationships'. It looks at the words people use and compares these words to people's actions. It examines people's expectations in relationships and tries to understand the influences that affect these expectations. Thus, context is examined critically as this research argues that context plays a crucial role in relationships. The role that culture plays is also interrogated in such a manner that it reveals people's thoughts and how they make sense of culture. This chapter further reveals that there are different types of relationships and goes on to scrutinise these types. Lastly, it tries to make sense of the concepts that people use to try and understand the underpinning meanings within these concepts. It attempts to reveal how, occasionally, people use words that mean the opposite of what they actually want to say.

3.2 Definition of relationships

In order to attain the holistic understanding of the concept 'relationships' it is necessary to understand the social categories that are formed by this concept. The study looks at: monogamy; men with multiple partners; women with multiple partners and serial monogamy. These categories played a critical role in understanding this concept, and, therefore, this study attempts to understand why people choose these particular categories of relationships.

When asked to define what the concept 'relationships' means to them, many informants replied that, "it is when people are 'involved' because they love each

other". The words 'Involved' and 'Love' thus became keywords in defining this concept of relationships. Subsequently, 'love' became a concept that is also discussed in detail later in this chapter. According to Castaneda, there are two critical components in relationships: the closeness between partners, and the stability of the relationship (2000: 15).

Informants in similar contexts seemed to have similar expectations, and also shared a similar definition of the concept 'relationships'. I grouped them according to the similarity of their definitions. I do not, however, argue that the informants I grouped together are a homogenous group. My grouping simply means they have similar opinions, derived from similar situations wherein they find themselves. Past experiences influence the attitude people have in relationships. As Memela argues in his article that "One university student said: I have seen love does not pay; I am now interested in what they (men) can provide" (Memela, 2002:17)

In an attempt to explain explicitly how people understand relationships, I grouped the informants into four workable groups and I named these groups as follows: Conformist informants, Dependant informants, Independent informants and the Critical analytical informants.

Conformist informants

'Conformists' are the informants who seemed to believe in societal norms and values and who helplessly conformed to these. Most of the informants in this group were men: of the fourteen male informants interviewed, ten of them showed to be helplessly conforming to societal norms and values Giddens (1992) argues that sexual

equality challenges the cultural norms and this has an impact on relationships and marriages. In addition, Cornwall argues that "custom is constantly recreated, constantly influx" (2002: 969). Men appear to still be struggling with the concept of equality, and they feel as though women are 'pushing it too far'. These men often complain about women taking charge in everything, even in relationships. Themba[5] acknowledges this equality, but has a problem with accepting it:

> I know we are now equal, but I know that I am still a man, and nothing can change that. I was born a man; even the Bible says a man is the head of the family. The Constitution cannot change that I will always be a man and women cannot be like us.

According to Themba, equality is about assuming equal roles in the relationship, where neither party is superior to the other. However, having an affair outside a relationship is not acceptable with regards to women. Understanding and accepting this seemed to be a hurdle for most of my male informants. It is, thus, believed by male informants that there are different roles in relationships, but change seemed to be challenging these roles. Hence, relationships are impacted by equality. It was not made clear by the male informants, which things should change and which should not, and why they want these changes. They would often say it is not acceptable for a woman to do something in particular, but would not substantiate their statements with valid reasons.

Male informants appeared to view themselves as powerless and helpless as they used terms such as, 'life is tough, Joe' (which is an American slang). Relationships seemed

[5] Themba was staying with a girlfriend and broke up with her in December 2002. In January he moved in with another girlfriend. He is staying in his girlfriend's apartment. They had financial problems, and, as a result, his townhouse was repossessed. The girlfriend left her job and tried to start a business. Things did not work out, and, hence, they fell into debt. He is a dropout from the Technikon and is working for a political organization.

to be taking the opposite direction of the societal norms. Twiggs cites Ramphele (2002) who rightly asks the question "how are young people to understand their own evolving roles in a community that insists on male dominance even when men are absent physically and emotionally? How do young men learn to become men in such settings?" (2003: 1). Society has deceived men, and coming to terms with this, is a struggle for them. This seemed to be a critical point with the informants I interviewed. One informant in the male focus group said:

> Women are controlling everything; they decide on everything and at times, as a man, you don't know what your role is and you ask yourself: why are we in relationships?

According to most of the male informants, women are taking over in everything, even in relationships. Twiggs, citing Gupta (1997), argues, "men, like women, are crippled by societal gender norms" (2003: 2). This research shows that men seem to be affected by gender societal norms, as they appear not to believe in relationships. However, I would argue that they are not victims: yes, they are struggling as Gupta argues that they are 'crippled'; but I argue that they are still trying to make sense of what is happening or dealing with change in their own way. Change might be overwhelming for them. They want to be able to understand and take charge. The fact that they are raising such questions is a sign of realising what is happening in their lives.

This group of informants emphasized their frustrations in relationships. They attributed these frustrations to the lack of commitment in their relationships, which, according to them, force them to be promiscuous. Themba justified his promiscuity thus:

> To make your relationship work you need to find another woman so that when your girlfriend is giving you a tough time you know where to go.

However, not all informants in this group said they had multiple partners. They all agreed that it was difficult to commit to one particular person, but some preferred to 'move on' if relationship did not follow the direction they desired.

Giddens (1992) sees the low rate of marriage as a result of the societal change towards equality. Society creates definitions and these definitions are now challenged. That is why some men feel helpless: their expectations are not met in relationships, and they, consequently, see no point in getting married. Most of these informants argue that women are in control, and that women want to rule. This was evident in the focus group (which consisted of unemployed males) where men emphasised the fact that women want to control their lives. This contrasts many studies that purport to show women as powerless and dominated in relationships.

On the other hand, the women that I interviewed did not view themselves as being in control in their relationships. This does not suggest that they are powerless, but they are either not aware of the power they possess in their relationships, or that power does not matter to them. There were other important things that women focus on. Zanele[6], a 26-year-old graduate, who is employed but still staying at her parents' home noted:

> I discuss things with my boyfriend because I believe that we are equal partners, I make suggestions but I don't control him

[6] Case study

From these informants, I discovered that all parties possess power and they do what they want. In relationships, neither men nor women felt oppressed: the problem lay in accepting the other partner. In most cases, both parties in a relationship were trying to change the other partner. Twiggs, citing Gupta, argues that "there is this notion that power is finite…it is a pie and if you take a piece, then I get less. I like to believe that power is infinite in the long term, so that if you give women power you are not taking away men's power you are adding of the entire household, the community, the country" (2003: 2). I argue that male informants are battling with this issue of power, thinking that women have taken their power and, as a result of that process, they (men) have lost touch with the power they posses. This research shows that power is infinite; on the one hand, women have accessed power, while men have retained theirs. The problem is that both males and females feel loss of power, but do not have any clear grasp of what 'power' is, in this context.

Dépendant informants

'Dependants' consist of informants who depend on their relationships and view their relationship as some kind of support system. Their expectations in a relationship are obvious: they expect material support from their partners. Many of the informants in this group are informants that do not have a support system, possibly because they are unemployed, are still living with their parents and do not qualify to be dependants anymore, or they are working but cannot afford to live according to their 'standards'. Thus, they try to find someone who can help them. This group of informants believe that when they are in a relationship with someone, that particular person must show that s/he loves him/her through visible gestures and by sharing belongings. I argue that this group of informants make this concept of love practical, as they believe that

love must be seen in conjunction with action: the partner must provide in order to prove his or her love. They use the saying "actions speak louder than words". This could be viewed as what Joseph calls a connective relationship. According to Joseph, "Connective relationships were considered loving when persons anticipated each other's needs, attended to and acted in each other's interests" (1994: 55). If needs are not met, the relationship can be viewed as null.

This group can be mistaken for 'gold diggers'. The informants in this group did not view themselves as 'gold diggers', as they did see themselves as being 'in love' with their partners. Such an example is Thandi, who is 34 years old and has three daughters (aged 12, 2 and 6months). She lives in a room with her boyfriend (who works at a supermarket); she does not work and is a Matric dropout. Thandi stated the following:

> If you 'love' someone and then expect material things, that does not mean you are only looking for material things. But, when someone does things for you it shows that he cares about you.

For these informants, getting 'gifts' from a partner is an affirmation that the partner appreciates them. This is part of reciprocity. What is interesting with this group is that they have constructed a relationship in a very practical manner. Love is seen more than felt. This practicality means that one cannot stay in a relationship that does not satisfy the material needs. These informants can be compared with to the 'little houses' in Tanzanian urban dwelling, where women chose to be 'mistress' (which they call 'little houses') so they could benefit materially as that proved to be more beneficiary as compared to being a wife (Lewinson, 2006).

According to Reohr (1971), relationships exist because people need to survive; they give something to get something. In this group it is clear that they fall in love in order

to survive, and that means they exchange love with material things. The critical question is: what is the 'love' that they give to their partners? Tumi[7] is 31 years old. She used to work for M-net but resigned, and is now self-employed. She has a 6-year-old daughter, stays in the townhouse and has a car. She does not perform household duties; she expects equality but does not contribute equally in a relationship. Although these informants could not articulate clearly what it is that they do in order to show that they love their partners, as they expect material things in return, it was clear that sex was often used to show this love. Thandi said:

> I can't sleep (have sex) with someone I don't love or feel; you know, I have to feel a person before I can think of sleeping with him.

'Feel', in this instance, is used to mean what I can call 'chemistry' – which refers to what occurs when people are attracted to each other. What is interesting is that in this group, love is viewed in terms of reciprocity: one will only return love if love is first shown by the other partner. Tumi emphasised this and argued:

> I am sick and tired of being exploited in relationships. The person I will fall for next time must really, really convince me that he loves me before I can give him my heart… you know, you can see if someone loves you, he will take care of you, like when you need something he will be able to try something; that is love: caring for someone and being concerned about her needs, because that is what I do when I am in a relationships and now I expect the same.

According to Van der Vliet (1990), being single for women was a strategy against poverty. This category supports Van der Vliet's observations, as, in this group, a relationship is not seen as a process towards marriage, but rather as a support system. Thus, I can argue that if a better support manifests itself, these women can easily leave the men they are with for 'greener pastures'. Tumi left her boyfriend once she

[7] Tumi broke up with the father of the child in December and started dating another man, who was a divorcee, in January. She broke up with this man in June, as she discovered that he was broke. They had planned to get married in December 2003.

discovered that the boyfriend was broke and prefers to remain single until she finds another man who is 'loaded'. Rebhun supports this as she argues that as much as "young women may daydream of an exciting companion, and especially at the younger ages may underestimate the importance of financial solvency to future happiness. But many also want a good earner, who will provide them with a house" (Rebhun, 1999: 154). The social conditions in these relationships do determine the stability of the relationship.

Van der Vliet (1990: 219) concluded that the reason why women choose to be single is that men are 'traditional' and women are 'modern'. However, this group of informants show that it is not about being modern, but is about finding someone who will be able to improve their lives. It is more about their well-being than being modern. As Rebhun points out, "most young women need a man to get them out of the household" (1999:148). If women think they cannot take themselves out of the difficult background they might be having, finding a good man becomes an alternative.

The reason informants stay in a relationship "has also been seen as the result of emotional and material investments made to the relationship and availability of alternatives, and it is related to the degree that important needs are satisfied by the relationship. If these needs are satisfied, greater dependence on, and therefore greater commitment to the relationship will result". (Castaneda cites Drigotas &Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). However, should the situation change in the relationship, for instance one partner looses a job, a relationship is more likely to end because material needs cannot be met anymore. To

provide space for this, partners are more likely to push for a flexible arrangement to make easier to move should things don't go according to plans. Smart and Neale, argue that "In a context of intimate relationships in a capitalist market society, money is seldom if ever simply a neutral medium of exchange" (1999: 3). Money can therefore becomes a deciding factor on whether relationship survives or dies.

Independent (idealist) informants

The 'Independent' informants are independent materially and are also independent from the relationship, partly because they work, and partly because they have other support systems, such as family or friends. For this group, love is felt: it is not tangible, but abstract. They view relationships as a process towards marriage and starting a family, security and thinking about the future. According to the informants in this group, they were concerned about the future. Lerato[8] is 29 years old, has a BSc degree and is working for Eskom as a manager. She has a three-year-old son, lives in a townhouse and has her own car. She stated:

> Everyone needs a companion and stability when they get old. I cannot imagine myself at 40-something, still single and trying to find a boyfriend; I need to find a boyfriend now.

Zanele[9] defined a relationship as when there is mutual respect between the couple. For Zanele, morals are also important, and culture is respected and influential. Thus, marriage is valued and relationships are perceived as a process towards marriage. Walworth (1980) argues that marriage is also used as a strategy for survival.

[8] She is single but looking. She broke up with the father of the baby while she was still pregnant. In 2002 she started looking for another boyfriend, as she felt she was ready for the relationship. She dated a taxi driver for two months; she met him in January 2003 and broke up with him in March the same year. The main reason for the break-up was that this man was not on the same level as her, and also because he was broke.

[9] Female case study 1

However, in this category, marriage is not a strategy for survival, but rather for social identity and emotional security. Lerato once said:

> How will people look at you if you are single at 40? You will be like these women who are perceived dangerous as they steal other people's husbands and break families. You won't even have friends because you will be threat to them, as they will think you are going to steal their husbands

What is interesting with this is that the informants in this group are so concerned with the future. For example, Lerato's mother is a divorcee: this could show Lerato that there is a possibility of her being single even if she does get married. But regardless of this possibility, she wants to be married. For Lerato, marriage is not a support system but is perceived as more of a social identity, as she often said "I don't want to be alone at 40". This research argues that marriage and relationships are not only about surviving, because surviving could mean keeping your options open. There are other things that people need, which this research will explore in subsequent chapters.

Most of the concepts that these informants used when defining relationships are the concepts that are used by the media. This is not surprising because authors such as Lewinsons, argues, "Africans are shifting inevitably to a European derived model of love and monogamy by virtue of being embedded in a capitalist system of living in the cities" (2006: 92). Similarly, their expectations in relationships were of the 'ideal relationship' that is portrayed in the media, such as the concept that relationships are based on open communication. However, I cannot decidedly conclude that the media influences this group of informants, as they might be using the concepts used in the media, because they do not have the words to express what is in their minds. Zanele had many problems with her partner, as the partner was not complying with her beliefs in a relationship. She would complain about things like "he is not open enough

and I don't know what he is thinking". My argument is that aspects such as these are ideal, but not practical, as people are individuals and they will always have different understanding of various things.

Furthermore, as Joseph points out, "as with any cultural model, the lived reality seldom matches the ideology…. Yet while the ideology does not reflect the lived reality of many people in western society, it has a powerful cultural legitimacy" (1994: 55). What people aspire for, does not always happen, as Lewinson argues that the model that id derived from European or Modernist ideology "does not fit the complex variable real-life practices of many people and yet carries a level of recognition and reality in the cultural realm" (2006: 93). These are the challenges that people find themselves in, challenges that they need to negotiate with on daily basis.

Critical analytical informants

The last group, the critical analytical, consists of the informants who, I argue, are deconstructing the concept of relationships: they display the need to define their relationship in a manner that suits them. Most of informants in this group have, at least, a tertiary qualification. This group of informants seemed to value their independence and want their space; however, they also think about the future as the first group does. Yet, independence is of key importance. They would rather cohabitate, as they are not bound by anything.

Mandla has two daughters and, when I first met him, he was not sure if he was the father of a third child. According to him, he is single, as he does not have a steady girlfriend. Mandla is 30 and is still a student. He seems to know what he wants, but is

aware that his needs cannot be met by one person, and, therefore, has multiple partners. However, he does not see some of his partners as women he has a relationship with. When he was asked about his girlfriend, he mentioned only one girlfriend. As I spent more time with him I discovered that he was seeing other women, and when I asked why he did not mentioned them earlier, he said because they are not his girlfriends, as he has no intention of settling down with them. According to Mandla, they are aware of that and they also have partners besides him.

From the above information I can argue that categories two and four challenge the norms of society, while categories one and three conform to societal norms. Consequently, it might not be accurate to label all women as 'modern' and all men as 'traditional'. These findings show that context plays a crucial role, as those who have a support system can conform to the norms. If there is no support system people develop coping strategies in order to survive. Thus, dependant informants develop their own support system and create their own world.

3.3 Are there types of relationships?

The above information suggests that people enter relationships for different reasons, and I can, therefore, argue that there are different types of relationships derived from the needs of individuals. In other words, different categories would have different types of relationships, although the understanding would overlap. These types were derived from the conceptualisation of power and would be based on 1) relative power, 2) different definition of power, and 3) relative/different distribution of power. This understanding of power defined the relationship; for instance, informants who believed in relative power were not dependent on their relationship.

According to Lucvan *e. al,* there are two types of relationships: fusion, and associative relationships.

Fusion Relationship

Lucvan *et al* defines fusion relationships as "relationships that are notably characterised by the idea of total sharing in all areas of life… togetherness is based on the durability of a relationship. [Fusion relationships] put emphasis on assimilation and the interdependence of individual and adhering to family values and beliefs such as fidelity and mutual commitment". (1999: 6) This suggests that people are influenced by their environment, as it shapes their expectations in relationships. This kind of relationship suggests the connectedness that Joseph would describe as a "One's sense of self in intimately linked with the self of another such that the security, identity, integrity, dignity, and self-worth of one is tied to actions of the other" (Joseph, 1994: 55).

People who engage in this kind of relationship are more likely to get married. Thus, marriage is one of the expectations. Conformists can be categorised as this type, as their expectations in relationships are based on social values. Marriage is the emphasis of oneness: what is mine is yours and yours is mine. However, people are not homogenous and can detect if there are problems. The fact that there are different types of marriage contracts proves this: people can get married out of community of property and this can challenge the 'oneness' that marriage should produce.

Associative Relationship

According to Lucvan *et al,* associative relationships are characterised by individuals who define the areas of exchange in a relationship, and how this exchange is to be implemented. Partners negotiate the terms of contract that will bind them in some aspects of daily life. For example, social life or leisure activities are necessarily encompassed in this exchange. The emphasis is, thus, on differentiation and interdependence of the individuals within the couple (1999: 7).

One can therefore argue that, this type of relationship is practical hence it does not emphasise eternity or exclusivity (Giddens, 1992: 62). In the study conducted in Tanzania, Lewinson find out that when women looked for a partner, "they looked for reliability… providing resources, both social and material… Material goods provided a man's reliability demonstrating his character and affection through deeds" (2006: 104). In this kind of relationship, the terms are clearly defined, as they are not abstract. Emotions are expressed with material things.

This type of relationship suggests that the exchange is clearly defined and all parties involved are aware of this exchange. None of my informants appear to be in this type of relationship. While, at first glance, the dependant informants may seem to fit into this kind of relationship, they are, however, looking for something permanent in the relationships in which they are involved. When they see that the person is right they are prepared to "*ufaka amazipho*" (literally meaning 'to put on nails', in other words 'to cling on'). Clearly, the informants in the dependant category are looking for

something serious, and it is not only about material things. I argue that context is critical if we want to understand relationships.

Arguing that there are relationships that are based on negotiated exchange overlooks the complexities within relationships. My informants did not reveal this exchange, although exchange clearly exists. Informants in the dependant group somehow acknowledged this exchange, but it was not emphasised. Leclerc-Madlala (2003), in her study among the teenage girls, observed this exchange whereby the girls wanted what she calls 'the three Cs': cash, clothes and cell phones. According to Leclerc-Madlala's finding, for young people, relationships are based on exchange. However, seeing relationships in that manner ignores other needs people have, which are also met within the context of relationships. Even though reciprocity is a critical part of relationships, it does not only manifest itself materially: people can expect emotional support in relationships, and relationships can also offer a space for people to fantasize.

The types of relationships that have been discussed above do not explain the kinds of informants that I interviewed. Furthermore, these types do not look at the understanding of power that defines relationships. This suggests that, although people may have similar expectations, but they do not have similar understandings of issues. Thus, categorising people can, sometimes, be problematic when people tend to be viewed as homogenous groups. However, I do not discard these types of relationships; but I do argue that they do not accommodate all people who engage in relationships. The critical point to take into consideration is that when one talks about types of

relationships, one must allow for other relationships that may not fit into the categories/types of relationships stipulated.

3.4 What qualifies a relationship?

Having discussed how relationships are defined, this research reveals that relationships are complex and mean different things to different people. Relationships can also be used as a tool to access resources. The critical question then becomes: how do we pin down this concept of 'relationship'? All the informants admitted having sex with their partners, since they were in relationships. Sex, thus, becomes critical in understanding relationships. I argue that relationships are defined by 'sex'. However, this does not suggest that sex maintains relationships - it simply defines them. The fundamental aspect in a relationship is a feeling of individualism and sacredness. 'It is not 'sacred' as religious experience is sacred, but it does have the same qualities" (Thornton, 2003:8). It is sex that provides the experience of sacredness.

