

**Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the
influence of consensual non-monogamy on the
marital satisfaction of South African couples**

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DECLARATION

By electronically submitting this thesis, I, Marina Basson, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, produced through my own original research. I further declare that:

- i. this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Sociology at the Vanderbijlpark campus of the North-West University;
- ii. other authors' work and quotations are clearly cited/referenced in this thesis;
- iii. apart from other authors' (referenced) works, this thesis is my own work;
- iv. the assistance of external individuals in the research process (such as, but not limited to, identifying possible participants and spreading awareness of the research) is clearly indicated in this thesis; and
- v. this work or parts thereof have not been submitted before.

Marina Basson

ABSTRACT

Prompted by the comparative paucity of existing research on the subject of swinging in a South African context, the aim of this study was **to explore how the consensual non-monogamous lifestyle of swinging affects marital satisfaction among South African couples**, using a qualitative approach. Participants were purposefully selected from across South Africa through invitations to swingers' clubs and snowball sampling. Data were gathered via individual semi-structured interviews, were audio recorded transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. The findings were integrated into a **Consensual Non-Monogamous Marital Satisfaction Model (CNMMS)**.

A number of **enabling factors** influenced participants' decisions to engage in CNM, emanating from the worldview of the participants. These factors centred on how they critique and challenge *religious views of monogamy* and the view that the only valid relationship style is *heteronormative*.

Three main themes emerged to describe the reasons (or **antecedents**) why people engage in CNM. The first theme was *influences from external sources*, which included sub-themes such as the pro-swinging influence or prompting of the media, life partners, and social connections. In each of these sub-themes, the participants were introduced to CNM through an external source such as pop-up adverts (media), suggestions to engage in CNM from life partners, or through discussions with work colleagues (social connections). Typically, the world views of such individuals (which tended to be disconnected from religious indoctrinations and to view the notion of heteronormativity as limiting) were more partial to alternative romantic relationship styles.

The second main theme was *the desire to fulfil needs for sexual diversity*, centred around two sub-themes namely *sexual needs* and *social needs*. Sexual needs included the desires for sexual diversity (multiple partners) and fluidity (exploring bisexuality), which could be addressed through CNM by engaging with multiple sexual partners, the freedom to explore bisexuality without harming the primary relationship, and through the variety of themed rooms at clubs such as BDSM rooms or medical fetish rooms that cater to a wide array of fantasies and fetishes. As some of these needs could not be met in a monogamous heterosexual relationship, the need became a strong motivator to pursue

swinging. The second sub-theme, which centred on social needs, included the need for like-minded friendships where one could be authentic without fear of rejection or judgement from those who do not agree with the lifestyle. Non-lifestyle friends are perceived to be inauthentic whereas lifestyle friends are deemed to be more honest and authentic with regard to their sexuality. The freedom to be authentic without judgement and rejection was a strong motivation for the participants to engage in CNM.

The third main theme, *trauma*, linked to life experiences such as the death or infidelity of a partner that caused a reconstruction of what a relationship is and how it should be conducted. This made the participants susceptible to suggestions to different relationship styles such as a swinging lifestyle, which either offers an alternative to infidelity or a means to fulfil a sexual need arising from the death of a partner.

Couples who enter the lifestyle encounter **challenges** and derive **benefits** from their varied and diverse interactions with other swingers. The challenges and benefits most notably affected the **personal**, **social**, and **marital** aspects of their lives. The most significant challenges pertaining to the **personal** realm included a *negative body image*, which caused some participants to be reluctant to interact. This occurred mainly among women who felt too fat, too old, or otherwise insecure about perceived bodily imperfections. In many instances, this resulted in the women needing much more convincing to engage in CNM. However, once engaged, women typically become the maintainers of the lifestyle and seemed to enjoy it more than their male partners. In part, this was ascribed to the 'women rule' principle, which maintains that women are in control and determine when, where, and how swinging interactions transpire - which directly challenges patriarchy.

Nonetheless, despite maintaining the lifestyle, some women *faked orgasms* so as not to hurt the feelings of their swing partner, specifically when he was not a good lover, which attests to the maintenance of traditional *gender roles* and *patriarchy*. Furthermore, given the average age at which the participants entered the lifestyle (40–45 years), the onset of *erectile dysfunction* (ED) is prevalent and often not disclosed. The women who engaged with these men were in some instances left feeling inadequate. In other instances, men with ED were sought out by predominantly single female swingers, as that became a source of intimate touch and embrace which they otherwise would not get because of not having a steady partner. A final challenge pertained to inconsistent

condom use, as some participants felt that it was only useful as a birth control measure, and not as STI protection.

A few **marital challenges** were identified during the analysis, some of which are common to non-swinging relationships, and others which appear to be unique to the CNM lifestyle. A common challenge of the former kind was *jealousy*, which was often associated with distrust and disharmony, and which tended to negatively influence marital satisfaction. Although CNM is purported to be devoid of *cheating*, it remains prevalent in the lifestyle in the form of partners falling in love with their swing partners and conducting the relationship under the guise of swinging. **Challenges unique to CNM** occur mainly during the entry phases to the lifestyle, which require the negotiation of a playstyle and deciding whether to engage in ‘full swap’ (i.e., penetration with the play partner) or ‘soft swap’ (i.e., flirting or petting with no penetration). These challenges all require open and sexually candid communication within the dyad. *Failure to communicate effectively* about these challenges could damage the primary relationship.

Once the couple has navigated the initial stages of entry into CNM and addressed the marital challenges, they start coming into contact with other swingers, clubs, and swing parties, which also expose them to challenges in their **social lives**, centring on *racial dynamics, non-lifestyle friendships, religion¹, age* and the perceived *exploitative nature of swingers’ clubs*. Although clubs are deemed to be a safe space to engage in bisexual encounters and explore needs for sexual diversity, they are also perceived as exploitative, particularly toward single men, who are expected to pay the admittance price of a couple to a club, while single women are in some instances not charged an entry fee. Single women, however, felt exploited for the benefit of couples who wish to engage in threesomes or bisexual encounters.

There were meaningful differences in how each *race* perceives and enacts swinging. While white persons engage in swinging mainly for sexual diversity, friendship and agency, black and coloured swingers are perceived to be more penis-centric, reportedly engaging in swinging to “show off” their larger penises. Furthermore, white swingers mostly play with other whites, while black and coloured swingers seek out white women as trophies. Black and coloured male participants noted that they avoid swinging with others of their own race due to a penis-centric outlook; they do not want their partners to

¹ Denotes what a person believes in or their religious practices.

be with another black or coloured man who has a bigger penis. Age (i.e., specifically as it related to *youthfulness*) is another notable social challenge. The influx of much younger swingers was deemed a challenge, despite the older swingers generally being the ones who invited them in. Younger women are often perceived as being sexually immature, despite the notion that an older man with a younger woman implies that he “still has the moves”. Meanwhile, younger men are seen as virile and sexually exciting for the older female swinger and enhanced the feeling that the older women are still desirable.

While the **challenges** were more prevalent during the entry stages of CNM, the **benefits** seemed to become more prevalent *after* engagement in CNM. As was the case with the challenges, the benefits also occurred within the **social**, **marital**, and **personal** domains. Both men and women experienced better hygiene practices, such as shaving and taking extra care with cleanliness. The most notable **benefits** directly associated with marriage included learning new sexual techniques and then transferring this to the marital bed, leading to a feeling of enhanced marital satisfaction. The findings highlight the value of candid and honest communication to navigate the *challenges* and amplify the *benefits* associated with engagement in CNM. An understanding of such challenges and benefits, as well as the value of open communication about them, could be of significant value to counsellors and therapists working with individuals either already in or considering entry into the CNM lifestyle. Such support could assist couples in transcending the initial stages, which are characterised by various challenges that could be detrimental to the dyad, and to enhance the benefits associated with the lifestyle, which would facilitate enhanced marital satisfaction.

Irrespective of its eventual effect on the couple’s relationship, the study shows how CNM facilitates the democratisation of contemporary South African men and women’s conceptualisations, experiences and expressions of sexual intimacy.

Key words: Consensual non-monogamy, sexuality, swinging, swingers, CNM lifestyle, sociology, South Africa.

OPSOMMING

Gegewe die betreklike tekort aan bestaande navorsing oor die konsensuele nie-monogame (KNM) leefstyl (oftewel “*swinging*”) in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse konteks, was die doel van hierdie studie om te verken hoe die konsensuele nie-monogame leefstyl van *swinging* huweliksbevrediging onder Suid-Afrikaanse paartjies beïnvloed deur middel van 'n kwalitatiewe benadering. Deelnemers is doelgerig van regoor Suid-Afrika gekies deur middel van uitnodigings na swingingklubs en sneeubalsteekproefneming. Die data is deur middel van individuele semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude ingesamel, met klank opgeneem, getranskribeer en aan tematiese analise onderwerp. Die bevindinge is saamgevat in 'n Konsensuele Nie-monogame Huwelikstevredenheidsmodel (KNMHT).

'n Aantal bemagtigende faktore het deelnemers se besluit om by KNM betrokke te raak beïnvloed. Hierdie faktore spruit meestal voort uit die deelnemers se wêreldbeskouing, veral met verwysing na kritiek op en die uitdaging van godsdienstige sienings van monogamie en die idee dat die enigste geldige verhoudingstyl heteronormatief is.

Drie hooftemas het as redes (of antesedente) waarom mense by KNM betrokke raak te voorskyn gekom. Die eerste tema sentreer rondom invloede van *eksterne bronne*, wat subtemas soos die pro-*swinging* invloed of aansporing van die media, lewensmaats en sosiale verbindings ingesluit het. In elk van hierdie subtemas is die deelnemers aan KNM bekend gestel deur 'n eksterne bron soos opwip-advertensies (media), lewensmaats se voorstelle om betrokke te raak by KNM, of deur gesprekke met werkskollegas (sosiale verbintenisse). Die wêreldbeskouings van sulke individue (wat geneig was om los te staan van godsdienstige indoktrinasie en die idee van heteronormatiewiteit as beperkend sien) was tipies reeds meer positief ingestel teenoor alternatiewe romantiese verhoudingstyle.

Die tweede hoofteema, die begeerte om behoeftes vir *seksuele diversiteit* te vervul, het uiteengeval twee subtemas, naamlik seksuele behoeftes en sosiale behoeftes. Seksuele behoeftes het die begeertes vir seksuele diversiteit (veelvuldige seksmaats) en vloeibaarheid (verkenning van biseksualiteit) ingesluit. KNM spreek hierdie behoeftes aan deurdat persone met veelvuldige seksmaats omgang kan hê, deurdat dit hulle die vryheid gun om biseksualiteit te verken sonder om die primêre verhouding te benadeel, en deur

die verskeidenheid temakamers by klubs, soos BDSM-kamers of mediese fetisj-kamers wat voorsiening maak vir 'n wye verskeidenheid fantasieë en fetisje. Aangesien sommige van hierdie behoeftes nie in 'n monogame heteroseksuele verhouding bevredig kon word nie, het die behoefte 'n sterk motiveerder geword om *swinging* na te streef.

Die tweede subtema, *sosiale behoeftes*, het te make met die behoefte aan eendersdenkende vriendskappe waar 'n mens outentiek kan wees sonder vrees vir verwerping of oordeel van diegene wat nie met die leefstyl saamstem nie. Nie-leefstylvriende word as onoutentiek beskou, terwyl leefstylvriende as meer eerlik en outentiek geag word met betrekking tot hulle seksualiteit. Die vryheid om outentiek te wees sonder oordeel en verwerping was 'n sterk motivering vir die deelnemers om betrokke te raak by KNM.

Die derde hooftema, *trauma*, het betrekking gehad op lewenservarings soos die dood of ontrouheid van 'n maat wat gelei het tot 'n herooring van wat 'n verhouding is en hoe dit bestuur moet word. Dit het die deelnemers vatbaar gemaak vir voorstelle vir verskillende verhoudingstyle soos dié van *swinging*, wat óf 'n alternatief vir ontrouheid bied óf 'n manier om 'n seksuele behoefte te vervul wat voortspruit uit die dood van 'n maat.

Egpare wat tot die leefstyl toetree, beleef uitdagings en voordele uit hulle uiteenlopende interaksies met ander *swingers*. Die uitdagings en voordele het veral betrekking op die *persoonlike*, *sosiale* en *huweliksaspekte* van hul lewens. Die belangrikste *persoonlike* uitdagings was 'n negatiewe liggaamsbeeld, wat veroorsaak het dat sommige deelnemers huiwerig was om omgang te hê. Dit was veral opmerklik onder vroue wat te vet, te oud of andersins onseker gevoel het oor waargenome liggaamlike onvolmaakthede. In baie gevalle het dit daartoe gelei dat die vroue baie meer oortuiging nodig gehad het om by KNM betrokke te raak. Sodra hulle egter ingekoop het, word vroue tipies die handhawers van die leefstyl en lyk dit dikwels asof of hulle dit meer geniet as hulle manlike maats. Dit word deels toegeskryf aan die 'vroue-reël'-beginsel, wat volhou dat vroue in beheer is en bepaal wanneer, waar en hoe *swinging* plaasvind – wat die patriargie direk uitdaag.

Nietemin, ten spyte van die handhawing van die leefstyl, het sommige vroue voorgegee dat hulle orgasmes bereik om nie die gevoelens van hul swingmaat seer te maak nie, veral as hy nie 'n goeie minnaar is nie. Dit getuig van die handhawing van tradisionele

geslagsrolle en patriargie. Verder, gegewe die gemiddelde ouderdom waarop die deelnemers tot die lewenstyl toegetree het (40–45 jaar), is die aanvang van erektiele disfunksie (ED) algemeen en word dit dikwels nie bekend gemaak nie. Die vroue wat by hierdie mans betrokke raak, voel soms asof hulle tekort skiet. In ander gevalle word mans met ED opgesoek deur oorwegend enkellopende vroulike *swingers*, aangesien dit vir hulle 'n bron van intieme aanraking en omhelsing word wat hulle andersins nie sou kry nie omdat hulle nie 'n vaste maat het nie. 'n Laaste uitdaging het betrekking op ongereelde kondoomgebruik omdat sommige deelnemers voel dat dit slegs nuttig was as 'n geboortebeperkingsmaatreël, en nie as beskerming teen seksueel oordraagbare siektes nie.

'n Paar *huweliks*uitdagings is tydens die analise geïdentifiseer, waarvan sommige ook algemeen is in nie-KNM verhoudings, en ander uniek blyk te wees aan die KNM-leefstyl. 'n Algemene uitdaging van eersgenoemde soort was jaloesie, wat dikwels met wantroue en disharmonie geassosieer is, en wat geneig was om huweliksbevrediging negatief te beïnvloed. Alhoewel KNM na bewering sonder *ontrou* is, bly dit algemeen in die lewenstyl in die vorm van maats wat verlief raak op hul swingmaats en die verhouding onder die dekmantel van *swinging* voer. Uitdagings uniek aan KNM kom hoofsaaklik voor tydens die intreefase tot die lewenstyl. Hierdie fase vereis onderhandeling van 'n speelstyl en besluite rondom keuses soos “volle ruil” (d.w.s. penetrasie met die speelmaat) of “sagte ruil” (d.w.s. flirt of troetel met geen penetrasie nie). Hierdie uitdagings vereis oop en seksueel openhartige kommunikasie binne die diade. Versuim om doeltreffend oor hierdie uitdagings te kommunikeer, kan die primêre verhouding beskadig.

Sodra die egpaar die aanvanklike stadiums van toetrede tot CNM kon navigeer en die huweliksuitdagings aangespreek het, begin hulle in aanraking kom met ander *swingers*, klubs en *swinging* partytjies wat hulle ook blootstel aan uitdagings in hul *sosiale lewens*. Hierdie uitdagings behels rassedinamika, nie-leefstyl vriendskappe, godsdiens, ouderdom en die waargenome uitbuitende aard van *swingers* klubs. Alhoewel klubs beskou word as 'n veilige ruimte vir biseksuele ontmoetings en die ondersoek seksuele diversiteit, word hulle ook as uitbuitend beskou. Die uitbuiting is veral teenoor enkellopende mans, van wie verwag word om die toegangsprys van 'n paartjie tot 'n klub te betaal terwyl hulle enkellopend is. Enkellopende vroue word in sommige gevalle nie 'n toegangsfooi gehef nie. Enkellopende vroue het egter weer gevoel dat hulle uitgebuit word tot voordeel van paartjies wat wil deelneem aan drietal of biseksuele ontmoetings.

Betekenisvolle verskille is opgemerk met betrekking tot hoe elke ras KNM beleef en uitvoer. Terwyl wit persone betrokke raak by *swinging* hoofsaaklik vir seksuele diversiteit, vriendskap en agentskap, word swart en bruin *swingers* beskou as meer penis-gesentreerd. Hulle neem na bewering aan die leefstyl deel om met hulle groter penis te "pronk". Verder speel wit *swingers* meestal met ander blankes, terwyl swart en kleurling *swingers* wit vroue as trofee soek. Swart en bruin manlike deelnemers het opgemerk dat dit hulle vermy om saam met ander van hul eie ras te *swing* as gevolg van 'n penis-sentriese uitkyk. Hulle nie wil hê dat hulle maats saam met 'n ander swart of kleurling man moet wees wat 'n groter penis het nie. *Ouderdom* (d.w.s. spesifiek met betrekking tot jeugdigheid) is nog 'n noemenswaardige sosiale uitdaging. Die toestroming van baie jonger *swingers* word as 'n uitdaging beskou, al is die ouer *swingers* oor die algemeen diegene wat hulle genooi het. Jonger vroue word dikwels as seksueel onvolwasse beskou, ten spyte van die idee dat 'n ouer man met 'n jonger vrou impliseer dat hy "steeds die ding kan doen". Intussen word jonger mans gesien as viriel en seksueel opwindend vir die ouer vroulike *swinger*, en versterk sulke interaksies die gevoel dat die ouer vroue steeds begeerlik is.

Terwyl die uitdagings meer algemeen voorgekom het tydens die intree-stadiums van KNM, het dit gelyk of die voordele toegeneem het ná betrokkenheid by KNM. Soos met die uitdagings, kom die voordele ook binne die *sosiale*, *huweliks*- en *persoonlike* domeine voor. Beide mans en vroue het beter higiëne begin toepas, soos om te skeer en ekstra sorg te neem met netheid. Die mees noemenswaardige voordele in die domein van die huwelik, is die aanleer van nuwe seksuele tegnieke wat dan na die huweliksbed oorgedra is. Dit lei dan tot verhoogde huweliksbevrediging.

Die bevindinge beklemtoon die waarde van openhartige en eerlike kommunikasie om die uitdagings te navigeer en die voordele verbonde aan betrokkenheid by KNM te versterk. 'n Begrip van sulke uitdagings en voordele en die waarde van oop kommunikasie daaroor, kan van beduidende waarde wees vir beraders en terapeute wat met individue werk wat óf reeds in die KNM-leefstyl is óf oorweeg om dit te betree. Sulke ondersteuning kan paartjies help om die aanvanklike stadiums wat gekenmerk word deur verskeie uitdagings wat nadelig kan wees vir die diade te navigeer, en om die voordele verbonde aan die lewenstyl te vermeerder, wat verhoogde huweliksbevrediging sal fasiliteer.

Ongeag die uiteindelijke effek van die KNM leefstyl op die egpaar se verhouding, toon die studie hoe KNM die demokratisering van kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse mans en vroue se konseptualisering, ervarings en uitdrukkings van seksuele intimiteit fasiliteer.

Sleutelwoorde: Konsensuele nie-monogamie, seksualiteit, *swingers*, KNM-leefstyl, sosiologie, Suid-Afrika

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CHAPTER 1:

SWINGING IN SOUTH AFRICA: INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1954, during his address to the American Psychiatric Association, Kinsey argued that “when there are adequate sexual relationships, marriages became emotionally richer; when sexual relationships do not involve sufficient emotional interchange, then marriages are threatened” (Gathorne-Hardy, 2000:70). In keeping with this quote, this study aimed to explore the influence of the consensual non-monogamous marital arrangement of swinging among couples in South Africa, with a particular focus on marital satisfaction. A social constructivist and partly post-modern perspective informs this study’s focus on the influence of swinging on marital intimacy.

Chapter 1 outlines the various significant steps of the research study, the general and specific research objectives and questions, the study’s central theoretical framework. It offers a concise description of the qualitative research methodology, research design, the chosen sample and sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. The principles associated with a qualitative research design necessitates consideration of the trustworthiness and quality assurance of the study. These aspects are discussed in short, after which the ethical considerations pertinent to the study are described. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis and a brief appreciation of the significance of undertaking this sociological inquiry.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The starting point of an inquiry of this nature would inevitably be to briefly examine the institution of marriage in all its forms and how sexual intercourse applies to this institution. This section offers such an overview and orientates the reader with respect to the concept of swinging, the swinging ‘lifestyle’ and the narratives of swingers. It concludes with the problem statement and the reason why this study should be undertaken.

1.2.1 The institution of marriage and sexual intercourse

Marriage and matrimonial relationships form part of the broad continuum of sexuality. This continuum includes all aspects of sex, gender identities, eroticism, gender roles, as well

as considerations such as sex for pleasure and reproduction (Bethmann & Kvasnicka, 2011:1005–1006). Modern sexuality is entangled in power relations, status, and generational factors, and attached to hierarchies of dominance and the contestations they provoke. The meanings and materialities of desire, the technology of pleasure and all its related forms, the ways and the means of practicing sex are all bound up in this political phenomenon and in the contending regimes of moral regulation (Posel, 2005:127). Posel (2011) further maintains that during the apartheid era, married couples would mainly engage in sexual intercourse for the purpose of procreation, not pleasure. Sexual relations often positioned the wife as passive and without any agency, further reinforcing patriarchy (Thoreson, 2008:680). However, with the subsequent post-1994 democratisation of social, political and sexual rights, South Africans (like their international counterparts in countries such as the US and UK), started to explore the possibilities of engaging in either a monogamous (one sexual partner for life) marital and sexual lifestyle or serial monogamy (having multiple monogamist relationships), or even exploring both (Bond, 2017:35).

Sociological research foregrounds the importance of the interaction among social (and sexual) actors in specific social institutions as key to understanding the world around us. This is in keeping with the thought on changes in ideologies concerning practices associated with coupledness, marriage and sexuality (which I examine in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3). The structures pertaining to human sexuality (between married/cohabiting partners) and the varied forms of sexual interaction (non-monogamous interactions/homosexual relations, among others) between different people, are chaotic, complex and pluralistic (Plummer, 2015; Rothmann, 2018). This study sought to explore the social institution and practice of swinging (i.e., consensual non-monogamy – CNM) among South African couples to arrive a conceptual framework of how such relationships may influence marital relationships and sexual satisfaction. This framework can make an inductive and empirical contribution to the current body of scholarly literature.

The institution of marriage is both old and omnipresent. Referring to marriage as an institution may elicit differing connotations for different people based on their unique social contexts. Examples in this regard may include those persons who ascribe meaning to religious teachings that view marriage as a sacred institution that seeks to uphold heterosexual coupledness (Bethmann & Kvasnicka, 2011:1005–1006; Fye, 2018:7). Feminists may, however, see marriage as a control mechanism that reinforces patriarchy

(Droeber, 2006:181). These examples imply that there are predetermined rules in political, social and economic structures that potentially govern this particular form of human interaction. Wilt *et al.* (2018:3) argue, similar to Coon (2006), that “our changing social organisation has created an opportunity for people to engage in behaviours that have always been part of ‘the human behaviour matrix’ but were infrequently engaged in due to *suppressive sociocultural norms*”.² Writing from a South African perspective, Reid (2009:454) notes that the application of these rules and societal arrangements (e.g., heteronormativity and patriarchy) further reinforces social expectations associated with sexual behaviour for men and women (cf. Butler, 1990; 1993).

Traditional Western views of the institution of marriage emphasise the adherence to particular social and sexual conventions. As noted above, according to feminist theorists writing during the 1970s and 1980s, this included the maintenance of a specific social ordering of gender (Jackson & Scott, 2010:26). The bride and groom had to be male and female, heterosexual and single or divorced at the time of the conclusion of the marriage. Heterosexuality was (and arguably still is) not only privileged, but normalised and naturalised (Myers & Raymond, 2010; Gansen, 2017). This is evident from the way in which heterosexuality is linked to concepts and ideas about the foundational structure of society and culture. Heterosexuality does not only pertain to sex, but is also perpetuated by the regulation of marriage and family life (Herz & Johansson, 2015). According to Rich (1980:631–660), the way in which heterosexuality has been enforced through institutionalisation has been central to the maintenance of patriarchal domination. Couples were not supposed to live together nor have sexual intercourse until they were married. These norms were ideal norms. Although couples did engage in sexual intercourse prior to marriage, it remained unspoken among the couples and their immediate community (Trost, 2016:17–18). Sex was therefore a means to procreate and not necessarily a means for pleasure. Writing from a functionalist perspective, George Peter Murdock’s (1949) research offers much the same conclusions at a much earlier date. Studying 250 human societies around the world through interdisciplinary and cross-cultural analysis, Murdock examined family and kinship structures and their relation to marriage and sexual regulation. He identified five communal features that informed marital and familial relationships: a heterosexual male and female as couple, children

² Emphasis added.

(whether biological or adopted) of the couple, economic cooperation between the couple, sexual reproduction and living in a common household.

According to American research, monogamy is a relatively modern Western ideal (Bond, 2017:35; Mueller, 1995:29–30). Throughout history, several cultures sanctioned polygyny (practice of one man marrying multiple women). The evolution from polygyny to monogamy is said to be, among other things, based on economic reasoning (Mueller, 1995:29–30). Wealthier men found it more economical to preserve their offspring within a single domicile with one sexual partner, rather than having multiple sexual partners, which could make determining the paternity of the children problematic. Religion was also instrumental in reinforcing monogamy as a Western norm with the emphasis on Christian religious ideology in Europe. The strict new rules issued by religious institutions made polygyny and extra-marital sex socially unacceptable. The apartheid government's legislation also enforced codes of sexual conduct, which were mainly informed by Christian nationalism, an ideology propounded by the Afrikaner nationalist government and its many subsidiaries in civil society (Klause, 2010:42–43). Not only was it influenced by Calvinistic morality, but it was also patriarchal in nature. The unmarried Afrikaner daughter represented sexual innocence, which was under the strict control of the father and was expected to remain latent until her marriage required her to perform conjugal duties. The married woman was then seen as a "*Volksmoeder*" (mother of the Afrikaner people) and had nothing more expected of her than fulfilling her national duty to reproduce and nurture the "*volk*" (*Afrikaner people*) (Du Toit, 2003; Klause, 2010:42–43).

In addition to this, laws were also passed that sought to regulate interracial sexual and marital contact. This included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (55 of 1949), which prohibited marriage between "whites" and "non-whites", as well as the Immorality Amendment Act (21 of 1950), which prohibited sexual intercourse "whites" and "non-whites" outside of marriage. The Group Areas Act (41 of 1950) enforced the separation of residential and business spaces for racial groups in South Africa's urban areas (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010:224). Persons from different racial groups were not permitted to work together, live together, or socialise together. Each had their own designated areas for all spheres of social life. This segregation is no longer permitted in post-apartheid South Africa. According to Posel (2005), post-apartheid South Africa is saturated with sexual imagery and discourse. Sex and sexuality are now being circulated in movies, magazines, on the internet and also on television and in clubs. According to

Dogging (2012:1), whites themselves now initiate interracial encounters at swingers' clubs.

According to Brown (2002:42), the word 'sex' is the most searched for term on the internet today. A national survey conducted of young people (10–17 years old) who regularly use the internet, reported that one out of four said they had encountered unwanted pornography in that year. The survey also reported that one out of five had been exposed to unwanted sexual solicitations (Finkelhor *et al.* 2000). Despite increasing public concern about the potential health risks of early, unprotected sexual activity, most of the mass media rarely depicts the three Cs of responsible sexual behaviour: commitment, contraceptives and consideration of consequences (Kunkel *et al.*, 2001).