The role of sex in the relationship

Sex plays a central role in any relationship. However, it is necessary to understand the specificities of this role, in order to understand its significance in relationships. In the *Oprah* magazine one author explained why people engage in sex as follows:

> Because it is fun, because it can be the most powerful, concrete way to demonstrate love for us and for someone else. It helps us to remember, it helps us to forget. Because when we open ourselves to the experience completely, we become intimate with the world in a way that's otherwise inaccessible, and unique (Moviroe 2005: 101)

Freud (1950) argued that people are sexual beings, however, because of disappointments, they learn the reality of life that they cannot get what they want all the time; the sexual need is thus tamed. Moviroe talks about sex as fantasy, not as a reality, and this is the understanding many people have of the concept. The sexual act depends on your state of mind, as well as the extent of meaning that you attach to it.

Some authors argue that, "Sexuality within relationships is not just enacted out of sexual desire or for reproduction functions; it is related to other dimensions of the relationship, such as intimacy, commitment, power, conflict, love, or obligation" (Castaneda, cites Christopher & Gate, 1985, 1988' Sprecher &McKinney, 1993). Thus, sex as it is used in relationships, has different meanings and can be used to express different feelings. What is also important to note is that sex alone does not play a role: it is the meaning that people attach to the act that gives sex its role in a relationship. Sex can be used as a tool to express bad feelings, such as anger, as well as to express good feelings, such as love. Some informants admitted having had one-night stands and they did or do not have a relationship with those people. In these cases, sex was used purely for pleasure. This concurs with Fernando and Snijders's suggestion that, "sexual relations provide most enjoyable and rewarding pleasures" (1997: 6). But there are different kinds of pleasure: the socially constructed pleasure, and the physical pleasure. Fernando and Snijders refer to the physical pleasure that results from sexual intercourse.

But also sex reveals power relations. Hannoun argues, "the principle of male domination is inscribed in the body, which makes the sexual act itself an act of domination and possession" (2006: 889) In this instance sex can be viewed as a

violent act, and it is easy to understand this when we look at rape. In relationships though, the manifestation of violence is minimal as women agree to the act. In as much some people can argue that sex is violent as it requires a degree of force, but consensual aspect of it makes violence acceptable. And also the meanings attached around sex give value to it.

In a relationship, sex does have its purpose and meaning. Some authors argue "the perceived success of sexuality in a relationship can also help to maintain the relationship" (Castaneda cites Dainton & Stafford, 1993). This argument shows that the quality of meaning of sex is critical in a relationship because sex qualifies a relationship. What is critical, though, is the understanding if those involved in the relationship view sex as the key element in their relationship.

For the informants, satisfaction in sex was also critical, although it was not made clear what 'satisfaction' entails. For some female informants, satisfaction would be reached if the man has the 'right size' penis, while for other women, satisfaction would be reached with the 'good partner' (most referred to someone who has adequate sexual experience, but some also referred to the gentleness of a person). The women who stressed the importance of size simply mentioned that they did not want the penis to be too big or too small, but 'just right'. For research purposes, it may have been more helpful if these informants had mentioned an actual measurement. For some male informants, satisfaction came from women with experience, while others thought that women who are 'tighter' (physically) would provide more satisfaction. All these explanations are clearly subjective.

The above explanations show subjectivity with regards to sex. I am tempted to argue that sex is associated with the person with whom you have it, and that is what will determine the satisfaction of the act. However, such an argument does not fully explain the cases of satisfaction in one-night stands. Two female informants admitted to having had one-night stands, and argued that these experiences were enjoyable, and, for that reason, they have no regrets. The information from the informants showed that sex had different meanings to different partners. Depending on an individual, the meaning of sex would vary. Zanele associated sex with her partner, and could not imagine herself having sex with another man (her boyfriend is the only sexual partner she has had, thus far). So, for Zanele, sex was about bonding and intimacy. But for some other informants who have had different partners, sex is connected to various aspects: pleasure, bonding, an obligation, and a commitment, especially to those living together.

Love in the relationship

Sex in a relationship is associated with love. Thus, the notion of love can differentiate the kind of sex that people experience. Although sex is important in a relationship, love also has its role; as Nude argues: "Size matters, but it can't bring love" (Drum magazine, 9 October 2003: 114). It is, thus, critical to understand love within the context of a relationship. Fernando and Snijders argue that, "sexual relations provide most enjoyable and rewarding pleasures" (1997: 6). All my informants were engaging in sexual activities with their partners. Although informants did admit sex was a key component in their relationships, love and feelings for the other person were the main elements that were mentioned when they talked about their involvement in their relationships. Sex was still considered to be fundamental, as it provided a space to

‘really’ express love for one another, by ‘making love’. Snyder defined love as “a metaphor for beliefs, feelings, attitudes and behaviours associated with uniquely human experience” (1992: 62). This shows that the understanding of love will vary from person to person as a fantasy, and will further be shaped by experiences.

Love becomes a more complex concept. Unlike sex that is practical, love is abstract and is confusing as Rebhun points out. “ the informants found love confusing, they did not always know what it felt, they changed their minds, fooled themselves, and made mistakes…… the constant emotional manipulation in the micro-politics of gender relations, and the very human errors people make as they try their best to love one another under very difficult circumstances” (Rebhun, 1999: 161). Love therefore becomes a problem when people have expectation of something that they do not know. When they feel that they are not loved, it is something that is not tangible.

In the First book to the Corinthians, the Bible defines love as patient, selfless, and forgiving, (1Corinthians 13, verse 4-7). The reason behind using the Bible for this quote is that I believe it is a very influential book. Drawing from this, the understanding of love for many people is derived from the definition of love. Love was also a critical component of my informants’ relationships.

> The whole concept of love is a myth. What we need to talk about openly is the fact that partners in a relationship have to meet each other’s terms and also satisfy material expectations; otherwise the thing will never work (Memela, 2002:17)

There is a person who can love you unconditionally, despite all your faults, and can provide a safe space wherein you can explore yourself. Due to the fact that this idea is not often realised, relationships fail, and people continue searching for ‘love’. The

notion of ‘love’ can be seen as an obligation. For instance, one may believe that ‘you love me and therefore you have to make some sacrifices’, as the Bible states that love is unselfish. Reciprocity can also be viewed as a form of expressing love. The importance of a relationship, is, thus, to serve as a support system. One can, thus, summarise this idea by stating that sex can result in love, and love can result in sex.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the dimension of relationships, and the challenges that result from the various definitions of relationships. There is no clear definition of what a relationship is. There are different categories shaped partly by the context people find themselves in, and, as a result, people engage in relationships for different reasons. Relationships are also a form of survival strategy. However, the gist of a relationship is the sexual contact that occurs therein, that Thornton labels a ‘space of dual’.

Relationships are a process, and, therefore, change over time. They are shaped by the needs of the individual at that time. The expectations of a relationship will also be shaped by the needs of that particular individual. I conclude by using Snyder’s argument, as he correctly argues that relationships are a “negotiated reality and are actively constructed within the context of their everyday lives” (1992: 63). This chapter confirms this argument, and shows that relationships cannot be clearly defined as they mean different things to different people. This may be a result of the fact that the meaning of sex cannot be defined, as it is primarily experienced.

Chapter 4: A Critical Analysis of Relationships within the South African Context

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I tried to ascertain how people view and understand relationships, and, consequently, argued that relationships cannot be precisely defined. In this chapter, I will attempt to show how relationships are structured and sustained. In an attempt to reveal this, power dynamics become central in understanding relationships. Studies show that casual relationships are becoming a trend, as there is a fall in the rate of marriage. Understanding relationships becomes critical as they become a substitute for the structures that sustain society. This chapter starts by looking at marriage in an attempt to understand the preference of relationships over marriage. It also examines how relationships are structured and how issues of power come into play. In the previous chapter I mentioned typology of power; in this chapter, I will explore the significance of this power within relationships.

4.2 Marriage is valued

Marriage has been viewed as a part of life that sustains society, because of its role in procreation. In the literature review in chapter 1, marriage and kinship were explained. I showed that marriage and kinship are recognised structures, because marriage is understood as the process that creates a relationship between kin groups (Nanda, 1987). In other words, marriage sustains kinship. In an attempt to understand marriage, it is important to consider the Geertzerian tradition of thick description, as it allows one to unpack phenomena beyond their obvious meanings. When looking beyond the obvious, these findings suggest that marriage is still valued in some

communities. It is like what Rebhun observed with Brazilian community where "many people also discussed the sentiments shared, not shared, hope for, and all too often misunderstood or misinterpreted by men and by women in the pursuit of romance, of marriage, and of sexual experience" (Rebhun, 1999: 151). It is in this confusion that I draw conclusions, where people don't articulates their desires but act them out in the manner that are normally misread.

People do, in fact, value marriage, even though many male informants did not show enthusiasm about it. Marriage was still on their life's agenda: it was not erased from their thoughts, but merely postponed to a later stage in their lives. The value attached to marriage can be viewed as a rite of passage, as it distinguishes between a boy and a man and, similarly, distinguishes between a girl and a woman. The research argues that marriage affords people a sense of belonging, and is, therefore, valued. At this point, I argue that while marriage is valued, we must focus on non-marital relationships. This may seem to be a contradiction, but a considerably increasing number of people choose to be in these relationships. What this study tries to understand is why there is a prolonged time spent within these relationships.

This research argues that marriage is defined by rules and obligation, while relationships depend on the individuals and their needs. When I asked informants to define marriage, most of them mentioned permanence, stability and starting a family. Some included economic advancement when they talked about joint income. Most of these things could be achieved in a non-marital relationship, and, furthermore, marriage could not ensure them. For male informants, marriage was not seen as necessary, while female informants saw relationships as too risky, as there is no protection with regards to the family and the law.

To a certain extent, female informants were mostly influenced by western ideals. As these ideals are flashed in the media and " include romantic love as the basis for marriage and monogamous family structure, principle which came to the force in conjunction with an emerging early modern capitalist system in Europe (Engels, 1942; Jancoiele, 1995; Mac Farlane, 1987). Women want to be married but also want financial security. As we live in the capitalist society, money becomes a tool through which feelings and emotions are expressed.

Sekano's analysis could explain why men do not show enthusiasm about marriage. According to him, the pressure that society puts on men by labelling them 'providers' pushes them away from their homes when they feel that they cannot fulfil that role (2002: 17). Although Sekano tries to provide the reasons behind extra-marital affairs, this also reveals the pressure that men experience in marriage. This pressure explains their preference for relationships outside of marriage. However, this is not only limited to married men, but men who are in stable relationships can also feel this pressure. Steve gives his reason for cheating as follows:

> When you have spent time with a person they start neglecting your needs and stop appreciating you. It makes everyone feel good when he/she is appreciated. I really wanted to spice up my life and I would do that again. I did get attention when I was cheating. I think my girlfriend suspected that I was having an affair and she pulled her act together

It is believed that women within the marital setting are empowered because they are not expected to work hard, as men should provide for them. In the conformist informant group, men emphasized their discomfort with providing, while their female counterparts seemed to enjoy this arrangement. For married informants, it was a given thing that a man should provide 'as he brings more money', even if the woman is also

working. The quotes below show how income plays a significant role for married couples:

> Thami (the name is changed) is the one who pays the bond, the school fees for our daughter and the car. I take care of the house, and buy the groceries and the furniture. This is our arrangement as he earns more than I do; this arrangement is based on our income. (Thobeka)

> When we got married, I had my own house and he also had his house. We both sold our houses and bought the new one, so our house is shared 50/50. But with the bills, Bongani (the name is changed) contributes more because he earns more. I think if I was earning more than he does, it would be other way around, I would be contributing more (Mercy)

In both these cases, men earn more than women. This might seem to be a coincidence, but I argue that it is not. It is a conscious decision that people make when they select their partners. Because men are expected to provide for their families, women will prefer men who earn more than they do, and vice versa. Furthermore, this shows that women benefit in this institution of marriage. Female informants were willing to get married and viewed marriage positively, as something that should happen to every woman. For female informants, marriage was often associated with having children; thus, the value of marriage can be compared to the value attached to having children.

There exists literature that argues that there is dichotomy between the public and private spheres, and that marriage occurs in the private sphere[10]. This literature also suggests that women are oppressed in the private sphere. However, according to Lucas (1985), this dichotomy, whereby women are associated with 'private' and men with 'public', does not put women in an inferior position. Similarly, Keesing and Strathern argue that women are not necessarily 'exploited' in the 'domestic' domain, because women can actually acquire power within this sphere. They argue that Kpelle

[10] Rosaldo argue strongly about this

women support the traditional framework and use it to their own advantage (Keesing and Strathern, 1998:273). This means that association of 'domestic' and 'public', with women and men respectively, does not automatically disempower women, as some literature suggests.

The arguments that depict women as being oppressed in the domestic domain suggest that women will, consequently, fight against the institution of marriage. Moore (citing Ellis) (1986) suggests that many young women are rejecting marriage and are instead experimenting with different kinds of relationships. This argument is supported by Van der Vliet's view that the shift from marriage to relationships is the result of the emancipation of women. This implies that there is growing rate of possible multiple partners and serial monogamy in women. If women are experimenting surely they are experimenting with men (provided we remain within the sphere of heterosexuality), and, thus, it is not only women who are moving away from marriage, but rather both sexes. According to this argument, even though men engage in serial monogamy or multiple partners, it is not only as a result of their choice, but also the choices of women. However, an opinion that exuded strongly from these female informants is that marriage represents stability, especially to those who consider the joint income: it is an easy way out of financial constraints, and, thus, most women prefer marriage to relationships. This challenges the assumption that women are the ones who are oppressed within the marriage institution.

However, this does not suggest that all women are choosing marriage over relationship. In fact, their choices depend on their situation. They might want to get married, but if they can get more outside of marriage they will choose that. Lewinson

shows in her study that women often gave up on the ideals, "instead, they measured a relationship's success with a yard-stick of emotional, connectedness, male persistence and the man's readiness to support their children" (2006: 107). According to Vogler, societal changes lead to "the emergence of new kinds of intimate relationships which are more diverse, fluid and individualistic but at the same time, also much less stable than traditional heterosexual marriages" (2005: 2). Even though women look for other things, stability is still regarded as the critical component of relationships as it gives a sense of security. These are the choices that women make.

This study, therefore, suggests that marriage does not oppress women. It can, in fact, be viewed as an institution that provides women with a platform to take charge of the household. This calls for a further definition of oppression and power that would point out that there is no absolute oppression or absolute power in the context of marriage and relationships. I am not attempting to overlook research that provides the evidence of oppression and abuse of women within the marital setting. However, what is clearly evident in this research is that there are other forms of oppression and power that have been overlooked by these researches. But also women are able to make choice as Cornwall (2002) shows that some women do choose to be outside of marriage, in fact to be outside of both relationships and maariage as both these institutions can prove to be difficult.

It would, thus, appear that men might be the ones who are oppressed by marriage. As a result, many of them postpone marriage. Society, by its virtue of kinships, promotes marriage and does not provide a space for single people. This may result in people feeling pressured to get married, even though they may prefer to remain single. By

postponing marriage, men perhaps hope to enjoy their bachelorhood extensively, as marriage is perceived as taking freedom away from them. Thus, marriage may still be valued, but is treated with scepticism, especially by men.

This conclusion takes into consideration the fact that marriage may not be as stable as informants defined it to be. Harrison points out:

> Sexual networks appear to be highly unstable for women and men, both married and unmarried. The predominant pattern of sexual networking for women seems to be serial monogamy. Marriage appears to introduce a period of extended monogamy with one partner for most women. (Harrison et al, 1997: 105)

However, this study focused on relationships and cannot verify the instability of marriages. Furthermore, observing marriages would require a longer period because of the lengthy processes involved when people decide to separate, which is not the case with relationships. But these findings do draw attention "to the limitations of approaches that use gender as a shorthand for an oppositional imbalance of power in which women are inevitable the losers, and that fail to make sense either of womes's agency or identification" (Cornwall, 2002: 968). This proves that women do have agency, they are not passive victims, but can maupulate the situation to suit their needs.

Marriage empowers women

From my married informants, I realised that women had a significant amount of power, as they were the ones who were responsible for the running of the family. These responsibilities included making decisions on what schools the children should go to, where they, as a family, would live, what food would be eaten, and what

furniture would be bought for the house. However, in some instances, decisions were made in consultation with their spouses. Power within the domestic sphere is normally not perceived as the 'real' power, and men would, therefore, easily give this power to women. Rosaldo "defines 'domestic' as those institutions and activities organized around mother-child groups, while 'public' refers to activities, institutions, and forms of association that link, rank, organize, or subsume particular mother-child groups"[11] (Rosaldo cited in Moore, 1988:22).

Some female informants, especially the married ones, did not see themselves as having power over their partners. Marriage was not viewed as a means of accessing power, but rather as a way of attaining protection. Most female informants who were not married felt that they were ready to get married. They viewed relationships as disempowering, as they do not know where they stand with their partners. Stability for female informants was critical. Power does not seem to be the primary reason for marriage.

I argue that the importance of marriage for younger women is to get total control of their boyfriends so that they (the women) will have the right to know their men's whereabouts. Mandla disclosed that some older men told his friend – who had just been married – that his name would now change to '*uphumaphi uyaphi*' ('where are you from, where are you going?'). Women have power that may not be recognised, but is felt in the household. As a result, you find men running away from their homes and preferring to spend time with friends, in order to get away from 'this controlling freak' (their wives), as they state it. This view manifested itself strongly during the

[11] This is outdated, especially in South African context where women have a presence in the public sphere

male focus group discussion. Unfortunately, there is not enough literature that deals with the frustrations of men within marriage.

The most important thing to note is that the female informants do not equate gaining control with power. Although women are aware that when they get married they can control the household arrangement, this is not interpreted as gaining power. Due to the fact that this control in the household does not equate to power, some people view "marriage as an institution that forces women to become prostitutes because men expect women to give something in return for the stable homes" (Memela, 2002: 17). This equates married women with prostitutes, and suggests that some people believe that men who provide for their women oppress them in this way. However, this interpretation of marriage undermines the power women possess.

Contemporary women who voice their preference for marriage, are supported by the women of the older generation, who prefer their children to get married, as they view non-marital relationships as being responsible for HIV and the AIDS epidemic. These were the views expressed by older women:

> Our nation is dying because our children do not want to get married. Satan is really playing with our children; I don't know where this thing is going. I think, as women, we need to pray so that God can show these children a way. (First older woman)

> I am worried about my son: he is getting older and he is not yet married, I am getting old and there is no one helping me with house chores. Our children view not getting married as their rights and these rights have impacted negatively. They can choose not to get married. What kind of society are we going to have? (Second older woman)

> I somehow understand why our kids do not want to get married; you know with this AIDS thing it is really difficult for our children. But still, I am concerned (because marriage sustains community). (Third older woman)

The older women's perspectives could be viewed in two folds: firstly, as old fashioned, and secondly, as the knowledge that women can access power in the institution of marriage. Although, according to the older women, the emphasis is on sustaining the community, marriage does seem to provide more than that. Relationships have proved to be able to sustain the community, as more and more children are born out of wedlock; but older women still want their children to get married. If women have suffered in their marriages, it is not logical for them to want their daughters to go through the same hardships. I argue that the reason women want their children to get married is because of the power they can access, inside and outside of marriage, as marriage is a rite of passage. 'Inside' refers to what happens between two married people, and 'outside' refers to the external factors that values people according to their positions.

However, the support from older women is perceived negatively by some people, as they suggest that it might a way of controlling young people. Akeroyd (2000), when she cites Baylies and Byjra who conducted research on the gender AIDS Group in Tanzania and Zambia, argues that older women displayed hatred for young people and blamed them for unruly behaviour. The support for marriage that older women show should not be seen as something exclusively positive, but also as a means by which older people create a space to control young women. This theory is supported by some anthropological literature, which suggests that women gain control by controlling other women. I argue that this is not the only way for women to access and exercise power, as they are also able to exercise power over their male counterparts.

The literature that informs female empowerment assumes that men have power, and have always accessed power, at the expense of women. This, however, neglects the aspect of empowering men, in order for them to give power to women[12]. Sipho[13] argued:

> I do not understand why people still want to get married; it is commitment that is not necessary. When you are in a relationship, you can leave at any time. You know sometimes people take advantage when they see that you are serious about them; how much more when you marry? I don't see myself married in the near future; maybe when I'm 35, but definitely not now.

This is the cry for help from men, as no one focuses on them, even though it is perceived as displaying power. This study reveals that the empowerment process does not fully understand the power that women have: it focuses on the areas in which women do not have power. This has resulted in discomfort in many men. It is not uncommon to hear men saying, "we voted for women", as the constitution is geared towards empowering women and assumes that all men already have power. The ideal situation to address the process of empowerment would be using Castaneda's analysis of empowerment which she sees it as a mutual device, which can benefit both parties. Unfortunately, in South Africa, we only deal with female empowerment.

This becomes critical in understanding empowerment processes. For instance, if the assumption that men possess power is accurate, men should be included in this process, so that they know how to share their power. Thus, there is still much that needs to be done with regards to addressing the 'imbalances of the past'. I argue that before one can start to address the problem, it is important to have a full

[12] I do not suggest that men have power, in fact I draw from Silberschmidt (2005) who suggests that strategies to empower women are only meaningful if they are balanced against efforts to deal with men's increasing frustrating situation

[13] Is a 34-year-old man who is living alone. He does not want a steady girlfriend as he claims to be still enjoying his freedom

understanding of said problem. Within the South African context, gender inequalities seemed to be understood at face value, and the impact of the 1980s[14] seems not to have been taken into consideration. Thornton (1992) rightly argues that, as human beings, we are prisoners of the 'illusion of history'. I argue that the view that marriage is an oppressive institution for women, is based on 'illusion of history' when one is looking at the South African context that is influenced so much by what happened in the 80s. Ramphele also poses this question: how do men learn to control women if they grew up with absentee fathers?

Men postpone marriage to later in life

The fact that most men postpone marriage should raise some questions, and I argue that there is a need to focus on men when looking at gender issues. Reasons that were given by men for postponing marriage varied from person to person. Some of the reasons given were these:

> I think there is a lot I need to do and marriage will restrict me in achieving some of my goals. You know when you get married you must have children and be a family man, start attending parents' meetings and so on; marriage comes with responsibility. (Mandla)

> I do not want to get married now because I don't want another person to suffer because of my decisions. I still want to explore and enjoy life and do things like I want to do them, and cannot expect anyone to understand that. I do not want to hurt anyone and that is why I feel that I am not ready for marriage. (Thabo)

> Marriage comes with many limitations. If I can get married today, I cannot decide tomorrow that I want to go back to school because that decision will affect the other person. Going back to school might be the best decision for

[14] This is the significant period that demarcates the behaviour of people. This was a highly violent period; boys and girls were fighting equally with the apartheid government. In rural areas, men were away from homes working in the cities; in the townships, men were away because of exile. Thus, male absenteeism was evident during this period. Where did these men exercise power or where did boys learn that they are powerful or should be in control over women?

> me, but not for the other person. Once you get married it is like selling your freedom, and I am still enjoying it; but I will get married at some point (Sipho)

What one can deduce from this is that South African history, as well as the constitution, plays a crucial role in these decisions. These men have witnessed women gaining power through marriage and, furthermore, women are protected by the constitution. Therefore, men are scared of marriage. Their rights and protection in marriage have been neglected. Men are perceived as being powerful, and in a position to control - and even abuse - power. Mokae re-iterates this when he argues, "the times when women were subservient to men – not because they are inferior, but because paternalistic customs and law dictated it – are over" (Mokae, 2003:16). Yet, the findings in this research show the opposite of what Mokae is suggesting.

On the other hand, women are perceived as victims. Within the South African context this perception is flawed, as, during the Apartheid era, most men were absent in families and, therefore, could not possibly exercise power. Instead, women had to make decisions, as they were the 'heads' of families. The men who were part of my research grew up during this time (the 1980s), as all of them are below the age of 35. For black people in South Africa, there was no space for petty politics, during the period of struggle: people were faced with major politics, which comprised of life and death situations. In other words, there was no time or space for customs - the important thing was to survive in those harsh conditions.

However, authors such as Cornwall, have continued to argue that marriages are traditional and relationships are modern as "in relationships it more likely to be

democratically negotiated and re-negotiated between two equal individuals who make their own decisions about how they want to live together, rather that conforming to traditional gender roles" (citing Jamieson, 1999; Smart and Neale, 1999, pg. 2). To a certain extent, marriage is viewed to be traditionally. But the female informants in this study still wanted to be married. I argue here that people are actively involved in defining what they want; the modern and traditional is actively reconstructed depending on what people need.

Having argued this, it is important to look at other reasons that could attribute to the postponement of marriage. A critical point to note is that there is a shift in the role of marriage itself: it is not only a link with regards to kinship, but can also be a source of economy. This suggests that, for men, marriage not only ensures the attainment of power for women, but it is also beneficial to women's economic situation. In addition to the other reasons that men provided for not wanting to get married, they also stated that they were not ready. This readiness might refer to financial readiness. I have shown above that it is preferable for men and women that men earn more than their female counterparts. But, as our Constitution stands at the moment, women are moving up the economic ladder faster than men. It, thus, becomes difficult for men to find a woman whom they can provide for. Sipho obviously realises this as he says:

> I really do not see why I should get married, because I can get everything I want outside it, but if I decide to get married I will make sure that I marry someone who will meet me half way. I cannot afford to sponsor another man's child - I should take care of my own children. In fact, women have enough opportunities to advance themselves better than us.

Thabo[15] said:

[15] look at the appendix

> I want to be well established, have my own things so that I can be able to provide. I want to be independent first, right now I am focusing on my personal growth - I am even thinking of going back to University, so marriage for me is out of the question. I do not see myself marrying for at least another five years. I do not want to sacrifice or have someone else sacrifice for me

What these informants state here is easier said than done. Although men realise that things are changing, and that it is becoming difficult for them to get better positions in the job market than women, there is still that belief that, as men, they should provide for their partners. Thus, the role of procreation as the deciding factor in getting married appears to have been partly replaced by economic needs. This can, therefore, also explain the postponement of marriage as people want to 'find themselves' before they get married.

These findings suggest that there is a need to empower men, as some of them have been victims of the previous regime. The South African constitution needs to acknowledge the powerlessness of men when it addresses the imbalances of the past. Men feel neglected by the government, as the constitution not only protects women from harmful men, but also from their harmless counterparts. This has resulted in men becoming frustrated, as everything seems to be against them.

What I have argued above shows that it is primarily men who feel the need to postpone marriage, because of the changes in our society. This, however, contradicts Memela's analysis that relationships are embracing a new spirit of freedom, which allows a woman to control her life and determine the quality of her life (2002: 17). In fact, women do want to get married. I argue that this signifies the fact that marriage has not been oppressive towards women, as they still actively choose it.

4.3 Relationships as a platform to explore and to find oneself

Relationships have been viewed as a process towards marriage, and have not been understood as a type of institution. Relationships are not a new phenomenon: in the 1960s, Simons stated that, "social trends in the contemporary society favour a liberal outlook" (1968: 99). This quote might suggest that, if relationships provide a liberal outlook, then, conversely, marriage provides an oppressive outlook. I have, thus far, shown how relationships have become a trend; in this section, I will attempt to show how relationships are maintained.

In chapter 3, I illustrated how informants in relationships are not all the same as each other, and, thus, I grouped them. Based on those groupings, I show how their everyday activities are carried out in the context of relationships. I have further showed that the concept of relationships does not provide the same understanding to different people: this understanding proved to be influenced by the conditions wherein people live.

A significant aspect that manifested itself in this research is that relationships offer freedom, because there is no 'obligation' to provide for someone or even to stay in that relationship. Relationships can, thus, be understood as providing a 'liberal outlook', unlike marriage, during which, one can suggest that one conforms to societal norms. Furthermore, communities do not recognise cohabiting and, thus, they do not interfere in those types of relationships. Consequently, people who engage in these relationships do not experience the pressure of defining how they should arrange

their responsibilities. With marriage, communities interfere, and comments, such as '*umdlisile*' (someone has been bewitched) are used; one can only bewitch someone s/he is married to. Not all informants preferred to be in relationships; nonetheless, relationships provided those therein with a space to be independent[16].

Not only do relationships provide flexibility, but they are also perceived as providing people with peace of mind. There are people who are married but partake in extramarital relationships. In this situation, a relationship affords people with a space to live without rules. Thus, as relationships serve different purposes, there are people who are in different kinds of relationships. In relationships, reciprocity exists on an individual level, while in marriage it is on a family level.

Division of Labour in Relationships

Relationships provide a space for growth, as they are a process. Marriage does not accommodate that. Relationships, therefore, provide the individual parties with power to decide on what they want to do. Sipho[17] explained his reluctance to be in a stable relationship by arguing:

> The psychological burden of a stable relationship is overwhelming and there is no financial gain.

In the group of conformist informants, things were clearly defined. But what does this mean? I have shown, in the previous chapter, how this understanding of men as providers puts pressure on them. According to Jackson, heterosexuality is a system of social relations in which male domination and female subordination are

[16] By independence I mean a situation where people can make decisions about themselves only, without being obligated to think about the other person.
[17] Sipho is a 34-year-old man who doesn't have a steady girlfriend and does not have a child either.

institutionalised and sexualised (1987: 77). Although there is division of labour in the relationships of the conformist informants, the domination of men was not significant.

Some conformist informants were not living with their partners, and individual roles were apparent. In this type of relationship responsibilities are shared in a manner that both parties believe will work for them. Lizeka does the house chores, as she is not working; but she does expect some assistance, especially when it comes to taking care of children. What is important to note here is that, because there is no involvement by the family, the couple can decide what works for both of them. This further depicts the flexibility of relationships.

In some instances, the concept of moving on from a relationship is the result of conflicting interests. Although relationships appear to be a good tool for survival, they do not provide the stability that comes with security. Xoli[18] wants stability and, probably, marriage; however, her boyfriend was not in the stage of getting married. Sometimes in relationships, there are conflicts of interest, which can result in frustrations and a consequent break-up.

Critical analytical informants on the other hand, were clear about the reasons why they are in relationships. What is interesting, though, is that all of these informants were men. For these informants relationships provided a space to explore. This was similar to dependant informants, despite them having different types of relationships to the critical analytical informants. However, for the dependant informants, a

[18] One of the case study informant

relationship is about getting the right person. The power in this group is known and exercised: they take control of their lives.

This fluidity in relationships provided those involved with a space in which to manoeuvre their needs. While men could maintain their freedom, women, on the other hand, would have a space wherein they could be in control, without the interference of the families. Relationships are fluid and cannot be controlled, and it is, therefore, difficult to define them. In a free society people have choices. Context is critical in relationships, and is also accommodated by them. I argue that relationships provide society with happy people, as people have the option of leaving the partner who makes them miserable. However, this statement is said with caution, as there are many people who are involved in meaningless relationships in the hope of getting married or because of fear of the unknown. I argue that it is better to be in a happy relationship that lasts for only three months, than be in an unhappy marriage for three years.

People, who favoured relationships seemed to use them as a support system and those who were critical about relationships, were showing strain that they bring, hence some informants chose not to be in serious relationships. This is captured by Jenkins (2000) when she argues "Sociologists commonly appraise relationships in terms of their structure and function, while psychologists tend to favour more subjective perceptions of relationships, evaluating social support and strain in the eyes of the individual as the key behaviour" (pp.18). Relationships are practical: they address social issues, including economic ones.

Unlike marriage, relationships have been viewed as a system that can empower women. However, there is a view that societal structures are based on patriarchal ideology and will, therefore, inevitably oppress women. Jackson supports this kind of thinking when she looks at heterosexual relationships, as she argues that heterosexual relationships are a "key institution in and through which male power is produced and maintained" (1987: 77). This suggests that people are passive and do not challenge the institution. The challenge may not be organised, but in many, and different ways, people do challenge systems, and find ways to access power.

Relationships are a survival strategy

I have discussed the reasons that make people choose relationships over marriage, but there is also another critical aspect that requires scrutiny. Situations wherein people find themselves play a major role in decision-making, with regards to relationships. (Relationships are not always an option but sometimes they are a survival strategy. Lizeka is cohabiting, and, although she views her relationship as marriage, she is aware that it is not a legal and traditional marriage: she is 'married' in the sense that she and her boyfriend live together as a married couple. Not getting married, both traditionally and legally, was a choice that protected her. She felt that if she were to be married, her family would want *lobola*, the money that would help them survive. Furthermore, as *umakoti*, she would have to show concern about her in-laws, meaning that she and her husband would have to give her in-laws something every month. Not getting married was a strategy of not sharing the little money that they had.

In order to understand relationships, one needs to bear in mind that there are many factors that impact on relationships as Rebhun argues, "these various ideas of love

interacted in complex ways, made more complicated by changes in economic systems, family structure, gender role, and urbanisation" (1999: 149). When people make decisions, these are factors that are at play, it is not just decision based on emotions but decision that address the pertinent issues that a person is faced with at that particular moment.

Another reason for Lizeka not to get married to her partner is that she is HIV positive and she confided in me that she has never slept with anyone besides her boyfriend. When she gave birth to their first child, she tested negative and, three years later when she was about to have a second child, she tested HIV positive. This indicates that the boyfriend probably cheated on her. As a result thereof, Lizeka felt that her partner was not the right partner for her and hoped to find someone better. Yet, she is still with this man. Because of her present situation, she is still living with this boyfriend until she sorts herself out: there is much damage in their relationship and nothing can be done to amend it. According to Lizeka, getting married would complicate things if she ever left this man. Clearly for Lizeka, this relationship is a survival strategy more than a choice.

Dependant informants get into a relationship knowing very well what they want, and that is financial support. These women hope to get married in order to stabilise this support, as it is their source of income. Tumi said: "I need joint income and therefore I want to get married. I cannot afford to buy a bigger house and a bigger car by myself - I need someone who can help me out". It is important to note that the need for some of these informants to get married is brought about by the reality that they cannot afford to live a comfortable life by themselves. These types of women might, at some

point, think that they do need to get married, but then they come to the realisation that men are actually quite handy as they can provide without questioning, as this is part of who they are: the provider. In most cases, these women would want men who earn more that they do, and Tumi emphasised this point. This might result in inequalities of power in a relationship, as this quote shows: "Imbalance of power in the social and economic spheres of life translates into a power imbalance in heterosexual relationships" (Twigg citing Gupta, 1997). However, this does not take into account that men also enter relationships with their specific needs, and 'providing' becomes a form of exchange. Therefore, it does not necessarily equate to imbalances of power.

Most Dependant Informants viewed relationships as a way to support themselves. These informants wanted partners who would help them financially. The relationship was not seen as simply a process to marriage, but as a way of ensuring financial assistance. Although some of these informants do hope to get married, the partners they are with appear not to be the 'right ones'. The Dependant Informants are in these particular relationships simply because of what they can get out of them.

This argument takes into cognisance that the role of *lobola* in the process of traditional African marriages introduces an economic aspect. The complexities of economic aspects are exacerbated by the fact that women now have access to the economy, and this has impacted on their roles in the context of marriage. However, the role of a man as a provider in the household setting has not changed much, regardless of the revolutionary economic stances in society. I strongly argue that this unchanged role for men is the main reason behind why marriage is postponed for 'later in life'.

When women use relationships as a survival strategy, they are seen as victims. Yet, I argue that women are not victims, as they are aware of their situation: they wait for opportunities and can move on. Hence, they prefer not to get married.

4.4 Manifestation of Power in Relationships

Men in the conformist category seemed to, at least, be in a position to negotiate for power. These men could afford to have multiple partners to fulfil their desire, and control these women. In the previous chapter, it was shown that power is infinite: when men exercise their power, women find other ways to exercise their power and when women do this, men feel powerless. This is another reason that allows women to be even more powerful. In a study conducted in Tanzania, shows that it was not only marriage that gave women power, even those that were not married had means to access power. Lewinson argues "while the inside wife had a public status and privilege, bearing children with a man in the context of a longstanding relationship made a woman his wife. A child essentially defined a marriage, not a marriage a child. In turn, caring for the children made a relationship into a marriage"(2006: 106). Children therefore become a way to access power. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

In the group of conformist informants, even while men seemed to be in charge, this came with other responsibilities. This perception that men are in control does not look at the fact that men are chained by this control. In South Africa we are celebrating 18 years of freedom, which includes the empowerment of women. This has, in a very

subtle way, left black[19] men in the dark as they are still expected to provide, although the system gives them less opportunity to be able to provide.

With the group of conformist informants, there were many routes used by women to access power that resulted in gaining control. Thoko had a child out of wedlock and was staying with her parents. What is interesting is that, she is the one who is responsible for making decisions about this child. This even includes the rituals that should be performed. Thoko said that her child belonged to her family because she is not married; but she wanted her child to be baptised into a religion that was not shared by her family. She told her mother that the father of her child belongs to that church, and only then was it agreed that the child would be baptised in that church. Clearly this shows that the mother of the child has the power, as she can, subtly, make the decisions concerning the child.

The child becomes a means of accessing power. Thoko's boyfriend gives her money and she can buy whatever she wants. She told me that she was having problems with her boyfriend and she, therefore, would not allow the boyfriend to see her child; she said: "I don't trust him anymore". Thoko, therefore, punishes her boyfriend by not letting him see his child. So, her boyfriend plays according to her rules and she states that, if they break up completely, he would lose his child for good. These types of situations occur often. It is not talked about we hear about men who do not support their children: we never hear about the women who use their children to get what they

[19] I am using 'black' men because race becomes an issue when we talk about economic issues in the South African context: colonialism, which was deepened by apartheid regime, pushed black people out of the system. This has very deep and rooted scars that will take a long time to fade. 'Black' in this research refers to Africans and I am excluding Indians and coloured people because this is how people were separated during the apartheid era

want. Thoko's boyfriend did not have a say in his child's upbringing, but was still expected to support the child.

Steve also had a similar problem. His girlfriend's family was refusing him access to his child unless he would marry their daughter; he felt that he was not ready for that. (But he had paid at least 'damages'). Our Constitution appears to favour women with regards to issues concerning children, while their male counterparts have no say whatsoever. Legally, a child requires the presence of the mother (Burman and Preston-Whyte, 1992: 58). A child produced out of wedlock then becomes an important asset in providing women with power. This seems to be understood by those involved: men seem to know that they do not have control over their children and, thus, must abide by the rules created by the mother of the child.

Within the context of conformist informants, control is significant, as each party wants control. What this study reveals is that both parties exert control in different ways. (One informant raised a concern about this that if he is called that if someone says '*umuntu wami*' (my person) it is like he doesn't exist anymore, that reduces him. A position that arose strongly from the informants was that one is expected to control the other person. This was not said in words, but was rather observed: men would control women with a promise of marriage; then these men could even cheat, but their partners would stay, in the hope of eventually getting married and attaining ultimate control. As Cornwall argues, "Women's effective economic independence does not deter men from exercising authority or women from submitting to it" (2002: 972). Men too, have their own tactics that they employ to gain or maintain power as it were.

Power does not equal control. I differentiate between power and control as power includes physical strength, which is automatically perceived as a male trait, although there are women who are physically strong. Furthermore, as our constitution protects women from all kinds of abuse - which includes being beaten by the partner - this strength does not benefit the man in any way. Power is often mistaken as being able to control - that is an abuse of power. This study shows that both men and women in relationships acquire power, although this acquisition is very subtle. The problems that arise in relationships are caused by a need to control or to 'own' a person.

What needs to be clarified here is that, although these informants seemed to be conforming to societal norms, there was a form of questioning from both male and female informants. Male informants did not want to get married, even though society makes marriage a necessity. What is interesting is that male informants would not actually say that they did not want to get married; they just said that they did not want to get married at present: they push marriage to a later stage in life, and emphasise the need for their freedom.

Ortner argues that women's subordination is universal. (Moore citing Ortner, 1988). There is a foundation that has been created around gender, and it assumes that women are oppressed. What I question is this: are women really oppressed? My question is supported by Ortner's view that the association of women with the 'private', and men with the 'public' is a cultural construct, which is not inherent in the biological nature of the sexes. I add to this view by arguing that if the association is constructed, it is not surprising to find women reflecting power in the sphere that is associated with them. Because of the equal power that men and women have, in whatever sphere

these sexes are associated with, they will exert power. The problem with power is the definition attached to it that obscures us from seeing other people exerting power. Power should be viewed as relative and specific to the individual involved (Jenkins, 2000: 19). These findings show men as silent in the domestic sphere as in the private sphere, where women seem to be silenced.

Women use sex to control men

I have shown that dependant informants use relationships as an institution that benefits those involved. However, this group of informants are condemned as their views on relationships can be seen as immoral, and Memela boldly writes, "It is difficult to outright condemn this socio-sexual behaviour as prostitution, when women define pursuit of love and material comfort as her human right" (Memela, 2002:17). Such a statement undermines the power women have. Women's bodies have been made into a commodity through the media, and there are many feminist movements that have tried to condemn this. But this portrayal of women's bodies as a commodity has also benefited women, as they can sell or use their bodies as a bargaining tool.

However, the power that has been created around the female body is not recognised by many women. In fact, many women believe that men are the stronger sex; therefore, they (women) are the weaker sex and should be provided for. What does it mean to be weaker and stronger? Thandi viewed herself as weak, as she defined 'strength' as being only physical. Thus, she could not see herself as having the potential to gain strength. She would normally say:

> [Zodwa] you must admit, we were created unequal and there is nothing you can change. We get hurt easily, we cannot do some jobs because we are not

> strong; basically we are dependant on them and they are aware of this. This is why they do as they please - because they have power.

Sexuality has been politicised, and Jackson argues that there is a need to depoliticise sexuality, and develop a theory on heterosexuality that would view women not as victims, but as human beings in their own right. One of the main obstacles in achieving this is that, to a certain extent, these informants believed in this politicisation of sexuality. I argue that one of the ways to empower women is by showing them the power they already possess.

I argue that women have many tools with which they can use to control men. For instance, in this group, women use their bodies to control men. Men can use money to control women, but not all men have enough money to provide for women. However, all women have bodies at their disposal.

Men who do not have money are disempowered

Having multiple partners for men was one way of controlling women and gaining power, as women would somehow be forced to reduce their demands because of the competition. However, this game becomes tricky because men want to ensure that the woman does not see that he is cheating, but should only suspect it. Having multiple partners also has some requirements: one must have material things, in order to attract more women.