Despite the liberalisation of sex in modern societies throughout the world, including in South Africa, contradictions include, among other things, persistent sexual violence against women as a result of the continued gender hierarchy in heterosexual relationships (Graaff & Heineken, 2017:624; Jackson & Scott, 2010:71–72). The propagation of sex talk (such as in radio discussions and magazine articles about various sexual topics) has also created discrete discursive nodes. This is seen in the sex discussion groups that have emerged on social media platforms such as Facebook, as well as on the web pages for swingers (e.g., Sex with Emily; CBD Sexlife). Legal changes in South Africa since 1994 (e.g., black economic empowerment, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and pornography, and the abolishment of the two Immorality Acts and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act) have also resulted in shifts in the cultural politics of class, status and the emergence of a new black elite (Posel, 2011).

Prior to 1994, marriage in South Africa was regulated by the Marriage Act (25 of 1961), numerous amendments to the act and common law principles. This meant that only civil marriages were recognised, and that these marriages were categorically deemed to be monogamous and heterosexual, regardless of culture or religion (Rautenbach & Du Plessis, 2012:751–754). All unions that did not conform to this norm, including African customary unions and same-sex unions, were not recognised by the law. During apartheid, premarital heterosexual activity was discouraged, as noted above. This was evident, for example, in the manner in which the father of an unmarried Afrikaner girl would control her sexual innocence until her marriage (Klause, 2010:42–43). The ruling government believed that Western immorality was infiltrating South Africa.

While other countries, including America, Britain and Switzerland, served as examples of contexts that encouraged a more liberal approach to sexual plurality, experimentation and diversity (Schultheiss & Glina, 2010:29), the apartheid regime subjected sex and sexuality to severe censorship and repressive policing (Posel, 2011). The selling of magazines that contained material of a sexual nature was prohibited, as was public sex talk. Television programmes containing images of a sexual nature were censored. Legal action was taken against those found to be selling pornographic magazines or videos (Norman, 2016). However, the regulation of sexuality created controversy and confrontation. Continuous public discourse about sexuality, conducted within a wider matrix of moral anxiety and social and political instability, may arguably be post-apartheid South Africa's most revealing marker of the complexities and vulnerabilities of the politicisation of sexuality (Posel, 2005:127). Since 1994, South Africa has followed in the footsteps of more sexually liberal countries with more liberal policies concerning the display and representation of sex (e.g., easier access to pornography on the internet, the proliferation of pornographic magazines and the mainstreaming of erotic literature, among other things) (Posel, 2011; Weiss, 2019).

After the introduction of the Bill of Rights enshrined in the South African Constitution in 1996 (RSA, 1996a), divergent views arose on what type of union should constitute a marriage. With the passing of the Civil Union Act (17 of 2006) (RSA, 2006), heterosexual as well as lesbian and gay couples are allowed to enter into a "civil union", regardless of their cultural and religious affiliations. This notwithstanding, polygamous marriages were still not recognised under South African law (Rautenbach & Du Plessis, 2012:751–754). In order to address this exclusion, the amendment to the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998) was passed in 2009 (RSA, 2009), acknowledging and legitimising polygamous marriages, provided that all spouses are African (citizens of South Africa). The choice of marriage now includes a civil marriage, civil union or polygamous union (Rautenbach & Du Plessis, 2012:751–752).

Traditional (i.e., heteronormative) patterns of courtship have been subjected to criticism in recent years. According to Koedt (2010), the conventional ordering of sexual conduct was challenged (the emphasis on the male-defined view of heterosexuality, which denied a woman sexual pleasure). Eventually heterosexuality itself was challenged, mainly through feminist and queer worldviews. As is evident from the preceding discussion, feminist theory has contributed greatly to the critical analysis of sexuality. Feminists not

only challenged the double standards of sexual morality (heterosexual and cisgendered coupledness), but also questioned which practices constitute 'acceptable' sexual attraction and intercourse (Jackson & Scott, 2010:25). In keeping with feminist and queer theoretical critiques of heteronormative and patriarchal coupledness, the newfound sexual freedoms and democratisation of sexuality in South Africa and abroad, has introduced divergent formations of familial, marital and intimate relationships (Chambers, 2012). Examples include cohabitation and same-sex marriages. Living together has become culturally normative, as is seen in the decline of social stigma related to cohabitation (Dueck, 2016:180–181). Research suggests that one of the contributing factors in the increase in premarital cohabitation has to do with the erosion of confidence in the stability of marriage, as well as the increase in divorce numbers (Dueck, 2016:180–181; De Vaus *et al.*, 2003:34–39). The changes related to shifts pertaining to social norms and personal values on intimate relationships have been chronicled in the work of academics as early as the 1990s.

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Giddens (1992), the increase in cohabitation may be ascribed to societies experiencing an increase in moveable intimate relationships, enhanced individual freedoms in making life-course decisions, as well as the de-traditionalisation of personal life (as per the individualisation thesis, which is discussed as part of the central theoretical argument). Particularly in America – Lucas County, Ohio, younger people are now pursuing behaviour (cohabitation and sex for pleasure) that was previously viewed as non-normative and immoral (Manning *et al.*, 2007:559–560). According to Statistics South Africa (2016), there has been a decrease in cohabitation and an increase in the “never been married” population in South Africa. However, this is ascribed to possible incorrect self-classification (never married as opposed to cohabiting), as well as the expensive “paying for the bride” price customary in African communities, which “forces” the couples to live together rather than get married. Within these societal contexts, cohabitation is construed as a rational way of avoiding over-commitment (Lappegard & Noack, 2015:287–310). The multiple variations in coupledness today (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, divorced and remarried, as well as other cohabiting arrangements) imply that heterosexual marriages are no longer the sole norm for couples to engage in the formation and enactment of family life. According to Chambers (2012:43), couples now enjoy the company of mutual friends, cooking, as well as recreational sex as part of the so-called ‘new norm’ that encompasses varied forms of coupledness in contemporary society.

1.2.2 *The swinging phenomenon*

Rubel and Bogaert (2015:961), writing from a psychological perspective, define “swinging” as the consensual non-monogamous sexual activities or behaviour of a couple (married or in a committed heterosexual and/or same-sex relationship) for the purpose of sexual variety (multiple partners and settings) and sexual pleasure. Swinging or partner-swopping is not a new concept; it has been around for many years. What has changed, though, is the fact that people now engage more openly in debates about it, rather than concealing their preferences for this practice (Fernandes, 2009:2; Hatcher, 2017:1). The democratisation of sexuality in a post-apartheid context after changes in legislation governing sexuality, has shifted the emphasis to the rights and responsibilities of individual sexual actors. The shift in responsibility therefore allows individuals and the state to render these rights (sexual liberation and freedom) indisputable in the face of moral and religious claims to authority (Posel, 2011).

Both in the scholarly literature and in common parlance, swingers are described as married or co-habiting couples in a committed relationship, who engage in and allow their partners to engage in sex with other people through mutual consent and agreement and for the purpose of sexual variety and pleasure (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2). The demographic profile of a swinger in America, for example, is described as someone who is typically white, middle-aged and conservative in political orientation in the sense that they advocate for individual freedoms (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1). They are described as middle-class to upper middle-class people and predominantly hold professional and management positions (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1). There is, however, a paucity of scholarly or any other literature on the demographic profiles of swingers in South Africa. Consider, for example, the fact that the swinging lifestyle has been described as South Africa’s “best kept dirty little secret” by a well-known adult swingers’ site on the internet (Adultland, s.a.).

Swinging should be distinguished from polyamory. Polyamorous couples engage in more than one consensual sexual relationship at a time, allowing for any number of feelings to develop (e.g., love and emotional intimacy). In polyamorous relationships, the spouse is referred to as the “primary” and they take on “secondaries”, who often become close connections and are then seen privately as part of a predictable routine (Ehrenfeld, 2012:2). Swingers, on the other hand, are couples who partake in extramarital sexual playing as a couple. The understanding is that there is no development of close emotional

connections with which the couples they have sexual intercourse (Ehrenfeld, 2012:2). Swingers refer to their subculture as a “lifestyle” and their sexual ‘incidents’ as “play time”. This lifestyle involves many latent risks to marital stability, such as jealousy, and it is therefore not suitable for young insecure couples. Positive features of swinging include, among others, higher relationship satisfaction and higher sexual satisfaction (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:977–978). Brennan’s (2008:18) American study shows that most swingers are in their forties and have established relationships based on trust.

The swinging lifestyle has rules that are deemed necessary if it is to be beneficial to both partners involved. Respect, honesty, testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs hereafter), the use of contraceptive protection (e.g., condoms), as well as selectivity in choosing partners, are all considered as non-negotiable rules (Benamati, 2016:1). This notwithstanding, every couple can make their own rules for their needs in the relationship and marriage (Benamati, 2016:1). The couple determines these rules to set boundaries and to protect the primary relationship.

Considered as an “evocative” sexual venture, couples engage in swinging for a variety of reasons (Hatcher, 2017:1). Some of the earliest examples of swinging involve communal contexts such as ‘swinging parties’. At these parties, partners are randomly selected by means of picking a set of keys from a hat. More modern and sophisticated sex clubs have stricter entry requirements, where swinging partners are purposefully selected rather than randomly. Swinging, however, remains a hedonistic hobby (Townsend, 2013:5). Studies in America have shown that married women, in particular, prefer this lifestyle due to the agency it allows to have sex with other women. In many cases, it is the primary reason why these women enter into the lifestyle (Alexander, 2017:2; Townsend, 2013:5). Other studies corroborate this point, insofar as they comment on the fact that female swingers are more inclined to identify as bisexual or ‘bi-curious’ (Diamond, 2004; Wilt *et al.*, 2018). This is opposed to their male counterparts who, although they are commonly the ones who initiate the couple’s practice of swinging, are actually “more sexually jealous” of the other parties involved. Notwithstanding the freedom that such relationships provide, it also presents a number of challenges and critical questions. One of the most fundamental questions centres around just how far the parties will allow themselves and their partners to go when engaging in sexual intercourse with a third party (Townsend, 2013:5). This limit pertains to the rules the couple determines beforehand and entails choices, such as whether they will engage in ‘soft swinging’ of ‘full swinging’, and whether both couples will

engage in the same room or in different rooms. Soft swinging refers to the couple engaging in manual or oral stimulation only and full swing extends to coitus (Fernandes, 2009).

According to Townsend (2013:5), one of the most common misconceptions surrounding the swinger lifestyle is that swingers engage in these extramarital sexual encounters daily. This is not the case, since his study shows that the frequency of encounters is dependent on the rules the couples set before engaging in the lifestyle. It varies from couple to couple. Regardless of these potential positive features and the challenges that the swinging lifestyle presents, studies have not commented on the number of times couples have been married or divorced and how this, together with the frequency with which they engage in swinging, influences the couple's marital sexual well-being.

Given this background, it is worth noting that research on CNM (or swinging), has "seemingly been avoided by researchers" due to, among other factors, the perceived "sensitive nature" of the topic (Wilt *et al.*, 2018:4). Wilt *et al.* (2018:4) also cite the "fear of...the subject [as] being taboo" (cf. Rubin, 2001). This corresponds to Irvine (2014) and Msibi's (2014) reference to the fact that the so-called "dirty work" label has been attached to the work of sexuality scholars. It requires critical engagement through the continued empirical and theoretical work of academics. This emphasises the importance of undertaking research on sexuality in general, and on the complexities of sexual intimacy in contemporary society. As such, this study seeks to provide a conceptual framework as an inductive contribution on how CNM (or swinging) may affect couples' marital satisfaction.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although the sexual act of swinging may be viewed negatively based on social, moral or religious grounds, research has shown that it may contribute to marital sexual well-being (Loftus *et al.*, 2003). The way in which someone rates their marital sexual well-being is socially conditioned. It is thus expected that different types of people will rate their marital sexual well-being differently. It is also expected that the components these persons deem important with respect to their swinging lifestyle, such as having multiple sexual partners, is also dependent on their particular social context (Loftus *et al.*, 2003).

The practice of sexual swinging has not been documented as extensively in South Africa as in the case of academic studies in America. The American studies have focused on reviewing the current literature available on the swinging paradigm (Jenks, 1998), assessing transition, maintenance and satisfaction of swingers in the lifestyle (Kimberly, 2015), researching the swingers' paradigm in America (Fernandes, 2009), focusing on the demography of swingers and why they started swinging (Fernandes, 2009), commenting on the risk of STDs (Niekamp *et al.*, 2013), and exploring the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of women who swing (Popplewell, 2006). Research suggests that swinging may affect marital sexual well-being, although the full extent of how and why has not been documented (Fernandes, 2009; Moors *et al.*, 2017; Peabody, 1982:428). Given the changes in the South African social and cultural landscape over the last two decades following democracy, many changes to social norms and values have taken place (Asunka *et al.*, 2022; Posel, 2011; Stemmet, 2005). The extent of influence that these changes have had on swinging and post-apartheid coupledness is unknown. Also, the true psychological and sociological impact of swinging in the South African context is not known, particularly considering the very conservative and monogamous ethos of the pre-democracy era (Klauser, 2010:42–43). No academic literature exists to clearly define the demography, prevalence and frequency of the lifestyle across the various cultures and races within South Africa and its corresponding significance among South African couples.

American studies have commented on the importance of sexual well-being as a predictor of the overall contentment in marital relationships (Stephenson & Meston, 2015; Yucel, 2016). Sexual activity is deemed particularly important, because it represents a factor that could protect against the effect of many stressors (Stephenson & Meston, 2015) that could affect marital well-being and result in marital instability (Yucel, 2016). As far back as 500 B.C., the orgasm was deemed vital to the female gender as a means to prevent female hysteria. In order to relieve women of hysteria, which society then regarded as a form of evil, medical doctors would stimulate the genitals of women deemed to be suffering from female hysteria (Serena, 2017). The tiring and time-consuming process of bringing a woman to orgasm led to the designing of the vibrator, which is now freely available, and women can use it discretely within the privacy of their homes (Serena, 2017). Research suggests that sexual orgasms are healthy because they stimulate blood flow to the brain, assist with pain alleviation, increase production of leukocytes (disease fighting white blood cells) and increase longevity (Parikh, 2018).

Studies conducted in South Africa suggest that marital well-being is important for any experience of physical well-being (Idemudia & Ndlovu, 2013:5486–5498). Women who are married and unhappy tend to internalise their unhappiness and become prone to depression. Men, however, are prone to externalise their unhappiness and tend to abuse alcohol, among other behaviours (Idemudia & Ndlovu, 2013:5486–5498). A thorough exploration of the principles that comprise swinging, the reasons people in South Africa engage in swinging and how this may potentially influence the marital satisfaction of couples, will contribute to sociological discourse on the changing nature of marital relationships in South Africa. It will enable both counsellors and potential swinging couples to better understand the issues that define swinging from a South African perspective. From an academic perspective, it will add value to existing literature that documents how South African society has changed in terms of sexual expression from a pre-democratic dispensation characterised by conservative views on sexuality (reinforced through restricting legislation and censorship) to a democratic context that encourages the democratisation of sexuality. Ultimately, it will enable a better understanding of how these dramatic social changes have affected marital sexual well-being.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The general and specific research questions of the present study, read as follows:

1.4.1 General research question

Given the background and problem statement, the general research question reads as follows: **How does the consensual non-monogamous lifestyle of swinging affect marital satisfaction among South African couples?**

1.4.2 Secondary research questions

The following specific research questions relate to both the spouses and partners and further inform the general research question:

- Which theories can inform the central theoretical argument of the study that explores how CNM (or swinging) may affect marital satisfaction among South African couples?
- What literature is available on CNM (or swinging) in South Africa and abroad?

- What research design and methodology best serves a study on how CNM (or swinging) may affect marital satisfaction among South African couples?
- Why do South African couples engage in CNM (or swinging)?
- What are the positive effects of CNM (or swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples?
- What are the challenges associated with CNM (or swinging) for the marital satisfaction of South African couples?
- What would a conceptual framework for CNM (or swinging) and its effect on marital satisfaction among South African couples, entail?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of the study include the following:

1.5.1 Research objective

In keeping with the general research question, the general research objective is: **To explore how the consensual non-monogamous lifestyle of swinging affects marital satisfaction among South African couples.**

1.5.2 Secondary research objectives

The following specific research objectives arise from the general research objective:

- To discuss the theories that inform the central theoretical argument of the study on how CNM (or swinging) may affect marital satisfaction among South African couples.
- To discuss the available literature on CNM (or swinging) in South Africa and abroad.
- To identify a research design and methodology to study how CNM (or swinging) may affect marital satisfaction among South African couples.
- To explain the reasons why South African couples engage in CNM (or swinging).
- To explore the positive effects of CNM (or swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples.

- To explore the challenges associated with CNM (or swinging) as they pertain to the marital satisfaction of South African couples.
- To provide a conceptual framework of how CNM (or swinging) may affect marital satisfaction among South African couples.

1.6 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

Two social theories are relevant to the study, i.e., the **individualisation thesis** and **Morgan's 'family as practice'** approach. The latter aligns with the main tenets of **symbolic interactionism**. Both are described below.

1.6.1 *The individualisation and intimacy as practice theses*

One of the major challenges facing the sociology of family has been the need for empirical research and for concepts that are sufficiently sensitive to identify and explain the complexity and diversity of family life (Chambers, 2012:41). David Morgan (1996:193–194), in his “family as practice” approach, foregrounds the contradiction between an ideological notion of the nuclear family (i.e., mother, father and children) and the variety of ways in which everyday people conduct their family lives based on a myriad of arrangements (e.g., single parent families, same-sex families and non-monogamous marital relationships, among others). His main contribution in this regard is what he terms as people “doing family life”. This provides a useful way to explore the complex realities of family living. This underscores the main tenets of this study on the exploration of CNM in South Africa (i.e., the provision of an inductive conceptual framework on couples who engage in the swinging lifestyle).

According to Morgan (1996), family members are social actors, engaging in actions and activities, including unique everyday routines of ‘doing’ family life. Contemporary families are more defined by ‘doing’ family things as opposed to ‘being’ a family (Finch, 2007:66). The emphasis is on how people ‘do’ and enact their relationships as opposed to passively conforming to rigid family or intimacy structures. Furthermore, Morgan (1996) sees the family as a facet of social life and not as a social institution, implying that family represents a ‘quality’ as opposed to a ‘thing’. This includes co-parenting among divorced couples and same-sex couples raising children (Chambers, 2012:43). This approach thus acknowledges a wider range of personal relationships as having equal legitimacy (Morgan, 1996). It further allows for the understanding of diverse and experimental family

forms, including more diverse, multi-faceted and fluid relationships, such as friendships, as seen for example in friendships forming between CNM couples (Chambers, 2012:42).

According to Bauman (1992), human identity is transforming from a 'given' to a 'task'. The individual is therefore responsible not only for performing this task, but also for the consequences of such performance (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:xv). This new emphasis on individual choice and self-fulfilment have created new risks and new opportunities (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Geinsheim, 1995). These opportunities include a more flexible and egalitarian relationship between couples. This has made an increased acceptance or tolerance for alternative and more experimental intimacies possible, such as living together and same-sex relationships (Chambers, 2012:36–37). The risks may include the transient nature of the relationships, as indicated by rising divorce rates (Chambers, 2012:37). Proponents of the individualisation thesis emphasise the weakening bonds of traditional customs that once bound families together. They do this by focusing on the rise in individual agency and personal choice as it relates to family life and intimate relationships (Chambers, 2012:35).

Central to the individualisation thesis is the notion that an individual not only has the ability to make a range of personal choices depending on their particular social contexts, but that they may be compelled to do so (Ray, 2005:3). This individualisation is not only about opportunities in the pursuit of self-innovation and self-improvement being regarded as a positive democratic phenomenon, it also has to do with omnipresent and ever-changing risks that are perceived as new obligations bearing down on the individual (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1992). Coupled with the emphasis on individual choice and self-fulfilment, the value that each partner brings to a relationship not only creates new risks but also new opportunities. These new opportunities allow for an increase in flexibility between a couple, and this in turn allows for more experimental intimacies (Chambers, 2012:36–37).

Individual identities become less bound by the collective identity or 'we-ness' as would be the case with those identities that fall within social norms and values (Snow & Corrigan-Brown, 2015:174). Couples may now choose to reject socially accepted and prescribed monogamy and engage in CNM in ways that are both fulfilling and exciting to them, e.g., engaging in sexual intercourse with various swinging partners with whom they enjoy recreational sex. Furthermore, couples may choose to explore same-sex encounters while retaining their heterosexual labels, as is prevalent in the bisexual curiosity of women specifically (Neville, 2018). This may be attributed to the rise in individual agency and

personal choice, coupled with new-found flexibility within intimate relationships. A couple feels secure enough in their relationship to engage in CNM and enjoy multiple sexual partners without needing to conform to monogamous heteronormative social rules. Giddens (1992) describes this new stage of family life as the democratisation of family, marriage and intimate relationships.

The above changes also challenge traditional values in South Africa (Adeagbo, 2015). As noted before, post-apartheid South Africa has undergone immense changes with regard to the regulation of marriage, intimate relationships and interracial interactions since the piecemeal abolishment of apartheid legislation (Posel, 2011). These developments have challenged (if not changed) the traditional (e.g., Calvinistic and patriarchal) bonds that previously bound families and relationships together in apartheid South Africa. In some instances, racial segregation no longer separates intimate relationships. The abolishment of the Group Areas Act and the Immorality Act have further facilitated the normalisation of interracial marriages (Amoateng & Heaton, 2017:367). Legislative changes have furthermore allowed for new lifestyles (such as the swingers lifestyle) that offer a wider range of choices for living one's own life (Rustin, 2021; RSA, 1996). Social positions and interactions between family members are now guided less by traditional duties (such as the wife being required to be obedient to her husband) and more by active choices and negotiations between individuals (Hutzler *et al.*, 2016). Men may change their attitudes towards gender roles, particularly if they marry a woman who is less traditionally orientated, meaning that the division of labour within the household and regarding family duties become more egalitarian (Adeagbo, 2015:40–41). This is visible from the way in which couples are renegotiating the constraints of monogamy and actively choosing instead to adopt different familial, marital and sexual relationships.

In certain societies, statistics have shown a decline in monogamy, evident from the ways in which people are choosing alternative intimate relationships such as CNM, which better suit their pursuit of instant gratification (Emmerich, 2019). The changes in partnership from formal marriage to more democratic partnerships leave intimacy devoid of the constraints of pre-existing social structures and traditions. Individuals have become inwardly focused. Rather than comply with heteronormativity, they have become more concerned with how society and networks can provide for the gratification of their personal needs. This opens any relationship up to being valued for the benefits the partners can

bring to each partner (Duncan & Smith, 2006), as opposed to being a pre-constructed set of ideals about intimate relationships.

Giddens (1992) refers to this as “confluent love” and the search for a “pure relationship”. According to Giddens (1992), confluent love is an active and contingent love where intimate relationships are characterised by personal understanding and negotiation between two people. This may include an understanding between couples who engage in non-monogamous relationships that, although they have agreed to a non-monogamous relationship, they are still obligated to each other based on their mutually negotiated rules and mutually accepted/chosen boundaries (Benamati, 2016:1). Since the relationship is actively constructed and developed by the couple, it is typified as being a “pure relationship”, shaped by an interaction of trust and emotional interaction, rather than being based solely on external pressures that are imposed by the expectations associated with heteronormative and patriarchal principles (Chambers, 2012:36). Giddens (1992:61) maintains that due to the changes set in motion by female sexual emancipation, an emphasis on romantic love, linked to the self, has coincided with a crisis of moral commitment, thereby exposing the provisional nature of commitment between couples. Giddens (1992) terms this provisional love as “confluent love”. Confluent love is not monogamous and less sexually exclusive – unlike romantic love, which is viewed as a monogamous and “for ever” kind of love. The role of sexual exclusivity in the relationship extends to the degree to which partners deem it mutually desirable or essential (Giddens, 1992). This is evident in the number of couples who cohabit rather than get married.

However, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; 2002) provide a more pessimistic view of these changes in intimate and familial relationships resulting from the increase in personal choice and agency. They see it as provoking conflict with the needs of the family. They postulate that families are becoming more fragile as a result of this flexibility and the atomisation of individuals. The stability and permanence of traditional marriage, which is considered a necessity for raising offspring, is negated and often no longer present because of the seemingly transient nature of the now flexible intimate relationship. This includes conditions such as flexibility for women’s employment, gender equality, as well as flexibility within intimate lives (Chambers, 2012:39). However, the act of raising children (and other related social activities) could be altered or even compared with other kinds of modern undertakings. These may include personal development, the fashioning

of the self, and the pursuit of careers. Sex, reproduction and raising children thus becomes one of a range of 'life projects'.

It is argued that these dramatic social changes have exacerbated feelings of alienation and loneliness among individuals who are now more prone to search for some stability and a sense of belonging through intimacy. Love has, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), become more important, yet also elusive, insofar as not all persons ascribe as much importance to establishing a long-term monogamous marital relationship – opting instead for the noted confluence (Chambers, 2012:39). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) further maintain that it is this very lack of a firm foundation (found in the traditional values and structures of family life) that makes it difficult for individuals to sustain these kinds of intimate relationships, which then leads to escalating divorce rates (Chambers, 2012:39).

Irrespective of engaging in an arguably confluent and individualised form of relational intimacy, scholars contend that swingers tend to simultaneously reinforce and transgress heteronormative ideals in their relationships when viewed as an ideological composite of three binaries: gender, sexuality, and family (Oswald *et al.*, 2005). The intersection of these binaries contributes to the social construction of appropriate social actions. The family binary recognises the heteronormative value of a family and the family's legal ties as genuine, compared to other "pseudo" forms of intimate relationships (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:312–313). Swingers not only 'do' family along heteronormative lines, but they also choose to "undo" (cf. Adeagbo, 2015) these expectations by partaking in a CNM lifestyle within the more democratic value system. This is attributed to their less traditional thinking capacity, which allows them to creatively adapt to changing circumstances.

1.6.2 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism encourages researchers to approach research in a way that is open to the discovery of aspects of everyday life (such as whether swinging has the scope to become a model for marital sexual well-being) that have previously either been ignored or just not observed (Kotarba, 2014:418). Echoing the tenets of social constructionism, interpretivism, and the above discussion of the individualisation thesis, I adopted the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism (particularly the contributions of

Herbert Blumer and George Herbert Mead), to further elucidate the individualisation thesis's emphasis on the inherent diversity of people's views on intimacy.

Rooted in pragmatism, symbolic interactionism maintains that reality is socially constructed through people's actions, which result from their definitions and interpretations (consequences) of their daily interactions with other people (Tracy, 2013:51). According to the theory of symbolic interactionism, social order and stability is created as a result of interaction between people – i.e., social interaction. Socialisation is the process through which a person learns to be a member of a group or society through the transfer of norms, values and ideas (Cole, 2019). Meanings are negotiated by means of verbal and non-verbal symbols (i.e., language and gestures) during human interaction. This process takes place from birth through death and is the means through which members are incorporated into social groups. In the case of swingers, they engage sexually with many partners, with the understanding that it is a fun sexual encounter and not an emotional connection, such as would be present in the monogamous heterosexual understanding of a sexual encounter (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1).

The meanings that people attach to these interactions are not inherent, but grounded in social relationships (Coakley & Pike, 2007:29). How these meanings are assigned and attached through interaction is relevant to understanding how people define their reality of the world around them – in this instance, the symbolic meanings and interpretations attached to CNM. Through the process of secondary socialisation, which includes communication and language, a meaning is ascribed to things called symbols (Mead, 1934). Based on their knowledge of the world through communication (meanings having been attached to symbols) and on what has been useful to them, people are likely to change what no longer works for them through continuous definition and redefinition of the meaning of the symbols (Ritzer, 2010:351). This includes the meaning and interpretation of the symbolism attached to the value of swinging. For swingers, the symbol of CNM would be defined by actions such as those experienced with the various partners and the consequences of these actions, such as their partner being okay with it and them having the freedom to enjoy multiple sexual liaisons without any guilt or judgement from their spouse.