The South African constitution has afforded women many opportunities. The group of independent informants consisted of examples of women who have accessed the opportunities made available to them by the government. In the beginning of this

chapter, I mentioned how women prefer men who earn more than they do. These are some of the requirements that women mentioned:

> I cannot go out with someone who does not drive a car (Xoli)
>
> He needs to drive a better car than mine (Tumi)
>
> He must have a decent job (Lerato)
>
> Qualification counts a lot, for me, because even if he is not earning much now, I know that he still has a chance to grow at work and earn better (Zanele)

Clearly this shows that men who do not have money are not viewed as 'real' men. "Men can see that these women are no longer dependant on them. Those empowered women will be fine without a man, so he must now respect her and also behave" (Twigg quotes one of her interviewees). For example, if partners do not live together, a boyfriend has to provide a place where the relationship can occur, and this comes with a responsibility that many men - who are not employed and who live in small houses with their families - cannot afford to provide. They are, therefore, sidelined.

Some men do not mind providing for their partners. Thabo said he regarded his partner as *ubaby* (baby, the slang used in the townships which refers to a girlfriend) and, he therefore, saw it as his responsibility to take care of her. This went further to providing a place for a relationship. If both partners still live with their families, it is the man's duty to provide a place for the relationship to transpire.

4.5 The Contestation of Power in Relationships

What becomes apparent in this chapter is that power in relationships does not belong to one particular group. Both males and females access power, but it comes at a price.

This chapter reveals that there are plenty of power dynamics within relationships, which are not always perceived as power.

Female power

It can be argued that women achieve total power when they get married, but before they are married, sex becomes an important tool to use in order to access power. Those women who live with their boyfriends share responsibilities. In this setting, things are negotiated to accommodate individual needs. For example, Xoli said: "I tell him to clean the house: he is not working, and I provide, so he must do house chores". Arguing that relationship as an institution oppresses women would be ignoring the negotiations that exist within this structure.

There is an old debate in anthropology dealing with social institutions and the oppression of women (see, Rogers, 1978; Sanday, 1974; Strathen, 1984; Tiffany, 1978, Moore, 1988 and Rosaldo, 1974). Some view social institutions as being oppressive to women, while others argue that women access power within these institutions. The problem lies in the definition of power itself.

According to Rosaldo, ideas about women and 'domestic space' place women in a subordinate position. Rosaldo suggests that, in order to bring about a more equitable society, there must be a transformation of institutions and ideologies, so that women are allowed into the 'public' space. Despite Moore's criticism of Ortner's and Rosaldo's work as being culturally specific, these ideas continue to inform academics. Mager draws on Rosaldo's argument that it is women's association with the 'domestic space' that facilitates their oppression. She argues that men's power rests on their

domination over women in domestic domains (1995:52). This does not appear to be the case with respect to my informants.

Again Lucas's (1995) case study in Alexandra confirms the dichotomy between the spheres of men and women. It depends on how people view these institutions. Furthermore, people are not homogenous and some might see women's authority in the domestic sphere as translating into female power and autonomy, rather than arguing that these women remain subordinate.

There is, however, continuity in seeing women as subordinates in heterosexual relationships. Some authors still write about this subordination, especially with the emergence of HIV and AIDS. As Jenkins argues: "For communities of women most at risk, whatever power they can claim as individuals may be more than they can mobilize at other structural levels" (Jenkins, 2000: 2). The South African constitution further enhances women's means to access power. The power of men is a belief more than a reality. What I am attempting to illustrate here is how difficult it is for people to separate imaginary power from real power. In order to understand relationships, we must accept that there are different things that bring about the dynamics therein, such as: economic status, level of education and religious affiliation. These are the situations that determine some of the elements that occur in relationships. Thus, I support Tiffany's suggestion that "there is a need of formulation of new models, concepts and terminology for researching the social structure and organisation of female/male relationships in contemporary social systems" (1978: 48). Although this literature is relatively old, I believe that very little has changed with regard to the views on the subordination of women.

Women, perhaps unknowingly, are aware of the power that marriage provides: marriage legalises their power. While in relationships, women's power is negotiated. Both young and old women do benefit from marriage as they can exercise control. Although a fair amount of literature shows marriage as being oppressive to women, these findings show the power that women actually gain from marriage. It is important to differentiate between a belief and a fact. The subordination of women may be a belief more than a reality. Many people who study gender simply reproduce what they believe to be true, not what is actually happening. (I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6). This becomes critical because this belief overlooks the dynamics within society. For instance, within the South African context, many women hold parliamentary positions, so the question is: if women have been, and still are oppressed, where have these women in positions of power come from, and where did they get all the experience

I further argue that the power women access within the marital setting can explain the issue of extra-marital affairs. Mokae suggests, "a nagging wife would lead a man needing comfort from an extra-marital affair" (2002: 17). Married men try to escape the pressure they encounter in their marriages by having an extra-marital affair. Thus, seeing women as victims because their partners are having extra-marital affairs can be somewhat biased, as it fails to look at the bigger picture that puts men's behaviour in context. In other words, it fails to take into account how wives may also be partly to blame for extra-marital affairs, in some cases.

Male Power

Although men would talk about women taking charge, they still viewed women as the weaker sex. They would refer to women as being emotional and sensitive, and would also mention their (men's) superior physical strength. These reasons were used to justify the fact that men should take care of women. Men have found ways to empower themselves by escaping marriage. The power that men have is deciding whether they want to get married or not. Tumi once said, "If it was women who proposed marriage to men, all men would be married". This is the power that men have: making the decision to get married, for both parties. Yet, I argue that, once men have exercised this power, they provide women with an opportunity to exercise their own power as well. The low rate of marriage and high rate of divorce could be understood in this manner: men may have realised that when they get married they shift the power to the woman. "Men have emotional dependency on women, which is hidden even from themselves" (Volger, 2005: 4)

Within the South African context, it is important to note that while marriage may afford women power, the constitution also empowers women. Might this have contributed to men noticing the imbalances of gender with regards to power? What is interesting to note is that not many studies have managed to depict the imbalances of power that are facilitated by the 'emancipation' of women. Many studies portray the oppression of women and, hence, power is geared towards women. What is not taken into consideration is that power is not absolute, as it depends on many things. In chapter three, I discussed the perception of power, which is not real: the power that men have been believed to have is just a perception of power, not actual power.

The critical point is that people involved in a particular situation do not see things the way they actually are: this is what is called internalisation. Men have internalised the idea of having power: even if they no longer have it, they still think they do. Women, on the other hand, have internalised oppression, and they still think that men abuse them, even though they have developed strategies to 'fight back'.

4.5 Conclusion

Relationships benefit individuals, while marriages are assumed to benefit families. Indeed, relationships are an institution and within families they are recognised, although not favoured. It is important for us, as researchers, to acknowledge institutions before we discuss 'single parenting' concepts. From these findings I cannot conclude that women are rejecting marriage, although the majority of my female informants were not married. Yet, I can assume that men are rejecting marriage. It has been argued that women reject marriage because it is oppressive. I could, similarly, argue that men reject marriage because it is oppressive to them.

Most gender studies show that women are oppressed. Marriage is seen as the worst institution that oppresses women. However, other anthropologists argue that the private sphere is controlled by women. This research reveals that power is infinite: women do exercise power, but not over a person. In relationships women negotiate for the things they want. However, in other instances, women do exercise power over men. Relationships provide a space wherein women can manipulate men, in order to punish them or get what they want. Women are, thus, not victims in relationships. The situation could, in fact, be viewed in the converse: that men are victims. As a result thereof, men are the ones who complain about relationships.

An example is the case of rural women: plenty of literature suggests that these women are struggling, a statement I completely agree with. However, this tends to create a picture that, while the women are struggling, their male counterparts live comfortably. In fact, most rural men work hard as mine workers, for example, and have had to leave their families, not by choice, but because they had to provide. Literature on mine workers shows the pain that these men undergo every day of their lives. Connecting these issues make sense, as we start seeing communities as a whole, not divided by gender, and that the struggles are experienced by everyone involved. It is this that I wish to draw attention to: the fact that men, in these cases, also struggle, and this knowledge should be made evident.

The definition of power is usually perceived as finite, but clearly power is infinite, and can be accessed by everyone. People are not helpless victims: they can, in their own ways, find strategies to deal with their everyday obstacles. In this instance, women really can find ways to access power, and they can be truly untouchable

because of the tactics they use in order to get what they want. Older women do not only support marriage because it provides them with a platform to exercise power to *umakoti* (this is, in fact, disappearing), but they also support it because they know that marriage will afford their daughters power. Thus, older women dislike *abomakoti*, because they know that they control their sons.

Many studies argue that men have power, and that relationships are preferred by men: how could men hate an institution that gives them power? The focus on empowering women has worked in reverse, because it has empowered men, although this has been done in a subtle manner.

Chapter 5: Impact of Relationships in the Spread of HIV/AIDS

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the types of informants used in this research, as well as the contexts wherein relationships occur. In Chapter 3, I also argued that sex qualifies and defines a relationship. Within the context of HIV and AIDS, it becomes critical to understand the role that relationships play in the spread of HIV and AIDS. In this chapter, I analyse my observations in order to understand the behaviour of informants in, and, thus, attempt to find what the role of this behaviour is in the spread of the epidemic. There were no direct questions asked regarding the issue of HIV and AIDS. There were, however, questions about people's perception of sex. Sex, within the context of heterosexual relationships, is also explored in this chapter, as it has been argued that these relationships are the main means of transmission of HIV.

The previous chapters show that non-marital relationships have become a trend in contemporary South Africa. However, they carry many complexities, especially in these times of HIV/AIDS. It is, thus, critical to understand the impact of relationships on the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially amongst young people. Castaneda argues that, "There has been little focus on the relationship context and its possible link to HIV risk reduction behaviour". (2000: 1). This suggests that it is important to focus on the context of relationships, as it shapes people's behaviour. Addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS requires a closer look at behavioural patterns.

Surely, if HIV and AIDS are transmitted during the process of a relationship, there is an urgent need to scrutinize this 'structure' of relationships. The focus of this chapter

is to look at the sexual behaviour of informants: this includes their understanding and practices of sex. However, to put things into perspective, we need to understand the context in which cultural practices are constructed. Therefore, I will begin by discussing the South African historical background of HIV and AIDS, in an attempt to show how it has been understood, and how the past has impacted on our understanding of the epidemic.

5.2 The South African context

The point of departure is acknowledging that AIDS is a problem in South Africa. The 2008 national estimate of HIV prevalence among South Africans of all age groups is 10,6%. (Research conducted by HSRC, MRC and CADRE in 2008). In Africa, the most common cause of infection is through heterosexual[20] sexual relations, while transmission from mother to child is the second most common cause.

South African history contributes to the spread of AIDS:

The South African context, in which HIV and AIDS occurs, is different from any other country in the world, as it is shaped by our historical background. This history does not only affect the government's response towards the HIV and AIDS, but also affects society at large. The persisting spread of HIV and AIDS in South Africa is rooted in its history, which is characterised by the mobility of large populations. This mobility, which is one of the consequences of the past regime, provides a space for the spread of disease. During the Apartheid era, the disruption of families was

[20] This does not suggest that homosexuals do not exist in Africa; in fact, I suggest that perhaps we need to further examine homosexuality, because the rate of infections is explainable when we look at scientific explanations of transmission of the virus. According to Searle "the virus is actually weak and difficult to transmit" (Searle, 2001: 76). There are studies that suggest that in South Africa we have bisexuals, which raises concerns as strategies to address HIV are not focusing on homosexuals as they are not perceived as a significant group of people especially in black communities.

significant in forms of migrant labour and sending people into exile. Women were, thus, forced to be heads of the household. In Chapter 4, I mentioned the particular struggle of one man, in order to show how this produces the pattern that relationships and marriage have taken.

The attempts made by the government to curb the disease seem to be in vain, as the disease continues to spread. This might be based on Grundlingh analysis that "Apartheid not only caused severe underdevelopment amongst the black population but also ensured that the government would have no credibility amongst them – essential ingredient for effective action against AIDS" (2001: 28). This notion of the government not having credibility is exacerbated by the debates surrounding AIDS made by different stakeholders, and this has heightened people's scepticism about the epidemic.

The politicization of AIDS

In South Africa, HIV and AIDS have also been politicised, as Searle shows in her research, where she looked at the construction of AIDS in the media. Searle (2002) argues that HIV and AIDS in the media have been used to promote other people's agendas. Before the new democratically elected government came into power, AIDS was perceived as the disease of the 'other', and the government could, therefore, not do much about it. According to Heald, "In Southern Africa, these coincide with entrenched social divisions, most signally of black/white, these carry a political load, operating to locate the Government and its spokespeople on one or other side of the social and epistemological divide" (2001: 13).

However, the informants did not emphasise history as having an impact on the spread of HIV and AIDS. But informants' understanding of and their views on relationships, showed the impact of our past. Later in this chapter I show how relationships are a field of HIV transmission, as sex qualifies a relationship, and sex is one of the means by which HIV is transmitted in the context of relationships.

I argue that the context of this behaviour is South African history; this will be portrayed in the manner in which people understand the issues surrounding them. This historical background is what we need to bear in mind when attempting to understand relationships. One of my informants said warnings about AIDS remind him of missionaries: they came and told people how to live their lives, and he argued that he will not allow that to happen again. This shows that in South Africa, people are still very sceptical of others' intentions

5.3 Sexual negotiation

Various research has shown male domination in sexual negotiation. Maforah and Jewkes (1998), in their study conducted among Xhosa-speaking adolescent women in South Africa, found that their male partners defined conditions and timing for sex and the women had to submit to them. Because of the idea that men are in control of sexual negotiation, there is a call for African woman to redefine and renegotiate their sexual relationships (Ulin, 1992). However, this paints a picture of African woman as being passive (Castaneda, 2000). Nnko and Robert support this with their findings on the study they conducted in Tanzania, and argue that it was clear that boys do put pressure on girls, but they also found that girls were competent enough to negotiate

sexual deals (1997: 89). Applying pressure does not equate to negotiating. What becomes evident here is that men initiate sex, but women negotiate sex.

Men are expected to initiate sex, as it is perceived that they have an excessive sexual drive. Thus, men do not expect to gain anything material from the sexual act, except pleasure, while women have an ambiguous need to have sex that combines pleasure with financial gain (Nnko and Robert, 1997). This puts women in a better position for negotiating. Although men were expected to initiate sex, my female informants were in charge of refusing or accepting men's advances, depending on their moods. This attitude from female informants is similar to Castaneda's explanation of traditional sexual script. To show that female informants were in charge of sexual negotiations, Themba said:

> We don't really discuss if we are going to have sex or not. But sometimes we will start by kissing and one thing will lead to another and if she doesn't want to go that far, she will then say no and I have to accept that and stop, although it is very frustrating. But you don't just stop without trying your luck: if I have to, I push further, and if she persists with 'no' then I know she really doesn't want to go that far.

A female informant from a focus group said:

> When we are in bed he will start touching, you know, if I want it that night I will respond; then one thing will lead to another and we end up having sex. But if I don't want to - maybe he made me angry - when he touches me, I'll push his hand away, so he knows that I don't want to and he stops immediately

These findings show that, in relationships men initiate sex. What was strongly apparent, in both male and female focus groups, was that men have to show more interest in sex and initiate sex, as they are perceived as having more sexual drive than

women[21]. Although men are supposedly the ones who negotiate sex, in practice they do not have control in the negotiation.

Heterosexual relationships are often marked by differential power that is culturally defined (Jenkins, 2000). According to Jenkins, this differential power affects the sexual decision-making. Even though sexual decision is based on the power differential that one is expected to negotiate, what is made obvious in this study is that, when one exercises power, that person does not take power away from the other person. This is the concept discussed in chapter 3, that power is infinite. Power that people exert may be different, but it does not mean one partner has more power over the other. Jenkins acknowledges "The romanticization and even sexualization in the popular media of women's submission to men's preferences has also undermined women's willingness to assert the importance of their own safety" (2000: 18). This study shows that women are in the position to assert themselves.

This does not negate the literature that shows the immense sexual abuse of women. However, what I wish to emphasise is that some women are capable of negotiating for sex. Even though they are perceived to be in a compromised position, they do find strategies to do this. In the previous chapter, I showed how women have gained power through the portrayal of their body as a commodity. Sometimes, we need to deepen our thinking in order to find the power women exert in their relationships.

[21] I do not discuss this in detail as it not the focus of this chapter, but it does highlight the fact that culture is constructed and has internal and external influences. Informants emphasized men as having more sexual drive. My informants were all literate, and could access magazines easily, where this concept of 'men having more sexual drive' is often discussed. Furthermore, the biological sciences also reinforce this when they talk about testosterone. Thus, I argue that another reason that makes people think that men should negotiate for sex is not only cultural, but is also influenced by these 'western' beliefs of men having more sexual drive than women.

Silent Negotiation

I have argued that women negotiate sex, but there were no words used during this negotiation. Yet, even though there are no words used, those involved still understand this is a negotiation. Sexual negotiation is silent: people do not communicate with words when or if they want to engage in sex, but they act out their needs, and the other party reads them. This forms part of communication, and sexual negotiation is communicated, silently. This is very significant, especially when we look at how people have been told to negotiate the use of condoms (I discuss this further under 'condom negotiation'). Often, when there is no clear communication, people are misunderstood and misinterpreted. Even though people do not use words as often, messages are transferred in signals that should be understood by the relevant party.

Men also highlighted the subtleties and difficulties around these silent negotiations. They expressed their frustrations when they have misread the signals. Steve said:

> Sometimes I feel scared to respond to her signals. The other day when I thought she really wanted it, and I thought I was going with the flow, I learnt later that she was not in the mood to go to that level - all she wanted was just a kiss, and from my previous knowledge, a kiss was a preparation for sex. But for her, it was a different story. Now I'm very careful: I have to wait until she touches me there, you know…

This situation is not unique to Steve; other men narrated similar stories. This silence surrounding negation is critical, as some sexual abuse cases arise from this. Further, this raises concerns on HIV/AIDS prevention, as men do not seem to be in a better position to negotiate for sex.

Type of a relationship influences the negotiation

Dependant informants deliberately give away their control when it comes to sex, in exchange for support. One way of getting support is to show that one is committed in

a relationship. Tumi clearly told me that she wants to be a woman in a relationship and, according to her belief, a woman is taken care of by a man. However, this comes with a price. Gupta and Wiess, who also view women as making their decisions based on their realities, argue "the urgent need for an approach to prevention that is grounded in the realities of women's lives and sexual experiences". (1993: 399).

Literature shows that poverty has put women at a disadvantageous position, where they have to sell their bodies in exchange for economical support (Walker 1999, Ulin, 1992 Leclerc-Madlala, 2000). Thus, sex is used to maintain the relationship. In this manner, sex is definitely not an individual choice, as one must think for the other person. Individualism and freedom of choice is not universal (Swart-Kruger and Richter, 1997: 964).

Tumi stated: "For someone to spend money on you, he must trust you and trust is earned". She meant that a man must be convinced that the woman loves him alone in order for him to spend money. Sex can, thus, be used as a tool to show trust: this is done by giving someone (most probably the man) control over sex. As Bond points out, "Any sexual relationship between women workers and supervisors, for example, is not necessarily a clear case of sexual harassment or exploitation, since some women openly like power to negotiate a favour in exchange for sex, and would see this as a 'good' thing" (Bond, 1997: 81). Female informants in the dependant category did not view giving away control over sex as a bad thing, as they received 'support' in return.

For people who live together, sex is normalised. When sex is normalised, it is no longer negotiated. Dependant informants felt that it was important for them to show

that they trust their partners in exchange for material support. There are many sacrifices in this kind of relationship, as Thandi shows:

> Sometimes you have sex with your partner, even if you don't feel like it, because if you don't, he will go and get it somewhere else.

People put themselves in situations that make it difficult for them to be in a position to negotiate sex, as Swart-Kruger and Richter argue: "Several analyses have shown that for many women in general and in poor, developing societies in particular, sex is not simply a function of rational decision" (1997; 964). However, this over-generalizes this view on sex, and also undermines the rationality some women use in understanding and using their bodies. To view them as not being rational when making decisions about sex creates a picture that they are not in control of what they do. In this study, women proved to be in control of their sexual lives, and they made decision on how and with whom they want to have sex.

The critical point to note here is that this lack of control is based on women's choices and priorities. It is not only about suppression, but is also about choosing what is important at that particular time. These women choose not to take charge of their lives sexually, since they can get what they want from their men without doing so.

Men cannot reject women's advances

Above, I have shown how the conditions women find themselves in influence the decisions they make in relation to sexual negotiations. This might suggest that men are in control of sexual negotiation. Women use sex as a bargaining tool: if a woman gives a man all the sex he wants, a woman has the right to make other demands. We have seen how women can reject men's advances if they are not 'in the mood' (this is

the term that was used by informants referring to not wanting sex at that particular time), but it seems to be difficult for men to do the same.

In this chapter it becomes evident that men are not in control, even of their needs. Steve clearly does not want to have sex with his girlfriend, but he feels obliged to do so. Men do not only have to negotiate sex, even if they do not feel like it, but they also cannot reject women's advances. Sipho said:

> Women think we are machines. They expect us to be 'ever ready power plus' to always be in the mood. We are also human beings, and, just like them, we do get tired and it's not like sex is the only thing on our minds. But it is difficult to say that to your partner. She might think you don't love her or you are seeing someone else. You find yourselves having sex, even if you don't feel like it, just because your woman has initiated it.

In the conversation I had with Steve, when he was telling me about the difficulties he experiences living with a girlfriend, sex negotiation came up, as he said:

> She made me angry, but I understand and I am trying to forgive her. Having sex with her is difficult, but I cannot tell her that I have to pretend to enjoy, after all I am man: I have to enjoy sex all the time. Having sex with her has become a duty, and I know she won't understand if I tell her how I feel right now.

Some studies have suggested that men are in control of their sexuality. Akeroyd stresses this perception as she argues, "Men are generally far less likely to have sexual intercourse forced on them than are women" (2004: 93). However, this over-simplifies the process of sexual negotiations. It assumes that men are mostly in control of their sexual activities. This does not take into account the fact that men do not have a space to talk about cohesion.

Sbu related a story: when he was working in the Eastern Cape, he went to a party. He was young then - in his early twenties. Late at night he decided to go and sleep, as he

felt tired. As he was sleeping, he heard something in the room and, when he woke up, he saw this naked old woman coming towards him. Because he was in shock, he screamed; some people came, and when they saw this naked woman they left him with her. The following day when he met with his friends, they told him, "Idiot! How can you not want to eat the meat in front of you?". He said he felt embarrassed because he could not take advantage of the situation, and also that he learnt that he should not reject a woman's advances, and if he ever did, no-one must know about it.

This story highlights the pressure that men are under because of the expectation from their 'excessive' sexual drive. Clearly, men are not in control: there is pressure that stems from the notion that men are negotiators. Furthermore, men are not allowed to reject women's advances, as they will be regarded as *ubhari* (slang, referring to an idiot). This signifies the pressure that men experience when it comes to sex negotiation.

Furthermore, men are not only unable to reject women's advances, but they also have to satisfy women. Satisfying a woman can mean two things: satisfying her sexually, but also satisfying her by providing her with material assets. In chapter 3 I showed how it was important for a man to have the 'right size'. Having the 'right size' adds to the importance of satisfying a woman. This idea of satisfying a woman can put men at risk: unprotected sex is associated with satisfaction. The sexual act can, thus, be viewed as symbolic of male and female roles in a particular society. It is this symbolic view attached to sex - and not power relations, as some studies suggest - that determines whether sex will be safer or not.

5.4 Condom negotiation

In the above section, I discussed sexual negotiation. What became evident in this research is that sexual negotiation did not equate to condom negotiation. Most men believe that it was their responsibility to negotiate for sex; however, some studies suggest that power relations are a marker in sexual decision-making, to such a degree that males decide whether or not to use condoms. This suggests that the risk of spreading HIV is unlikely to decrease because women do not have bargaining powers to negotiate for sex (Letamo and Bainame, 1997). In this study, most men seemed to find it difficult to negotiate for condom use in stable relationships, while women could easily find reasons to introduce condoms. If the men tried to introduce condoms, the implication is that either he has slept with another woman or is suggesting that his girlfriend is cheating on him. Both these implications were not pleasant for men, if they still wanted to maintain the relationship.

Understanding condom negotiation becomes critical, as many authors have used sex negotiation as a proxy for condom negotiation. This implies that if men are the sex negotiators, automatically they are the ones who negotiate for condoms as well.

How does negotiation come into play? Steve says:

> It is difficult to negotiate condoms with your steady girlfriend, but with a casual partner you just say ‘let me put on a condom’. But with your steady girlfriend it is difficult; I even hide condoms, because if she finds them she will know what I do something behind her back and I don’t want her to find out. I respect her so much… I cannot think how would I introduce condoms to her. Let’s say I just say to her, ‘let me put on a condom’, and she asks ‘why?’ What will I say? No, I cannot even try to introduce the subject.

This shows that men are not automatically in a position to negotiate condom usage. In the study of gay men that was conducted by Henriksson and Mensson, it was discovered that “in most cases it was the passive partner who would introduce a

condom into the negotiation, and if the passive partner (penetrated partner) did not put the condom on the negotiation table, the act was an unsafe one" (1995: 170). One might argue that gay relationships are different from heterosexual relationships because of power dynamics that might take place. This shows that even the seemingly passive partners are capable of negotiating for condoms. In fact, this study reveals that women are the ones who would normally introduce the condom, if it were to be used because they can come up with sound reasons to use condoms

Lizeka stated that, after she discovered her HIV positive status, she insisted on condom use with her partner and her partner did not object to it. Although I have argued that those women who are dependant on their partners do give away control of their sexuality to their partner in exchange for support, this does account for these women not negotiating for condom use, as some authors suggest.

In the study conducted by Van Wyk, which attempted to understand a low incidence of condom use, the issues that emerged as barriers to negotiating condom use were discovered. They were: negative attitude towards condoms; condoms seen primarily as contraceptives; perceived invulnerability and projection of negative, stigmatized aspects of AIDS or sexuality onto others, and the meaning attached to various stages or forms of a relationship (1995: 31). Power relations did not come up as the main reason behind low condom use. Instead, women proved to be in a position to negotiate for sex, as they could develop sound excuses to use condoms.

The Impact of the Type of a Relationship in Condom Negotiation

The type of relationship one is in determines whether condom usage will be negotiated or not. To account for people not using condoms, we need to find the underpinning factors that make people decide whether or not they are going to use condoms. Although there is a strong view that sexual negotiation lies in power dynamics, in a relationship, the manifestation of these powers comes in different forms, resulting from the cultural context in which they occur. (Henriksson and Mansson cite Bolton, 1995). Harrison *et al*. rightly argue that, "It is important to understand that partner networks are fluid and changing, not static" (1997: 106).

The type of relationship that a couple finds itself in determines whether condoms will be used or not. This can be determined at the onset of the relationship, or as the relationship progresses. Independent informants depict this argument clearly. When this group of informants enter into a relationship they want stability, and relationships that might lead to marriage. Sex also has to reflect this aspect of trust and commitment in the relationship. This puts people in a disadvantageous position in terms of condom negotiation. Trust also becomes an important aspect of a relationship. Lerato said:

> When you make love it is another way of bonding, expressing your love; after sex, we feel that we have become closer, we connect at another level and in no other way can we reach that level. It is something amazing: that's how sex feels if it is with someone you love.

Van Devanter et al. argue: " the need to practice safer sex created barriers to intimacy and healthy sexual relationship in some male couples" (1999: 183). Harrison *et al*. add to this by stating that, "women expressed trust in their regular partners, even though there were presence of STIs" 1997: 105). Castaneda also found that those who

had higher commitment scores were less likely to see themselves at risk of contracting HIV and were less likely to use condoms. (2000: 3) Independent informants showed a high level of commitment in their relationships, and commitment has to be reflected through trusting one's partner. Independent informants would not fall into the normally defined 'vulnerable group', but still prove to be vulnerable because of the type of relationship they engage in. This challenges this notion of 'vulnerable' communities.

I have shown that at times sex is normalised in relationships. In this instance, sex is a part of everyday activities that are not negotiated, and, therefore, condom negotiation is compromised. But sex becomes integrated with normal activities, as Xoli explains:

> When you are staying with someone, sex becomes part of your activities like doing laundry, whether you enjoy it or not; sometimes it is out of the question - you have to fulfil that task, but sometimes it is enjoyable.

For independent informants, condom negotiation did not exist because of the kind of relationship they were in. These informants longed to be in a stable relationship and would convince themselves that the person they have met is the right one. From the outside, independent informants appear to be in a position to make 'informed decisions', but what has become evident is that, dependence is not only measured by material things. There are other forms of dependence, such as emotional dependency; therefore, poverty is not the only measurement of dependence.

It has been taken into consideration that, even in the independent informants group, power dynamics exist, as these informants are dependant on their male partners to provide them with emotional support and to provide them with a sense of belonging. This shows the complexities of relationships: because of this dependence in

relationships, other things might not be considered as important, because the important thing is to keep the partner and maintain stability.

Several studies have used poverty as the main reason for practicing unsafe sex, but independent informants show that this is not always the case. People have different reasons for being in relationships, and those reasons compel them to remain in that relationship. There is also emotional dependency that is equally as dangerous as poverty. Castaneda states:

> Many studies demonstrate that condom use occurs more often in casual, compared to primary, relationships, even when objectively defined risk exists in a primary relationship. Because the social, or relational, context in these two situations is quite different, the meaning of condom use may be very different, thus affecting participants' decisions to use condoms. (2000: 13)

The Critical analytical informants do not conform to societal norms, and can be perceived as deviant informants. This group of informants has their own understanding of relationships. Some of these informants admitted to being in multiple relationships or partaking in serial monogamy. With this category, multiple 'partnering' was evident. There are relationships that are viewed as serious relationships, casual relationships, and 'sexual healer' relationships (which are purely about sex). Sex negotiation, thus, depends on the specific type of relationship. Most of these informants talked about the importance of using condoms in different types of relationships. There were relationships that they viewed as less risky, wherein they could 'make a mistake'. Normally, these would be the relationships with people they knew, even though they were not in the steady relationship with them. Knowing someone's past seemed to be the key to determining someone's HIV status. This clearly shows that informants practice safer sex with people they do not trust in a

relationship that they feel has no direction. Hence, as they could not invest emotions in such a relationship, where sex has no value and is just an act, they used protection.

Reasons to have sex

I have attempted to show that sex has different meanings for different people or different occasions. I have tried to explore these meanings attached to sex, in order to find out whether or not they provide a space for people to use condoms. Henriksson and Mensson (1995) suggest that the *symbolic value* of sexuality that is attached to sex influences safer sex negotiation. I show how types of relationships affect the practice of safer sex, the meanings attached to sex provide with the reason for sex.

Both male and female informants expressed the importance of having children. Although some informants did not feel ready to have children, others were. For those who were ready, one of the reasons to have sex was procreation. Using a condom while trying to make a child defeats the whole purpose of procreation, and, clearly, people in that position are at risk of contracting HIV. It is, thus, necessary to understand why there is a need for people to have children, and risk being infected. From the informants' points of view, having a child was another way of leaving a legacy. The value attached to having children is another critical aspect in addressing HIV and AIDS. Put a qoute

Sex is also used as a way of escaping reality. Just like any substance used to escape reality, those using sex do not think deeply about the consequences. Thabo said:

> Sometimes I feel stupid after sex and do not believe that I have actually done that… You know, sometimes you sleep with someone that you would not have slept with, if you were really in your right mind. You know that you don't

> want the woman, and you actually feel embarrassed that you slept with her, but it happened.

This normally occurs when people were under the influence of alcohol; they often reported having done stupid things in this state. South Africa is reported as the having the largest consumption of alcohol (MRC Report). If this is the case, the role of alcohol in the spread of HIV should also be scrutinised. Recently, Special Assignment[22] aired a programme on drug consumption in the Western Cape Province. What was reported is that many young girls have turned to prostitution in order to make money to buy this particular drug. While several studies have dealt with AIDS, very little has been done on consolidating all the possible factors that contribute to the spread of HIV. I argue that looking at all these factors would be looking at this epidemic holistically.

Independent informants had viewed sex as a process of bonding with one partner, and they rarely viewed sex as an act of pleasure. In most cases, sex, according to them, was an expression of love. Because sex is used to cement the relationships, it is not normally negotiated, as it becomes part of the relationship. Bolton rightly argues that "Prostitutes are more likely to become infected in their relations with lovers than with clients" (1995: 296), because they are less likely to practice safer sex with their lovers, as sex has a different meaning in this context.

In some instances, the informants used sex purely for pleasure, where they talked about 'no strings attached'. When people have sex for pleasure, negotiations are also

[22] Special Assignment is a program that plays on SABC Channel three. It investigates criminal activities using hidden camera and expose them on national television. These criminal activities are normally followed up to make sure that justice prevails.

different, if there are any negotiations at all. Male informants talked about having sex for pleasure and, in many instances, this type of sex did not involve partners that they were in a serious relationship with. Normally, this act would occur with people they had just met, or with people with whom they have a casual relationship. With this type of sex, women's bodies would turn on men. Men expressed not being able to control themselves when they see such women. Thabo compared this feeling with hunger, where sex represents food. This was a very interesting comparison for me as he said, "When you are hungry you can eat anything".

I try to make sense of this comparison in order to infer other meanings attached to sex. Why do we eat? There are different reasons why people eat, but the critical one is: we eat to survive. When we want to survive we don't care what we eat. Once we ensure survival, we can move on to eating healthily; in this sense, we hope to prolong our life span. But sometimes we get hungry, and in this instance, the bigger picture of survival disappears, and we simply focus on getting full. In Zulu, when you are really hungry you say '*ngilambe ngingadla umuntu*' ('I'm so hungry I could eat a human being'). This emphasises the point that, when you are hungry you can eat anything. The food you eat when you are hungry depends on the availability: survival and health are removed from the equation.

Now let us come back to sex and try to understand it as food. We have sex in order to sustain the human race; in this sense, sex becomes an obligation. We also have sex in order to become intimate with our loved ones. Finally, we have sex for pleasure. I equate this last reason for having sex with hunger. This comparison implies one can

have sex with anyone (the first two reasons will remain out of the picture for the moment). Thus, the practise of safer sex will depend on the availability of condoms.

This analogy between sex and food brings many things into perspective. If this is the understanding we have about sex, we can better understand the spread of HIV and AIDS. Farmer *et al* argue that the most significant factors of poverty, low social status and lack of empowerment prevent women from negotiating HIV prevention and protecting themselves against AIDS (Farmer et al, 1993). I argue that poverty is just one of the reasons that exacerbate the spread of the pandemic. People could be engaging in unprotected sex because of other pressing issues, such as having a child. As Kalichman and Simbayi state, "For people who confront multiple social problems in their daily lives, AIDS may understandably rank relatively low among the most threatening social problem" (2003: 33). Although this looks at poverty as the biggest social problem, I argue that there are other social problems.

What becomes apparent here is that rationality is different for different people. Thus, imposing our 'scientific' knowledge does not help us in understanding the people we work with. Paxson (2002) explains the importance of understanding rationality of communities, dealt with in a study she conducted in Greece on women's preference for abortion. She emphasises the importance of respecting that rationality and being able to work with it. Van Wyk supports this and argues, "People are not necessarily in position to make purely rational, individualist decisions about safe sex" (1995: 32). There are levels of struggles that people go through when making decisions.

People's Context

"A growing number of investigators have recommended examination of the role of social contexts in understanding HIV sexual risk perception and behaviour, as opposed to intra-individual elements, particularly among women" (Castaneda cites Amaro, 1995; Bajos, 1997; Osmond et al., 1993; Reisen & Poppen, 1995). This becomes critical as it shows that people are always in positions to make independent decisions.

Situations determine whether a person will regard the usage of condoms as important or not. We all know that if a person does not use protection and then engages in heterosexual sex, it would result in problems for both sexes: for women, becoming pregnant, and for men, impregnating a woman. Discussing this issue is not difficult and people appear to talk freely about it. However, this is an indication that people have engaged in unprotected sex. I am overlooking other possibilities, such as failure of the contraception used. For the purpose of this study, I will look at pregnancy as a consequence of unprotected sex. There is another indicator I will use to assess people's sexual history: the method of a contraception used by female informants.

I have discussed how people negotiate for sex and condoms. However, I could not prove whether people really do negotiate for condoms or not, as I relied on the stories the informants told me. I, therefore, narrate the stories of two of my informants that give an idea of what is actually happening. On the other hand, it is my opinion that informants who have casual sex are more likely to practice safer sex.

Although I talked about HIV and AIDS with my informants, I triangulate what they told me with what was happening in their relationships. All the informants that I interviewed had children. This confirms that they are in sexual relationships, and, at times - or even all the time - do not use protection. This is a sign that, at some point, they did not use condoms or the condom broke. In the previous chapter, I talked about relationships that are perceived as marriage. Thus, we could assume that these informants were in such relationships. I am going to present the sexual lives of two informants who were closely studied.

Story 1

Xoli fell pregnant early in a relationship. She has a child with someone she had been dating for three months, and she told me that the condom broke. She lived with this man, and at some point she suspected she was pregnant. She broke up with this man and had three other boyfriends, whom she told me, she never slept with. The last one that she was with has been sick - he was hospitalised because he has TB. Within a month, I found Xoli drinking some tablet and she said it was making her weak. She told me that the accident had happened: the condom broke.

Story 2

Lerato told me that she and the father of the child had been dating for three months before she fell pregnant. She wanted to have a second child, but met this 'foreigner' (a Nigerian man) with whom she was sure that she wanted only companionship and nothing more. While that man was in the picture, she became involved with another one, but, after a month, she realised he was just after her money. The accident happened with the foreign man, and she called me asking where she could get help, as

she did not trust this man. She went to the doctor and paid R1000-00 for pills. She changed jobs and had to relocate. Three months later she told me that she was pregnant and later decided to terminate the pregnancy, because she felt the man was irresponsible. Her needs are as follows: someone who will go to her family and acknowledge the child.

These two stories depict two significant issues. Firstly, if condoms really do break, people do not have total control over their lives with regards to being infected with HIV. The second issue here is that people do not always think about HIV and AIDS. There are other things that they believe to be more important, until something happens that will really force them to think about AIDS.

The above discussion has shown that people continue to live their lives and construct meaning of what they do, but HIV and AIDS are not the main issue. This supports Kalunde's findings in the study she conducted in Zambia: Kalunde discovered that "many young people regardless of age, sex and educational background do not regard HIV/AIDS as a threat to their lives and do not even consider it as a hindrance to sexual relationships" (1997: 94). This is because people focus on and prioritise other things. AIDS becomes the main focus only when it strikes, and, when that happens, one cannot escape the reality of HIV and AIDS.

AIDS is acknowledged, as people panic after an accident occurs. However, it is not the main focus in people's lives: there are other pressing issues. These two informants are not poor, but their pressing issues were to find themselves in loving relationships. This was their focus; therefore, HIV and AIDS was not their primary concern, but

finding the ‘right’ man was. The shortcomings of AIDS research include that it has labelled people as ‘vulnerable’, and they are being researched as having different reasons for engaging in unsafe sex.

5.5 The Struggle Against AIDS Continues

Stadler points out that, “AIDS research in South Africa is characterised by rapid survey methods” (2003: 137). These rapid surveys, which are driven by the need to come up with solutions quickly, have resulted in the opposite of what they aimed to achieve. For example, Searle says: “AIDS, as a ‘black’ disease, is an image that is pervasive in the media, although often not explicitly stated as such” (2001: 78). The focus is on the poor and the uneducated, and in South Africa, it is black people who are seen as the only people who are at ‘risk’. However, authors such as Shisana, Mark and Stadler have begun to argue that the groups that have previously not been viewed as being at risk of contracting HIV are, in fact, at risk. Halperin points this out clearly: “Studies from several developing countries have found that HIV rates tend to be higher among people with greater income and education levels” (2001: 1). This contradicts authors, such as Walker and Gilbert (2001), who see AIDS affecting poor African women in particular.

The above discussion shows that relationships provide a space wherein to transmit the virus. The gap that exists in research is that, although there is considerable amount of research on AIDS, the spread of AIDS continues. This study reveals that interventions that deal with behavioural change will not work, as people are not fully in control of their lives. Secondly, sex, by its virtue, is not an autonomous decision as it involves two people.

There exist problematic statements, such as “We need to develop a balance approach by recognizing that Africa and the West have different types of epidemics and going beyond the fruitless battle between the abstinence and condom camps” (Green, 2003: 2). I argue that we should move beyond creating the ‘other’ with this focus on diversity, and we should start seeing people as human beings.

The point that I cannot emphasise enough, is that we must move away from thinking only of particular groups when addressing AIDS. In South Africa, it is said that AIDS is spread mainly through heterosexual relations, emphasising that it is transmitted through sex. I argue that sex is universal, and we all have the same needs when it comes to sex. By looking only at a specific group, we not only create a stigma for that group, but we also, inadvertently, ignore other issues we should be focussing on, in order to curb the disease. “With regard to the HIV-AIDS issue, the frontline in the campaign of intellectual intimidation and terrorism which argues that the only freedom we have is to agree with what they decree to be established scientific truths” (Mbeki, 2000: 4).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I show that South African history plays a role in the direction that HIV has taken. I further argue that women are in a better position to negotiate for condom use than their male counterparts are, because of the commoditisation of their bodies. This contradicts several studies that have shown women as simply victims of the epidemic.

This chapter shows how HIV spreads within the context of relationships. Relationships, as a structure, are not responsible for the spread of HIV, but they do contribute, by providing a space for fluidity. The important thing that manifests itself in this chapter is that there is no single ‘vulnerable’ group, when we look at AIDS. It is people’s understandings, and the context wherein they find themselves, that make them vulnerable. Thus, AIDS should not be seen as a disease of the ‘other’.