The understanding of social experience cannot be achieved without understanding the experienter's social world. Acting and roles form part of this social world and how we interpret it. A stimulus (such as exposure to a potential sexual swinging partner) does not

elicit an automatic response from the human actor. Rather, the stimulus becomes an opportunity to act (Blumer, 1969:4–5). As part of the swingers' paradigm, meeting a potential swinging partner does not necessarily translate into a person wanting to engage in a sexual encounter. Rather, it becomes an opportunity to assess the potential partner and decide whether to engage sexually with them or not. When actors interpret one another's responses, it can bring about greater consensus about the meaning of the symbol used. Considering that there are monogamous and non-monogamous couples, sex for pleasure with multiple partners may be internalised through secondary socialisation to create a symbol of either an erotic pleasurable encounter or an encounter that should be avoided. For instance, consensus on the meaning of the symbol of CNM may be reinforced as pleasurable by fellow swingers and, conversely, as something to avoid by non-swingers.

Social phenomena, such as a swingers' community, can be explained in terms of the actions of the individuals that give rise to that particular phenomenon (in this case, CNM). In trying to explain the social change – e.g., people moving from strictly monogamous relationships to hedonistic multiple partner relationships – one has to view how such change arose as a result of individual actions and interactions (Crossman, 2017:1). That will include the gestures that carry symbolic meaning between the actors, the verbal communication, as well as the non-verbal communication. Mead (1934:xiv–xv) identified two levels of social interaction in human society: gestures and significant symbols. He defined gestures as non-symbolic interactions that take place when one responds directly to the actions of another without interpreting those actions (e.g., a swingers couple responding to gestures from another couple at a club indicating an invitation to interact), and symbols (such as the symbolic meaning of swinging, being observed as a model for marital sexual well-being or a symbol associated with poor sexual morals) as the meaning assigned to specific actions (Mead, 1934:xvii). The meanings of symbols depend on the consensual responses of those who use them.

During social interaction, human beings engage in gestures as they respond immediately and unreflectively to each other's bodily movements, expressions, and tones of voice (Mead, 1934:xvii). Social interaction involves two or more persons and includes the basic mechanism of a gesture, which can be communicated consciously, leading to the development of significant symbols. Within the swingers' paradigm, communication may become difficult during the introduction and noting-of-interest phase of a potential meeting

of new partners. Couples therefore employ the use of secret code words to which they assign meanings. These meanings clearly indicate their intentions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2019) and how they should proceed with or exit the encounter. Significant symbols not only make thinking possible, but also symbolic interaction, for example a couple in the swinger lifestyles use of the symbolic meaning of a gesture and how that gesture is interpreted so that they are aware of each other's intentions without letting on to other parties concerned (Ritzer, 2008:390). People develop their own symbolic meanings around sexual gestures as a form of non-verbal communication, through their social interactions in relation to sexual pleasure and through the culturally embedded norms, values, and beliefs extant in their socio-cultural contexts.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the proponents of the epistemological approach of **interpretivism**, knowledge is subjective (Scotland, 2012:10) and unique to each individual. Ontology, in turn, refers to the study of reality (i.e., the beliefs about the nature of the social world and the nature of being) (Martignani, 2016:523; Sarantakos, 2013:29; Tracy, 2013:48). The ways in which swingers, for example, define and experience the “swingers’ lifestyle”, represent their subjective constructions and experiences of their unique experience of their social worlds. This could range from them considering CNM as a reason for their good marriage to it being a potential source of sexual satisfaction, among other factors. The applicable ontological approach for this study is **social constructionism**. This approach was selected because its central principles emphasise the importance of understanding participants’ subjective lived experiences (Blumer, 1969:93; Creswell, 2014:37–38; Sarantakos, 2013:37–38), such as those pertaining to CNM.

In addition to these meta-theoretical bases, I employed a **qualitative research methodology**³. Such research is used when seeking to understand the “why” and “how” of social phenomena that affect various populations, e.g., why couples start swinging and how this affects their marriages and social environments. Qualitative research, which is exploratory in nature, requires interpretation of the data to identify the inductive themes that inform the everyday life-worlds of those engaging in CNM. It can therefore be used as a means to see a social phenomenon in new ways. Social researchers highlight the

³ A detailed discussion of the research methodology is provided in chapter 4.

significance of social context for comprehending the social world (Neuman, 1997:331; Sarantakos, 2013:42).

To do this, I employed the **non-probability sampling** procedures of **purposive (or judgemental)** and **snowball sampling**. In so doing, I was able to identify and recruit those participants with the necessary knowledge and experience of the topic under investigation (Tangco, 2007:147). **Snowball sampling** furthermore helped me to recruit additional participants from a target population that was difficult to identify (Griffith *et al.*, 2016:773). As primary investigator, I requested those participants who completed their interviews to consider approaching others who met the criteria and who would be willing to participate in the study to ask them to contact me (Sarantakos, 2013:179). This method proved invaluable, since the swinging community is a closed community (due to stigmatisation) and not easily accessible to outside parties (Chin-Ortiz, 2008:7; Fernandes, 2009; Shaw, 2018:3). In the end, 28 self-identified swingers participated in one-on-one **semi-structured interviews** with me, either in person or telephonically. The data were analysed using **thematic analyses**. This afforded me the opportunity to code and contextualise the emerging themes in a spontaneous and inductive manner and to relate it to the relevant theory.

1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapter layout for the remainder of this thesis is outlined below:

Chapter 2: The family and marriage trajectory: a literature review

This chapter explores marital lifestyles as practiced under apartheid and in contemporary South Africa, using the theoretical lens of the proponents of the **individualisation thesis** and **symbolic interactionism**. Specific foci that complement this discussion include the various institutions of marriage as they are applicable in the South African context, as well as how sexual relations apply to these institutions of marriage.

Chapter 3: “The lifestyle” of swingers: A literature review on consensual non-monogamy in contemporary society

This chapter engages literature on research undertaken on the “swinging lifestyle” in South Africa and abroad. Foci include a critical conceptualisation of swinging, an overview

of the reasons why couples engage in CNM, its positive features and, lastly, potential challenges and limitations.

Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methods used for sampling, data collection, and data analysis, and I examine the ethical considerations. The biographical description of participants and limitations of the study are also provided.

Chapter 5: Findings: a discussion of Consensual non-monogamy

This chapter includes a comprehensive discussion of the themes that emerged from the data.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

This chapter offer a critical analysis and discussion of the research findings.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a demarcation of the main findings of the study as it relates to the general and specific research questions and objectives. The study concludes with recommendations.

CHAPTER 2:

THE FAMILY AND MARRIAGE TRAJECTORY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person” (Lascala, 2019). The reality surrounding marriage in contemporary society contradicts the preceding romantic quote if one considers South Africa’s divorce rates (Statistics South Africa, 2018; Dueck, 2016:180–181; De Vaus *et al.*, 2003:34–39). Since the abolishment of apartheid, marriage and family forms have undergone significant change in South Africa (Moore & Govender, 2013:623). The Bill of Rights, as part of the new Constitution of 1996 (RSA, 1996a), significantly influenced the institution of marriage in South Africa by affording every person the right to claim equality before the law and equal protection by the law, allowing persons to marry others regardless of their creed, race, gender or sexual identity (Coertzen, 2015:387). Among other things, this allowed for polygamy. This influence is also apparent in the changes in cultural norms and values seen in the declining rates of marriage, as well as the increase in cohabitation among black South Africans (Moore & Govender, 2013:623). As such, sex is no longer confined to the realms of marriage alone.

This chapter explores marital lifestyles as practiced under apartheid and in contemporary South Africa, using the theoretical lens of the proponents of the **individualisation thesis** and **symbolic interactionism**. Specific foci that complement this discussion include the various institutions of marriage as they are applicable in the South African context, as well as how sexual relations apply to these institutions of marriage.

2.2 THE FAMILY AND MARRIAGE TRAJECTORY: A CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Before 800AD, particularly during the early Christian era, marriage was primarily a state matter dealing with the union of a man and a woman. It was only after 800AD that the church (both Catholic and Protestant⁴) started performing weddings and it later became a sacrament or covenant (Uglow, 2017). Many across the world consider the bond between a husband and a wife as the closest tie that is possible between two human

⁴ Persons who are practicing Catholics view scriptures and tradition as important. Protestants, however, ascribe much more importance to such scriptures (Del Rosario, 2014).

beings. However, throughout history and in many societies, marriage was not only a bond between two unrelated people, but also a bond between blood kinship (Uglow, 2017). Ancient Egyptian pharaohs married their sisters, and European royal families normally married from within the family. The reason for this was not only to preserve the royal bloodline, but also to retain their land and economic foothold. Pre-industrial societies displayed similar trends to those of such ancient societies, in that persons did not necessarily marry for love alone, but rather for the preservation of the lineage and for economic value (Giddens, 2006; Stricklin, 2018). The custom of marrying within a closed bloodline has waned due to, among other reasons, the genetic health problems that occur as a result of the restricted gene pool. The context of marriage has thus changed through time.

As a social construct, marriage is defined by specific socially framed parameters (Rubin, 2001:713) that not only serve important social functions, but through the social norms present in any society, also determine the role of each spouse within the marriage. As social constructs, the cultural norms and expectations of a particular society determine what the marriage is and who may marry whom (Crossman, 2019). The structure and functionality of the institution of marriage may differ vastly due to context-specific freedoms or restrictions imposed on people that allow or stifle attempts at establishing a unique relationship in particular marital lifestyles (e.g., swinging) (Rubin, 2001:713).

Being a culturally universal and social institution (Giddens, 2006; Van Zyl, 2015:i), marriage presupposes that those who enter into it are expected to accept a new social status, accompanied by a set of social obligations (and roles) that are recognised by some members of their society (Chambers, 2000:103–104). In patriarchal terms, women may be expected to adopt the roles of a wife, mother and sexual partner for her male husband, who conversely may be expected to take on the role of breadwinner (Graaff & Heineken, 2017:2; Qibtiyah & Syamsiyatum, 2018). Family life is seen to be strongly regulated by prescribed gender and sexual roles (Chambers, 2012:35). Depending on the particular social context, the couple may be expected to take on the social obligation to procreate (Palamuleni, 2010:43). Such procreation is associated with a social institution of marriage (in its more traditional form), which further implies that the heterosexual couple enters into and conforms to those principles of a monogamous relationship “till death do them part” (Coertzen, 2015:387; Wagner, 2018:1231). Writing from an American perspective, Cruz (2016:45) is critical of this arrangement. He describes these monogamous relationships

as flawed and tied to restrictions on romantic feelings. He further maintains that monogamous romantic relationships are characterised by high levels of emotional intimacy, while sexual intimacy is not necessarily essential, although often desired and important.

Giddens (1992) refers to the creation of a so-called “romantic love” ideal during Victorian times, where the couple developed the relationship along gendered lines. This meant that women, in particular, would preserve their sexual purity (i.e., virginity) for the institution of marriage. Such relationships required both the man and woman to maintain their marital relationship as far as possible. This ideal marital union foregrounded particular social functions ascribed to each party of the couple. These included, among others, socially identifying children by defining kinship ties to the mother and father, as well as the extended relatives – thereby regulating sexual behaviour, as well as the transference, preservation and/or consolidation of property, prestige, and power. Most importantly, it forms the basis of the institution of the family (Crossman, 2019). Procreation, for example, is the biological process that creates offspring and perpetuates families. In most societies people are brought up and socialised in families (Giddens, 2006). Traditionally, the family is deemed the most important institution in human society and central to the survival of the species through the process of procreation (Noyoo, 2019:69).

Opposing this traditional viewpoint, Giddens (1992) writes that in more recent times, this “one-and-only-love” has changed to an “until further notice” approach that favours confluency over romanticism. Proponents of confluent love favour and emphasise sexual fluidity, diversity and experimentation and are therefore no longer dependent on finding and retaining a ‘forever-one-and-only’ quality of romantic love (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Chambers, 2012; Finch, 2007). Romantic love remained synonymous with getting married and remaining married with that same partner for life, irrespective of how the relationship developed (Muniruzzaman, 2017). Conversely, confluent love favours choice, in that married people no longer need to remain married to each other if their relationship is not working (Giddens, 2006).

According to David Morgan (1996:186), family is an active facet of social life and not a static social institution, i.e., it represents a quality rather than a thing. Family practices include key concepts such as fluidity, diversity and being multi-faceted (Finch, 2007:66). According to Finch (2007:69), the contours and character of what constitutes ‘my family’ is very fluid, because families change over time as individuals move through their life

course and changes occur in their mode of living. One manifestation of such fluidity, which is particularly pertinent to the present study, involves consensually non-monogamous couples (i.e., swingers) having evaluated, negotiated and adjusted their sexual relationship as a couple to include multiple partners. The emphasis shifts from who belongs in the family, such as just the husband and wife with their offspring, to how family is *practiced* along the contours of the evolving character of the relationships. This emphasises the complexity of the very definition of what family is or what it entails.

Although the definition of family is complex, in its most traditional form, it can be described as “persons who are related to a specific degree, through blood, adoption or a socially approved sexual union” (Noyoo, 2019:72; Giddens, 2006). Family typologies in South African society include, among other examples, the following:

- The nuclear family: i.e., a traditionally heteronormative form of marriage between a man and a woman with two generations living together – e.g., parents and their children.
- Multigenerational families: i.e., three or more generations living together – e.g., parents, grandparents, and children.
- Extended families: typically associated with customary African societies, where the family extends beyond that of the nuclear family and may include aunts, uncles and related family members all living together in the same dwelling.
- The reconstituted family: typically associated with a modern family, which may include single parent families, same-sex parent families, couples who cohabit, persons in open-relationships and divorced parent families (Noyoo, 2019:70; Magezi, 2018).

However, non-reconstituted single parent families are not mentioned in the above list, yet according to Statistics South Africa (2017), single parent families make up 11% of the household types in South Africa.

Noyoo (2019:69–71) further identifies eight family formations prevalent among the South African population as a result of exogenous forces in addition to those already identified above:

- Skip-generation families, where the grandchildren live with the grandparents only.

- Elderly-only, which is where one or more elderly people make up the family unit.
- Single adults who reside on their own.
- A child-headed family, where all the members are younger than eighteen years.
- Married couples with adopted children.
- A siblings-only family formation.
- Polygamous families.
- Migrant and refugee families.

These examples of the multiple and diverse formations that constitute South African family formations show how family has been transformed by exogenous forces –from the time of the Portuguese settlements in Angola and Mozambique, in the 1400s, to the Dutch and French settlements in the Cape of Good Hope from 1652 onwards, and the country’s history after that (Noyoo, 2019:69). Despite these varied forms of family, family remains one the most notable and influential social institutions in society (Noyoo, 2019:69–70). Research on sustaining engagement with vulnerable families undertaken by Ginn *et al.* (2017:488), suggests that families with unmet belongingness and love needs tend to weaken. Not only does being part of a family grouping offer emotional support, it also offers material support to all of group members, which is essential for their growth and well-being (Noyoo, 2019:71).

Writing from a sociological perspective, Janet Finch (2007:66) states that the methods people use to constitute their ‘family’ requires a ‘display’ of these methods to others. This includes particular actions. ‘Displaying family’ emphasises the fundamentally social nature of family practices. This implies that the meanings of one’s actions need to be both *conveyed to* and *understood by* relevant others for those actions to be defined and considered as constituting ‘family’ practices. According to Finch (2007:67), display is the manner in which individuals and groups of individuals convey to the relevant audiences that their actions do, in fact, constitute “doing family things”. This confirms that these relationships are “family relationships”. In keeping with the present study, an example of this would be the way in which married couples reflexively and actively engage in redefining what constitutes a marital and familial relationship. They do this by engaging in intimate consensual non-monogamous relationships, as well as exploring other forms of sexual expression – e.g., bisexuality as part of their swinging fantasies (Fernandes,

2009). On the one hand, these consensually non-monogamous relationships transgress the traditional one-man-one-woman monogamous view of marriage. On the other hand, however, they may partly retain the ideological heteronormative and monogamous ideals associated with family and marriage.

This incongruence may result in couples displaying so-called mono-normative ideals. This marital typology foregrounds a sex-negativity paradigm, creating a hierarchy under which sexual activities are labelled either as productive and positive or, conversely, as perverted and negative (Rothschild, 2018:31). It is within this hierarchy of monogamy that certain marital, familial and sexual practices, including same-sex intimacy or CNM, may be socially sanctioned in particular contexts, but with the proviso that the monogamous marriage typology remains the standard to which to aspire and conform (Rothschild, 2018:30). In this way, 'displaying' family becomes validated and recognised, in particular where families do not strictly conform to traditional heteronormative models, but rather seek to socially construct and negotiate their relationships *within* the socially sanctioned marital or familial institution (Lahad *et al.*, 2017). However, there are contradictions in the display of family (and arguably also 'displaying marriage') as practiced by swingers as they partly reject traditional models of heteronormativity and patriarchy. One such example is the fact that although research suggests it is mainly men who introduce the idea of swinging into the marriage, the women are the ones who maintain the swinging lifestyle and make the rules for engaging or not engaging at a swinger's party (Poppewell, 2006:12–13; Wilt *et al.*, 2018:12; Chase, 2002:9; Jenks, 1998:512). This means that they are simultaneously transgressing traditional (read heteronormative) familial and marital expectations *and* retaining their relationship by instituting specific parameters to govern their sexually fluid behaviour.

One particular component that speaks to the focus of the study and to the agentic and process-based quality of heterosexual coupledness, is *intimacy*. Intimate relationships encompass various associations that include, but are not limited to, associations between friends, sexual partners and family members (Gillies, 2003:2). Within the field of sociology, the term intimacy is relevant as it describes the emerging theoretical stance that came to dominate topics previously viewed from the perspectives of family or community studies. According to Jamieson (1998), the term 'intimacy' now replaces what was previously termed 'primary relationships', bringing the focus towards the quality of the relationships rather than its structure.

In the past, models of intimacy emphasised gendered roles, such as those identified by Becker (1993:30–31). These roles stated that women should primarily ‘specialise’ in childbearing, child-rearing and domestic activities, and that men should protect and provide for the family. These arguments are similar to the view propounded by Seltzer (2019:408), who details the responsibility of married couples to have and raise children. This recalls the seminal contributions of Connell (1987:183) on masculinity and femininity. She argued that the hegemonic male was, depending on context, regarded as being more aggressive and competitive than their ‘emphasised’ [empathic?] female counterpart, who was thought of as being more submissive and flirtatious. However, it was the men who posited women as weak and submissive and fickle, among other characteristics, as a means to retain the ideology of the necessity of male dominance in society (Rothmann, 2014:35). This is contrary to current writings, which focus on adult sexual relations by theorising them in terms of individualised and negotiated transactions (Chambers, 2012:34–35; Gillies, 2003:2). One of the main informants of these changes is individualisation.

Individualisation explains the revision of boundaries between the masculine and feminine, including the roles prescribed by gender, such as motherhood, fatherhood and childhood (Chambers, 2012:35). Individualisation also considers the driving forces behind the collective processes that allow individuals to take on individualistic ascriptions and orientations (Hofmeister, 2015:280), attributed to the erosion of traditional values and the rise of individual agency (Giddens, 1992). According to Schroer (*cited in* Hofmeister, 2015), individualisation shifts from the obligatory decisions determined by others (e.g., societal expectations about what constitutes family and marriage) to more flexible and changeable decisions on how to define and redefine intimate relationships, which includes a person’s choice to engage in CNM as opposed to monogamy or polygamy. The new emerging lifestyles emphasise the agency and autonomy of the individual. As a result, intimacy is being transformed. It is no longer only a set of social obligations, but has become a new kind of democracy between couples (Chambers, 2012:35–36). Family members are now understanding their social positions through active choice and negotiation, as opposed to solely conforming to traditional duties (Chambers, 2012:35). In the context this study, this means that husbands and wives are able to negotiate their preferences for CNM and interact accordingly with their swinging partners, as opposed to the strict expectations of the monogamous ‘till death do us part’-model.

2.2.1 The pre-industrial and industrial family: Changing ideologies about marriage, family and intimacy

The pre-industrial/pre-colonial era of South African history (prior to the arrival of the colonial forces) saw the emergence of permanent, consolidated and structured societies. These included groups of a village size, chieftaincies of considerable territorial extent, to kingdoms in a hierarchical organisation of tributary chiefs and their headmen (Noyoo, 2019:72; Konczacki, 1990). Families in South Africa were large and often included aunts, uncles, servants, slaves and farmhands, i.e., akin to the extended familial typology, as noted above. This was primarily because most families doubled as units of production where they worked the land (agrarian) or made crafts (Noyoo, 2019:72; Stricklin, 2018; Brooks, 2020:56). The family unit saw to the socialisation of the young and looked after the old, protecting them from adverse social conditions (Noyoo, 2019:72). Families were patriarchal, with women being subservient to their husbands (Thompson, 2013; Gillies, 2003:3). There was little distinction between family, social and economic functions (Gillies, 2003:3). These families are referred to as 'corporate families', as they were organised around the family business. In a South African context – the farming business would be a prime example. All members of the family worked all aspects of the farm to keep it viable (Brooks, 2020:56). Marriage was not necessarily based on love and affection, but rather resulted from a need to continue a family line, i.e., foregrounding the importance of procreation (Giddens, 2006; Stricklin, 2018). Marriage under the law, into the nineteenth century, was codified as *coverture*. The doctrine effectively meant that the woman and her property became the property of her husband, who had the right to beat her, sell her at a market, and dictate whom she may have contact with (Brook, 2015:55). The purpose of marriage was therefore social, economic and procreative.

A paradigm shift took place during the Victorian era when the family became less of an economic unit and more of a moral unit, a place for the formation of love (Brooks, 2020:57). Sociologically, these changes in family and personal relationships are attributed to post-industrialisation, which led to detraditionalisation and concomitant individualisation of social life (Chambers, 2012:34–35; Gillies, 2003:3). However, sociologists are divided on the implications. Some adopt a pessimistic view that maintains that the breakdown of traditional ties leads to the disintegration of moral values (traditionalists) (Gillies, 2003:2), while others (such as Talcott Parsons, 1956) are focused more on the change and adaptation as a response to the needs of the modern

industrialised family (Gillies, 2003:2). Both perspectives are ideologically charged, reflecting particular depictions or understandings of sexuality, e.g., the de-sexualisation of women and control by men.

Industrialisation and urbanisation have also been instrumental in the alterations to and new configurations of the family in South Africa (Magezi, 2018). Family and household practices were subjected to the influence of the Western formation (Magezi, 2018). Not only did urbanisation and Western influence challenge or undermine the importance associated with polygamy, but it also distorted traditional views and spurred on extra-marital sexuality (Delius & Glaser, 2004:84). Families were restructured and reformed. Families that once were extended and communal, now became more nuclear in structure (i.e., husband, wife and their immediate children). According to Parsons (1996:16), the nuclear family, consisting of a mother and a father with children, was vital to the socialisation of boys and girls in their respective roles in society. The socialisation of women cast her in the role of a nurturer and caregiver to her husband and children, and men in the role of provider for his family (Gaitskell, 1983:241–242).

According to Parsons (1956), the growing need for specialised mobile labour led to the increase in urbanisation during the initial stages of industrialisation. This resulting in a differentiation between the economy and the family – meaning that the economy shifted from being agriculturally-based to being predominantly industry and manufacturing-based. This brought about, among other occurrences, the formation of nuclear families who were relatively free from the obligations of wider kin. It required families to adapt to the requirements of an industrial society (Gillies, 2003:3). These requirements included the necessity for people to move from rural communities to towns and cities, which caused the rapid growth of cities. The evolution of the family went from pre-industrial production and consumption to one of an industrial society, in which socialising the children and stabilising the adults within the boundaries of family emerged as a phenomenon (Parsons, 1956). According to the functionalist approach, this brought about a division of labour based on gender. Men were paid for their work in the public sector, whereas women remained home and took on domestic tasks (Martinez Dy, 2021:215).

The normative construction of family in heteronormative nuclear terms is infused with power relations, including patriarchal Western notions and gendered hierarchies. This is despite family being positioned as an indicator of modernity from within a Eurocentric construction serving colonial interests (McEwan, 2017:738). According to Noyoo

(2019:70), this heteronormative nuclear family structure was imposed on Africa by the West from the colonial period onwards. The notion of a nuclear bourgeoisie family (monogamous and heterosexual) with the purpose of reproduction was used to classify societies not practicing this order of kinship as uncivilised (Kitch, 2009). Minority family constructions, such as polygamy and same-sex families, were thus regarded as deviant (Kitch, 2009).

In typical patriarchal families, characteristic of many parts of rural Africa, values and norms are socialised through the elders (Magezi, 2018). According to Russell (2003:153) and Ssemogerere (2011:5–7), rural areas of Southern Africa strongly enunciate rules about kin, responsibility and co-residence as passed from the elderly to younger generations. However, urbanisation is in direct conflict with traditional rural practices, which resulted in the South African urban black elite showing signs of acculturation into Western life (Russell, 2003:154). This included the adoption of a nuclear family as opposed to an extended family, as well as co-habiting as opposed to an arranged and agreed-upon marriage. According to Chambers (2012:35), these acculturations to Western life are ascribed to the weakening of the traditional customs that correspond with the rise in individual agency and personal choice.

Recent studies comment on how the introduction of technology such as the internet into households has changed the quality of family relationships. In one study, the internet is associated with bridging continental distances between families and allowing the older generation to see and communicate with family overseas, thereby preventing loneliness (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2020). In another study, the internet is associated with negative outcomes, such as exposure to potentially problematic data (Quaglio & Millar, 2020). Access to media technologies is now a fundamental part of everyday life. It distracts the individual into the solitary world of the technology that demands their undivided attention (McGrath, 2017:9–11). This does not mean that individualisation is synonymous with unconstrained freedom, but rather implies an adjustment to the changing expectations of contemporary society (Burgess, 2018:86–87).

The propagation of sex talk (such as radio discussions and magazine articles about various sexual topics) has also created discrete discursive nodes. This is seen in the sexual discussion groups that have emerged on social media platforms such as Facebook, as well as the web pages for swingers (e.g., *Sex with Emily*; *CBD Sexlife*). Media articles and terms such as ‘transactional sex’ (i.e., sex as a payment of sorts, or

sex in lieu of rent due), 'friends with benefits' (i.e., friends who are also sex buddies), 'bi-curiosity' (i.e., openness towards experimenting sexually with the same sex), and 'booty call' (i.e., calling on someone with the sole intent of having sex) allow us to assess ourselves daily against what is considered to be the 'new norm' in society (Dowsett, 2015:532). An example of these 'new sexual norms' is the contemporary women's magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, where articles feature topics such as 'how to make a polyamorous relationship work' (Sheff, 2018; Griebeling, 2012). The exposure to sexual media not only enhances existing sexual practices, but it also creates a sexual imagination and the trajectories that constitute new sexual idiosyncratic practices (Dowsett, 2015:531). Niche media markets that facilitate easily accessible material for their audiences are expanding, including for gay and lesbian audiences (Bond, 2015:37).