Chapter 6: Struggles in Representation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the struggles I experienced in the field, which resulted from my roles in the field. Most research does not show the role that researchers play in research. In chapter 2, I attempted to show how my role as a 'homegirl' interfered with research, and also how I discovered much about myself, by reflecting my findings onto myself. This chapter serves to explain the position I took during this research. It attempts to show that researchers can take particular positions that serve their own interests, but this is not often scrutinized. I show my biases and how they influenced this research, but, most importantly, I argue that by acknowledging my biases, I deepen my interpretation. I try to look beyond the obvious by trying to answer the 'why' aspect of human behaviour. As Geertz suggests that "The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts, to support broad assertions about the role of culture in construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifies". (1973: 28).

When I went out into the field, I was armed with a specific lens of intellect. I had read literature on relationships and this shaped and provided me with the theoretical framework I needed in order to grasp the information I acquired from the field. With the assistance of these tools I had particular issues I wanted to address, as literature suggested their relevance. Issues, such as gender inequalities and the vulnerability of women, became some of the issues that I needed to keep an eye on while trying to understand the concept of relationships. I expected these issues to come up in research, and had prepared myself to tackle them. These issues, thus, became a lens through which I would see and engage with my informants.

6.2 Reflection on my Role

As I have indicated, I had different roles in the field. These roles had a way of manifesting themselves during fieldwork. I was not aware of these roles prior to finding myself in the field: for me, being a 'homegirl' meant that I shared experiences with the informants and my responsibility was to represent these. However, I soon learnt that, even though I am a 'homegirl', there were differences between my informants and myself. In order to connect with my informants, I had to position myself at their level, as Hastrup argues, "The essence of fieldwork is to learn another world by way of experience; it is the shared social experience in the field that is the foundation of anthropology" (1997: 356). My situation was different in the sense that I shared similar experiences to the informants'. At times, I drew from those shared experiences to better understand the informants' actions. Because of these shared experiences, I had the best of two worlds, as I was an outsider, as well as an insider.

However, these identities of being both an outsider and insider in the field came with other complexities that I still struggle to conceptualise. As an outsider, I expected myself to be objective (as I have argued that Anthropology is a science that cautions one to remain objective), and, as an insider, I expected myself to understand the dynamics of this community. However, in many instances, I had to pause and check which identity I was using or which one I needed to use to understand and interpret the information or situation confronting me. However, these two identities proved to have both advantages and disadvantages: it became important for me to reflect at all times in order to keep track of what arose from within me, instead of what was arising

from informants. This chapter reveals my experiences in the field, in order to explain the position I took in the field, and in the process of writing this thesis.

6.3 My understanding of Relationships

I used my own experiences to define relationships, but when I started to interview people about relationships and observed what was happening in those relationships, my experiences were put under scrutiny. I must admit this was not an easy task, but it helped to look deeper into certain issues. My definition of 'relationship' was one of total sharing, commitment, selflessness, love and respect. However, this was an ideal definition, and none of the relationships I have been in actually reflected this definition. Independent informants had a similar definition of relationships, as recorded in chapter three. In addition, during formal interviews, this group of informants would talk about positive aspects of their relationships, such as doing things together. However, these informants were in constant conflict with their partners and I would often have to be the mediator. Because of this, I started paying more attention to what was happening than to what I was told. I learnt from Independent Informants, that what they told me was more of an ideal situation than a reflection of what was actually happening in their relationships.

For dependant informants, relationships were perceived as a form of surviving, and I had never thought of relationships in that manner. I have been exposed to other ways of living and, thus, want to maintain my independence. What confused me were the similarities that I drew between the group and myself, when they would talk about their ideal men. Tumi defined an ideal man as:

> Someone handsome, intelligent, independent, both financially and emotionally, because I do not want a burden - I want someone who can help

> me. I must see a difference when I am in a relationship, I cannot continue borrowing money while I claim to be in a relationship.

Although for me, the emphasis is not on someone providing money, I definitely want someone who is financially independent. This forced me to look at myself and ask: what are my expectations in a relationship? When I looked at my own relationships, I realized that my views of being independent were influenced by the information I received from the media. In reality I could not afford to be independent, and, hence, I had never been so in relationships. In so many ways, my partner at the time would assume certain roles without me contesting them, as I believed that they were his roles, such as paying the bill when we went out.

In fact, my dependency sustained those relationships: because I needed something from those people, I, therefore, stayed in those relationships. I argue that dependence is a necessity in relationships to assist partners in staying together, and this may, consequently, reduce serial monogamy or multiple 'partnering'.

Looking at dependant informants I learnt that, as a woman, I have no reason to complain about men, as I can get what I want from them as long as it is something practical. My frustrations in relationships were largely caused by my ideal expectations, influenced by the media and the books I read. I found dependant informants as being more grounded and having a more fulfilling life, as a result of their take in life. They had liberated views about sex and marriage, and, thus, had control of their lives. My understanding of relationships was challenged at many levels. Based on this understanding, the dependent informants would be the most oppressed informants; hence, I labelled them 'dependant'. My stereotypical thinking

posed a challenge to my data collection, as I consistently had inner dialogue. Perhaps this should be the focus of the research, as oppose to seeing some communities as being more vulnerable than others.

This was confirmed in this research, as I 'discovered' myself during the fieldwork. Having equipped myself by reading on the subject, I thought I was ready for the field and felt prepared for whatever would come my way. I would never have thought that the literature that I have read may be an obstacle in maintaining objectivity, but it was. For instance, at first, I saw the dependant informants as victims, because vast literature suggests that women use their bodies because they do not have alternatives. There were three main reasons that made me see this group as the opposite of myself: firstly, their views on relationships, seeing relationships as a support system; secondly, using sex freely, and, lastly, their views on marriage.

Sex as Sacred

I grew up in the Christian family and sex was a taboo. I had specific beliefs going into the field, and I was aware of what they were. There were times when my beliefs were challenged. Sex, to me, was 'sacred' as I saw my body as the temple of The Lord (1 Corinthians, 6:19). Thus, my body was a sacred place, and whoever would be intimate with me was stepping on 'holy ground'. With this statement I try to show the value I attached to sex. However, Dependant informants and critical analytical informants challenged this value I attached to sex. These groups of informants did not put much value on sex, and admitted to having had sex with people who meant nothing to them. To me, this was shocking.

I shared similar views of sex with independent informants. Independent informants viewed sex as an expression of love. In chapter 5, I showed how this association could put one in a vulnerable position, and this vulnerability is not based on context, but on the understanding of sex. Bolton also shares this view, that it is not power relations that make people practice unsafe sex, "but probably the biggest reason for unsafe sex is love, love involves risk – taking, giving, trusting" (1999: 295).

This understanding of sex became critical, because of the value I had attached to sex. I saw myself as being different from the informants who gave a different meaning to sex. In the first stages of my research I saw Dependant Informants as being vulnerable, as I looked at the partners they had had, and because of their understanding of sex. As research progressed, I realized that I was, in fact, vulnerable because of my understanding of sex. I had practiced unsafe sex a number of times, but I thought my situation was different. With this understanding of vulnerability, the focus should, thus, be on groups that have been perceived as 'not being at risk'. Realizing and admitting that I am at risk was scary, but also empowering because I now know that being at risk is not defined by how much education or money you have, but by the kind of sex you practice.

With dependant informants I also learnt that sex was an open discussion and this contradicts several studies that suggest that the spread of AIDS results in silence around sex. These studies attribute this silence as being embedded within African cultures. But what these studies fail to show is the external influence that 'black culture' has, as well as the differences and diversity of 'black cultures'. It was easier for me to believe that sex is a taboo in most African communities because it is taboo

within my family. My mother has never talked about sex with me; instead she taught me about the Bible, as she believed that the Bible would show me the way. Clearly, this shows that the silence around sex in my family is rooted in Christianity, which tells people to leave their cultures behind and follow Christ. Failing to understand these dynamics within African cultures results in inappropriate interventions that try to address particular problems.

In South Africa there are ethnic groups that still practice initiations (Radebe, 2000). One major aspect of initiation is about 'sex teaching'. Tumi told me that she suspected that she had an infection, and her mother advised her to use some traditional herbs. This was a shock to me, as I could not believe that someone could discuss such issues with her mother. To me, sex was a taboo, and this was based on my upbringing, as my mother was a staunch Christian. This research showed me that culture is constructed. It is said that people are not open about sex, and that women do not ask their partners for sex. I discovered here that I was the type of person who is not open about sex, as I could contrast myself with my female informants who were so free and open about discussing it. Perhaps they do not use 'direct' language, but the fact is that they get whatever they want. Not understanding the language used when people talk about sex, results in the assumption that people are not open about sex. There is 'old' anthropology and 'new' anthropology: 'Old' anthropology believes that culture is coherent and authentic (Wright, 1998). Sax (1998) admits that there is danger in celebrating diversity, because it may obscure the universally 'human', and create the 'other'.

Most importantly, attributing the spread of AIDS to the lack of communication shows naivety, as in chapter 5 I showed that people engage in unsafe sex because of the meaning attached to that specific sexual act. Openness about sex does not curb the spread of AIDS. This is simply based on the fact that it seemed that AIDS was affecting one particular group, and that group has been put under scrutiny. Consequently, there have been attempts to interpret this group's practices, in order to explain the spread of AIDS, but, unfortunately, they have been misinterpreted. With the extensive work that has been done on HIV and AIDS, I argue that the message has reached those people that were identified as 'vulnerable', and they are trying their utmost to protect themselves. The challenge remains within the communities that are considered to be safe: for these communities, the struggle is only beginning, as, firstly, they have to acknowledge that they are at risk, and, secondly, they must change their behaviour.

Marriage as an oppressive Institution

As I have already mentioned, I always saw myself as an independent woman and viewed marriage as an oppressive/limiting institution. Having observed the informants and seen how most female informants wanted to get married, I had to try and understand why they would want to get married. When I looked at the practicality of being assisted in life, I realized the importance of marriage. Furthermore, I wanted a stable relationship, and marriage promises that, to a degree.

Chapter 4 revealed that marriage is empowering to women. This was very difficult to understand, because I believed that marriage was outdated and, therefore, many modern women would not want to get married. Female informants made me realise

that marriage provides women with an opportunity to claim their rights under the protection of the law and the involvement of families. In the case of losing a partner, I realized that, if I were married I would be entitled to other things, both legally and traditionally. However, if I were not married, my deceased partner's family could make all the decisions, and I would simply have to listen, as I would not have the power to make demands or even suggest anything.

I have mentioned that my views on marriage were influenced by much of the literature I have read. In addition, my personal experiences also played a role. Because of my background, marriage was not an ideal institution for me, as my parents could not survive in it. When my parents separated, my mother took us, and I only understood my mother's point of view with regard to the break-up, as she portrayed herself as a victim. I believed her and still do. But while doing this research, I had to revisit my past in order to try and validate the information that seemed to arise from my informants.

When my mother left my father it was a war: it is long story, but for the purpose of this paper, I will cut it short. My mother had 8 children and she took us with her when she left my father, and never went back. Reminiscing on something that occurred more than two decades ago is sometimes problematic, as memories fade and information becomes distorted. But what I remember and how I remember it is my truth, and it is what shapes and influences me. One of the reasons that made my mother leave my father was his infidelity. In chapter 4, I hinted the fact that sometimes men cheat on their partners because they are frustrated in their relationships. I argue that looking at the end result in solving a problem does not do

justice to that problem: it is also important to try to understand the cause of a particular behaviour. Condemning cheating does not solve the problem, but finding the reasons that lead this particular behaviour might result in something workable. The point I am trying to raise here is that my father had frustrations that I never thought about, as I could only understand my mother's frustrations; and, sadly, most people understood only my mother's frustrations because she was vocal about them.

This further rejects the idea that women find it difficult to leave their marriage, as there are no proper structures in society to support these women. This research argues that there is support for women who leave marriage, but the support is not structured and formal.

Besides the in-depth analysis I conducted in this research, the research also evoked personal experiences that I have never dealt with. When my mother separated from my father, I saw my mother as the victim, and everywhere we went, my father would be painted as the monster. Consequently, I developed resentment towards him, as I saw him as a cause of all our sufferings. However, this research afforded me with a space to look back on the situation, and I managed to forgive him as I imagined the trauma he probably went through when he lost all his children. This does not suggest that he was an angel, but only highlights the price he paid for his mistake, without anyone feeling pity for him.

Talking about my personal experiences that were evoked while doing fieldwork does not mean that my research has no value. What I am attempting to point out in this

paper is the diversity and complexity of societies, and that personal experiences shape people's attitudes and behaviours.

6.4 Impact of Experiences on Data Collection

I have shown how I used my personal experiences to understand data, but collecting data had its own complexities. During data collection, I argue that the questions asked reflect one's particular needs, and they further shape the focus of the research. Freedman rightly argues, "We can learn more about who we are when we see ourselves through the double-sided looking glass of our ethnographic lens". (1986: 357). The similarities I had with informants varied from one informant to another, and these were some of them: race, class, gender, educational background, and religious affiliation. Due to this, it became critical for me to be aware of myself so as not to interfere with my data. Thus, my role as a researcher separated me from informants, such that the conversations we had did not mean much to them, but had valuable information for me to analyse and assign meaning to.

However, this process of making meaning of what was said in casual conversation was challenging to me, as I started seeing the informants as the 'other'. I could not see myself from the meaning and interpretation I was developing. It is this distance that was created that made me uncomfortable; I, thus, tried to understand the reason behind these distances. In chapter 3, I showed that I grouped informants - the dependent informants were the group that made me realize this. What struck me most was that when I started the research, I saw myself as being very different from this group of informants: it was like they were in another world. Yet, the more time I spent

with them, the more I could see that I shared many things with them. The question was: what actually makes me similar to them?

I have, thus far, discussed my roles, but have not talked about how my experiences impacted on the focus of this research. I lost my partner during this research: this was a testing time for me and impacted on this research a great deal. I was left with many questions. After taking a break, I went back into the field and things were no longer the same. What changed were not only the questions I asked, but also the responses I received from the informants. Some informants found it difficult to talk about good things in their relationships while I was mourning. In trying to help me, they told me about the difficulties they were experiencing in their relationship, as a way of comforting me.

My 'singlehood' had implications on the data, but in this regard, it clearly enhanced my understanding of issues around relationships. As Freedman suggests, "The roles in which we find ourselves may also influence the kinds of information we can obtain" (1986: 356). If I had started my research after losing my partner, I would find that many people are unhappy in their relationships. But the first part of my research showed me that many people are coping in their relationships. This taught me that, sometimes, when we conduct research, we pick up one particular aspect of people's lives and ignore the bigger picture of life as a whole. This often results in seeing people as victims who need to be helped.

I conclude by asking Preston-Whyte's (cited by Bolton) question: "Does our commitment have its origin in our own intellectual imperialism, what we construe as

part of human survival"? (Bond cites Preston-Whyte, 1992). Moore argues that, "the particular perspective taken by an individual researcher tends to determine the types of explanations they provide to the question of the origins and nature of women's subordination" (Moore, 1988: 13). Although this might be outdated, this statement still holds, especially with regards to HIV/AIDS research that tends to find quick answers.

6.5 Self Realization

This research did not end by simply becoming an academic piece of work, but it also became a means of self-realization. It was through this process that I came to realise that some of the differences between informants and myself did not actually exist. Instead, they were based on preconceived information I took with me into the field. Although I knew that I was studying myself, there were many obstacles in this. Some obstacles would be obvious, such as bias.

The critical aspect of research is the researcher. In this chapter I show the importance of the researcher, as this is the person who shapes the findings. Bond boldly states that there is a need to redefine good professionalism as he sees "[t]he potential politicisation of research and researcher undoubtedly permeates data collection, pervades writing up and directs intervention" (Bond, 1997: 79).

In the field, I discovered that I was similar to all my informants: there were similarities in colour, age group, background, level of education, class and so on. The biggest challenge after I discovered this is that I had to check how this impacted on my research. I noticed that many researchers have not observed some of the things I

started to see. What then did this mean? I realized that there could be two reasons: firstly, my own bias, and, secondly, the eroticisation of the outsiders. “In studying other cultures, we also study ourselves”. (Herzfield, 1987:13). The important thing for me was to maintain the balance between the two.

My Role as an ambassador

Earlier in this chapter I discussed my role as an insider, which resulted in some challenges during fieldwork. I show how this role impacted on this research. One key aspect that kept me going while doing this research was that I knew I would get an opportunity to represent ‘my’ people, which is what attracted me most to this topic, in addition to getting a chance to study myself. It is important for a researcher to know that, among other roles, he/she is an ambassador for the informants. However, this role is not known, due to the fact that, in most cases, researchers are outsiders. The main reason I came to the realization of this role is that I saw myself from the informants’ point of view. I have talked about the reasons that allowed me to identify myself with them, so whatever interpretation I would come up with I would ask myself if that is that how I view life. This allowed me to become very critical, not to take anything for granted and to see the stereotype that has become reality.

This role could be detected on skewed interpretations that showed informants as people who are in control of their lives. This would not necessarily be the case, but what becomes important is that perhaps people do not see themselves as victims as they are normally believed to be. This poses a challenge to many policies that aim at helping people: if people do not see themselves as helpless, who decides on the kind

of help people need? This can, thus, reflect the supremacy of some people who are in positions to decide on behalf of other people's lives.

Maintaining Objectivity

How do we contain our biases, and maintain objectivity? How do we know that we are objective? In the methodology chapter I talked about being detached, but to what extent can one do this? As I have highlighted how these personal experiences impacted on data, what is significant is that the experiences are understood in the context of Anthropology. I have argued that my personal experiences directed me towards the questions I needed to ask. Being objective becomes critical and one needs to be aware of the direction she or he is taking, in order to make sure that there is value in that divergent. Although I saw myself as an ambassador, the important thing was to maintain objectivity so that the research did not suffer. I had to balance my intellectual self with my personal self. These roles were very important and forgetting either one would be self-defeating. Reading extensively and practicing detachment helped me to achieve this.

As previously mentioned, an important aspect in research is the researcher. It is not by accident that I write about my experiences in the field in this chapter. This is an attempt to show that we are human beings first, before we become researchers. This is important as it shapes our interpretations, and sometimes we select what we want from the findings, even in the field itself. The fact that we have to make some decisions about what to explore during the interview shows that our human nature does come into play during research. It might be useful when, as researches, we look

at any study by, firstly trying to understand the researcher, so that we can understand the angle from which the findings are understood.

I have shown how my role as an ambassador impacted on this research. Objectivity was challenged. But I ask myself, what is objectivity? If a researcher is an outsider, does it mean she/he is in a better position to be objective? I argue that my struggles in the field were not rooted in my role as an insider, but rather in being aware of myself, and my own agenda. Therefore, this research is not only about recording people's experiences, but also representing people in a manner in which they can develop a sense of pride. This agenda manifests clearly in this research, and I argue that this is an even more critical aspect of this piece of work, than the understanding of relationships.

6.6 Ambiguities in Research

In many studies it is often overlooked that, when research is conducted, the researchers are researched during that process. This is very critical as it lies at the essence of findings. In qualitative research, interpretations are part of the analysis. Although we are trained to look at things critically, our biases will somehow prevail in different forms. The proof for this lies in the fact that we research a topic that is in our minds: it is our interest and that is what we will focus on in the field. Thus, much information might be discarded because we 'know' what we want.

Relationships provided me with a space to challenge issues in attempting to understand the role of a researcher. Research is not an innocent field, but can easily be manipulated to suit other people's needs. While research is capable of doing this, I do

not undermine the important role that research plays, especially in the field of development and informing policies. However, I caution the idea of seeing research as 'holier than thou', and call for a strong critique of research papers.

Looking at different categories, I realized that, although people were in different situation with regard to AIDS issues, they still took similar positions. For me, this was a realization that people do not lose their humanity, no matter what situation they are in. This is an attitude that needs to be considered when dealing with people who, despite their experiences, do not lose their zeal for life. They have a right to enjoy life and have aspirations to be proactive in the world.

6.7 Conclusion

When we conduct research, we sometimes over-emphasize diversity, and this can obscure universal human truth or experience. Normally, informants are people who are not in the same league as us. The difference in this study is that I have studied people in my own league. One could say that I was studying myself. This could be traced in the manner with which I interpreted these findings. What is evident in these findings is that informants are not seen as victims. Most research especially that which addresses the issue of HIV and AIDS, always portrays informants as victims, and hence, always offers solutions.

Often research findings are scrutinized in a context of research methods, and if there are flaws, the flaws will be attributed to the research tools that were used. In this chapter, I attempt to highlight that methods cannot be 'perfect' because researchers are human beings, and there will always be that element in our work. What is

important is that we acknowledge this, and try to understand how this may impact our work.

The focus of this research was to look at relationships as a form of institution. What struck me in the findings is that, although the research illustrated themes that are familiar within the research field, most of my findings disputed the norm. There is vast literature on female oppression, and on women as victims of HIV and AIDS, and my research contradicted much of this. I was concerned with these findings, as they have huge implications on research. It is not that I conducted brilliant research, but I did find what many other researchers have not found. Also, I do not believe that my findings were affected by going into the field with my particular biases: in chapter two, I thoroughly discussed my methodology and also presented myself as a tool. The difference in this research lies in the particular informants used. The norm in research is to study the poor, uneducated black people. Although all my informants were black, most of them could be classified as being part of the growing 'black middle class' and this already offers a new dimension in the research of this topic.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The main question this thesis has attempted to address is how the network of relationships constitutes a structure of social life and the meaning attached to relationships. To answer this question, this thesis has looked at the concept of relationships and interrogated how people understand them; it further observed people's behaviour in relation to what they say. This study confirms that relationships are a form of a social institution as they follow a particular pattern. However, relationships are complex and involve constant negotiations which result in ambiguities. Before I draw conclusions, it is important to note that the number of informants participated in this research could not be a representative of any group, and therefore I cannot make generalisations. However, I use these findings as a lens to start and understand the complexities within societies especially in the era of HIV and AIDS.

Relationships are an important part of many people's lives as many people engage in them. However, not everyone engage in relationship out of his or her free will. For some, relationships are a form of a support system; but they also bring many uncertainties to those who engage in them. Many men viewed relationship as a platform to find themselves and to enjoy their freedom before they get married. While some women on the other hand viewed relationships as a process towards marriage. Relationships come with advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, relationships impact on other societal structures such as marriage and kinship. At the same time social dynamics are mirrored in relationships.

Power relation is evident in the functioning of relationships. Within relationships power is contested and negotiated. Women have their own ways to access power like their men counterparts. For women, their bodies are used as a tool in negotiating for their needs. Because there is the societal belief that men have excessive sexual drive, this put women at a better position to negotiate using their bodies as a bargaining tool. Media has played a critical role in showing women's bodies as an 'asset' that is worth selling for women and worth buying for men. This is done in many advertisements we see daily on our television sets. This, however, is perceived as reducing women by some feminist theories, but these findings show that women use sex strategically as men cannot resist them especially those women that are in relationships for financial gain. These women would even relinquish physical control in some instances to gain resources. Again this is also interpreted as women oppression by some feminist scholars.

Women have other means to negotiate power besides their bodies. Children too are also a tool to access power for women, as they have completely access unlike their males' counterparts. In chapter 4, I showed how women control men using their children if children were born out of wedlock. For men to access their children if they are not married to the mother, have to play according to the mother's tune. Thoko showed how she uses her control over a child to get what she wants from her boyfriend. This is another form of power that is not recognised, because when men do not play along and neglect their children the focus becomes on neglecting the child but not on root of this particular behaviour.

On the other hand men are not victims, because they have ways to also control women such as promising their partners marriage in exchange for loyalty. For men, having multiple partners is also a way to get what they want from women as they believe that when women realise that a man has another affair they start to 'behave' meaning they do not make unreasonable demands. It is important to note that not all men who engage in extra marital affairs want to control women, for some men, this is a result of frustrations experienced in their relationships or marriage. Having an affair is a way of coping with those frustrations. But not all men could afford to have an extra marital affair as this had other requirements such as having money.

Economic resources also play a role in relationships as they determine the type of the relationship a person should engage in. Because some women use relationships as means to access resources, men who do not have money are disempowered because it is not easy for them to get partners. But this is not often translated as disempowerment to men; instead this is seen as abuse towards women when they use relationships as way to access resources. These findings reveal that men have their own struggles and there are many challenges they are faced with although these challenges are not well documented. In the study Silberschmidt (2004) conducted in Kenya, she found that "socio-economic change in Africa has increasingly disempowered men which result in men's lack of social value and self-esteem" (pg. 6). This is not unique to Silberschmidt's study as Dover cited in Bond (1997) says "boys without money have hard time attracting girls" (pg. 75). Chirwa in the study he conducted in Malawi reveals that men without money were perceived as faded and it was difficult for them to get girlfriends.

Despite the significant amount of power women have, both men and women do not perceive women as having power even though men are complaining that women are controlling them. Furthermore, women's means of accessing power are not translated as strategy but rather as a 'natural' thing to do. Like in the case of children, women are viewed as having a natural concern for their children rather than being seen using children as a bargaining tool. The reason that both men and women do not view women as having power, results from overwhelming writings that portray women as victims of male abuse in all forms. Jenkin (2000) sees this "romanticisation and even sexualisation" of women's oppression. In understanding women's issues we also need to acknowledge that experiences shape the understanding of oppression. The question I pose who defines oppression? Another important point to note is that, the understanding of women's issues is embedded on power relations; such that some women are subjects and therefore the ideological apparatuses of society makes expressing a self-defined stand point more difficult (Lorde, 1986).

As Moore (1988) argues "a well documented and widely accepted fact that gender relations in many parts of the world have been transformed under the successive impact of colonisation, Westernisation and international capitalism" (pg. 33). Furthermore, Briggs, (1974) and Tiffany (1978), argue that the perception of oppression of women is the result of using the West as the lens to understand different societies. This shows that the understanding of women as submissive and oppressed is influenced by other factors, it not an unchallengeable fact. In fact, some anthropologists such as Moore, 1988; Goodale, 1971; Rosaldo, 1974; Leacock, 1955; Strathen, 1972 and Sanday, 1974 have shown how other women in different societies acquire power. With these societies, they challenge the notion of viewing oppression

of women as universal. This suggests that societies should be understood in their own context. In the context of my informants women prove to be in-charge of their sexuality in relationships and were in a position to make demands using their bodies as a bargaining tool.

However, despite the power women posses, the focus of some government policies is geared at empowering women. The historical background of South African context is misinterpreted as the focus is on the 'girl child'. When we look at affirmative action, the real context of an individual is not considered, the fact that a person grew up in townships, where there are no privileges given to a boy child at the expense of a girl is not considered. The privileges given to women victimises some men that are victims of their circumstances already. The history that shows that the significant number of families in South Africa were headed by women, one can conclude that the men that are 'abusive' in South Africa were/are raised by women as most men were working in the mines or were in exile and even dead. These are critical issues that do not get attention in an attempt to understand challenges we are facing as a country.

The presence of HIV and AIDS have exacerbated the understanding of gender inequalities, as in South Africa, research suggests that between 12 and 13 African women are infected currently for every ten African men (Oppong and Kalipeni, 2004: 47). This shape has been attributed to gender inequalities. Some authors argue that the escalating spread of HIV and AIDS is a result of these inequalities where women cannot take control of their sexuality (Schoepf 2004; Ulin 1992; Bylies and Bujra 2000).

In an attempt to fight AIDS, the focus has been on women because of the higher infection rate of women than men. One argument is that men are generally far less likely to have sexual intercourse forced on them than women (Akeroyd, 2004: 93). Another argument suggests the positioning of African women has created a space for the transmission of HIV/AIDS where women cannot negotiate for sex. As Schoepf (2004) points out, "Poverty, violence, and pervasive gender inequality continue to make it difficult for women and girls to avoid sex" (pp. 2). Such arguments are prominent in the AIDS field that portray women as victims because of their socio-economic status (Standing, 1992; Scheper-Hughes, 1994). However, these arguments tend to simplify the positioning of women and this can paint a picture of women as helpless victims. Again this gives the impression that the programmes geared at the emancipation of women are futile. The skewed HIV infections should not be equated to women oppression, as the idea of oppression needs to be re-evaluated in the large context of gender relations. The danger of labelling other groups as oppressed obscures us in addressing the real problem.

In fact this research found that women are in a better position to negotiate, during sexual negotiations. Although men are the ones who are expected to initiate sex, women decide whether they want safer sex or not. What comes out in this research is that the meaning attached to sex determines the safety of the sexual intercourse. The type of the relationship determines the meaning that will be attached to sex. Casual relationships prove to be the safer one as sex does not have the meaning besides getting pleasure. Based on this, we cannot therefore attribute the skewed infection rate on unequal gender relations, as this shows that safe sex is beyond gender relations.

But the meaning attached to sex and the values that promote unsafe sex should be the focus in addressing HIV and AIDS.

The impact of HIV and AIDS in relationships was not observed, as people did not seem to have changed their behaviour. Relationships as a structure are not responsible for the spread of HIV, but they do contribute by providing a space for fluidity. The important thing that comes up in this study is that, the prolonged stay in relationships gives people an opportunity to change sexual partners, as they do not feel obliged to stick to that partner if they start experiencing problems. Changing of sexual partners has negative consequences when we look at the spread of HIV.

What becomes significant though is that vulnerability to contract AIDS is not the result of poverty, but on the roles that both males and females are required by society to perform. For instance, having a child is important as it affirms one's womanhood or manhood; hence all my informants have children. But the important thing to note is that people interviewed did not view HIV and AIDS as the main concern and they were continuing living their lives. Most of informants that participated in this research could be classified as the so-called upcoming black middle class. This group is perceived as in a better position to protect themselves in contracting HIV. These informants proved to be vulnerable to contract the HI Virus because of the meanings attached to sex and value in having children.

The focus has been given to the poor, uneducated groups of people as AIDS was seen as particularly affecting 'poor African women' (Walker and Gilbert, 2001). However,

some authors have started to argue that there is a need to focus on other groups of societies, the groups that have been ignored (Shisana, 2002; Marks, 2002; and Stadler, 2004). Akeroyd (2004) points this clearly when she argues, "HIV infections occur in all social and economic classes but much research concentrated on specific disadvantaged and deprived communities" (pg. 91). This suggests that communities should be put under scrutiny to take into account of differences within communities, if we are to win the battle against AIDS (Susser and Stein, 2004). There is a need to acknowledge the progress made around HIV and AIDS. It is also important to understand that the strategies that are designed to combat the spread of AIDS need to be specific base as there is no one size fits all strategy in addressing HIV and AIDS.

The question worth looked at is: what has led to this massive focus on poor people in addressing HIV and AIDS? I argue that it is because research is not immune to power dynamics within a particular society. This can be seen in the underlying tone of most AIDS research that implies that AIDS is the disease of the 'other'. Maybe there should be change of focus in research to understand AIDS holistically. When we talk about holistic understanding if AIDS we normally talk about that referring to one particular group. But what I call for is the understanding of society as a whole, so that we will know the trends of people as a whole not just of one particular group in the society in order to come with strategies that will curb the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The last point this research highlights is that marriage is still valued in some communities. Although relationships are a trend, many informants showed ambiguities that they (relationships) bring. However, some informants especially men prefer relationships over marriage. Marriage seems to be providing women with a

platform to exercise power through making demands. For both sexes marriage was viewed as a rite of passage that defines adulthood. Therefore if a person is not married, that person is regarded as a 'child'. This had both advantages and disadvantages, especially for men. The advantage for men was that they could be 'irresponsible' if they are not married hence most men viewed relationships as providing them with freedom. The advantage would be the respect that comes with being regarded as an adult. Marriage was still on the life's agenda of all the informants.

If marriage is still valued how do we account for the decline of it? This research is not in a position to answer this question as its focus is on relationship. But what becomes significant is that marriage is still a valuable institution and does not seem that it will disappear. Again it is important to define marriage, to explain the decline properly. What seemed to be happening with some of the informants is a traditional way of doing things, legal marriages might be declining but the traditional might be constant. Clearly there is a prolonged stay in relationships but this does not equate to decline in marriages. Another aspect that needs attention is the fact that some past laws encouraged people to get married because marriage would qualify people with some benefits such as getting a house, this could account for the rise of marriage.

In understanding relationships as an institution, necessitate to understand the challenges that this institution brings. The prolonged stay in relationships comes with challenges, because relationships have no customs as there are constant negotiations. Mercy's story is an example of the challenges that are posed by relationships.

Therefore kinship is challenged as there is fragmentation of families. Mercy's child is not known to her family and this clearly destruct the kinships system. Kinships are viewed as governing people's behaviour and providing with sense of belonging which is critical in sustaining society. But relationships are part of us and I argue that they will always be. How do we begin and understand relationships as the structure that sustains society? This becomes critical as it also impact on the belief system. The ancestral belief system is not left untapped as families are no longer involved in rearing of children. The fluidity in relationships further poses a challenge on government policies that seek to address these social structures. Government policies are often informed by political structures which are outside of the social structure. Policies are based on fixed structures and therefore do not accommodate the change that happens in the communities. Understanding this fluidity becomes critical if these policies are to be relevant to the targeted population.

This research concludes by arguing that relationships play a critical role in our present society. However, they bring contradictions as they give people an idea that there is 'freedom' and there is structure that has no rules. But because relationships are based on 'rulelessness' they are not sustainable. Structures such as marriage and kinship help in shaping people to obey the rules. If we still want to maintain the society that is governed by rules, we therefore need a society that has a space that shapes people to follow them. Total freedom is an ideal need and relationships try to afford people with that but in reality there is no total freedom and thus there is no space for relationships. In a changing society we need a refined marriage to accommodate change but relationships brings a lot of uncertainties and confusion in a present society.

7.3 Bibliography

7.3.1 Published Sources

Abdool Karim, S.S.; Abdool Karim, Q.; Preston-Whyte, E.; and Sankar, N. (1992) Reasons for Lack of Condom use Among High School Students *SAMJ* Vol 82 August 1992, 107-110

Akeroyd, A.V. (2004) Coercion, Constraints and "Cultural Entrapment": A Further Look at Gendered and Occupational Factors Pertinent to the Transmission of HIV in *Africa in HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology* (ed) E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J.R. Oppong and J. Ghosh, Blackwell Publishing

Albertyn, C. and Hassim, S. (1998) The Boundaries of Democracy: Gender, HIV/AIDS and Culture, *Development update*

Anderson, K. and Jack, D. (1998) Learning to Listen. Interview Techniques and Analysis. In Perks et al, *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge: 157-171

Baylies, C. and Buyra, J. (2000) AIDS, Sexuality and Gender in Africa: Collective Strategies and Struggles in Tanzania and Zambia, *Social Aspects of AIDS.* London: Taylor and Francis

Bernard, R.H. (1995) *Research Methods in Anthropology*, London: Altamira Press

Bolton, R. (1995) Rethink Anthropology: The study of AIDS. In: Han ten Brummelhuis, Gilbert Herdt, Eds. Culture and Sexual Risk: *Anthropological Perspectives on AIDS,* 285-313. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers.

Bond, V. (1997), 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place': Applied Anthropology and AIDS Research on a Commercial Farm in Zambia, *Health Transition Review,* Supplement 3 to Volume 7, 69-83

Briggs, J.L. (1974) Eskimo women: Makers of men, in Many sisters, *Women in cross-cultural perspective* (ed) Carolyn J. Matthiasson New York: Free Press

Burman, S. and Preston-Whyte, E. (1992) *Questionable Issue: Illegitimacy in South Africa*, Oxford University Press: South Africa

Busken, I. (2002) 'Fine Lines or Strong Cords? Who do we think we are and how can we become what we want to be in the Quest for Quality in Qualitative Research' *Education as change* 6(1): 1-31

Castaneda, D. (2000) The Close Relationship Context and HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction Among Mexican Americans. *Sex Roles: A Journal if Research,* April, 2000

Chirwa, W.C. (1997) Migrant labour, sexual networking and multi-partnered sex in Malawi. *Health Transition Review*, Supplement 3 to Volume 7, 1997, 5-15

Cornwall, A. (2002) Spending power: Love, money, and the reconfiguration of gender relations in Ado-Odo, Southwestern Nigeria. *American Ethnologist* 29(4): 963-980. American Anthropological Association

Duck, S.W. (1973) *Personal Relationships and Personal Construct: A Study of Friendship Formation*. John Wiley and Sons: London.

Farmer, P., Lindenbaum, S., and DelVecchio, G.M. (1993) Women, Poverty, and AIDS: An Introduction. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*. 17:387-397

Freedman, D.C. (1986) Wife, Widow, Woman: Role of an Anthropologist in a Transylvanian Village, in *Women in the Filed: Anthropological Experiences* (ed) Golde, P. University of California Press: London

Freud, S. (1856-1939) Beyond the Pleasure Principle/ Sigmund Freud; a new translation by James Stractiey London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of psych-analysis 1950

Geetz, C. (1973), "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture" In the Interpretation of Culture. New York, Basic Books.

Giddens, A. (1992) The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies. Cambridge: Polity Press

Glaser, B. (1978) Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press

Goodale, J.C. (1971) Tiwi wives: A Study of women of Melville Island, North Australia Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press

Greene, P.J. (1978) Promiscuity, Paternity, and Culture. *America Ethnologist.* Vol. 5. No. 1 (Feb, 1978): 151-159. Blackwell Publishing.

Gupta, G.R., and Weiss, E. (1993) Women's Lives and Sex: Implications for AIDS Prevention. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 17: 399-412

Hammond-Took, D. (1993) The Roots of Black South Africa, Jonathan Ball Publishers: Johannesburg.

Hanoun, A. (2006). La domination masculine. *American Anthropologist*. Vol. 108. No 4. December

Hastrup, K. (1997) "The Dynamics of Anthropology Theory" *Cultural Dynamics* 9(3): 351-371

Harrison, A.; Lurie, M. and Wilkinson, N. (1997), Exploring Partner Communication and Patterns of Sexual Networking: Qualitative Research to Improve Management of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, *Health Transition Review,* Supplement 3 to Volume 7, 103-107)

Haviland, W.A. (1996) Cultural Anthropology, Harcourt Brace and Company: Orlando

Henriksson, B. and Mensson, S.A. (1995) Sexual Negotiations: An Ethnographic Study of Men Who Have Sex With Men, *Culture and Sexual Risk: Antropological Perspective on AIDS* ed Brummel-huis H., Herdt G Routledg: London and New York

Herzfield, M. (1987) Anthropology through the looking-glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: New York

Holy Bible, (1985) New king James Version, The Gideons International

Hsu, F.C.K. (1971) Kinship and Culture, Aidine Publishing Company: Chicago.

Jackson, M. (1987) "Facts of Life" or The Eroticization of Women's Oppression? Sexology of Social Construction of Heterosexuality", in Caplan, P. (ed.) *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality*. Tavistock, London

Jenkins, S.R. (2000) Introduction to the Special Issue: Defining Gender, Relationships, and Power, Sex Roles: *A journal of Research*, April 2000

Johnson, C.L. (1989) In-law relationships in the American kinship system: the impact of Divorce and remarriage. *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 16. No. 1 (Feb., 1989): 87-99

Joseph, S. (1994) Brother/sister relationships: connectivity, love, and power in the reproduction of patriarchy in Lebanon, *American Ethnologist* 1(1): 50-73, American Anthropological Association

Kalichman, S.C., and Simbayi, L. (2003), Perceived Social Context of AIDS in Black Township in Cape Town, *African Journal of AIDS Research* 2(1): 33-38

Kalunde, K.W. (1997) HIV/AIDS and Sexual Behaviour Among Youth in Zambia *Health Transition Review*, Supplement 3 to Volume 7 91-95

Keesing, R.M. (1976) Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective, (ed.) Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York

Keesing, M.R. & Strathern, A. J. (1998) Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective, Hercourt Brece College Publishers

Leacock, E. (1955) Matrilocality in a simple hunting economy (Montagnais-Naskapi) SWest J. Anthrop 11, 31-47

Letamo, G. and Bainame, K. (1997) The Socio-economic and Cultural Context of the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana, *Health Transition Review*, Supplement 3 to Volume 7 97-101

Lewinson, A. (2006) Love in the City: Navigating multiple relationships in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, *City & Society* Volume 18 Issue 1, pp. 90-115, American Anthropological Association

Lorde, A. (1986) I am Your Sister: Black Women Organising Across Sexualities. Latham, New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Colour Press

Low-Beer, D. and Stoneburner, L.R., (2003) Behaviour and Communication Change in Reducing HIV: Is Uganda Unique? *African Journal of AIDS Research, 2(1): 9-21*

Lucas, J. (1995) "Space, Domesticity and People's Power: Civic Organization in Alexandra", in *African Studies* Vol. 54(1) pg. 89-113

Mager, A. (1995) "Patriarchs, Politics and Ethnicity in the Making of Ciskei, 1945-1959" in *African Studies* Vol. 54(1) pg. 49-72

Mauss, M. (1954) The Gift, London: Cohen and West LTD

Marks, S. (2002) An Epidemic Waiting to Happen: The Spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa in Social and Historical Perspective, *African Studies* 61(1), pp. 13-24

Moore, H. (1988) Feminist and Anthropology, Polity Press, Cambridge

Nanda, S. (1987) Cultural Anthropology, City University: New York.

Nnko, S. and Pool, R. (1997) Sexual Discourse in the Context of AIDS: Dominant Themes on Adolescent Sexuality Among Primary School Pupils in Magu District Tanzania, *Health Transition Review,* Supplement 3 to Volume 7 85-90

Oppong, J.; and Kalipeni, E. (2004) Perceptions and Misperceptions of AIDS in Africa in *Africa in HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology* (ed) E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J.R. Oppong and J. Ghosh, Blackwell Publishing

Paxson, H. (2002) Rationalizing Sex: Family Planning and the Making of Modern Lovers in Urban Greece, *American Ethnologist* 29(2): 307-334

Quinn, N. (1982) "Commitment" in American Marriage: A Cultural Analysis, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 9 No. 4: 775-798

Rebhun, L.A. (1999), For Love and for Money: Romance in Urbanizing Northeast Brazil. Volume 11, Issue 1-2: 145-164, June 1999

Rehle, M.T., and Shisana, O. (2003) Epidemiological and Demographic HIV/AIDS Projections: South Africa, *African Journal of AIDS Research* 2(1): 1-8

Reohr, J.R. (1971) Friendship: An Exploration of Structure and Process, Garland Publishing: INC-New York and London.