Sex is no longer only considered a function of marriage, and sexual pleasure is no longer necessarily a taboo topic. The contemporary individual has greater choice than previous generations as a result of the erosion of some of the social barriers (Burgess, 2018:86–87), such as condoning sex before marriage and the introduction of multiple partners into a marriage. This media exposure not only provides the reassurance for belonging (or not), based on how we perceive ourselves according to what is considered the new norm, but ultimately it also encourages persons to move their sexual interests and behaviours from the private to the public realm. It is within this public domain that sexual interests and behaviours can be researched (Dowsett, 2015:532). Giddens (1992) describes these new sexual norms as the emergence of a so-called 'democratisation' of sexuality. It is based on consumerism and is characterised by new lifestyles that seem to offer a wider range of gender and sexual choices. An example of this is the choice some married couples make to pursue CNM in the form of swinging. There is now a variety of different marriage typologies to mirror the old and new normative realities, as is discussed in the next section.

2.3 MARRIAGE TYPOLOGIES FROM A PRE- AND POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Under apartheid, legislation only recognised monogamous, heterosexual marriages as a social institutional norm (Klause, 2010:42–43). Since 1994, the democratic South African legal landscape has been recognising three types of marriages: civil marriages, customary marriages, and civil unions (DHA, 2019). The formalisation and validation of these marriage types are managed by the Department of Home Affairs, according to the

acts that govern each marriage type (i.e., civil marriages, customary marriages, and civil unions). In addition, the democratic South African dispensation saw the recognition of polygamy and same-sex marriages as marital forms (Amien, 2017; Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018). Polygamy, in general terms, has been widely accepted in many societies since ancient times. It refers to one person (man or woman) having multiple spouses of the opposite sex simultaneously. The term polygamy includes the concepts of polygyny (literally "many women") referring to a man with multiple wives, as well as polyandry (literally "many men"), where a woman can have multiple husbands at the same time (Uglow, 2017).

Under apartheid, civil marriages were governed by the Marriage Act (25 of 1961) (DHA, 2019), which considered the "traditional" form of marriage as the norm. Characterised by heteronormativity and monogamy, it is still the most common marriage form in South Africa today (Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018), with any form of polygamy (marriage to more than one woman/man simultaneously) not recognised (Amien, 2017). This type of marriage contract excluded African customary marriages and same-sex couple unions. In addition to this, laws were also passed that sought to regulate interracial sexual and marital contact. This included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages (55 of 1949) and the Immorality Amendment Act (21 of 1950), which prohibited sexual intercourse and marriage across racial lines. The Group Areas Act (41 of 1950) further enforced spatial separation of race groups (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010:224). Different racial groups were not permitted to live or socialise together. Each had their own designated areas for living and social activities. According to Brook (2015:76), writing from a South African perspective, marriage is not simply about who has access to the institution, in other words who had the right to marry, but about how marriage itself is shaped as a creation of the state through such regulation.

At present, customary marriages are governed by the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998) (DHA, 2019) and is defined as a negotiated marriage entered into in terms of a customary law observed by indigenous African people (Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018). Customary marriages also include polygamous unions (Grant, 2015). Civil unions are governed by the Civil Union Act (17 of 2002) (DHA, 2019) and are marriages that cater for persons of the same sex (Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018). Same-sex unions were strictly prohibited under apartheid. Not only was homosexuality considered an immoral act that threatened white civilisation through the corruption of innocent

Afrikaner boys by mostly wealthy English and Jewish men (Rothmann, 2014:78), it also presented a threat to the national order along with the ideologies that legitimised apartheid (Carolin, 2017). During this time, government sought to intensify its moralist control of sexual bodies, which included state power to arrest and prosecute homosexual persons through the amendment to the Immorality Act (23 of 1957) (Rothmann, 2014:77). It is argued that the reasoning behind this moralistic control was that homosexual encounters could not be justified as sexual encounters with the aim of procreation, i.e., these encounters took place for the purpose of pleasure. The puritan nationalist government deemed any form of sexual pleasure outside of the heterosexual norm as deviant and sinful, a threat against the government and a means to challenge Afrikaner purity (Jones, 2008:404).

This situation changed with the onset of democracy in South Africa. Constitutional and legal changes in South Africa since 1994, including policies in favour of black economic empowerment, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and pornography (RSA, 1996a, 1996b), and the abolishment of the Immorality Act and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (RSA, 1950a, 1950b), resulted in shifts in the cultural politics of class, status and the emergence of a new black elite (Posel, 2011). Through the introduction of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a) and the passing of amended acts, the classifications of what constitutes a marriage were renegotiated. The Civil Union Act (17 of 2006) made provision for lesbian and gay couples to enter into a civil union, regardless of their cultural and religious affiliations (RSA, 2006).

The paradigm shift that brought about the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996a) could, from a theoretical perspective, be described as the result of socialisation. This includes the communication and language through which a meaning is ascribed to things called symbols (Mead, 1934) – such as the meanings attached to the symbol of homosexuality. Based on their knowledge of the world through communication, people change what no longer works for them through continuous definition and redefinition of the meaning of the symbols (Ritzer, 2010:351). As a result of the definition and redefinition that takes place through communication, same-sex families are now part of the family patterns found in society, and the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998) legally recognises African customary marriages (Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018; Amien, 2017). The Recognition Act (120 of 2000) passed in 2009 acknowledges and legitimises polygamous marriages, provided that both spouses are South African citizens. The choice of marriage now

includes a civil marriage, a civil union or polygamous union (Rautenbach & Du Plessis, 2012:751–752). In her discussion of the individualisation thesis, Chambers (2012:34) describes this as the advent of a more democratic phase of family life due to the changes in ideas about love and commitment.

However, according to Bond (2017:35), the subsequent erosion of the importance ascribed to religious values, the development of methods of contraception, and the relaxation of taboos, monogamy (one sexual partner for life) has now become serial monogamy (having multiple monogamist relationships). The individualisation thesis explains this as a revision of the boundaries that existed between femininity and masculinity, as well as the roles between motherhood, fatherhood and childhood (Chambers, 2012:35).

As a social contract based on one of the marriage systems recognised in South Africa (civil marriage, civil union and customary marriage) (Du Toit's Attorneys, 2018), marriage may cause the marriage partners to anticipate physical (sexual), biological (procreation), social (family creation), psychological (marital well-being) as well as spiritual satisfaction from the other party (Van Zyl, 2015:i). Investigations into the importance of sexual well-being found that sex is the strongest contributor to happiness and represents a factor that could protect against the effect of stressors that affect marital sexual well-being (Stephenson & Meston, 2015; Yucel, 2016). There have, however, been certain changes in intimate relationships related to shifts in social norms and personal values. These have been chronicled in the work of academics as early as the 1990s. For example, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) and Giddens (1992), the increase in cohabitation rates may be ascribed to societies that are experiencing an increase in moveable intimate relationships, enhanced individual freedom in making life course decisions, as well as the detraditionalisation of personal life, as per the individualisation thesis (Chambers, 2012:34–35). This is ascribed in particular to the erosion of confidence in the stability of marriage and the increase in divorce numbers (Dueck, 2016:180–181; De Vaus *et al.*, 2003:34–39). In contrast to what is noted above, Statistics South Africa (2016) reveal that there is a decrease in cohabitation and an increase in the “never been married” population in South Africa. However, this has been ascribed to possible incorrect self-classification (never married as opposed to cohabiting) and the commercialised and expensive “paying for the bride” price customary of some African communities, which “forces” the couples to live together rather than get married.

In certain societies, cohabitation is construed as a rational way of avoiding over-commitment (Lappegard & Noack, 2015:287–310). Especially in America, younger people are now pursuing behaviours (cohabitation and sex for pleasure) that were previously viewed as non-normative (Manning *et al.*, 2007:559–560). Intimacy is also being transformed from a set of social obligations and conventions to a new kind of democracy between couples (Chambers, 2012:35). Living together has since also become culturally normative, as is seen in the decline of social stigma attached to cohabitation (Dueck, 2016:180–181). The multiple variations that constitute coupledness today (e.g., heterosexual, gay, lesbian, divorce and remarriage, as well as cohabiting arrangements, among others) imply that heterosexual marriages are no longer necessarily the only norm for couples to adhere to as they form and enact family life. Social categories such as gender and sexuality, once regarded as being biologically determined, are now being transformed (Chambers, 2012:35).

2.4 SEX UNDER APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA VERSUS ‘SEX FOR PLEASURE’

During his 1954 address to the American Psychiatric Association, Alfred Kinsey (cited in Gathorne-Hardy, 2000:70) maintained that one of the primary functions of marriage is to provide a context for sexual pleasure. He stated that the lack of sexual relations in a marriage threatens the marriage. However, during apartheid in South Africa, the act of sex created social anxieties and tensions for the then government (Reid & Walker, 2004:79), which resulted in a negative effect on sexual relations between married couples. The sexual oppression and rigid control of the nationalist government with respect to sexuality had serious effects for sexual well-being.

Reich (1973:6) states that mental health is dependent on the degree to which a person can surrender to the ecstasy of orgasm as part of the natural sexual act. It can therefore be inferred that the frequency with which couples engage in sexual intercourse, including how gratifying the sex is, is one of the central indicators of marital health (Schoenfeld *et al.*, 2017:489; Girard & Wooley, 2017:720). Although the Calvinistic ethos of the apartheid era informed and policed the code of sexual conduct in South Africa vehemently, sex for pleasure was not an entirely foreign concept, as it was practiced and enjoyed, albeit in secret, through extramarital affairs (Reid & Walker, 2004:81). These affairs were not only between white men and women but also white men and black women *and* men. According to Carolin (2017:112), the entanglement of sex, race, and politics

during the moral and political panic of the 1970s highlighted sex in all of its illicit desires, erotic pleasures, and contingencies.

The need for the various acts of Parliament (most notably the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Amendment Act, and the Group Areas Act), in itself indicates that sex across racial lines was actually prevalent. It is assumed that this was for pleasure because of the manner in which the African bodies and sexualities became focal points for the justification of civilising the so-called 'barbarian' in Africa (Tamale, 2011). Not only were African sexualities depicted as primitive, but they were considered to border on nymphomania (Tamale, 2011:17–22). Examples in this regard include the sensual and often sexual descriptions of their ritual dancing, which included men and women colliding breast to breast while stomping their feet (Thompson, 2012:2). Unlike the sexual enjoyment and abandonment of the African woman, the puritan Afrikaner women viewed sex as a duty that had to be performed.

The differences between the traditional Afrikaner family and traditional African family in the South African context must be noted in this regard. Whereas the traditional Afrikaner family was mainly characterised by two heterosexual adults (male and female), maintaining a socially approved monogamous sexual relationship, whether this includes having children or not, the traditional African family extended to aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives who may intervene, typically during times of crises or certain lifetime events (Noyoo, 2019:72). As such, these familial arrangements may also include polygamy (Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016:310).

The cultures that are said to be permissive with respect to sex for pleasure nevertheless employ elaborate systems to regulate it. An example of this is the Lesu of the South Pacific, who accept and condone female masturbation, provided the female uses only her right heel to exert pressure against her vagina. The use of hands is strictly forbidden (Goldenberg *et al.*, 1999:1174). Particularly in British culture, a fascination with female sex toys coupled with explorations of sexual adventure have contributed to current relaxed attitudes towards female sex toys (Smith, 2007:167). This shift in perceptions of women's sexuality is associated with a focus on the acceptance of hedonistic feminine sexual practices (Smith, 2007:167). Sex toys not only give a tangible form to sexuality, they also have significance and symbolic meaning through the course of their circulation and consumption (Appadurai, 1986; Smith, 2007:168).

According to Baudrillard (1988:48), the use of sexual aids is not only about the hedonistic sexual experience, but also about how consumers mutually implicate themselves in a general system of exchange of symbolic values. The very constitution of sexual engagement and pleasure is ever-changing and renewing. People become subjects of sexuality and therefore, without subjectification (change in the meaning of the term sex), there can be no pleasure (Dowsett, 2015:531). Brook (2015:61–62) mentions a further indicator that sex for pleasure is an integral part of marriage by describing how women in England during the 1960s submitted court applications for divorce because their husbands would not engage in regular sex with them. In one of the cases mentioned, the woman was subjected to having to watch her husband masturbate without being permitted any sexual contact with him. The applications brought before the court were for the cruelty suffered by the women as a result of their spouses withholding sexual intercourse. Although the courts dismissed both cases, the verdict was different when it was men bringing the application. A husband's lack of sexual appetite is deemed beyond his control, while that of the wife was deemed an illness. During that era, sexual relations thus posited the wife as passive without any agency, further reinforcing patriarchy (Thoreson, 2008:680).

Sexual socialisation during the apartheid era enforced and condoned sex for procreation and not sex for pleasure. The effects of rigid and restrictive control of sex included disruptions to sex life and negative effects on body image (Marci *et al.*, 2012). Young men were socialised to view same-sex sexuality as deviant and a threat to society. According to Karson (2014), sexual socialisation may be considered (depending on its application) as one of the six most common problematic areas in marital sexual health. This is because growing up in families and societies where sex is taboo or unnecessary may instil the idea that sex is not a key part of life, and people may therefore deem romance and marriage as unrelated sexual institutions (Karson, 2014; Reid & Walker, 2004:81). By censoring an open discussion on sexuality, the apartheid government effectively facilitated the creation of secretive and obscure sexual behaviours and subcultures (Reid & Walker, 2004:81).

2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WHITE AFRIKANER FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

During the apartheid era, then prime minister Dr Verwoerd, aspired to using various means to preserve the survival of a collective white community. The fight was not merely for Afrikaner ascendancy, but “the necessity for preservation of European civilization,

specifically associated with race” (Dubow, 2015). The model for traditional monogamous marriage in South Africa during colonialism and apartheid, was based on British legal principles and on *Roman-Dutch Common Law* (Garetto, 2014:72). The ensuing Afrikaner nationalism, which also governed marriage during apartheid, was the product of the seventeenth-century Calvinism⁵ which, isolated within the South African interior, remained unaffected by Western influence (Korf, 2008:4).

The Calvinistic system of belief maintains that man is created content, and that he became distanced from God by acting in immoral passion. In addition, Calvinists believe that the church should influence everything, including government policy (Everyculture, 2019). The church is therefore a symbol associated with law and order. Calvinistic beliefs also maintain that races must remain pure and separate (Everyculture, 2019). Similarly, religious influence on marriage, also characterises Muslim marriages. This relates to the fact that Muslim persons may not marry outside their faith, and if a spouse should convert to another religion, the marriage is voided (Samad, 1998).

During apartheid, many Afrikaner politicians advocated for large families to ensure the dominant position of white persons in South Africa. God had to be the centre of a marriage that carried the purpose of procreation and the couple’s adoration of God (Hoselton, 2014). Sexual pleasure was therefore not condoned, particularly outside the confines of marriage. Judaism shares a similar view of sex for pleasure as opposed to procreation, with any form of sex not directly related to procreation (such as masturbation) being strictly prohibited (Goldenberg *et al.*, 1999:1173). When viewing these religious standpoints from a socio-economic position, Wilhelm Reich (1973:7b) states that this negative attitude towards life and sex results in pleasure anxiety, where the pursuit of sexual pleasure (such as masturbation) leads to feelings of guilt because of the way one is socialised (in that it is not part of procreation). He further maintains that it was not of biological origin but developed with patriarchy.

One characteristic of traditional Afrikaner dating and marriage practices was that a young man courted his girlfriend and then formally requested permission from her parents (especially her father) to become engaged (Breene, a.s.). This was then followed by the couple’s names being read in church for three weeks preceding the wedding, where, if

⁵ The nationalist apartheid government distorted Christianity in general and Calvinism for political gain and ideological control, and as such, Calvinism throughout the study, is inclusive of this distortion (Dobosova, 2009).

no objections were raised (for example, that one was already married to someone else), the marriage was performed in church, with a reception afterwards. This practice had become less formal by the 1990s (Everyculture, 2019).

During the apartheid era, when a couple who were married according to the civil marriage system engaged in sexual intercourse, it was mostly for the purpose of procreation, not pleasure (Thoreson, 2008:680). The wife was seen as passive without any agency, further reinforcing patriarchy (Thoreson, 2008:680), which underscores the dualistic nature of male and female sexuality. As described in Jackson and Scott (2010:113–114), men were thought of as sexual and women as asexual. Not only was the code of sexual conduct imbued with Calvinistic morality, but it was also patriarchal in nature. Women had fewer “life chances” than men and were frequently subjected to physical violence. Men felt it their duty to discipline their wives if they did not conform to their rule, which at times included marital rape (Noge, 2014:35–42). The man had to take up his role as the so-called ‘king’ in the house and the woman had to be submissive (obedient to her gender role) and sexually available (abide by social expectations of being a woman) for his pleasure (Stander & Forster, 2019:5–6). Women were expected to take up their role as mothers and nurturers of their husbands, while the men dealt with all matters public that affected women as well (Noge, 2014:2). The strict new rules issued by religious institutions made polygyny and extra-marital sex socially unacceptable. Any evidence of sexual desire in women was considered a gynaecological problem or wicked, perceptions that maintained and sustained the sex-negativity (Jackson & Scott, 2010:114) – also prevalent during the apartheid era (Hodgson & McCurdy, 1996).

The unmarried Afrikaner daughter represented sexual innocence, which was under strict control of the father and which was expected to remain latent until marriage required her to perform conjugal duties. The married woman was seen as a “*Volksmoeder*” (mother of the Afrikaner people) and was nothing more than a means to fulfil her national duty to reproduce and nurture the “*volk*” (Afrikaner people) (Du Toit, 2003; Klause, 2010:42–43). Not only was premarital sex discouraged within Afrikaner society, so too was masturbation (Duff, 2015). Masturbation was considered sinful and lustful because of the Calvinistic ethos to “be fruitful and multiply” (Rosenthal, 2012). The sexual socialisation within the apartheid era left very little room for considerations of sex as anything pleasurable.

However, with the abolishment of apartheid and the subsequent gradual democratisation of sexuality in South Africa, where sexual imagery and discourse came to saturate movies, magazines, the internet, television and clubs, South Africans were introduced to a greater degree of sexual freedom and liberty (Posel, 2005; Weiss, 2019; Reid & Walker, 2004:77). This can be explained convincingly by the individualisation thesis, which maintains that the weakening of the traditional customs that once bound families together corresponds with the rise in individual agency and personal choice (Chambers, 2012:35). This was particularly evident in the public protests regarding gender violence and homosexuality, where the closely monitored boundaries of a heterosexual and patriarchal sexuality were challenged (Reid & Walker, 2004:79). Women now had the right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy and to decide what happens to their body in terms of intimate relations. They could take contraceptives without a medical reason, which allowed them to engage sexually more freely (Guttmacher *et al.*, 1998:191). This newfound sexual freedom and democratisation of sexuality in South Africa and abroad introduced divergent formations of familial, marital and intimate relationships (Chambers, 2012), which can be attributed to an increase in personal freedom of choice in terms of marriage and family patterns (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Stander & Forster, 2019:14).

2.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN CUSTOMARY MARRIAGE

The consequences of the introduction of Christianity and Western influence on the values and marriage practices in Africa are numerous (Onyima, 2014:171). However, despite a Western influence, some black South Africans still maintain their unique marriage rituals. This is discussed in detail below.

According to traditional African marriage customs, the union involves more than two people, and is characterised by the relatives of the couple establishing close friendships (Baloyi, 2014:19). This was important for the negotiation of bride-wealth (*lobolo* or *lobola*) between the families of the bride and groom. Achieving consensus at such a negotiation is considered a safeguard against marital dissolution, and it also symbolises the blessing of the two families on the union (Baloyi, 2016:3–4; Van der Westhuizen & Koen, 1991). This dowry given to the bride's parents further serves as a token of gratitude for bringing their daughter into the world. The dowry generally involves giving a cow, a process known as *inkomo kamama*, and a monetary gift of R50 000,00 (\$2 959.11) to R100 000,00 (\$5

858.23) (Mekoa, 2012:228). Although the giving of a cow is still encouraged, some prefer an entirely monetary gift instead (Breene, a.s). The monetary gift practice does sometimes act as a deterrent towards marriage for those who cannot afford to pay the *lobolo*. Therefore, courtship and wedding practices are directly dependent on the particular culture, with the *lobolo* being a common tradition, which is upheld by many of black tribes in South Africa (Breene, a.s) and constitutes an integral part of African customary identity (Rudwick & Posel, 2015:289).

One of the factors influencing the *lobola* negotiations is the virginity of the bride. As was the case with the Afrikaner puritans of the apartheid era, virginity is considered very important to the native Africans. Young girls are/were subjected to virginity testing to determine if they are chaste (Maluleke, 2012; Van der Westhuizen & Koen, 1991) and if they are worthy of an honourable man marrying them. In the Zulu culture, the *umkhosi womhlanga* or “The Reed Dance” virginity testing ceremony was reintroduced by King Goodwill Zwelithini in 1991, specifically for young Zulu girls. The ceremony takes place annually in September at KwaNongoma, a royal kraal of the Zulu king in Umhlanga (Breene, a.s.). The ceremony has a significant cultural importance and seeks to encourage young Zulu girls to delay sexual activity until marriage (Maluleke, 2012; Van Rooyen & Hartell, 2012:327). According to Thabo Mbeki (cited in Arnfred, 2004:10), this may also limit the possibility of contracting STDs (e.g., through HIV transmission).

There are many black ethnic groups in South Africa, such as Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga. Although all these ethnic and cultural groups cannot be discussed in this chapter, Zulu courtship is discussed as an illustrative example. The start of a Zulu courtship begins when a woman confesses her love for a man, which is known as *ukuqoma*. At this time, she will stop practicing the ‘reed dance’ ritual. This suggests that the couple will start having sexual intercourse. This step commences arrangements for the actual marriage.

During this time, the woman gives the male something personal, which is worn by her “*ucu*”. Ucu refers to traditional Zulu beadwork connected with courtship and marriages and regulates the behaviour between individuals of opposite gender. It is a 5m long necklace made of white beads (Twala, 2007:113–123). The man displays this by wearing it for everyone to see. The social meaning ascribed to this practice pertains to preventing the woman from becoming involved with other partners and it also symbolises the

willingness of the couple to commit to one another. A further social meaning is that it identifies the father should the woman fall pregnant during the courting.

However, traditional Western views of the institution of marriage became intermingled with the African views. Western views emphasised adherence to particular social and sexual conventions, which included the maintenance of a particular social ordering of gender (cf. Jackson & Scott, 2010:26). Couples were not supposed to live together nor have sexual intercourse until they were married. The traditional wedding usually follows a white wedding (Ngcobo, 2013). The white wedding marriage ceremony involves the bride wearing a flowing white wedding dress and veil and the groom wearing a dress suit. They make oral promises before a priest and the congregation and then seal it with a ring or the Bible (Howard, 2006).

African customary marriages were not recognised during the apartheid era (Rautenbach & Du Plessis, 2012:751–754). Unlike civil marriages, African customary marriages allowed for polygyny (one man marrying multiple women simultaneously) and were entered into in accordance with the traditions and customs of indigenous African society (SAHO, 2016). Although very common in pre-colonial South Africa, polygamy was a minority activity, which saw sex taking place outside of marriage. Widows, divorcees, unmarried mothers, bearing a specific class and label in society, would live in their father's homestead, while essentially controlling their own sexuality. Their sexual partners included married, unmarried, polygamous and monogamous men – and this practice was accepted as part of social interaction. Marriage was considered transactional rather than being about the control of sexuality (Delius & Glaser, 2004:85).

Observers of black sexuality in South Africa have argued that polygamy not only created an expectation of multiple sexual partners for men, but that it was also successful in containing male sexual urges (Delius & Glaser, 2004:84). However, there were inequalities with regard to the customary law of succession pertaining to customary marriages. This was mostly ascribed to distinctive patriarchal characteristics, such as the rule of male primogeniture (Rautenbach, 2008). The first-born son of the man would be regarded as the successor to the estate, rather than the spouse in a customary marriage. Unlike a civil marriage, the customary marriage was not only concluded between the two individuals but extended to their respective families (Chambers, 2000:103). This quantified it as a familial matter that did not require the approval of an officiator to be regarded as valid (SAHO, 2016). Customary marriages were therefore predominantly

entered into for the continuation of the man's family line. Men had the right to enter into additional marriages, but the same right was not afforded to women (Chambers, 2000:103–104). However, the Sotho tradition of *bonyatsi*, which is a contemporary multi-partnership sexual practice, allows married women to take on lovers, mostly for material needs, while their migrant husbands are absent (Delius & Glaser, 2004:84). Polygamy is also prevalent among Indians of the Muslim faith with the proviso that all wives be equally treated and looked after (Mahajan, *et al.*, 2013). On the other hand, the practice of *lobola* pertains to the exchange of cattle between a potential groom and his future in-laws as payment for his bride. The number of cattle a man had was viewed more as being proportionate to his wealth than his sexual pleasure (Kuper, 2016:272–273). In contrast, within the Indian Muslim faith, a dowry is given to the bride, which becomes her asset, and is seen as a provision for her well-being (Mahajan, *et al.*, 2013).

2.7 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE AFRIKANER PURITAN MARRIAGES, AFRICAN CUSTOMARY MARRIAGES AND OTHER MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP MARRIAGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

As evident from the preceding discussion, there are different cultures with different sexual expressions. Therefore, there is no monolithic way of experiencing sexualities in one culture or community. Furthermore, during the apartheid era, particular acts associated with sexuality were criminalised or highly stigmatised.

African bodies and sexualities became focal points for the justification of civilising the so-called 'barbarian' in Africa. Not only were African sexualities depicted as primitive, but they were considered to border on nymphomania (Tamale, 2011:17–22). African women's sexualities were characterised as the converse of colonial mores of sex and beauty and were labelled primitive (Tamale, 2011:22). This may be ascribed to early anthropological observations, where African women were observed baring their breasts and buttocks with no apparent self-consciousness, as well as the non-reproductive sex (sex for pleasure) that was observed between unmarried adults (Delius & Glaser, 2002:27–54). One of the most cited examples of African sexuality or erotica is the story of Sarah Baartman.⁶ She was taken from South Africa to Europe and put on display there

⁶ Sarah Baartman, a Khoisan woman who was sold into slavery, was best known for her protruding buttocks, honey brown skin, and sexual intrigue (Howard, 2018).

because of her big buttocks and large protruding labia. These physical traits were thought of as being both erotic and putrid (Arnfred, 2004:65).

There is one similarity between the Afrikaner puritan typologies under the apartheid era and the practices within African customary marriages that were (and in some cases still are) practiced in the black ethnic South African villages. Young African girls are/were subjected to virginity testing to determine if they are chaste (Maluleke, 2012; Van der Westhuizen & Koen, 1991). Both African and Afrikaner girls had to remain virgins in order to be worthy of an honourable man marrying them, yet African boys had/have the freedom to have pre-marital sexual relations and may even impregnate a number of women (Maluleke, 2012). Premarital sex from a Muslim perspective was punishable by up to 100 lashes, irrespective of gender (Mahajan, *et al.*, 2013).

Patriarchal rule and control are also evident within the African traditions (SAHO, 2011). In some of the African cultures, female genital mutilation is practiced as a means to keep the woman chaste and increase her fertility (Maluleke, 2012). Though admittedly with less invasive forms of control, the unmarried Afrikaner daughter represented sexual innocence, which was under strict control of the father, and which was expected to remain latent until marriage (Klause, 2010:42–43). Not only does this create gender bias, but also sexually socialises boys and girls into very different contexts. In contrast, Indian religions, such as Islam, does not necessarily elevate one gender above the other, rather maintaining that both genders are created from a single soul. Women are, therefore, not created for the purpose of man, but instead, for each other (Mahajan, *et al.*, 2013).

Another pertinent similarity of culture exists between the puritan Afrikaner and the African customary cultures. Being widowed often leads to a lowering of status for the women of both cultures, as well as the possibility of losing her possessions due to primogeniture (Rautenbach, 2008). Widowers are encouraged to remarry soon after the death of their spouse, irrespective of whether they want to or not, while the widow is expected to remain loyal to her dead husband (Maluleke, 2012).

Regardless of some apparent similarities, the sexual socialisation of rural African persons differed from their Afrikaner counterparts in some ways. African rural South African men and women were socialised into sex from an early age, and also guided through the development stages with regard to their sexual maturation process. Sex was spoken about freely with little embarrassment and children were familiar with the nature of sex.

In fact, most of their play was characterised by a definitive sexual undertone (Schapera, 1940:180). However, young girls were not encouraged to have penetrative sex before marriage (Maluleke, 2012). Sex was by no means a secret affair. This was very unlike the ignorance found desirable in European girls (Delius & Glaser, 2002:30) and the taboo nature of sexual topics amongst Indians (India) (TNN, 2020).

Furthermore, with industrialisation and the migrant labour system. African men in particular were exposed to Western ideologies and ideals associated with, among other things, the family, marriage, sexuality and intimacy (Smit, 2001:538–542). Within the mining sector, sex between men within the closed institution was the norm. Alimi (2015), among others, note that there are examples of same-sex activities between younger American men who engage in cultural practices during their transition from boyhood to adulthood. The research that focuses on mining and labour during apartheid argues that the sex between men in these closed institutions was circumstantial, and that it constituted nothing more than a product of the rural migrant workers' fear of townswomen and their resistance to urbanisation (Reid & Walker, 2004:78). However, this introduction resulted in a reciprocally contentious and tense relationship between Western ideals and the importance ascribed to upholding traditional customary practices. The customary sexual and initiation practices that did not lend themselves to monogamy were not seen as acceptable by puritan Afrikaners, which caused a breakdown in the sexual socialisation process of African people (Delius & Glaser, 2002:27–54). According to Jenkins (2022), most self-identified coloured persons, in South Africa, are Christian and speak Afrikaans. I did not elaborate on their marital customs as they overlap largely with the Afrikaner traditions.

2.8 CONCLUSION

As part of the new Constitution of 1996, the Bill of Rights significantly influences the institution of marriage in South Africa. Every person now has the right to claim equality before the law and equal protection by the law, allowing persons to marry others regardless of their creed, race, gender or sexual identity. Changes in cultural norms and values are evident in the declining rates of marriage and in the increase in cohabitation. As such, sex is no longer confined to the realms of marriage alone.

The trajectory of the social construct of marriage has also changed. Where marriages were once solely arranged and bloodlines kept intact with siblings or family members

marrying each other, the structures and functionality of marriage have now become more context-specific, with varied levels of freedoms or restrictions imposed on people. This allows or stifles attempts to establish unique relationships within marriage particularly, such as those that are peculiar to swingers (Rubin, 2001:713).

According to Chambers (2012:35), family life is seen to be strongly regulated by prescribed gender and sexual roles. The social context dictates the social obligations, such as procreation associated with the social institution of marriage in its more traditional role (Palamuleni, 2010:43). This implies that heterosexual couples once mainly entered into and conformed to those principles of a monogamous relationship “till death do them part” (Coertzen, 2015:387; Wagner, 2018:1231). However, critics of this type of relationship have emphasised its flawed nature and more recent studies comment on how changing social, cultural and legal provisions have resulted in some persons valuing a more confluent, ‘plastic’ and negotiable (i.e., individualised) approach to family, marriage and sex.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the literature on swinging and the multifaceted nature of sex, sexual relations, and ways of experiencing the act of sex. The chapter further deals with discussions on the democratisation of sexuality in South Africa since 1994, and how this has influenced legislation. Examples include the legalisation of same-sex marriages and the unbanning of pornography. This allows each person the right to choose how they wish to engage sexually – including the right to engage as a same-sex couple, the right to be consensually non-monogamous and the right to engage sexually with another person, regardless of their race.

CHAPTER 3:

“THE LIFESTYLE” OF SWINGERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

I am very far from attempting to exclude reason from the domain of sexual relations. On the contrary, I believe that it must be constantly applied. It is just that reason applies not only to the external gestures that reveal them and that are studied by physiologists, but also to the feelings, ideas, and institutions that give these relations their specifically human shape (Durkheim, 1911:4).

The above quote exemplifies the multifaceted nature of sex, sexual relations, and ways to experience the act of sex. Swinging or ‘partner-swopping’ is not a new concept or a new type of intimate partner relationship. It has been practiced in a number of societies for many years (Smith, 2012; Kimberly & McGinley, 2018:1). What has changed, however, is the fact that people feel more comfortable to engage openly in debates about the matter, as opposed to concealing their preferences (Fernandes, 2009:2; Hatcher, 2017:1).

The democratisation of sexuality in South Africa since 1994 due to among other things changes in legislation, such as the legalisation of same-sex marriages and the unbanning of pornography, has shifted the focus from the government policing and censoring sexual relations to the individual sexual actor having their rights and responsibilities liberated (Stemmet, 2005). This shift has allowed members of civil society and the state to render these rights (i.e., sexual liberation and freedom) indisputable in the face of moral and religious claims to authority (Posel, 2011). Each person now has the right to choose how they wish to engage sexually, including the right to engage as a same-sex couple, the right to be consensually non-monogamous and the right to engage sexually with another person, regardless of their race. Furthermore, research suggests that swinging may affect marital sexual well-being, although the full extent of how and why this is the case has not been documented by South African academic inquiry (Fernandes, 2009; Moors *et al.*, 2017; Peabody, 1982:428).

This chapter provides an overview of research on the swinging lifestyle in South Africa and abroad. In addition, it also provides an outline of social scientific inquiry into the act

of sex. Finally, I engage with the concept and lifestyle of swinging, with a particular reference to a critical conceptualisation of swinging, an overview of the reasons couples ascribe to CNM, its positive features and its potential challenges and limitations for couples.

3.2 CURRENT LITERATURE TRAJECTORY

As noted in Chapter 1, swinging refers to the consensual non-monogamous sexual activities or behaviour of a couple (married or in a committed heterosexual or same-sex relationship) for the purpose of experiencing or engaging in sexual activities other than monogamy – e.g., sexual intercourse with multiple partners for the purpose of sexual pleasure (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961). The limited available literature about the swingers' paradigm and CNM can be attributed to the perceived "sensitive nature" of the topic (Wilt *et al.*, 2018:4), and particularly so from a South African perspective. However, internationally there are three main genres of literature currently available pertaining to CNM. One genre is self-help literature. Self-help literature on swinging is beneficial to readers looking to establish successful non-monogamous relationships (Haritaworn *et al.*, 2006:516), and includes publications such as *The swingers' manual* (2009) by Just Ask Julie, *The ethical slut* (2009) by Janet Hardy, and *Swinging for beginners* (2003) by Kaye Bellemeade.

The other genre is esoteric Orientalism (Haritaworn *et al.*, 2006:516). This genre guides those seeking to understand the value system behind CNM, such as the ideas associated with Eastern religious traditions, for example tantrism (Girard & Brownlee, 2015:464; Haritaworn *et al.*, 2006:516–526). Examples of such literature include, *The complete idiot's guide to tantric sex* (2004) by Dr Judy Kuriansky and *The complete illustrated Kama Sutra* (2003) edited by Lance Dane. Tantric sex, a practice that refers to the ancient Sanskrit meaning "to weave energy", encapsulates the connection (i.e., sexual energy) between two lovers or with oneself through masturbation (Brito, 2018) with the aim of increasing sexual pleasure or ensuring the experience of expanded prolonged orgasm. According to Wanderly (2018), the *Kama Sutra*, as a sacred ancient Hindu text, is conceptually more about the philosophy of the nature of love and life and a manual for good living rather than a book of sexual positions. The text provides advice on etiquette pertaining to engaging in threesomes (i.e., a couple who engages in sex acts with an additional partner, be this additional partner male or female) as well as erotic biting (i.e., sexual arousal through biting the flesh of their partner) (Kureishi, 2011:1). The writings of

the *Kama Sutra* challenge the Judeo-Christian discourse on sexual morality, in that they offer an alternative approach to sexuality – specifically the relations between men and women (Grant, 2005:509). Following along the continuum of alternative approaches to sexuality, sex magic. It is a form of non-monogamous sex practiced by people who identify as witches, and it is defined as a way of raising your creative, dynamic sexual energy to fuel your intentions by harnessing the feelings of your sexual experiences, which include all the tension, expectation and pleasure that comes with having sex to ultimately focus on your desires (Brabaw, 2018). Sex magic, tantric sex and other forms of sexual intercourse, such as those described in the *Kama Sutra*, require one to indulge in one's sensuality and allow the sexual energy to build gradually, which in turn will enhance the participants' magical power (Alexander, 2011) and the sexual experience. Sex magic, tantric sex and the sex teachings of the *Kama Sutra* require a transcendence of both sexual and spiritual planes, reaching deep meditative and spontaneous sex (Brito, 2018).

The third genre of available literature on the swinging lifestyle is that of academic research. There is ample research in the American and European contexts. This study views various aspects of swinging research from the work of Dr Edward Fernandes (2009), who conceptualises the phenomenon of swinging while consulting disciplines such as medicine, psychology and sociology. The work of Bergstran and Blevins Sinski (2010) defines swinging from an American perspective. Academic research on swinging or CNM is also prevalent from the perspectives of alternative marriage styles (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000) and the struggles pertaining to monogamy as the most common type of Western marriage style (Bond, 2017). Various academics have also looked at problems associated with CNM, such as the jealousy factors (De Visser & McDonald, 2007) and the prevalence of bisexuality (Baumgartner, 2017). The subsection that follows foregrounds the work of early and contemporary social scientists on the topic of sex.

3.2.1 The sociology of sex

A person's sex is commonly defined either as the biological characteristics that define humans as male or female or it denotes the physical act of having sex (Miller, 2017). The application and meaning ascribed to the act of sex is informed by multiple intersections of determinants, such as history, a variety of cultural and religious prescriptions and gender identity and race, all of which explain the reasoning behind the study of sex as a study of social behaviour (Richters, 2001:7). This section focuses on the different aspects

of sex as found in the contributions of sexology, the subjective nature of sex and sex in contemporary society.

3.2.2 Contributions of sexology

According to Escoffier (2020:36–37), sexology was initially considered an incoherent field, despite its scientific ambitions. This can be attributed to a lack of widely accepted theories on sexuality, a lack of influential scientific research programmes, and the use of theories frequently based on moralistic beliefs and misconstrued notions of Darwinism (Escoffier, 2020:36–37). Much of the early information on sex was documented based on observations of animals (Bullough, 1994:9) and research was largely dominated by the medical and psychological disciplines, with limited focus on a sociological approach (Morrow, 1994). Most of the discussions of sexuality and reproduction were therefore centred on the contributions of medical specialists. This resulted in research findings being informed by a primary emphasis on illness and pathology, which in effect replaced the predominant religious focus on sin (mostly in pre-industrial society) in the discussions of sexual activities (Bullough, 1994:15).

Historically, the writers of medical texts on sex mainly relied on anthropology for evidence about primitive sexual behaviour. However, what they found did not accord with the puritan European/Victorian vision of sex – discoveries that included masturbation, foreskin piercing, erotic biting and other curious customs (Richters, 2001:9; Arnold, 2017). Some researchers point out that although members of British society during the Victorian era subscribed to strict and largely prohibitive moral codes in relation to sexuality, the evidence nonetheless suggests that many among them exhibited a compensatory curiosity about sexual matters (Fenn, 2017). It was not uncommon for those in power in Victorian society to warn about the dangers of sex, for instance by claiming that masturbation causes blindness and insanity. Tissot (2015) also held similar views and was particularly influential in emphasising the dangers of sexual activity (Bullough, 1994:16). He maintained that seminal emissions and vaginal discharges associated with excessive intercourse and onanism could cause death. Any non-procreative sex was considered deadly (Bullough, 1994:16). Sex was seen solely as a means of procreation that women had to perform, as a result of their ovaries – a point of view that subsequently deemed them subordinate to men as a law of nature (Bullough, 1994:14). This notion was also favoured by St. Augustine (354–430 AD), who attributed importance to the procreative function of marriage and ignored the personalistic aspects (Burke, 2012:379).

One such example is the manner in which the induction of an orgasm was deemed vital as part of a medical procedure for the female gender to prevent hysteria rather than as a function of sexual intercourse or pleasure. In order to relieve women of hysteria, which was regarded by society during those times as a form of evil, medical doctors would stimulate the genitals of women deemed to be suffering from hysteria (Serena, 2017). Just as was the case with homosexuality (Rothmann, 2014:4), masturbation was considered to be a deviant and dysfunctional practice (Richters, 2001:9; Jones, 2008:404). Women's sexual liberation movements have taken a stand against this sexism. However, despite the progress made by the movement, such as with the rights to contraception or abortion, the overlap between women's rights and sexual rights is still being negotiated (Stjerna, 2018:173).

It was not until the 20th century, with the discovery and diagnosis of syphilis, that an explanation was provided to corroborate Tissot's allegations that excessive sexual intercourse could lead to sexual diseases and potentially to death (Bullough, 1994:16). Not only was syphilis detrimental to a person's mental health, but it was also found to cause disfiguration and, at that time, had no known cure (Fenn, 2017). In accordance with these pathological views, 19th century evangelists in America linked mental and physical disorders to masturbation, despite the difficulty in regulating the practice (Perry, 2019:697). It was also believed that if men experienced too many orgasms, it could be detrimental to their health. Conversely, during this time, women were not considered as an at-risk population due to moral beliefs that they did not experience orgasms during sexual intercourse (Goldenberg *et al.*, 1999:1174).

Despite the restrictive attitudes of the Victorian era concerning sexuality, the era itself saw the birth of a large body of literature on the subject of *magia sexualis* (i.e., sex magic), as well as medical manuals on what was considered to be deviant sexuality (Urban, 2004:696). Unlike the objectives of conventional and traditional sex, which is procreation (Hoselton, 2014), sex magic has as its main objective the harnessing of creative sexual energy (universal raw energy) to manifest a desired outcome (Alexander, 2011; Urban, 2004:696). Wilhelm Reich (1973:3a) refers to this energy as *the cosmic orgone energy*. He equates the need for sex to a "universal spirit in God" (Reich, 1973:179b). Sex is deemed the manner in which God is incarnated and perpetuated throughout the existence of man – the passing of genes from generation to generation (Goldenberg *et al.*, 1999:1174).

According to Moorhead (2018), female desexualisation in the past was characterised by the assumption that women are not as sexual as men, an argument that proliferated due to the overwhelming number of male-centric sexological contributions. For the most part, the male contributors to the scholarship of understanding female sexuality maintained that a woman was dysfunctional if she did not climax during intercourse. During the 1980s and 1990s, pioneers such as Rosemary Basson (Vancouver, Canada) contributed to a shift in these perceptions and labels, thereby re-sexualising women. Not only are women now seen as having sexual desires equal to those of men, but it is also understood that women's sexual desires may be linked to their menstrual cycles. Furthermore, Basson's contribution has normalised the experience of many women who previously were labelled as suffering from a sexual disorder (Harding, 2007:363).

However, the principles of medical science were not enough to understand the complexities of human sexuality. Rather, an interdisciplinary approach was required (Coleman, 2006:4). The current understanding of sexology is based on the principles of the general systems theory (GST), which maintains that "the system is greater than the sum of its parts" (Covington, 1998:1). Sexology is made up of multiple systems that ultimately merge and interact to create a holistic understanding of the individual and collective sexual being. These systems are biological, psychological, sociological and cultural. Understanding the sexual being requires a holistic perspective of the human sexual system in which sex and its multiple facets take place (Coleman, 2006:4).

One of the earliest authors on sexual activity was the 4th century BC Greek Philosopher Aristotle (385–323 BC), whose works such as *History of Animals* and *Generation of Animals* can be regarded as the foundation of Western zoology and Western sexology (Bullough, 1994:9). Aristotle understood sexual desire as an appetite analogous to the appetite for food. According to him, the virtue of temperance was therefore sought in the control of sex, because excessive attention to desire was considered bestial – akin to the preceding pathological accounts of unbridled sexual activity (Sable, 2009: 408). It was only during the last two decades of the 19th century that the scientific study of sexuality emerged as a distinct area of inquiry from within the Darwinian episteme, which had established sexual reproduction as one of the essential mechanisms of evolution and of the survival of species and sub-species – thereby rendering procreation a biological imperative (Escoffier, 2020:36).

During the 19th century, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) introduced a novel approach to the expression of same-sex love (Bullough, 1994:25). Ulrichs was the first person to formulate a scientific theory of homosexuality based on the view that homosexuality is inborn and not acquired (Kennedy, 1997). However, the modern notion of sexuality only started shaping towards the end of the 19th century, in particular with the works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) (Oosterhuis, 2012:133). Among other ideas, Von Krafft-Ebing was instrumental in shifting the perception that homosexuality is fundamentally a mental disorder (Bullough, 1994:22) to its being viewed as an autonomous and continual sexual instinct, thereby recognising sexual diversity (Oosterhuis, 2012:133; Bullough, 1994:22).

The early years of the 20th century saw the field of sexology dominated by three men: Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). While Hirschfeld and Ellis were mainly empirical in their approaches, Freud developed a new system for therapy for those who were afflicted with sexually related problems (Bullough, 1994:42). Magnus Hirschfeld conducted the first broad empirical studies about what was at the time termed “homosexual life” (Mildenberger, 2019:357). Hirschfeld maintained that all people were born bisexual and, through the natural development process, chose one or the other sex and became either heterosexual or homosexual. However, if their development process is flawed, they could end up loving both sexes (Bullough, 1994:45; Mildenberger, 2019:357). Havelock Ellis was a naturalist who popularised the concept of individual and cultural relativism in sex (Bullough, 1994:45). He wrote the first English medical textbook on homosexuality and devised the concepts of autoeroticism and narcissism (Crozier, 2004:275). He was of the opinion that sexual differences were inborn and not pathological. Like Hirschfeld, he considered sexual experimentation to be part of a person’s adolescence (Bullough, 1994:51).

Freud (1910:1–2) differentiated between deviations with regard to the object of desire (homosexual/heterosexual) and the sexual activity that satisfies the sexual desire (vaginal intercourse). He also analysed the erotogenic zones of childhood that contribute to the components of sexual instincts: i.e., oral/anal/genital (Escoffier, 2020:37). In Freud’s era, bisexuals were considered to be individuals who were fixated on a particular developmental phase, and they were therefore considered to suffer from a so-called sexual dysfunction. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), a manual published by the American Psychiatric Association that defines criteria for mental

illness and is used as a diagnostic tool by mental health practitioners, listed homosexuality as a dysfunction and mental illness up to 1973 (in the DSM-II). It was not uncommon for the use of conversion therapies to attempt to 'cure' homosexuality (Drescher, 2015:565). It is only fairly recently that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) acknowledged sexual diversity by updating the DSM, in particular with the publication of the DSM-V in 2013. The emphasis in the definition of a dysfunction shifted from a fit within cultural expectations to the absence of distress and the presence of consent (Sheff, 2016; Drescher, 2015:565). In 1973, the category of "homosexuality" was replaced with sexual orientation disturbance (SOD) in the DSM-II. SOD was later replaced with ego dystonic homosexuality (EDH). Homosexuality was completely removed as a disorder in the DSM-IV.

However, it is not only psychology, biology and psychiatry that inform matters of sex and sexuality. From the 1960s onwards, sociology started to incorporate foci on sex and sexuality as part of its academic pursuit (Seidman, 2022; Turner, 2016). Sociologists began engaging in research on sex and sexuality, presenting arguments for and against pharmaceutical treatments of various sexual dysfunctions and gathering data on them (Kew, 2011).

One of the most influential contributors to sexology in the 20th century was Alfred C. Kinsey. Not only did he revolutionise the repressive sexual views of his time, but he also encouraged the discussion of sexuality from new perspectives (Brown & Fee, 2003). Kinsey's work, (based on his publications *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), introduces the importance of sexual agency, fluidity, plurality and negotiation. Although Kinsey was an entomologist and originally known for his research on the gall wasp, contemporary references to Kinsey are based mostly on his publications of comprehensive interviews with 5 300 white men and 5 940 white women about their sexual histories. This research was undertaken by Kinsey and other collaborators at the Indiana University in the United States. His first two publications were met with a multitude of responses, ranging from thrill to shock and outrage, and sold an unprecedented two hundred thousand copies (Eaklor, 2008:80). Regardless of his meticulous interrogations of sexual practices that were deemed morally reprehensible by members of the mainstream public – mainly due to the inclusion of hundreds of questions on oral sex, anal sex, and masturbation – Kinsey also sought to

provide an objective and scientific account of homosexuality rather than a moral one (Eaklor, 2008:80).

Based on the data collected from the interviews conducted, he attributed homosexuality to a stimulus-response hypothesis. This hypothesis conceptualises homosexuality as common, rather than as deviant (Jackson & Scott, 2010:6). In essence, this argued that all individuals, given the necessary physical stimulus, will experience sexual arousal irrespective of its source (Meem *et al.*, 2010:122–123). Not only did his work contradict the congenital and naturally ‘innate’ understanding of homosexuality, but to substantiate his argument, he also devised a seven-point scale or continuum upon which individuals could position themselves. The scale allowed for degrees of heterosexual or homosexual attraction, rather than merely adopting a polarised either-or approach (Jackson & Scott, 2010:6). Through this process, he disproved views that sorted different forms of sexual diversity (such as bisexuality) into the categories of lesbian and gay. This allowed for an emphasis on the unique and autonomous nature of bisexuality (Gammon & Isgro, 2007:165).

Mental health workers use this scale, commonly known as the Kinsey Scale, to chart human sexual attraction. The scale is made up of seven points, which represent fluidity in terms of human sexual and erotic dispensations (Meem *et al.*, 2010:123). The scale is organised on a continuum with exclusively heterosexual (0) at the one end and exclusively homosexual at the other end (6). In between those extremes, the continuum on the scale ranges from predominantly heterosexual with only incidental homosexuality (1), predominantly heterosexual with more than incidental homosexuality (2), equally heterosexual and homosexual (3), predominantly homosexual with more than incidental heterosexuality (4), and predominantly homosexual with only incidental heterosexuality (5).

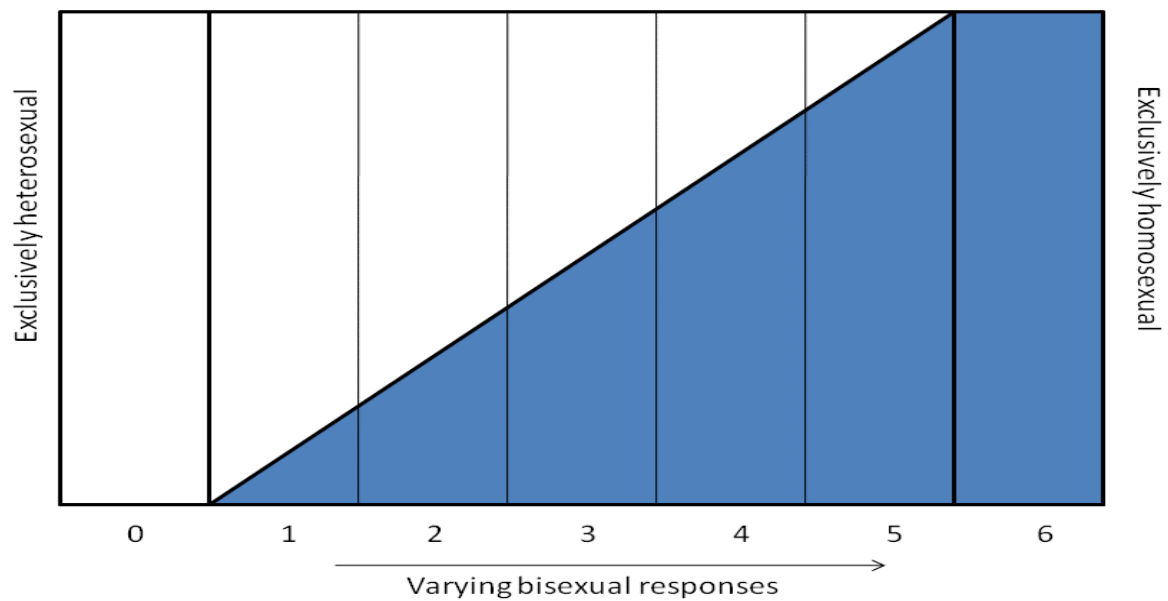


Figure 2.1: The Kinsey Scale (Source: <http://fvsch.com/notes/2013/forecast/>)

Although Kinsey concluded from the data he collected that 37 per cent of the male population had engaged in some homosexual behaviour leading to orgasm, his data also indicated that 46 per cent of men identified as bisexual (Eaklor, 2008:80; Jackson & Scott, 2010:7; Meem *et al.*, 2010:123). However, his primary focus was to identify behaviour and not to label. He was nonetheless subject to criticism. One such criticism was raised by Ericksen (1998:133), who maintained that Kinsey did not fully consider the historically specific and therefore changeable contexts in which the research was conducted. Kinsey's research spanned over twenty years. He specifically referred to the period between 1938 and 1948, which was characterised by one of the most devastating wars in history. Erickson maintained that the war created a space for many young American men to try new sexual pleasures while engaged in conflict away from home (Ericksen, 1998:133). Based on the example stated above, Ericksen (1998:133) further argues that Kinsey believed in an inherently static sexuality rather than a dynamic series of behaviours and desires contingent on time and place.

Kinsey's work was also subject to criticism for his statistical sampling methods (Bullough, 1998:130). Although Kinsey used random sampling methods, the interviewers attempted to interview all of the potential respondents approached. That approach created a cluster sample that is perceived to have reduced the potential benefits that a larger sample could have provided. Criticism was also raised as to the location of the participants. Since the

majority of the participants were residing in the Indiana or Midwestern United States, it was claimed that generalisability of the research findings was not taken into account (Bullough, 1998:130; Ericksen, 1998:133; Herzog, 2006:40). Amidst the criticism, Kinsey did, however, attempt to justify his reasons for not using random sampling. He maintained that such a sampling procedure would have yielded its own inherent bias (Bullough, 1998:130). He further maintained that an unresponsive respondent population group of randomly selected individuals would not agree to answer questions about their sex lives. Therefore, he maintained, respondents had to be recruited (Ericksen, 1998:133).

3.2.3 Sexual agency

In keeping with the preceding contributions of Kinsey, other researcher, including Simon and Gagnon (2003), made use of sexual script theory, which draws on George Herbert Mead's (1934) work on symbolic interactionism. They note that in order to understand sexual desire, one should consider the importance of social interactions. A focus on social interactions is evident in the work of Chambers (2012) and Giddens (1992) on the individualisation thesis. They argue that this approach emphasises the weakening bonds of traditional customs that once bound families together. This is achieved through a focus on the rise in individual agency and personal choice as it relates to family life and intimate relationships (Chambers, 2012:35). Giddens (1992) describes this new stage of family life as the 'democratic' family. Notwithstanding contemporary changes in family life, the revision of boundaries between feminine and masculine, as well as the diversity of contemporary family forms such as same-sex couples and single parent families (Chambers, 2012:34–35), have led to the erosion of traditional values (Giddens, 1992; Beck, 1994).

Social positions and interactions between family members have become less guided by traditional duties (i.e., the wife remaining home and ensuring that meals are cooked, and the children raised) and more exposed to active choice and negotiation between individuals (Chambers, 2012:35; Hutzler *et al.*, 2016). The way in which couples are renegotiating the constraints of monogamy and actively choosing to adopt different familial, marital and sexual relationships is evidence of this change. Giddens (1992) refers to this as 'confluent love' and the search for a 'pure relationship'. This love is characterised by personal understanding and negotiation between two people, such as the negotiation present between a couple who wishes to enter into CNM. Although they have negotiated a non-monogamous relationship, they remain obligated to each other based on their

negotiated rules pertaining to the boundaries of what is acceptable to both of them within their choice of lifestyle (Benamati, 2016:1). Since the couple actively constructs and develops their relationship, it is typified as a 'pure relationship', which is shaped by an interaction of trust and an emotional interaction, as opposed to being based on external pressures informed by heteronormative and patriarchal principles (Chambers, 2012:36).