Rodriguez, C. (1995) 'A Homegirl Goes Home'. Black Feminism and the Lure of Native Anthropology

Rogers, S.C. (1978) 'Woman's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20(1): 123-162

Rosaldo, M. (1974) "Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview " in Rosaldo, M. ad Lamphere, L. (eds). *Women, Culture and Society,* Stanford University Press, California

Sanday, P. (1974) "Female Status in Public Domain" in Rosaldo, M. and Lamphere (ed.) *Women, Culture and Society*. Stanford University Press. Calofornia

Sax, W.S. (1998) "The Hall of Mirrors: Orientalism, Anthropology and the Other" *American Anthropology* 100(2) pg. 292

Scheper-Hughes, N. (1994) AIDS and Social Body, Social Science and Medicine 39, 991-1003

Schoepf, B.G. (2004) AIDS, History and Struggle over Meaning in Africa *in HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology* (ed) E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J.R. Oppong and J. Ghosh, Blackwell Publishing

Shisana, O. (2002) *Nelson Mandela/HSRC Study of HIV/AIDS: South African Prevalence, Behavioural Risks and Mass Media*. Cape Town, Human Science Research Council

Silverman, D. (1999) Doing Qualitative Research, London: Sage

Silberschmidt, M. (2005) Male Sexuality in the Context of Socio-Economic Change in Rural and Urban East Africa, *Sexuality in Africa Magazine*, Vol 2 Issue 1 2005

Simmel, G. (1997) Simmel on Culture, (ed) by D. Frisby and M. Featherstone, London: Sage Publication

Simmel, G. (1971) On Individuality and Social Forms, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press

Simons, H.J. (1968) African Woman: their Legal Status in South Africa, C. Hurst and Co.: London

Stadler, J. (2004) The Young, the rich and the beautiful: Secrecy, suspicion and discourses of AIDS in the South African lowveld, *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 2(2): 127-139

Standing, H. (1992) AIDS: Conceptual and methodological issues in researching sexual behaviour in sub-Saharan Africa. *Social Science and Medicine* 34, 475-483

Strathern, M. (1992), Reproducing The Future: *Essays On Anthropology, Kinship And The New Reproductive Technologies*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Strathern, M. (1984) 'Domesticity and the Denigration of Women' in O'Brian, D. and Tiffany, S. (eds.) *Rethinking Women's Roles*. University of California Press: Calofornia

Susser, I. and Stein, Z., (2004) 'Culture, Sexuality and Women's Agency in Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa in *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology* (ed) E. Kalipeni, S. Craddock, J.R. Oppong and J. Ghosh, Blackwell Publishing

Swart-Kruger, J. and Richter, L.M. (1997) AIDS-Related Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Among South African Street Youth: Reflections on Power, Sexuality and the Autonomous Self, *Soc. Sci. Med.* Vol. 45, No. 6 pp. 957-966

Thornton, R. (1992) The Chains of Reciprocity: The Impact of Nietzsche's Genealogy on Malinoski's Crime and Custom in Savage Society. *The polish Sociological Bulletin* No. 1 1992

Tiffany, S. (1978) 'Models and the Social Anthropology of women: A Preliminary Assessment', in *Man* 13: 43-51

Ulin, P.R. (1992) African Women and AIDS: Negotiating Bahavioral Change, *Social Science and Medicine*. 34(1); 63-73

Van der Vliet, V. (1990), "Traditional Husbands, Modern Wives? Constructing Marriages in a South African Township", *African Studies* Vol. 50:1/2 pp 2-41

Vogler, C. (2005), Cohabiting couples: rethinking money in the household at the beginning of the twenty first century, *The Sociological Review,* Blackwell Publishing

Wagner, R. (1977), analogic kinship: a Daribi example. *American Ethnologist.* Vol. 4, No. 4 (Nov., 1977): 623-642. Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

Wilsworth, M.J. (1980) Strategies for Survival: Transcending The Culture of Poverty in a Black South African Township, *Institute of Social and Economic Research*, Grahamstown.

Wood, K.; Maforah, F. and Jewkes, R. (1998) "He Forced Me to Love Him": Putting Violence on Adolescent Sexual Health Agendas. *Soc Sci Med*, 1998 Jul; 47(2) : 233-242

Wood, C. and Foster, D. (1995) "Being the Type of Lover…": Gender-Differentiated Reasons for Non-use of Condoms by Sexually Active Heterosexual Students *Psychology in Society* (pins), 20, 13-35

7.3.2 Unpublished Sources

Halperin, D. (2001), Is Poverty the Root Cause of (Southern) African AIDS? A Paper presented in AIDS in Context Conference

Heald, S. (2001) It's Never, as Easy as ABC: Understandings of AIDS in Botswana, a paper presented in AIDS in Context Conference

Radebe, Z. (2000) Iqude: A Route to Women Empowerment? *An Honour Thesis Submitted in the department of Social Anthropology*, University of Witwatersrand, 2000

Searle, C.M. (2001), Representing Voices? How Johannesburg Newspapers Portrayed the Debate over Whether HIV Causes AIDS, *MA Dissertation,* submitted at University of the Witwatersrand.

Swartz, L. (2002), Fertility Transition in South Africa, *A Paper Presented on Expert Group Meeting on Completing the Fertility Transition.* New York, 11-14 March

Thornton, R. (2003) Sex in the Space of the Dual: Towards Theorizing the Power of Sex in Culture, *a Paper presented in the Sex and Secrecy Conference,* Wits University, Johannesburg

Van der Vliet, V (1984), Staying Single: A Strategy Against Poverty? *A Paper presented on Carnegie Conference,* Cape Town, 13-19 April 1984

Walker, L. and Gilbert, L. (2001) Women at Risk: HIV/AIDS – A South African Case Study, *A Paper presented in AIDS in Context Conference,* University of Witwatersrand.

7.3.3 Magazines and Newspapers

Green, E.C. (2003) A Plan as Simple as ABC, *The New York Times*, March 1 2003

Leclerc-Madlala, S. (2000) Silence that Nourishes AIDS in Africa, *Mail and Guardian* 11-17 August 2000

Memela, S. (2002) The price of a woman, *City Press* April 7, 2002 p. 17

Mokae, R. (2003) 'Stop Hiding Behind outdated Traditions, Buti', *Sunday World* 14 September 2003, p. 19

Mouroe, V. (2005) The Oprah Magazine, South Africa, February 2005

Ngudle, A. (2003) Size Matters but it can't bring Love Back Drum 9 October 2003 p. 114

Sekano, P. (2002) The Barriers That Lead to Two-Timing City Press April 7 2002 p. 17

7.3.4 Internet Search

South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey, 2008: A Turning Tide Among Teenagers? Research conducted by HSRC, MRC and CADRE. http://www.mrc.ac.za/pressreleases/2009/sanat.pdf

Statistics South Africa, Statistical release P0307: Marriages and divorces, 2009. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0307/P03072009.pdf

Twiggs, L. (2003) “Gender inequality contributes to South Africa’s high levels of violence, hamper economic development, places strain on our health care system and fuelling the AIDS crisis”, http://www.health-e.org.za/news/article.php?uid=20030830

Wright, S (1998) “The Politicization of Culture” http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/rai/AnthToday/wrighr.html

Appendix1: Informants' profiles

Key female informants

Lerato is a 29-year-old woman who has a university degree. She is working for a private company as a manager. She stays with her three-year-old in a townhouse and does not depend on anyone for financial support. Lerato is one the informants that I classified as independent informants because of her financial independency. Lerato said she felt pregnant when the relationship with the father of her child was three months old as she felt that she was ready to have child, according to her the 'clock was ticking'. She broke up with the father of the baby while she was still pregnant. Since the break up with the father of her child she has been in and out of relationship. In the 10 months that I spent in the field she dated three different men. The last boyfriend seemed to be 'serious' about the relationship as this guy introduced her to his family. She even fell pregnant but realised that the guy was irresponsible and decided to terminate the pregnancy, but still continued with the relationship. By the end of this research they were still together and the guy had got a job but in another province. After the boyfriend got the job, Lerato felt that she could have a child with him and was then trying to conceive another child by the end of my research.

Tumi is a 31-year-old woman who lives with her seven-old-daughter in a flat. She dropped out from university and got herself a job in a private company. However, she quite her job and started a business. She broke up with the father of the child in December 2002 after they have been together for 7 years, however, in this seven years they had been breaking up and making up, but this time it was final according to Tumi and she expressed her tiredness of the relationship. I classified Tumi under dependant

informants because of her expectations in a relationship. Tumi started dating another guy in January 2003. This guy was a divorcee. She broke up with this guy in June as she discovered that the guy was broke. They had planned to get married in December 2003. After this boyfriend, Tumi has been in and out of relationships and by the end of my research she was still single and looking for a serious relationship. Tumi's problem with the men she's been meeting is that they didn't seem to be serious, some they didn't want to spend money while others they are just playful according to her. Tumi had clear expectation in her relationships: financial support and stability and neither of this were easy to find hence she remained single.

Thandi is a 34-year-old woman and has three girls (12, 2 and 6months). She was staying in the back-room in Soweto with her boyfriend; and the two younger girls, the eldest was staying with her mother and she has a different father. Thandi was not working when I started my fieldwork and was dependant on her boyfriend. Hence I classified her under dependant informants. Thandi has been staying with this boyfriend for two years but the boyfriend had not paid anything to her family. According to Thandi, her father chased her away from home because she had another child and yet she was not married. Although Thandi had stayed two years with her boyfriend she expressed her dissatisfaction with her boyfriend and told me that she would love to find another boyfriend. The main reason of her dissatisfaction was derived from lack of financial security. Thandi's boyfriend was working at the local supermarket and was not making 'enough' money. Another reason which came secondary though to Thandi was that her boyfriend was cheating but she would say she does not mind someone who cheats as long as the person will support her.

Towards the end of my research Thandi got a job, a month she called me and told me that she had left the boyfriend and had found herself a new man.

Thoko is a 19-year-old girl who is still living with her parents. She had a 6-months-old son. Thoko told me that she discovered that she was HIV positive when she was pregnant. According to her, the family was supportive and she was coping very well with her status. However, with her boyfriend (the father of her child) things were not going well. During one of my field visits, Thoko told me that she had found her boyfriend sleeping with another woman. She was really heart broken. She retaliated by prohibiting the boyfriend from seeing her child and argued that if is sleeping around he collects evil spirit and if he visits the child, he will transfer these spirits to the child. Because the boyfriend was supporting the child Thoko would be the one to collect the money as she believed that it was his duty to support his child, and her duty was to take care of the child. I classified Thoko as a conformist informant because she believed in gender roles. Thoko became sick towards the end of my research and her family did not want people coming in and out to visit her. I had to stop my visits. I don't know what happened because her phone stopped working, I just hope where she is she is doing well, as she was an ambitious young woman.

Lindi is a 19-year-old girl who was doing grade 12 and she had a 2-months-old daughter when I first met her. She was staying at her boyfriend's place because she needed someone to look after her child while she goes to school. Her mother was working and the boyfriend's mother was not working, it was therefore practical for her to move to he boyfriend's place. According to Lindi, both families (her family and boyfriend's family) agreed to this decision. Lindi seemed to be comfortable with her

life as in this household there was freedom, as she would put it. She could drink alcohol in front of 'mother-in-law'. However, as a mother she could not go out as much as her boyfriend because her 'responsibility' was to take care of the child. When the child was sick she would have to miss school and take the child to the clinic. The boyfriend on the other hand was responsible for providing material support although he was not working, but was selling soft drinks and cigarettes. Although Lindi said she loved her boyfriend but emphasise the fact that she is still young and she wanted to enjoy life. I classified Lindi under the conformist informants because of the arrangement made her relationship with regard to raising the child. In the seventh month of my field work Lindi had move back to her family and I could not follow her up, as the boyfriend's family seemed reluctant to give me her home address.

Lizeka is a 22 year old woman who stays with her boyfriend and their two daughters aged 5 years and 1year. Lizeka said she ran away from home when she was pregnant with her first child because she was sacred of what her parents will do to her. She said her parents are very strict; it is still difficult to visit home even though the boyfriend paid money for 'damage' (money that is paid when a man has impregnated a woman). Lizeka revealed to that she was HIV positive. She told me that her boyfriend is the only boyfriend she has ever had and believed that he infected her with HIV. Lizeka said she forgave her boyfriend because she had no place to go and she also didn't want to separate her children form their father because he loves his children. However, Lizeka took charge of her life after learning about her HIV status. She told me that she now insists on condom use and the boyfriend can't argue otherwise because she has a reason not to trust him. Lizeka seemed to be content with her life,

and she started selling clothes to get her financial independency. Her boyfriend seemed to be a very nice person who really loved his family. He seemed to be regretting to have cheated on his girlfriend. Lizeka expressed the change of her boyfriend and said in a very subtle way she is happy to have experienced what she has because she would never have had a chance to know this 'best' side of her partner. Towards the end of the research Lizeka and her partner still seemed happy together although Lizeka in some of our conversation showed some resentment towards her partners as she believes that he infected her with HIV. I grouped Lizeka under dependant informants because she was dependant on her partner for material support.

Key male informants

Mandla is a 30-year-old man who has three children from different women. When I started my fieldwork, Mandla was been taken to court for maintenance for the child that he was denying that it was his. He did paternity test and the test proved that he was not the father of that child. After this whole drama Mandla told me that he went and did the vasectomy. This for me was an indication that Mandla did not believe in condom use, because consistent use of condoms prevent unwanted pregnancy and therefore there no need for vesectomy. Mandla was staying alone in his flat, and originally he is from Kwazulu-Natal. According to Mandla he did not have a serious relationship, but he only had people who would be available when he needed 'service' (by this he meant having sex) and there was a mutual understanding from both parties involved. The reason he did not have a steady girlfriend it is because he could not see how relationships can work as two people will have different ambitions and this will always be a source of conflict according to him. I grouped Mandla under critical

analytical informants because of his conceptualisation of relationships. Towards the end of my research he started getting sick and he went back home (Kwazulu-Natal).

Themba is a 29 year-old men and has a five-year-old son. When I first met Themba he was staying with his fiancée (he had paid lobola and they were preparing for marriage) in a house. They were going through difficulties in their relationship at that times and I found myself being a counsellor. What exacerbated their situation is that they had financial problems too. They eventually broke up and Themba sold the house and went back to Soweto. Although Themba emphasised his desire to get married again, but equally emphasised the 'not now' issue. When I was doing my last visits Themba was still telling me about the different girls he meets but they were not marrying type according to him. The definition of a marrying type according to Themba was a woman that would not question his decisions. Themba seemed to be enjoying his bachelorhood as there was no woman who was entitled to make demands. I grouped Themba under conformist informants because even though his relationship did not work but she still believed that he can find the 'right woman' and get married.

Steve is a 28-year-old man who has a three-year-old daughter and is staying with the mother of his child. When I started research Steve did not have a fulltime job but was working for different companies. Later he got a fulltime job from one the local NGOs in Soweto. Getting a job for Steve, afforded him with an opportunity to formalise his living arrangement with his partner. He paid lobola and then threw a big celebration after the lobola ceremony. The girlfriend on the other hand was doing part-time jobs. This couple seemed to be really stable as they did not have many fights, at least not

that I known of, they seemed to be matured although Steve had his complains about his girlfriend. I classified Steve under conformist informants because of the way he embraced his duties as a man to provide for his family.

Thabo is 26-year-old and has a seven-year-old son who does not live with him but visits him during school holidays. Thabo is working for a production company and is more into script writing. He sees himself as self-sufficient and feels that having a partner in his life will be a step back. He didn't have a steady girlfriend; he told me that he preferred to have many girlfriends. I classified him under critical analytical informants because he seemed to have the mind of his own when it comes to relationships.

Sipho is a 34-year-old man and is living alone. He does not have any children. He is working for in an IT company and is an IT specialist. He does not have a steady girlfriend and he said he doesn't want a girlfriend as he views his job as extremely demanding. Sipho did not seem to be looking for a serious relationship. He had his on views on them and strongly felt that they were a waste of time and that it is not possible to find that person who can make you happy for the rest of your life. For him what was practical was to find sexual partners rather than a relationship and argued that they complicate life. With these views I classified Sipho under critical analytical informants

Married informants

Mercy is 30-year-old woman and a qualified HR officer. She is staying with her family in Pretoria. The husband has a degree in computer science. Mercy has a child

from her previous relationship and the husband has accepted this child like his. For Mercy marriage became critical after loosing her previous partner that she was living with. She lost everything she had worked for because the families were not involved. In her experience she learnt that marriage is important hence she made sure that she cannot move in with a man unless both families knew about the arrangement and marriage makes this arrangement easy. Mercy and her husband have become devoted Christians and they believed that if it was not their religion, their marriage would have problems. Towards the end of my research Mercy told me that they were expecting a son and everything was moving smoothly.

Thobeka is 31 years and living with her family. They have 5 year old daughter and 15 months old son. Thobeka and the husband are both professionals, she is working for a government department and a husband is working for a private company. They met at varsity and have not experienced any problems. Thobeka's husband is a family man and prefers to spend time with his family.

Sbu is 31 years and has two sons but one if from the previous relationship. He is living with his wife and their son. Sbu is working as a financial advisor. His wife is not working. He stopped her from working because he felt that the money she was earning was not making any difference in the house. Sbu believed in polygamy as he had other girlfriends outside his marriage. For him, having girlfriends outside marriage was a matter of variety 'as a person cannot live on bread alone'. However, in some of our conversation we had, Sbu highlighted some frustrations he is experiences in his marriage and his extra-marital affairs were a form of coping mechanism.

NB: *I grouped all my married informants under conformist category as marriage is a social construct and when a person gets married s/he conforms to this social construct*

Older women

Older Woman 1: she is 56 years and has eight children. She is working at the hospital as a nurse. She grew up in Kwazulu-Natal then relocated when she got married to Joburg. She separated with her husband before the husband passed away. Ever since her separation with the husband, she has never dated any man as she believed that God would not want to see her with another man. She is born again Christian. Even though she did not talk about positive things in her marriage, she believed that marriage was still an important institution and wished that everyone should get married. She viewed marriage as God's will because according to her marriage originates from the bible between Adam and Eve.

Older Woman 2: She is 52 years and was born in Alexandra and has three children, two children from the marriage and one from a previous relationship. She is no longer working and is looking after her grand child. She had her first child when she was only 15 years old. Her husband passed away in 1998 and has been single ever since. Finding another man seemed to be a taboo as she thought she was too old for them. She is staying with her grandchildren. She believes in marriage and said she wished all her children could get married as this will show that she has done a good job in raising them. She said she did not raise her children to stay at home but to be able to start their families and this can happened through marriage.

Older Woman 3: she is 60 years old and is still working as a teacher. She has 7 children that she raised alone as her husband died when she was still young. She did not remarry as she felt she had to take care of her children and did not have time for men. She also highlighted that her marriage was difficult and would not want to go back to that situation again. She said her husband was *isoka* (Casanova) and that was very painful because she had to fight with those women so that they would leave her husband alone. According to her somehow her husband death was a blessing in disguised as she started focusing on taking care of her children instead of worrying about the man. Nonetheless, she wanted her children to get married because it part of tradition and she does not approved of children who have children out of wedlock. She viewed this as confusing children as they would not know where they belong, and saw her children not confused as they where they belong, they have a home and a surname.

Case study Informants

Zanele and Sfiso

Xoli and Kgomotso

NB: these are pseudo names

Appendix2: Informed consent form

RESEARCH TOPIC

Understanding relationships as a form of a social institution

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This research is conducted to fulfil Master degree requirement in the department of social Anthropology at University of Witwatersrand.

WHAT PROCEDURES ARE INVOLVED?

During the study you will take part in-depth interviews or participate in the focus group. That is, you will be asked to discuss your views regarding relationships. If you are asked to participate in the focus group you must know that there are no wrong and right answers and everyone is entitled to his/her opinion. I will not judge you in any way on the answers you will give. If you agree to be my case study, I will visit you at least once a week for the next four months. However, my visits will not include formal interviews, we will engage in informal conversation.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or stop at any time without stating any reason.

MAY ANY OF THESE STUDY PROCEDURES RESULT IN DISCOMFORT OR INCONVENIENCE?

If you do feel uncomfortable about discussing certain questions you may decline to do so. The discussions/questions will be held in a language that you understand.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?

The study does not foresee any potential risks involved in this study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY?

There are direct benefits that you will get by participating in this study. However, your participation will help me fulfill my Masters degree and furthermore the information you will give will help to inform the debates on relationships which might help in understanding the social structure.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained during the course of this study is strictly confidential. Results of the study that may be reported in scientific journals will not include any information, which identifies you as a participant in this study.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the investigator, Zodwa Radebe, about the nature, conduct and benefits of the study. I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Information Leaflet and Informed Consent) regarding the study. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, will be anonymously processed into a study report. I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

Participant's name _____ (Please print)

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's name _____ (Pease print)

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

I, Zodwa Radebe, herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature and conduct of the above study.