Social interaction is also evident in the work of Finch (2007) and Morgan (1996), with particular emphasis on 'doing' of family, relationships, and marriage. According to Morgan (1996), there is a contradiction between the ideological notion of a nuclear family and the variety of ways in which everyday people conduct their family lives based on the many arrangements of family – such as single parent families or same-sex families. His main contribution in this regard is what he terms as people 'doing family life'. It is this variety of ways that provides a useful way to explore the complex realities of family living and, as such, the ways in which CNM is lived within the context of a family.

Drawing on George Herbert Mead's (1934) work on symbolic interactionism, Simon and Gagnon (2003) contend that present interaction alone does not determine future sexual interactions, since individuals actively interpret the meanings of their interactions from within their own symbolic processes (Horley & Clarke, 2016:907). According to the sexual script theorists, the socially derived sets of conditions and sequences produce a common understanding of sexual interactions among these people. This effectively provides any interaction with its own unique sexual meaning (Horley & Clarke, 2016:907).

The theory of personal constructs, as explained by George Kelly (1955), attempted to blend individual-analytic richness with statistical rigour. According to Kelly (1955), there is a 'real' world that does not directly reveal itself to us, but which we need to understand to some extent. However, this 'reality' is subject to as many alternative ways of interpretation as we can construct (such as the many ways in which we can experience sex). Furthermore, these constructions are anticipatory and, in order to predict future experience (such as whether or not a certain sexual practice will be sexually satisfying), the individual develops a unique personal construct system that attempts to accommodate it in the unknown structure of their reality and the externally constructed social and sexual reality (Horley & Clarke, 2016:909). Some people may find that inflicting pain on others is sexually arousing or having pain inflicted on them brings them to orgasm (BDSM). However, Wilkerson (2007) points out that since human experience involves interpretation, these everyday events do not come with definite meanings and these

social and sexual encounters introduce their own inherent ambiguity. Therefore, we employ many different constructs to construct, re-construct, de-construct and understand our experiences (Horley & Clarke, 2016:910). Within the BDSM⁷ world, for example, a person may enjoy being spanked but not caned.⁸ Although both actions inflict pain, one is constructed as sexually arousing and the other as painful and non-pleasurable.

The act of sex and its determinants pique the curiosity of laypeople and academics alike. This is attributed to the subjective nature of the personal, moral, aesthetic and religious values of the beholder (Seltzer, 2011). During the 1890s, Wall (1920:vii), who was a medical practitioner and pharmacologist, reviewed a collection of books on sexual matters as part of his research. He described these books as “a collection of curious books on sex matters”. He later sold these books to an Eastern collector of erotica. Both these men ascribed a different set of values to the same set of literature for two different reasons and based on their particular interpretive lenses: The one viewed it as erotica (fine art), where the naked body was displayed and appreciated for its beauty. The other viewed it from an academic and medical research stance, where the body was seen as a biological organism to be studied. Because of this subjective nature of sex and its determinants, the act of sex is seen as a private and personal matter. However, according to Foucault (1981:24–25), sex is not a private affair. This is evident in the manner in which sexual acts have always been subject to public discussion. Foucault argues that if it were a private affair, there would be no condemnation of nonstandard sexual acts (such as CNM or same-sex relations) unless they were non-consensual or performed in public. One subject that always elicits public discussion is that of extramarital affairs, which are different from CNM.

3.2.4 The cisgender arrangements of sex in swinging: Agency versus structure

Heteronormativity, i.e., a system culturally embedded within the expectations of heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships (Habarth *et al.*, 2020), is viewed as a necessary precursor to the bias, prejudice and systemic inequalities experienced by the sexual minority populations (homosexuals and bisexuals) (Ward & Schneider, 2009). Theoretically, heteronormativity is presented as a set of social mores that provide a cultural imperative defining social normative expectations of the identity and roles of

⁷ BDSM refers to bondage, dominance, sadism, and masochism.

⁸ Spanking refers to the flat hand being slapped against the buttocks. Caning refers to the use of a cane or rod to administer corporal punishment, usually on the buttocks and back of the thighs.

people in intimate relationships (Bickmore, 2002; Suter & Daas, 2007). For example, men are expected to provide, and women are expected to be nurturers within the setting of a marriage between a man and a woman. Modern-day swingers tend to reinforce heteronormative ideals in swinging relationships as an ideological composite of three binaries: gender, sexuality and family (Oswald *et al.*, 2005). The intersection of these binaries contributes to the social construction of appropriate social actions.

The gender binary identifies the value that society assigns to “real” men and women. Connell’s (1987) seminal work is of value here. She distinguishes between the “hegemonic” male (the dominant male or ruler) and “emphasized” female (nurturer and caregiver). However, within the swinging lifestyle, women are the ones who take the lead and who set the rules. Men are seen as the protectors within the swinging setting. The sexuality binary emphasises heterosexuality as “normal”, thereby pathologising other forms of sexual behaviour, such as bisexuality. Heteronormativity may therefore reinforce the ideology that heterosexuality is the normal or preferred sexual orientation, which may result in heterosexism, which is a prejudice against homosexuality (Carolin, 2017; Kimberley & McGinely, 2018:1; Chambers, 2012:43). However, within the swingers’ paradigm, bisexuality is common and often sought out. Finally, the family binary recognises the heteronormative value of a family and its legal ties as genuine, compared to other “pseudo” forms of relating, such as living together (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:312–313). Consensually non-monogamous relationships are often referred to as ‘alternative relationships’ because of their divergence from monogamous sexual relationship styles (Frank & DeLamater, 2010:9). Monogamy refers to one partner with the exclusion of all others, while CNM refers to one partner to whom one is married, without excluding those people a couple mutually consents to have sex with within their marriage arrangement. Such an arrangement comes with its own set of rules and dynamics.

3.3 CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY VERSUS INFIDELITY: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENTIATION

The human need for sexual pleasure cannot be disputed, regardless of the nature of the relationship. This topic has been the subject of academic discussion (Gathorne-Hardy, 2000:70; Ben-Ze’ve, 2018:98; Earp, 2019; Reich, 1973a) and has been addressed in numerous self-help books and columns (Haritaworn *et al.*, 2006:516). For example, Wilhelm Reich stated that mental health is dependent on the degree to which a person

can surrender to the ecstasy of an orgasm (Reich, 1973:6a). However, the flexibility of human sexuality is of a fundamentally negotiated nature, because it can be represented by individual desire, marital sexuality and sexual networks (Combessie & Mayer, 2013:382). People have the choice of engaging in CNM, following a monogamous lifestyle (Bond, 2017:35), or engaging in secretive extramarital affairs (Reid & Walker, 2004:81). Foucault (1997) states that man is free to be reasonable and is therefore a being committed to the concern of the self. It is from this perspective that the diversities in the field of sexuality may be understood – e.g., CNM as opposed to infidelity (Combessie & Mayer, 2013:387–388).

3.3.1 *Extra marital affairs: A conceptualisation*

Before engaging with the social scientific work on CNM, it is important to differentiate this phenomenon from infidelity as the two concepts are regularly conflated. Infidelity is a morally 'tinged' word that pertains to a married person or person in a primary relationship (e.g., committed cohabitation) who has had or is having sex with someone who is not their spouse or primary partner, without their spouse's or primary partner's consent or knowledge (Stein, 2020:151). With regard to having sex with extradyadic partners: unlike the consensual nature of swinging, extramarital affairs are secretive and non-consensual (Atkins *et al.*, 2005:470; Cole & Spaniard, 1974:22).

Extramarital affairs (EMAs hereafter) or infidelity is forbidden in many cultures and ranks among the most tabooed sexual practices (Wilt *et al.*, 2018; Chase, 2002:9). Those who transgress monogamous rules of fidelity are stigmatised and labelled as deviant or criminal – as was the case in apartheid South Africa (Carnelley, 2013). In New York, laws pertaining to adultery are applied to the practice of CNM as well, and this legal practice carries negative social implications for CNM, as it is a choice negotiated and agreed between the dyad. Because they engage sexually with others, it is not uncommon for swingers to experience stigma and to be labelled as deviant because of the view that they are engaging in an EMA (as is the case of non-swingers) (Wilt *et al.*, 2018; Jenks, 1998). However, swinging is not the same as having EMAs. Swinging is a consensual decision to engage sexually with persons other than your marital spouse (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961).

Infidelity (non-consensual extradyadic involvement, or EDI hereafter), may be a traumatic event for a couple and it is typically characterised by marital instability, dishonesty, trust

issues and time spent apart (Atkins *et al.*, 2005:470). EDI is described as a betrayal and often cited as the most common reason for marital dissolution (Girard *et al.*, 2018:124). According to Esther Perel (cited in Sharma, 2019), infidelity (or an affair) encompasses three key elements: a secretive relationship with a person other than one's spouse, an emotional connection with said person/s and sexual chemistry with the 'other' person. Contrary to the dynamics of CNM, where there is no emotional connection (Hatcher, 2014) or secrecy between the partners about engaging in the lifestyle (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961), infidelity has as its core structure an emotional connection between the parties involved (Sharma, 2019).

Research suggests that sexual intimacy is often used as a means to obtain love, security and acceptance (Girard *et al.*, 2018:125). According to Bogaert and Sadava (2002), adult attachment styles have a bearing on EDI. Based on findings from their research on 792 young adults from Canada who completed questionnaires measuring adult attachment, self-reported physical attractiveness, erotophilia⁹ and various other sexual actions, individuals with anxious attachment styles were found more likely to engage in EDI than those with secure attachment styles. This can be due to their higher levels of intimacy motivation (Girard, *et al.*, 2018:125), as well as higher levels of fear of abandonment and a loss in the desired closeness with their partner (Fish *et al.*, 2012).

Additional studies suggest that men are more likely to engage in infidelity and that they tend to display higher levels of anger when learning about their partner's sexual affairs with others (Fish *et al.*, 2012). Conversely, women are more concerned about their partner's emotional connections as opposed to their sexual behaviour (Atkins *et al.*, 2005:472). It is suggested that such behaviour is most likely motivated by a sense of loneliness and neglect in their primary relationship (Girard *et al.*, 2018:125). Attachment theorists view the need for closeness and connection as a fundamental need that drives adult romantic relationships (Girard & Woolley, 2017:721). This changes the construction of the extramarital relationship and impacts negatively on the marital relationship itself (Sharma, 2017). The 'swinging lifestyle', however, maintains emotional monogamy despite the sexual non-monogamy to which both persons agree (McDonald, 2010; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2).

⁹ This refers to thoughts and feelings of sex being natural and good without guilt.

Regardless of the differentiation, infidelity shares one core similarity with CNM: sexual chemistry (Sharma, 2017). According to Leiblum and Brezsnyak (2006:55), who write from an American psychiatric perspective, sexual chemistry is defined as a nonspecific subjective description of a physical, emotional and sexual state. This 'state' may elicit feelings driven by pleasure in the context of an interpersonal relationship. It is therefore a synergetic product of the combination of the individual partners. Sexual emotions are not only the strongest human emotions, they are also the ones that may render the partners most vulnerable (Sharma, 2017).

According to recent studies, sexual desire is the underlying motivation for the sexual behaviour of adultery (Stein, 2020:153). Sexual desire is classified in terms of gender and sexual identity choices, such as the choice of engaging in a heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bi-curious or bisexual relationship. As an aspect of sexual desire, sexual orientation, intersects with other identity components: e.g., a person's age, height, body type, personality type and profession (Stein, 2020:153). In CNM, sexual chemistry is a requirement for the couples to 'swap' their partners with an expectation of satisfying *only* a particular sexual and not an emotional desire (Hatcher, 2014). This may include specific interests in certain sexual acts, including but not limited to certain venues and the frequency of having sex (Stein, 2020:153). The presence of sexual chemistry may make the initial stages of the relationship lustful, passionate and intense (Leiblum & Brezsnyak, 2006:55). However, infidelity goes beyond sexual satisfaction and creates expectations for more from the relationship (Sharma, 2017). This may result in serious damage to the foundations of the primary relationship, either in the form of divorce or the experience of trauma as a result of a spouse being confronted with the reality of infidelity.

Having provided the above differentiation between EMAs and EDIs, I next demarcate the various definitions and features associated with the main focus of the present study – swinging.

3.3.2 *Conceptualising consensual non-monogamy*

Swinging, which is a form of CNM, can be defined as dyadic couples who deliberately engage in partner-sharing sexual activity (McDonald, 2010:70), with mutual consent and agreement and for the purpose of sexual variety and pleasure (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961). Their emotional monogamy and connection to their marital partner remain their primary

objectives (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1). By removing the secrecy and dishonesty inherent in non-consensual affairs, the couple may explore their sexual fantasies *together* without necessarily experiencing feelings of guilt or risking the integrity of the relationship. It is important to note that sexual attraction can pertain to being attracted to only one person and being satisfied with sex with that one person (i.e., a display of monogamous desire) or, despite being part of a dyad, remaining sexually attracted to other people (non-monogamy). Furthermore, some people may become less interested in having sex with their partner after a number of years, but remain interested in having sex with others (Stein, 2020:153).

One of the earliest references to the term “wife-swapping” was a 1965 lecture on so-called “key parties”¹⁰ by the psychotherapist Dr Albert Ellis. Today it has become an increasingly popular alternative lifestyle among mainstream, middle-aged married couples, particularly in America (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1; Fernandes, 2009; Girard & Brownlee, 2015; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). The sex lives of swingers call normative monogamy into question because it challenges the notion that a sexual relationship should not involve more persons than the partnered pair. However, the experiences of some swingers provide a discourse that both rejects and reinforces the dominant understanding of how we are socialised to interact sexually (Phillips, 2009:82–83).

Studies conducted in America among younger adults at college level suggest that CNM is a more accepted relationship style during emerging adulthood than serial monogamy. This is attributed to the ‘hook-up’ culture¹¹ prevalent in the emerging adult culture (Sizemore, 2016:2–3). This is explained convincingly by the individualisation thesis, which maintains that the weakening of traditional customs that once bound families together corresponds with the rise in individual agency and personal choice (Chambers, 2012:35). It suggests a changing structure of future relationships to one of CNM rather than monogamy (Sizemore, 2016:2–3). As a result of this changing structure of future relationships, researchers are suggesting that CNM may become the next “moral and legal debate about sexuality and relationships” (Conley *et al.*, 2012:124–141).

¹⁰ Key parties refer to the practice of throwing keys into a hat or bowl and the random selection of a set of keys by the woman, who is then paired off with the owner of the relevant keys (Thesis Whisperer, 2012).

¹¹ The ‘hook-up’ culture refers to people who use dating applications, among other tools, to find other random or known persons who are willing to engage in a confluent and once-off sexual encounter.

3.4 THE DYNAMICS OF SWINGING

Consider the following quote as a reflection on the inherent contradictions associated with views of human sexuality:

What is peculiar to modern societies is not that it consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as the secret (Foucault, 1981:35).

Referred to as the “group closet to traditional coupledness”, swingers often portray themselves as heteronormative and monogamous (Kimberly & McGinely, 2018:1). This is particularly evident in the way in which the couple enjoys socialising as a couple while viewing their outside partners as friends rather than multi-partner relationships (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:8). As discussed in Chapter 2, multi-partner relationships (referred to as polyamory) differ from swinging in that swinging couples jointly seek recreational sex while maintaining emotional monogamy, whereas polyamory entails emotional commitment to each concurrent relationship (McDonald, 2010; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463). This subsection contextualises swinging by addressing the demography of swingers, the rules pertaining to swinging, the potential power struggles that may occur in the dyad and a contextualisation of swingers’ clubs in South Africa.

3.4.1 *The demography of swingers*

As a demographic characteristic, race has been shown to be a biographical variable in American studies on the swinging lifestyle. Research indicates that about 90 per cent of participants in studies conducted by Jenks (1985) and Rubin *et al.* (2014:20–21) identified as white. However, other studies commented on the fact that, irrespective of race, there is no difference in the frequency of swinging encounters between white people and persons of colour (African American; Latino/a; multiracial; Asian/Pacific Islander) (Rubin *et al.*, 2014:29). White persons and people of colour are equally likely to participate in CNM. The reason for the homogeneous demographic characteristic is attributed to the community-based (i.e., swinging community) recruitment of the studies (Rubin *et al.*, 2014:32), which is why one should also evaluate the environment of the participants.

In a study undertaken in America by Katigbak *et al.* (2016:210) specifically to recruit Asian American immigrant participants, community-based participant research was deemed to facilitate greater research participation among so-called hidden communities and

population groups (swingers' community being very secretive), because it aligns the community members' insider knowledge of their specific community with the methodological expertise of the academic researcher (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). Research undertaken by Mogilski *et al.* (2017:408) among self and partner-rated (i.e., how one's partner rates the relationship) romantic relationships in the American state of Michigan specifically looked into the frequency of partner-directed mate retention behaviours within monogamous and CNM relationships. This research suggests that in environments where mortality is high and economic resources low, the participants favoured monogamy and long-term relationships. Conversely, in environments with relatively low rates of mortality and a higher income, persons were more prone to favour non-monogamous sexual behaviours that included one-night stands as opposed to more committed monogamous relationships. They ascribed this to a pursuit of strategically pluralistic mating strategies for the purpose of gaining sexual satisfaction.

Similar American studies suggest that swingers are mostly white, middle-class people who are often highly educated (Fang, 1976:220–237; Jenks, 2014; Fernandes, 2009; Jenks, 1998:509; Kimberly & McGinley, 2018:1; Rubin *et al.*, 2014:20–32). Most swinging couples have been married for at least ten years prior to entering the swinging scene (McClelland, 1999). According to Edward Fernandes (2009:1–36), there are approximately eight million swingers in North America, of whom 24 per cent are women and 76 per cent are men. Pertaining to their sexual identity, 80 per cent of these men identify as exclusively heterosexual, whereas two thirds of the women either are or 'become' bisexual. A study conducted by Dixon (1984:71) in California, Oregon and Washington aimed to identify why women over the age of thirty in a swingers' relationship engage in bisexuality or become bisexual. The study revealed that the onset of bisexuality among swinger women is predominantly due to their husband's influence, and their developing a predisposition to gaining perceived fulfilment of felt needs through sexual activity with persons of the same sex – a thought reminiscent of Kinsey's (1948, 1953) hypothesis. This is also echoed by Hatcher (2015), a sex coach in California, who adds that even just kissing another woman to see what it felt like was a fantasy for many women.

This curiosity and experimentation led these women to self-identify as bisexual or bi-curious. The data collected also suggests that swingers are mostly white women, of whom half were in their first marriage. These statistics were also confirmed by Kimberly and

McGinley (2018:3–4) and Hounghbedji and Guillem (2016:1–4). Their studies focused on investigating the biographical characteristics/features of people who participate in CNM in America and France, respectively. They undertook their studies to, among other research objectives, map out how demographics and sexual practices have changed among swingers over the years. Based on the literature review of Vaillancourt and Few-Demo (2014), many of these studies were motivated by the realisation that, over the past four decades, only 24 articles were available that focused on the topic of swingers – mostly published prior to 1980 in psychology and family and social journals.

Given the many transformations taking place in the social and sexual ecologies, researchers thought it prudent to review how swingers have changed over the years, if at all (Kimberly & McGinley, 2018:2). This is because one can no longer ignore the political discussions taking place around so-called sexual minority groups, which arguably includes swingers (Serina *et al.*, 2013). Hounghbedji and Guillem (2016:1–4) reported one change among swingers: i.e., the fact that most of the swingers in their study (94 persons in total) used alcohol, cannabis and ecstasy, indicating higher sensation seeking practices within the swingers' population group. As opposed to these American studies, South African research has not offered any academic insights on the biographical profiles of the swinging community – hence the topicality of the present study.

3.4.2 Power struggle within the dyad of the swingers' couple

Sexual expression is a major element of a person's self-consciousness and self-perception. According to Foucault's (1981:142) work on the repressive hypothesis, society exerts tremendous power to limit and control open expressions of sexuality. As noted before, the term heteronormativity, which refers to the assumption that heterosexual monogamous relationships are the natural and morally correct form of human relations, exemplifies this limitation and control that is exerted by society (Barker & Langridge, 2010:750) through its exclusion of all other forms of relationships, including consensual non-monogamous and same-sex relationships. Such normativity gave rise to sexual liberation movements (or sexual revolutions) during the 1960s, which brought attention to, among other social problems, to the oppression of same-sex relationships. Furthermore, Foucault hypothesised that modern institutions like marriage force us into increasing repression for the benefits that it offers. One such control was the cornerstone of sexual morals. Not only was a woman's livelihood frequently dependent on marriage, but that of her children too (Haavio-Mannila *et al.*, 1996:411). Therefore, power became

the predominant constraining force in this repressive hypothesis. This power struggle is also present in modern relationships.

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995:62), modern relationships are characterised by two people falling in love and negotiating the content and structure of their own relationship in terms of getting married, cohabiting or being monogamous or non-monogamous. Despite this new-found freedom, there are also tensions in the relationships between the couples. For example, the use of birth control now allows women to decide when or if they want to have children. Furthermore, couples now have to negotiate the role of the woman in raising children should they decide to have children. This includes the impact on her career and her status. When it comes to a repression of sexual expression in a swinging couple could potentially manifest itself in two contradictory ways. They may feel free from constraint and therefore not hide their desires for sexual variety from their partner. Conversely, they may choose to keep their practices secret from other people in their lives or even stop swinging altogether (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:312).

Research suggests that it is mostly the men who initiate the couples' entrance into the CNM lifestyle. Women, however, are the ones who maintain it (Poppewell, 2006:12–13; Wilt *et al.*, 2018:12; Chase, 2002:9). Although men dominate the decision to partake in the lifestyle (Jenks, 1998:512), it is not uncommon for women to make the final decision about continuing with such behaviour or not. This bears signs of the advent of a more democratic phase of family and intimate life (Chambers, 2012:34), and the changes in ideas about love and commitment. For example, Giddens (1992) refers to the creation of a so-called “romantic love” in which the couple develops the relationship along gendered lines, and where both the man and woman seek to maintain it as far as possible. He further acknowledges that relationships have evolved from a “one-and-only-love” to an “until further notice” approach, which favours confluency over romanticism. Confluent love is both active and contingent and does not favour the so-called “forever-one-and-only” quality of romantic love. Although some researchers argue that swinging is a solely ‘male institution’ that only addresses male sexual pleasure (Jenks, 1998:512; Gould, 1999), research conducted in America by McDonald (2010:79) (who herself participated in the lifestyle for over 20 years and also worked as a therapist with clients who swing) and Chase (2002:9) (who is the founding executive director of the Intersex Society of North America) contradicts this finding. The studies indicate that women find sexual liberation

in the swinging lifestyle and the freedom to explore their bisexuality (McDonald, 2010:79; Chase, 2002:9). Women are often more liberated and more involved in the process. In research undertaken by Biblarz and Biblarz (1980:138), it was suggested that after an initial period of participation, women enjoy swinging more than men.

Although dated, it is worth noting Ramey's (1972) indication that past research suggests that power within the dyad reportedly becomes more egalitarian after the couple begins swinging. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) attribute this egalitarianism to a more individualised agency on the part of both men and women in contemporary society. In Gould's (1999) qualitative study, female respondents reported that they perceived an increase in their own power within their relationship as they began swinging. They felt they were able to contribute to the decision-making process as related to swinging in terms of negotiating the rules of engagement. Furthermore, the women felt powerful, in that they now had the ability to approve or disapprove of potential couples whom they engaged with extradyadically (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:312). This may imply that, through the renegotiation of traditional gender roles, CNM achieves gender equality as women and men share equal privileges within relationships (Burleigh *et al.*, 2017:24).

3.4.3 'Doing' and 'displaying' swinging: Performing the swingers' script

The swinging encounter starts with communication between the dyad and the prospective couple they will engage with. Communication is vital to ensure that both partners have the same expectations and that the experience is enjoyed by both (Moors *et al.*, 2014:3). There are three distinct communicative scripts between swingers. Firstly, they refer to *introductions* (either through a mutual friend or at a designated swinger clubs). This is followed, secondly, by the *noting of interest* where the woman will usually indicate that she likes the man. Finally, there is an *invitation* to engage in sexual relations (Kimberly, 2015:56–68).

Couples may opt for one partner to handle all the communication with other swingers through the various social media platforms, or they may opt to jointly communicate as a couple (Ed & Phoebe, 2019). Once there is a noting of interest, the couples may agree to meet at a designated venue to ascertain if there is a sexual chemistry between them. Communication may become difficult during such a meeting, because one of the partners may not feel attracted to the other or there may just be no 'spark' or sexual chemistry. It is here that couples may employ the use of secret code words to which they assign

specific meanings so that they can indicate their intentions (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2019), such as ordering a drink that is not your favourite may symbolise to your partner that you are not happy and want to exit the setting.

Swinging is typically done in the presence of one's spouse and requires the consent of both partners to engage in the experience. It is not uncommon for swingers to become close friends with other swinging couples. However, there are rules restricting *emotional involvement* with non-spousal partners (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1). These rules are deemed necessary if it is to be beneficial for both partners (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2). Respect and honesty (Moors *et al.*, 2014:3), also referred to as ethical hedonism (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:7), is considered as a non-negotiable rule. Other such rules include testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs hereafter), the use of contraceptive protection (e.g., condoms) and selectivity in choosing partners (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:316). These regulations notwithstanding, research has shown that every couple makes their own rules regarding what they require as non-negotiable in their relationship and marriage (Benamati, 2016:1; Biblarz & Biblarz, 1980:138). These rules are determined by the couple to set boundaries and also to protect the primary relationship. This is because, as noted before, swingers do not necessarily devalue the sanctity of marriage but rather engage in swinging as a means to fulfil sexual fantasies (Fernandes, 2008:17–23). In this regard, transparency is considered important, since it affects reciprocal respect, equality and consent (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:7).

The rules of engagement vary slightly, depending on the source you consult. Swinger's sites such as *Swinger's Help* (2018) and *Hello Beautiful* (2009), as well as editorials on swinging such as Cambridge (2017), maintain that asking permission to engage is vital. It should not be assumed that because it is a swingers' event you may just walk up to a guest and engage. Permission must be sought and received before such engagement. Furthermore, either the man or the woman may say *no*, and this implies no further contact with that person for the remainder of the evening or play session. It is important to maintain consensus of engagement (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014:316). Reasons for a refusal to engage may include one partner not feeling sexual attraction, or no consensus between the dyad on the couple requesting permission to engage (McDonald, 2010:74). Along with permission comes confidentiality. Whether one engages in swinging or not, it remains important and non-negotiable to maintain the highest level of confidentiality as to who the guests are and with whom you may have engaged. Indiscretion may impact

negatively on the economic and personal lives of the parties involved (Riley, 2018:53). Confidentiality and secrecy are thus essential parts of the CNM swinging culture. That is also why the swinging lifestyle is described as South Africa's "best kept dirty little secret" (Adultland, s.a.).

According to Cambridge (2017), in addition to the rules already mentioned, another fundamental rule is never to ask your swinging partner if you are better in bed than their spouse, nor gossip about your spouse or any other guest. In another study conducted by Bergstrand and Blevins Sinski (2010:8), which focused on swinging in America and its effect on love, sex and marriage in the 21st century, cleanliness was noted as an indisputable rule, as it has a direct bearing on hygiene and possible susceptibility to STIs. Furthermore, women are considered the rule makers at a swinger's event and, as such, they dictate the events around them during the evening. Women not only have the right to decline an advance but can insist on the removal of an offending party who does not respect their rejection of such an advance (Fernandes, 2013).¹²

Once the parties have agreed to engage sexually, a fundamental question arises concerning the extent of the sexual encounter with a third party (Townsend, 2013:5). This pertains to the rules that the couple will have determined beforehand, and it entails whether they will engage in 'soft swinging' or 'full swinging' and whether both couples will engage in the same room (open swing) or different rooms (closed swing) (Biblarz & Biblarz, 1980:138; Fernandes, 2009; Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2–3). Soft swinging refers to the couple engaging in only manual or oral stimulation, whereas full swinging extends to coitus (Fernandes, 2009; Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2–3). Manual stimulation involves masturbation. Research undertaken in America suggests that men and women may be equally approving of this behaviour. However, women are less likely to engage in mutual manual stimulation. This may be attributed to the physiological differences in anatomy between men and women. Men's sexual arousal is evident through an erect penis and cannot be subtly avoided, whereas a woman's sexual arousal is much less obvious (Petersen & Hyde, 2011:156–157).

¹² Pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, swingers' clubs were and remain subject to all the statutory restrictions and may even require certain details pertaining to health status. As at the date of publication, it was not mandated by clubs that patrons show their vaccination cards. It remains the choice of each patron as to whether they will engage with other patrons who are unvaccinated.

3.4.4 Frequency of the swinging engagement

According to Townsend (2013:5), one of the most common misconceptions surrounding the swinger lifestyle is that swingers engage in their extramarital sexual relationships on a daily basis. This is in fact *not the case*. The frequency of encounters depends on the rules that the couples set before engaging in the lifestyle. This means that it varies from couple to couple. Longitudinal studies undertaken in America by McNulty *et al.* (2016) focusing on associations between relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and frequency of sex in early marriage, suggest that sexual frequency is dependent on a variety of factors that include relationship length, sexual and relationship satisfaction, as well as perceived quality of relationships. According to Grontvedt *et al.* (2020:148), sexual activity and satisfaction level are prone to decline over the course of a relationship. This is due to a decreased interest in sexual activity, which can be attributed to the increased accessibility of a sexual partner and an increase in predictability of sex with that partner. The swinging lifestyle is reported to bring back sexual excitement and pleasure into the marriage (Cole & Spaniard, 1974:25; Chase, 2002:9). This arises from the freedom to engage sexually with other parties who can satisfy sexual needs that are not attainable from their marital spouse (Benamati, 2016:1; Jenks, 1998:512).

3.4.5 The sexual field of swinger's clubs: A South African focus

As a group, swingers share a means of communication (for example websites or online groups), leisure activities (such as meeting at clubs), belief expectations and practices as well as ethics (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:7). The swinger's subculture is defined by its venues and online communities (Platteau *et al.*, 2017:709–719).

3.4.5.1 Swinger sites

There are various sites on the internet that cater to many different niche markets. One such site, targeting senior citizens, is known as '*Senior swingers club.com*'. They (the swingers clubs) cater exclusively for swingers over the age of 40. The members identify themselves as a community of people who are aimed at making friends, exchanging experiences or pursuing a more adventurous sex life (Senior Swingers Club, 2020). It is free to join and they advocate privacy and confidentiality.



Figure 3.1: Senior Swingers Club Logo (Source: Seniorswingersclub.com)

A second well-known South African club is *Swinging Heaven South Africa*. This is, at present, the number one “free to join swingers and dogging site” for South African swingers and doggers¹³ (Swinging Heaven, 2020). The site is easy to navigate and allows for searches for couples, singles, fetishes, clubs, venues, parties, personal adverts, quickies and dogging sites. It is not uncommon to see pictures of members’ genitals as profile pictures or part of an introduction or invitation to view an album of a couple or single that is interested in getting to know you. Albums include the private profiles and pictures and forums that allow people to “chat, meet and flirt” with other persons who are likeminded (Swinging Heaven, 2020).



Figure 3.2: Logo Swinging Heaven (Source: Swingingheaven.za.com)

There are also swingers sites catering to specific racial groups. One such site is called *Black Swingers Club*. The home page reads: “This is the place where fantasies become reality”. It provides a brief history of swinging, and notes a warning about the content and its inappropriateness for children. Once you sign up, you will have access to black swingers all over the world.



Figure 3.3: Logo of Black Swingers Club (Source: blackswingersclub.com)

¹³ Dogging refers to the practice or watching of exhibitionist sexual activity that takes place in public settings such as parks or lakes.

Additionally, Adultland.co.za's homepage seeks to create a relaxed atmosphere for its visitors. The word of welcome on the site notes: "The swinging lifestyle can be an extremely intimidating environment for newcomers so *let us help guide you into the super sexy world of swinging and give you the key to unlocking South Africa's best kept dirty little secret!*" (Adultland, 2020). They attempt this by explaining what the nature of swinging is and to whom it may speak.



Figure 3.4: Logo of Adult land.co.za (Source: Adultland.co.za)

3.4.5.2 *Swingers clubs: South African context specificity*

Most swingers' clubs have their own webpages to which their patrons subscribe. The sites are organised in such a manner that couples can open a joint profile or open their own profile each. There is no specific way to ensure that the information recorded as part of a profile is indeed correct or truthful. This may create profiles with false impressions, such as being single when you are in fact married and not partaking in the lifestyle with consent.

A swingers' club (or sexual field) is a sphere of competition where dominant social systems of assessment (symbolic meaning of constructs such as looks, shape, status, etc.) produce a status order related to desirability (who can pick and choose out of the group) for partnering across the individuals within that club (Green, 2011:247). Although swingers do not necessarily conform to normative perceptions of beauty and body shape (Ehrenfeld, 2012), the club (sexual field) is considered enclosed with regard to sexual capital (various swingers who attend the event/party) within that domain because of its distinctive sexual status order (exclusive swingers club or casual swingers house party) (Green, 2011:247). In this field of sexual capital, there is a specificity of the sexual capacity relevant to the ethos of the specific setting (young and thin or older and more mature), notwithstanding that swingers are found in all spheres of society and across races. However, the tendency is for swingers to socialise with couples of similar background, race and somatotype (Ehrenfeld, 2012), regardless research suggesting that there is no difference in how the different races experience swinging (Kimberly & McGinley, 2018:3).

Clubs are found in almost every province in South Africa. Some clubs are theme-based, catering to specific niche markets. A few examples are shown below. *Fetish Haven* is a club that caters to the BDSM and fetish¹⁴ markets. The club is situated in Gauteng and is run by a dominatrix who goes by the name of Miss Cleo. According to the webpage of *Fetish Haven*, “This playground for ADULTS ONLY is designed to fulfil all and every need, craving, fantasy, deviant thought and bizarre fetish. Our fetish parties are for all of the Fetish/BDSM world, underground and alternative.”



Figure 3.5: Logo of *Fetish Haven SA* (Source: Fetishhavensa.co.za)

The interior design of the club is conducive to the sexual experience intended in the swingers' and BDSM arena. The lighting is in shades of red, with patches of other shades sporadically visible. The rooms are decorated to suit the intended theme, i.e., a medical room, which has bright lights and working medical equipment, including IVs. The props are authentic and used by patrons of the club. The props are cleaned and sterilised after each session (Club Patron A, Personal Communication, 2020). Below is an image of the medical room at *Fetish Haven*. The room is equipped with authentic medical paraphilia such as drips, needles, vaginal and anal speculums of all sizes. There are bags of saline solution for the drips which is used for the inflation of breasts, labia and penises.

¹⁴ Fetish markets refer to specific sexual fantasies/preferences that people may be engaged in sexually; i.e., medical fetish, where being in a room with medical paraphernalia is a sexual turn-on.



Figure 3.6: Medical Room: Fetish Haven SA (Source: Fetishhavensa.co.za)

The bar and dance area are subtly lit to create an ambiance of sensuality and sexiness. The seats are strategically placed around the dance area to allow patrons to watch those dancing. It is not uncommon for patrons to engage in very sexually styled dancing while on the dance floor (Club Patron A, Personal Communication, 2020). There is a bed on the dance floor for couples who enjoy being watched while having sex with their play mates. Coloured lights may have an effect on feeling, emotions and moods. According to Dmlights (2013), red is known to boost the libido.

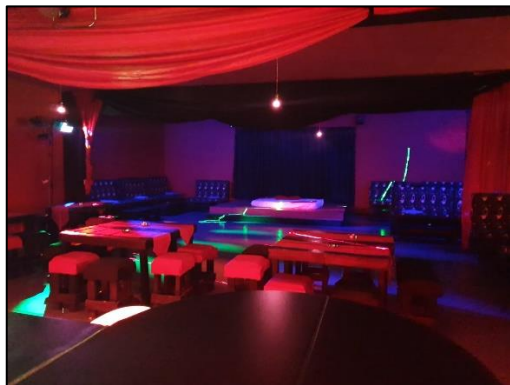


Figure 3.7:
Dance area: Fetish Haven SA
(Source: Fetishhavensa.co.za)



Figure 3.8:
Fantasy room: Fetish Haven SA
(Source: Fetishhavensa.co.za)

Each of the “playrooms” are individually decorated in a manner that is conducive to adding to the ambiance of the experience. The rooms are equipped to suit various fetishes and fantasies. The bedding is changed after every play session. Condoms and lubricant are

freely available in each room, along with wet wipes. Garbage bins are placed in the room for the disposal of used condoms, wrappers and wet wipes. Most of the beds in the rooms have restraints attached. These may be used for soft BDSM play (Club Patron A, Personal Communication, 2020).

In addition to the bar and private rooms, the dungeon has a variety of implements that are used for the purpose of punishment, restraining and invasive sexual play. The implements include a range of canes, floggers, paddles and ropes. These are used to restrain one of the players who may, among other things, have consented to some form of corporal punishment or restraining play. The invasive tools used to inflict pain or painful pleasure include various sized dildos, as well as steel cock-rings and anal/vaginal dilators specifically designed to stretch the pain barriers of the participants. There are candles of varying heat intensity, which are used to drip wax onto one or both of the players as part of the sex play. The implements and equipment are sterilised at the end of every play session (Club Patron A, Personal Communication, 2020).



Figure 3.9: BDSM ROOM: Fetish Haven SA (Source: Fetishhavensa.co.za)

Catering to a more elite and exclusive patronage of lifestylers is *House of Nexxxus*, located on a private estate in Glen Austin, Midrand. The club's motto is meant to make all feel welcome and comfortable in a non-pressurised, non-judgemental environment (Club Patron B, Personal Communication, 2020).



Figure 3.10: Club Nexxxus Logo (Source: Personal communication, 2020)

House of Nexxxus hosts the elite with all-inclusive lifestyle swinger cocktail events. Gourmet meals, top shelf beverages, entertainment and overnight accommodation in exclusive guest suites. The *House of Nexxxus* is elegantly decorated, giving it a cosy yet stylish feel. Hand-picked original works of art adorn the walls, comfy leather couches are dotted throughout and bespoke hardwood furniture makes up the rest (Personal Communication, 2020). There is a relaxed, sexy elegance from the entrance with indoor atriums and reception to the jacuzzi, through to the well-appointed bar, two lounges, dance area and smokers' lounge. Pure hot sexiness is the theme of their harem play area.

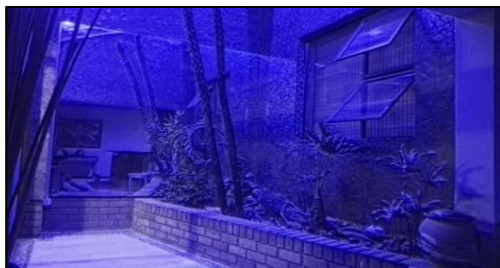


Figure 3.11: Club Nexxxus: Atrium

(Source: Personal communication, 2020)



Figure 3.12: Club Nexxxus: Jacuzzi

(Source: Personal communication, 2020)



Figure 3.13: Club Nexxxus: Harem (Source: Personal communication, 2020)

Part of *The House of Nexxxus* is *The Beach Pit Clubhouse*, which hosts a variety of events throughout the week. Saturdays are for swinger parties that go from day into night. Sundays are reserved for *Sunday Gay Days*, where they host *gay and bi-men only*. Wednesdays are open to all lifestylers, for daytime fun (i.e., daytime sexual interactions

at the club for those who cannot make the night-time activities) and *Meet-N-Greets* (i.e., where swingers meet other swingers and broaden their play groups and contacts). The *Nexxxus resort* includes an indoor heated pool and hot tub, outdoor pool and cascade pool. The play area comprises two peep show rooms, a glory hole and four private playrooms.¹⁵

3.5 THE REASONS FOR ENGAGING IN CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGRAMY

This subsection outlines the more commonly cited reasons for engaging in CNM. These include sexual excitement, meeting likeminded people with the intention of forging new friendships, learning new sexual techniques, exploring bisexuality, fulfilling fantasies, as well as for physical reasons such as erectile dysfunction.

One of the main reasons cited for engaging in the swinging lifestyle is for sexual excitement and pleasure they do not necessarily get from their marital partner (Benamati, 2016:1; Jenks, 1998:512). According to O' Byrne and Haines (2019:1–18), swingers start swinging in search of sexual variety without damaging their primary relationship or restricting their sexual opportunities. Studies have shown that swinging may in fact contribute to sexual excitement and potentially strengthen levels of marital satisfaction (Fernandes, 2009). This sexual excitement is described by Phillips (2009:84) as re-entering the dating process where you get to dress up and “get butterflies in your stomach,” yet have the security of going home with your marital partner. However, there are contradictory views on the actual influence of swinging on the marital relationships of a couple. Rubel and Bogaert (2015:974–975) specifically looked at psychological well-being and relationship quality correlates within consensual non-monogamous relationships. Their study indicates that there is no difference in marital satisfaction between swingers and monogamous couples, although CNM couples do display a higher psychological well-being in the domain of excitement. They attribute this finding to the conflicting findings between various studies: i.e., Bergstrand and Williams's (2000) work, which indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction, while Kurdel and Schmitt's (1986) study suggested lower levels of marital satisfaction among CNM couples. Findings from other studies seem to support the suggestion by Bergstrand and Williams (2000) that

¹⁵ Peep show rooms: viewing booth where patrons insert money, and a screen opens to display either a pornographic film or a display of live sex (Carlson, 2013).

Glory holes: a hole in a wall or other partition, often between public lavatory stalls or adult video arcade booths, for people to engage in sexual activity. In addition to the penis, fingers or tongue may also be inserted into the hole (Harrison, 2020).

Private playrooms: rooms that patrons of a club rent for the purpose of having sex within the confines of a private space.

swingers experience higher rates of marital satisfaction (Jenks, 1985; Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014). Reasons for this included increased sexual frequency and an increase in number of sexual partners (i.e., sexual variety) (Fleckenstein & Cox, 2015:94).

According to Jenks (1998:513), another popular reason for people to enter into the swingers' lifestyle is to meet people and make new friends. This reason is also listed on a swingers' help blog, i.e., Swinger's Help (2018) (Fernandes, 2008). The literature on people's basic social needs suggests that the satisfaction of belongingness (to a group of likeminded friends) allows for the person to begin forming pleasant interactions with others in their social circle (Taormina & Gao, 2013:158). Research consistently suggests that once the swingers enter a more intimate friendship with their swinging partners, the sexual side to the relationship in fact becomes less important (Adam, 2010:68; Peabody, 1982:428).

According to Biblarz and Biblarz (1980:139), people also engage in swinging as a means to learn new techniques from watching others and from their partners having coitus with other people. Heaney (2018:170–177) suggests that it also helps the individual to find out what 'turns them on' sexually. This includes engaging in new forms of 'kinky sex', previously unexplored BDSM and untraditional sex positions (Alexander, 2017). Kink is considered to be any sexual practice that is not conventional. It may include practices associated with BDSM, fantasy and role play (e.g., a dominatrix and her slave or a headmaster and a naughty student), fetishes (treating a non-sexual object or body part sexually, as in the case of a foot fetish), voyeurism (secretly watching people perform sexual acts), exhibitionism (openly displaying sexual acts for others to watch), as well as group sex (which includes threesomes and orgies) (Aswell, 2017). As a sexual expression, it encapsulates the polarities between bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, as well as sadism and masochism (Brink *et al.*, 2020).

According to Fernandes (2009:2) and Hatcher (2017:1), people are more open to discuss their fantasies and dreams and to act on them. Swinging offers the platform to explore fantasies and dreams in a safe environment. Fantasies and role play involve the creation of imagined scenarios (Aswell, 2017). According to Nell (2005:1), dreams are a means to release pent-up emotions as well as expressions of fear and desire. It is suggested that some people base their decisions and actions on their dreams. Gabrielle Kassel (2019), a New York-based sex and wellness writer, suggests that dreams pertaining to partner

swapping may be an indication that you are unconsciously considering CNM, such as swinging, and should therefore engage in honest discussions with your partner.

Another often-cited reason for entering into the swinging scene is the ability for women to explore bisexuality (McDonald, 2010:79). Female bisexuality is dichotomous in that it conflicts with the idealised versions of masculinity and femininity. It begs the question of how a woman can love a man and simultaneously be attracted to a woman, who is everything the man is not (Rodriguez Rust, 2000:206). It is suggested that swinging (CNM) allows women to explore the bisexual extension of their sexuality without the prejudice of bi-negativity (i.e., negatively stereotyping bisexuals) (Baumgartner, 2017:25). However, men are less likely to explore bisexuality, choosing instead to hold on to conventional gender roles (McDonald, 2010:79). According to Jabbour *et al.* (2020:18369), it has long been debated whether male bisexuality exists, with sceptics claiming that self-identified bisexual men are actually gay or heterosexual. His study in America to explore whether male bisexuality exists used the objective, genital responses of men to male and female erotic stimuli to investigate male bisexuality. It was concluded that male bisexuality could be articulated on a continuum rather than dichotomously. Jabbour *et al.* (2020:18369) attribute the men choosing conventional gender roles to their desire to de-emphasise homosexuality. Engaging in sex with women can be said to be a matter of social pressure that favours heterosexuality. As already discussed in this chapter, female bisexuality is less contested.

Sexual dysfunctions such as erectile dysfunction may also encourage participation in the swinging lifestyle (Smith, 2020) through exploration of other forms of intimacy. In the clinical setting, surrogate partner therapy is sometimes used (Ghose, 2018), where a surrogate becomes intimate with the client to help them bridge the sexual problems. Some therapists recommend CNM as a means to restore sexual satisfaction within the dyad, provided certain aspects such as jealousy have been negotiated and considered (Nichols, 2018). As an emotion, jealousy is associated with the actual or perceived loss of a valued relationship or an actual or threatened loss to self-esteem (Goldenberg *et al.*, 2003; Harris, 2003). Jealousy is a primary cause of marital discord and relationship failure (De Visser & McDonald, 2007:460). It is discussed in further detail below.

3.6 THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF SWINGING

Research has shown that cheating or infidelity is far more detrimental to the *stability of a relationship* than swinging (Cole & Spaniard, 1974:22). Research undertaken in America suggests that relationships characterised by infidelity show greater levels of marital instability, which includes dishonesty, trust issues and little quality time together (Atkins *et al.*, 2005:470). According to Knapp (1975:505), CNM may be a viable choice for certain spouses. It removes the secrecy and dishonesty that characterise infidelity, so that the couple can explore their fantasies together, without deceit or guilt, while retaining emotional monogamy between the marital partners (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000:1). The removal of secrecy suggests that the intimacy between the couples is being transformed. Not only is it no longer a set of social obligations, but it involves into a new democracy associated with intimacy (Chambers, 2012:35), where negotiation, egalitarianism and sexual freedom feature prominently.

As a result of the negotiation, the couple feels secure enough to allow each other the *freedom to explore sexual fantasies* with others while still maintaining emotional monogamy (Hatcher, 2014). Dreams and fantasies play an important role in the swingers' paradigm. This is made evident by various mainstream articles off swingers' websites, such as 'luxury swingers' and 'swingers' board', offering interpretations of sexual dreams (Luxury Swingers, 2014; Swingers Board, 2016), as well as the exploration of sexual fantasies. According to Lehmiller (2020:29a), the most common sexual fantasies include, among others, multi-partner sex in the form of threesomes and orgies, BDSM and swinging. Although listed as one of the seven most common sexual fantasies, homoeroticism (i.e., sexual desire for a person of the same sex) is the least-fantasised about. Women are cited as the most likely to fantasize about sex with another woman. Research undertaken by Wilt *et al.* (2018:12) on the attitudes and experiences of swinging couples, suggests that females enjoy threesomes with their partner and another woman more than with their partner and another man (Wilt *et al.*, 2018:12). This ties in with previous research undertaken by Fernandes (2009) on the swingers' paradigm in America, which suggests that two thirds of the women are or become bisexual when they start swinging.

Since the third century (A.D.), sexual dreams have carried the connotation of being temptations by the devil (Nell, 2005:86). Discussion or expression of such dreams was considered against social norms and subject to social sanctions. Although sexual

fantasies occur in the privacy of one's mind, they may manifest in *discourse* and behaviour (Busch, 2020:848–849). With the onset of a more democratic phase of family life, due to changes in ideas about love and commitment (Chambers, 2012:34), people are more open to discuss their fantasies and dreams and to act on them (Fernandes, 2009:2; Hatcher, 2017:1). According to Davidson and Hoffman (1986), this openness is useful for enhancing sexual satisfaction. *Sexual satisfaction* is an important aspect of marriage (Braden, 2014). It forms a major component in the quality of life, including mental and physical well-being (Anderson, 2013). This may be attributed to the enhanced communication between the couple, which promotes honesty and empathy. This reduces jealousy and promotes sexual satisfaction (Kimberly & Hans, 2017:797).

According to Stritof (2019), a lack of communication is cited as a risk factor for marital infidelity. *Communication* is vital for the partners to be fully present in the manner in which they conduct their marriage (Moors *et al.*, 2014:3). Swingers claim to experience increased constructive communication between partners, which results in feelings of warmth, closeness and love for their marital spouse (Bonello & Cross, 2010; Cole & Spaniard, 1974). This includes discussing their sexual fantasies and desires, as well as their communication pertaining to rules of engagement when meeting or engaging with a swingers' couple. This improved communication is perceived as a benefit of CNM (Moors *et al.*, 2014:3; Wilt *et al.*, 2018:12). Conversely, Mogilski *et al.* (2017:408) note that monogamous participants are less satisfied with the amount of communication and openness they have with their partner compared to CNM participants.

Research indicates that men express their love more physically than women, with sex becoming an important path to connection and intimacy. Rejection, in the form of a spouse declining to have sex often, can be internalised as a feeling of being “unloved”, which in turn renders men susceptible to extramarital affairs (Stritof, 2019). The swinging lifestyle allows sexual excitement and pleasure from an alternative partner that is not available from their marital spouse (Benamati, 2016:1; Jenks, 1998:512). *Sexual excitement* adds to marital satisfaction (Fernandes, 2009) and reduces the risk factor for extramarital affairs. The routine in daily life creates *boredom*. Boredom may cause a decrease in libido as a result of habituation (Frank & DeLamater, 2010). As indicated by research, swinging may curb boredom between the dyad (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2). According to Ehrenfeld (2012), swinging may add to the excitement and suspense in the marriage. Maharaj (2000), who explored suburban swingers, found that the responses

expressed how swinging helped couples to curb boredom in their relationships. A participant identified as Clyde stated the following in this regard:

If you are going to have sex with the same woman for 25 years, it's going to get boring – It's just the variety...so you need that extra spice. We go home (afterwards), and we have great sex for the next six weeks. It would seem that the variety of multiple partners lessens the boredom (quoted in Maharaj, 2000).

3.7 THE PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES OF SWINGING

There are also potential challenges that couples may experience when engaging in the practice of swinging. Firstly, *jealousy* may be a source for concern and is cited as a common emotion among swinger couples (Callahan, 2014; De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Mint, 2010:201). Secondly, swinging does not remedy a broken or troubled marriage (Your Tango, 2016). Thirdly, multiple and concurrent partners increase the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and STIs (Tibesigwa & Visser, 2015:301–315). Fourthly, cheating (i.e., in the context of this study referring to someone who engages in an emotional and/or sexual relationship without the consent of the primary spouse/partner) occurs as an abuse of power within the swinging paradigm (Samuels, 2010:213). Another risk is that of being exposed as swingers (Swinger's Help, 2018). Although these are not the only challenges, they are the most prominent. Each of these challenges are discussed in detail below.

Starting out in CNM may seem difficult, as it is mostly characterised by jealousy (Callahan, 2014). *Jealousy*, a common emotion among swinger couples and monogamous couples alike, requires very honest and earnest communication to create a couple's unity (De Visser & McDonald, 2007). However, in a recent study undertaken by Christina Wang (2016:1) on the effects of emotional jealousy in long-term couples practicing CNM, it was found that jealousy decreases as the length of the relationship increases. Jealousy is a constructed social phenomenon rather than a biological response. As a conceptual relationship, it enables mechanisms of power, typically in relation to the feelings of one person towards their partner's interaction with a third person who is perceived as a romantic rival (Mint, 2010:201).

Swinging is not a remedy for a *troubled marriage*. It may highlight the *problems* rather than completely solve them (Your Tango, 2016). In certain instances, such as where trust issues and personal insecurities trouble the couple (Swinger's Help, 2018), it may result

in the disintegration of the marriage. This is because relationship boundaries can be pushed or broken and result in disharmony, despite the rules that are negotiated between the primary couple to protect the dyad and maintain emotional monogamy (Marriage Helper, 2019). Multiple and concurrent partners increase the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and STIs (Tibesigwa & Visser, 2015:301–315). Furthermore, oral sex does not offer any protection, as the mouth is in direct contact with the genitals. According to Guo *et al.* (2004:77), mouth lesions can spread diseases such as herpes and syphilis during oral sex, either cunnilingus (female) and fellatio (male). Fleckenstein and CoxII (2015) suggest that swingers are more likely to test positive for HIV and STIs than monogamous couples, because they actively fear contracting STIs within the lifestyle (Biblarz & Biblarz, 1980; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:470). However, research undertaken in America suggests that CNM patients report challenges with addressing their healthcare needs. This may be due a lack of provider knowledge, inadequate preventative screenings and stigmatising behaviours (Vaughan *et al.*, 2019).

Regardless of how they are constructed, all relationships involve power issues and also carry the potential for the *abuse of power*. Cheating is one such power abuse within the swinging paradigm (Samuels, 2010:213). Even if sex is not a factor, communication with another party that takes place on an emotional level without the consent of both partners may be construed as cheating (Sheff, 2016). Even though swingers emphasise sexual variety with multiple partners (Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961), emotional and physical intimacy with the secondary partner may be perceived as a threat to the wellbeing of the marital relationship (Sheff, 2016). According to De Visser and McDonald (2007:457), this may be attributed as a response to a romantic partner's imagined infidelity. Furthermore, it may not be uncommon for one partner to prefer a swinging couple, while the other remains indifferent or uninterested. This may lead to what is known as "taking one for the team". This leads to conflict that may also lead to the couple being excluded from future events and parties (Harviainen & Frank, 2016:13).

Swingers also *fear exposure* to the broader public (Swinger's Help, 2018). Confidentiality and secrecy between swinging partners and couples is vital. Although swinging is not illegal, it is not necessarily socially sanctioned (Conley *et al.*, 2017:206–207). Therefore, swingers keep their participation in the lifestyle private and confidential (Adultland, s.a.)

to avoid potentially negative social repercussions. Indiscretion may negatively affect the economic and personal lives of the parties involved.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Swinging is one of the many ways in which some married couples choose to experience the act of sex. Within the swingers' paradigm, the act of sex is expanded to include sex with individuals who are not spouses or primary partners. However, this is not seen as cheating or infidelity. The defining factor distinguishing swinging from infidelity is the consent between the spouses with regard to the sexual encounters. Not only do CNM couples discuss, negotiate and agree on terms of engagement, they also negotiate with whom to engage. This level of negotiation and communication between the spouses is what differentiates swinging from cheating. In the ideal scenario where there are no complications or mitigating factors present in the CNM encounter, neither spouse will feel hurt or cheated on, as is prevalent in cases where one spouse is not aware of and has not given permission for their partner to engage sexually with a third party.

Various reasons are cited in the available literature for why people choose to enter a CNM lifestyle. Among these reasons, the most notable is the pursuit of sexual excitement without damaging the primary relationship's sexual excitement, together with an experience of potentially higher psychological well-being in the domain of excitement. Sexual excitement is not the only reason for seeking out CNM. In some instances, medical reasons have also been cited as catalysts for entry into CNM, specifically the onset of erectile dysfunction. Literature suggests that some couples enter CNM as a means to satisfy the sexual needs of the wife, when the man is physically not able to do that.

Despite swinging being perceived as a consensual and mutually enjoyable arrangement between the dyad, it is nonetheless characterised by challenges that start at the idea of entertaining CNM all the way through to the lifestyle of being a swinger. Challenges present themselves in various intersections of the swingers' trajectory. From setting rules prior to commencing the lifestyle, to being malleable enough to shift boundaries as the couple grows and experiences new elements of the swingers' lifestyle.

Swinging furthermore presents a platform on which a person can live and act out their true sexual nature and explore their sexual fantasies without guilt and shame. The ethos

of open and honest discussions within the sexual realm lends itself to the perception that the dyad is closer and communicating on a far deeper level than perhaps the average monogamous couple. The next chapter details the methodology of the present study.

CHAPTER 4:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

A study exploring the influence of CNM on the marital satisfaction of South African couples necessitates adherence to specific meta-theoretical, design and methodological principles. Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology used in this study.

Firstly, the meta-theoretical approach applied to this study is discussed. Secondly, I engage with the research methodology; including a discussion of the nature of qualitative research, the sampling procedures, data collection methods, and the data analysis process and how it applies to the present study. To conclude, I provide a discussion of trustworthiness and the relevant ethical principles.

4.2 META-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to offer a meaningful interpretation of social science research, one has to have clarity on the decisions that may affect the research outcomes (Moon & Blackman, 2017). These decisions are based on the theoretical and meta-theoretical frameworks used in the research, which are discussed next.

4.2.1 *Postmodernism and social constructionism*

The current study seeks to understand how CNM affects marriage. Different individuals experience sexual arousal and pleasure differently (Benson, 2003:50), meaning that reality is an experience constructed within and between individuals (Moon & Blackman, 2017) at every interaction. Therefore, there cannot be a single objective truth with which one can fashion absolute knowledge of any phenomenon. It stands to reason that the most applicable meta-theoretical framework with which to engage this study is postmodernism and social constructionism.

To understand what postmodernism is, one needs to understand what modernism is. Postmodernism is not a systematic school of thought with an intellectual framework and educational implications that are precisely defined. Rather it is a movement that constantly changes form (Forghani *et al.*, 2015:98). A good example relevant to sexual studies is the manner in which Kinsey researched male sexualities. Kinsey started off

using a modernist, scientific approach, which sought to describe, classify and explain masculine sexualities. However, his taxonomical approach ironically became the basis for criticism of conventional assumptions of sex and sexuality (Pryce, 2006:67). It became apparent that the construction of social and sexual diversity within human sexual behaviour was infinite. Not only that, but it is also embedded in the daily social interactions of people, which gives rise to a multitude of sexual secrets and anxieties – the very material that sexual fetishes are made of (Pryce, 2006:67), such as the secrets that swingers hold about their CNM lifestyle.

Unlike modernism, which emphasises realities and the discovery of realities, postmodernism rejects absolute values, instead emphasising the subjective nature of what reality may be (Forghani *et al.*, 2015:98). Reality is therefore socially constructed (social constructionism) by the social actors (swingers), based on the symbolic level where they seek to understand the meanings of each other's actions (how they understand the experience of CNM) (Mead, 1934:xvii). These also change as society and social constructs change (Vinney, 2019). Knowledge of CNM, for instance, is therefore deemed to be socially constructed as a result of human relationships (the many forms of CNM relationships), framed by the rules of language (safe words and words indicating that an engagement is sought) and how this shapes our understanding the world (how CNM influences marriages) (Vinney, 2019).

Ontology (the study of being) is concerned with the form and nature of reality. It asks the question: "What is known about the research subject?" (Holt & Goulding, 2017:287–288). A fundamental aspect of ontology is a person's worldview (Creswell, 2014). Not only does a person's worldview incorporate assumptions and accepted facts about a subject, but it also makes up the ontological philosophy of reality (Dosi, 1982), which is transposed onto methodological decisions (Holt & Goulding, 2017:288).

In the context of the social sciences, there is a common distinction between an objectivist and social constructivist ontology. The former refers to an acceptance of the existence of a single reality that can be studied, experienced and understood as a truth (Moon & Blackman, 2017). Conversely, the latter refers to a construction of realities arising from social practices (e.g., CNM) and institutions (e.g., the institution of marriage) (Griffith, 2018:394). This social construct is both derived from and dependent on certain social factors for its existence, i.e., history and biography, and agency and structure. For example, individuals define their romantic relationships within the symbolic meaning of

socially constructed institutions such as marriage. Therefore, an idealised version of heterosexual monogamy may define CNM as infidelity, whereas a more interpretivist view of romantic relationships would challenge such singular constructions.

An individual's experience of the world is constructed within a context of interrelated elements of meaningful objects and relations, such as the constructed experience of a swinger with their swinging partner during a play session. These constructed symbols are thought to be real and may have significant ramifications for one's lived experience, in terms of the experience being pleasurable or considered a transgression of certain rules between the dyad. Therefore, the experience is real to the person 'doing' and 'living' the experience. Within that context, the applicable ontological approach for this study is social constructionism. This approach was selected because its central principles emphasise the importance of understanding participants' subjective lived experiences, which if not taken into account, would essentially exclude the socially constructed meaning structures perceived and experienced by swingers as relevant to this study (Blumer, 1969:93; Creswell, 2014:37-38; Sarantakos, 2013:37-38).

One of the defining philosophical and scientific issues that challenge the study of sexuality is identifying the boundary between what is biological and what is social (Escoffier, 2020:35). As evidence presents itself over time, so does the understanding of what is considered knowledge change (Escoffier, 2020:35).

Within the historical context of research on sexuality, the boundary between biological and social is seen as both empirical and epistemological (Escoffier, 2020:35). Therefore, for the present study, I adopted an interpretivist epistemological stance. Its proponents favour an in-depth contextualisation of the subjectively constructed life worlds of the participants through their interactions with others and their social context (Blumer, 1969:93; Ultanir, 2012:195). Knowledge is, as such, considered subjective, unique and proactively constructed by individuals (Scotland, 2012:10), as is evident in the manner that swingers 'live' the construction and experience their unique reality of their social world.

The interpretivist approach aims to derive meaning from value-laden, socially constructed perspectives, such as those offered by the participants. These views are informed by the process of interpretation and interaction between the researcher (asking the questions and seeking clarification on what the participant says) and the participant (based on their

experience within the lifestyle) (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2019:95). The interpretive phenomenological approach asserts that we do not live in a singular social reality. Instead, we live in a multiple socially constructed view of social reality (Babones, 2016; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2015). Within the 'swingers' paradigm, the construction of the symbolic meaning of CNM through the subjective interpretations based on the life-worlds of the participants (Martignani, 2016:523; Sarantakos, 2013:29; Tracey, 2013:48) in South Africa would have relevance.

According to Gann (2017:31), Max Weber referred to this understanding as '*Verstehen*', and described it as a paradox where "in order to understand one another, we must acknowledge that we will never fully understand one another". This can be explained as seeing the world through the eyes of the participant, thereby striving towards an empathic understanding of *their* views (Tracy, 2013:41). That is why not everyone engages in consensual non-monogamous relationships, nor do they fully understand what it means to those who do engage in it. Creswell (2014) also refers to historical and cultural norms, operational in the individual's life, which shape the meanings that the individual forms as they engage with the world (Creswell, 2014:37-38).

4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, I discuss various methodological components of this study. I focus on five main components, namely the literature review, qualitative methodology, sampling procedures, data collection and data analysis.

4.3.1 Data collection

Interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research. For the purpose of this study, I opted to collect data by means of semi-structured, in-person and telephonic interviews. This is deemed to be a highly applicable data gathering method used to investigate the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of the individuals who partake in the research (Tracy, 2013:132). Once the participants were selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined previously, the interviews were scheduled and subsequently conducted at a mutually convenient time.

4.3.1.1 *Semi-structured interviews*

When compared to other interview formats, semi-structured interviews establish a unique balance between the formal structured interview, in which specific pre-determined questions are asked as part of the interview schedule, and the more open manner of interviewing that is found in unstructured interviews, where the questions are formulated and re-formulated based on the answers given by the participants (Sarantakos, 2013:278). Semi-structured interviews consist of a series of flexible, open-ended questions that allow the researcher to gain a potentially deeper insight into the meanings participants ascribe to the research topic (Newton, 2010), such as the meaning ascribed to the various facets of the CNM lifestyle. This allows the researcher to identify and delve into unforeseen issues (Adams, 2015:493) that arise during the course of the interview from the answers the participants give. Underscoring the relevance of this method of data collection in the context of the present study, Kaplan (2019:i) used semi-structured interviews as a means to gain knowledge about the particular experiences of persons engaged in CNM and commented on the usefulness of this method. It allowed the examination of unique experiences of heterosexual couples who engaged in CNM. Semi-structured interviews were also used in a study by Doolin (2014:6), who suggested that when seeking to understand the participants' reasons in matters such as why they got married and what their marital challenges and their beliefs associated with sexual satisfaction are, the use of semi-structured interviews best facilitated the exploration of these individual experiences.

The semi-structured interviews for this study were conducted in a conversational manner. Although the majority of the interviews (i.e., 14) were done telephonically, there were participants who were not comfortable not knowing who they were speaking to and opted for a face-to-face in-person interview instead. These interviews were conducted within the COVID-19 lockdown regulation prescriptions (i.e., wearing three-ply facial masks, observing at least 1.5 metres social distancing, and regular hand-sanitising) at the participants' clubs of choice. All face-to-face interviews were done in a private room at the relevant club with the consent of the club owners.

As with most interview structures, semi-structured interviews come with their own set of advantages and challenges. Notably, one of the advantages is the ability to obtain data that may not necessarily be part of the originally planned questions. This is due to the freedom to ask follow-up questions based on the participants' previous responses, which

enables the researcher to more fully explore various ideas raised by the participants. Furthermore, the researcher can ask probing questions on topics that the participants may not necessarily answer candidly in other situations. This allows the researcher to gain insight into difficult aspects of the topic under discussion, such as how often they may engage in swingers' activities. In this regard, Morrissey (2008:55) argues that "asking questions of a community which faces stigma for its activities and interests involves a great deal of trust on the part of that community". I therefore sought to establish a rapport with participants by showing genuine interest in their stories and by remaining actively involved in the interview without expressing any personal judgements or opinions.

One of the prominent disadvantages associated with semi-structured interviews is that potential participants may be deterred in cases where the interview topic is a sensitive one, as is the case with CNM. Swinging is considered by many to be a controversial lifestyle, and in some instances, it is shunned socially. For this reason, some questions may make the participants uncomfortable due to the probing and intimate nature of the questions. This was addressed by having a flexible set of questions, which enabled the researcher to focus on topics the participant was willing to talk about within the confines of the overall research topic.

An interview guide comprised of a list of mostly open-ended questions which covered the various topics deemed relevant to the study (Sarantakos, 2013:278) was created before the interviews commenced. The questions addressed topics such as the demography of the participant, benefits and challenges experienced by the participant in terms of their CNM lifestyle, as well as how the participant 'does' swinging (refer to Addendum B for the complete interview schedule). The guide was used as a starting point for all the interviews. However, based on the answers provided, the content and sequence of questions were adjusted to accommodate new perspectives that arose during the interviews.

4.3.2 The literature review

An appropriate definition for a literature review (Machi & McEvoy, 2009:4) may be stated as follows:

A literature review is a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge

about a topic of study. This case establishes a convincing thesis to answer the study's question.

By formulating and in-depth analysis of a subject, a critical appraisal of the current collective knowledge on a subject is assembled. This collection of knowledge becomes an informative, personal yet unbiased synopsis of the information already available on the topic (Winchester & Salji, 2016:308). In the present study, a review of the available literature is therefore essential, including grey literature on CNM, in particular with regard to major cultural, religious, scientific and sociological discourses, theories, and practices related to sexual behaviour.

According to Kim (2018), a well-researched literature review is essential to avoid incidental plagiarism, especially at a master's and PhD level. By conducting a thorough investigation of available literature on the topic concerned, researchers avoid the possibility of presenting research that is very similar to that of another researcher. Furthermore, it also justifies how the current research fits in with the existing body of knowledge (Wanjohi, 2012:1), which sharpens the research focus (Kim, 2018).

The literature reviewed was gathered using internet databases such as JSTOR, EBSCO Host, Google Scholar and Sabinet, and included peer-reviewed scholarly articles, theses, dissertations, books and grey literature. The inclusion of grey literature was deemed important due to the dissemination, insights and knowledge shared in the articles, mostly written by members of a specific community (such as writings of swinging experiences written on swinger's sites by swingers) (Garousi & Rainer, 2021). Keywords applicable to the search included various permutations of CNM, sexual well-being, swingers and partner swapping.

4.3.3 Qualitative methodology

The nature of qualitative research is exploratory. Rather than creating lists of numeric data, it is applied to explore information obtained from both individuals and groups based on their experiences (ACAPS, 2012). The current study sought to explore CNM among South Africans as an attempt to better understand their sexual practices and beliefs. Opting to use the qualitative research methodology was therefore aimed at understanding the “*why*” and “*how*” of social phenomena that inform the lives of swingers, i.e., their choice to engage in CNM and its implications for their lives.

One of the central assumptions of qualitative research is its emphasis on contextual and naturalistic inquiry (Creswell, 2014:295; Sarantakos, 2013:45; Tracy, 2013:4). It provides the researcher with an insider's perspective of interpersonal life worlds and relationships through the use of, among other research techniques, interviews and/or participant observation. The use of the former for the present study allowed the researcher to explore aspects such as why people engage in relationships in the manner that they do, and how their interactions emerge and change over time (Real *et al.*, 2009).

Exploratory qualitative research is subject-centred, allowing the researcher the opportunity to hear first-hand what a particular culture or subculture actually does, as opposed to what it is perceived to do – such as what really takes place in the lived experience of swingers in South Africa (cf. Sarantakos, 2013:45; Tracy, 2013:5). Qualitative data can therefore be used as a means to understand a social phenomenon in an emic way. Exploratory research is primarily used when relatively little is known about a topic or population being studied (Creswell, 2014:89; Tracy, 2013:81). Since relatively little is known about the effect of CNM on a marriage (particularly in the South African context), this study sought to investigate the benefits and challenges of CNM and its impact on marital well-being (Fernandes, 2009; Moors *et al.*, 2017; Peabody, 1982:428). Over the last two decades, after a transition to democracy, South Africa has undergone extensive changes in the social and cultural landscape, with many changes to social norms and values (Posel, 2011). The extent of the influence these changes have had in relation to swinging and the post-apartheid coupledness is unknown. Therefore, this study is classified as being exploratory in nature. By listening to the participants' accounts, I built an understanding of the topic or population being studied.

4.3.4 Sampling procedures

Fundamental to qualitative sampling is the principle of appropriateness, which requires non-probability sampling and the use of purposive sampling. This implies that the participant chosen to inform the researcher on the topic must have knowledge of the topic and effective communication skills to convey this knowledge to the researcher (Creswell, 2014:239; Sarantakos, 2013:178; Tracy, 2013:134). For this reason, I elected to use participants who are self-identified active swingers in South Africa. This sample aided the researcher in exploring the study's research objectives, insofar as the knowledge of the participants spoke to the topic under investigation. Therefore, purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used. Both techniques/methods are described below.

4.3.4.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling entails the deliberate choice of the researcher to recruit and involve a particular participant due to the qualities the person possesses (Sarantakos, 2013:177-178; Tangco, 2007:147). The main criterion of this procedure is involving persons who have the necessary knowledge and experience associated with the topic under investigation. It is considered vital that one also acknowledges the availability of the participant and their willingness to participate, especially when the topic is of a sensitive nature. Therefore, the researcher used an established South African swingers' club as initial point of entry (see Addendum C).

Similar studies conducted in America and Swaziland used purposive sampling (Power, 2002; Ruark & Fielding-Miller, 2016). These scholars commented on its benefits as enabling the researcher to describe complex social phenomena. This was attributed to the rich contextual data derived from the subjective experiences of the social actors (i.e., their participants). However, one of the limitations noted was the interviewer's influence on the participants in terms of social context and demography. This was deemed to have a bearing on the subsequent accuracy of the information given. For instance, in a very sexually conservative setting, it would be unlikely that a participant would describe or relay accounts of their true sexual behaviours to an older interviewer who may be perceived as being conservative themselves. Some scholars have suggested that the influence of the interviewer could lead to a misrepresentation of the truth in order to find favour with the interviewer. In order to address this concern, I met with the club owners first. That set the tone for them to ensure their patrons that I was not there to judge, but rather to hear and record their version of their experiences as swingers.

A benefit of purposive sampling is that it is conducive to the identification and selection of participants or groups of participants who are knowledgeable and experienced with the particular phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Tangco, 2007:147). For the purpose of this study, participants who were active swingers in South Africa were selected.

Purposive sampling requires detailed and clear inclusion and exclusion criteria (Tangco, 2007:147) to ensure that the data collected will be relevant and applicable to the study.

The following sampling criteria were applied:

The inclusion criteria:

- Participants had to be self-identified active swingers residing in South Africa.
- The participants had to have been swingers for at least one year or longer.
- Participants had to be older than 18 years.
- The participants had to be part of a couple (married or otherwise cohabiting) or single (i.e., not part of a couple) that engaged exclusively with other couples for the purpose of 'swinging' experiences.
- The participation in 'swinging' had to be consensual.
- Participants could be of any race, sexual orientation and/or religious affiliation.

The exclusion criteria:

- Participants could not be practicing sex workers – they could not be receiving money to partake in sexual activities within the swingers' community. The participation had to be for sexual pleasure and not a business transaction.

4.3.4.2 Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is a method used in qualitative research to recruit participants where the target population may be difficult to identify (Griffith *et al.*, 2016:773). According to Rumens (2011:163), there are some sexual and gender minorities who may be characterised as 'hidden' or 'hard to find' because they are fearful of being identified/stigmatised by others. Due to the sensitivity and secretive nature of the subject matter, I initially experienced difficulty to recruit participants, which prompted the use of snowball sampling. This method entails that the researcher asks those participants who have already consented to participate to recommend other people who meet the criteria and who may be willing to participate in the study to contact the researcher (Sarantakos, 2013:179). In order to safeguard the identity of the participants and to ensure that their participation was entirely voluntary, the researcher did not request the names or contact information of any potential participants. I rather requested existing participants to provide potential participants with the researchers' contact details. Individuals who were interested in participating in the study could initiate contact with the researcher. It was, therefore, beneficial for the researcher to work with a few willing participants, build rapport

with them and request their recommendation to other persons in the swinging community. As such, those persons who had already participated in the study were asked to approach other persons they know who would potentially be willing to participate in the study. The researcher was able to recruit five participants from referrals.

4.3.4.3 Recruitment

I engaged with the managers of two popular swingers' clubs in Gauteng via email. In the email I attached a detailed letter about the nature of the study and requested permission to recruit club members through their website (see Addendum C). In a letter dated 20 January 2020, one of the club owners responded and he consented. He assisted with recruitment by posting information about the study. This was done by uploading the invitation on their social network platforms and websites. Particular preconditions stated by the club owner included that he would notify his patrons of the study, and only once they indicated their willingness to partake, would he forward the invitation and informed consent. As the clubs approached were specifically swingers' clubs, the study content was not problematic. The one major concern was the willingness of the club patrons to participate in the study. It is not uncommon for club owners to network, so the invitation reached more than one club (i.e., three club managers assisted with the recruitment). Members on their websites (i.e., swinger couples who engage in consensual non-monogamous relationships), perused the information and contacted the researcher to indicate their willingness to participate.

Potential participants responded to the recruitment material posted online. The researcher screened each potential participant who replied on the invitations, and based on their answers to the screening criteria, ensured that they met the inclusion criteria and did not fall outside of the boundaries set by the exclusion criteria. The participants who met the criteria were contacted via email by the researcher informing them of their selection and requesting that they sign informed consent statement forms. The forms were emailed for their perusal and consideration. Once the consent forms had been signed and received by the researcher, the researcher contacted the participants and arranged a suitable time and date for the telephonic interview to take place. The ethics guidelines that were followed with regard to the recruitment of the sample group are described later. I conducted 28 semi-structured telephonic interviews.

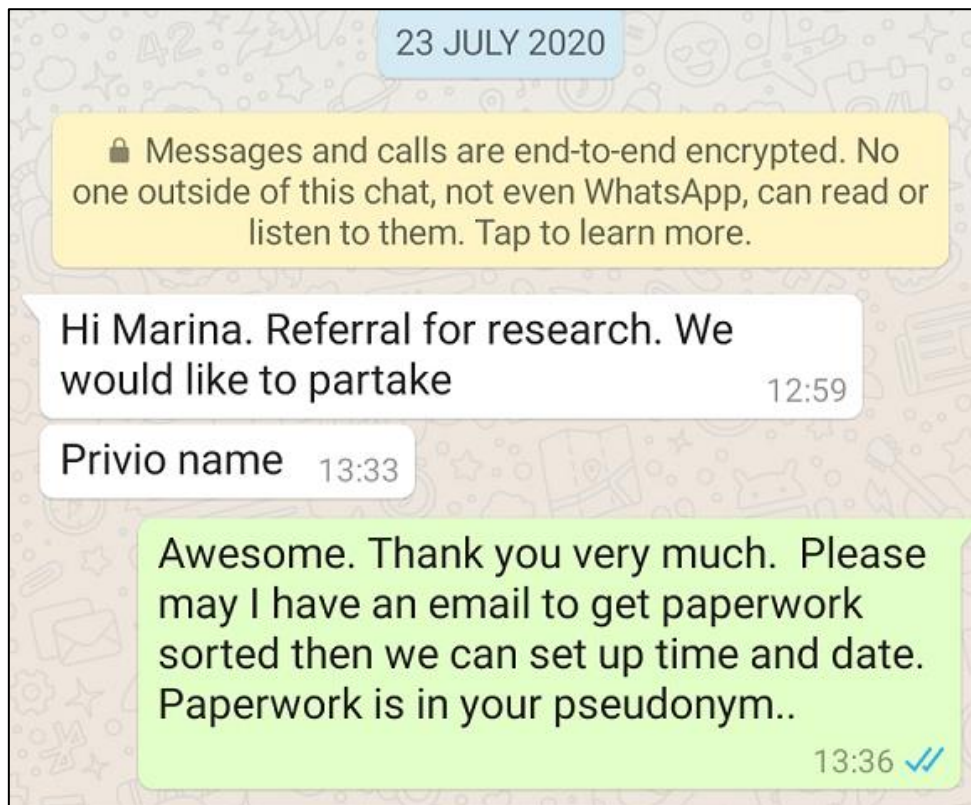


Figure 4.1: Example of use of WhatsApp message for recruitment

4.3.4.4 *The final participant characteristics*

The table below indicates the final participant profile.

Table 4.1: Biographical information of participants

Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Religion	Sexual orientation	Marital status	Years in lifestyle	Times married	Age
1	Female	Coloured	Christian-Spiritual	Heterosexual	Never	26	0	49
2	Male	White	Omnism	Heterosexual	Divorced	10	1	53
3	Male	Coloured	Christian	Bisexual	Divorced	20	1	49
4	Male	Coloured	Christian	Heterosexual	Never	10	0	35
5	Female	Coloured	Christian	Bisexual	Divorced	10	1	35
6	Male	White	Not applicable	Heterosexual	Divorced	10	1	46
7	Female	White	Wiccan	Bisexual	Divorced	20	1	50
8	Female	Indian	Muslim	Bisexual	Married	3	2	37
9	Participant died of COVID-19 in January 2021. Contribution withdrawn by spouse.							
10	Male	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	8	2	56
11	Female	White	Christian	Bisexual	Married	8	2	56
12	Male	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	4	2	52
13	Female	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Divorced	5	1	50
14	Male	White	Atheist	Bisexual/ Homosexual	Never	22	0	62
15	Male	White	Not applicable	Heterosexual	Married	18	1	54
16	Female	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	5	2	45
17	Male	White	Not applicable	Heterosexual	Married	5	1	58
18	Female	White	Not applicable	Heterosexual	Married	5	1	55
19	Female	White	Not applicable	Bisexual	Married	18	1	52
20	Male	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	9	1	50
21	Male	White	Agnostic	Agnostic	Never	18	0	42
22	Female	White	Spiritual	Heterosexual	Married	9	1	51
23	Male	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	4	1	55
24	Female	White	Christian	Heterosexual	Married	1	1	39
25	Male	White	Atheist	Heterosexual	Divorced	52	2	71
26	Female	White	Omnism	Heterosexual	Married	18	1	47
27	Male	White	Agnostic	Heterosexual	Divorced	5	1	58
28	Female	White	Agnostic	Heterosexual	Divorced	5	1	56

In order to ensure confidentiality, each of the participants was assigned a number. As evident from the above table, the youngest participant was 35 years old, and the oldest participant was 71 years old at the time of their interviews. The average age was 50 years old. Of the participants, 23 self-identified as white, four as Coloured¹⁶ and one as Indian. There were three participants who have never been married, 11 who were divorced and 14 who were married at the time of the study. Pertaining to gender identification, 15 self-identified as male and 13 as female, and 20 categorised themselves as heterosexual, two as gay and six as bisexual. Of further interest was the fact that, on average, participants had been involved in the swinging lifestyle for 11.7 years. The longest period reported during this interview was 52 years and the shortest period one year. A total of 11 participants self-identified as Christian, which made up the largest portion of participants. The second largest religious identification category was listed as 'not categorised', which had a total of five participants. The remainder of the participants self-identified as either spiritual (three participants), omnist (two participants), atheist (two participants), Muslim (one participant) and agnostic (three participants).

4.3.4.5 Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face interviews are different from telephonic interviews in that they encourage rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee, allowing for a more natural encounter, which also supports the generation of rich qualitative data (Farooq & De Villiers. 2017:292; Irvine *et al.*, 2012:88). Some of the participants were not comfortable with telephonic interviews and requested face-to-face interviews so that they could see who they were talking to. An advantage of face-to-face interviews is the that it allows for the researcher to observe non-verbal cues such as body language, which enables the interviewer to prompt for clarification or to rephrase the question. This helps to minimise data distortion (Irvine *et al.*, 2012:88; McIntosh & Morse, 2015:7). In the instances where face-to-face interviews were conducted, the interviewer had the opportunity to request clarification from participants when required. An example is cited below:

Interviewer: Do you swing as a single or part of a couple?

¹⁶ These participants self-identified as "coloured". Under Apartheid, the term denoted mixed-race people that did not categorise as either "white" or "black". Today, the use of the term remains contentious. This notwithstanding, some "multiracial" South Africans continue to use the concept as means to reclaim is previous derogatory meaning (Erasmus, 2012).

Participant 22: Both. We are both playing separately.

Interviewer: Please explain.

Participant 22: It is very difficult to get a couple where all four have a connection. “Taking one for the team” is not acceptable to either of us. If we do play in a group – it is fun.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a safe and secure pre-agreed setting and time between the researcher and the interviewee. Ensuring that the participants were comfortable provided a conducive context to motivate them to freely share their stories (Sarantakos, 2013:286; McIntosh & Morse, 2015:7). This allowed the interviewee to relay information as openly and comprehensively as possible, which yielded rich and valuable data for the research. Most of the participants and club owners who fell into this category (of preferring face-to-face interviews) requested that the researcher interview them at their respective clubs. In order to accommodate any preference of the participants (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017:294), I availed myself to conduct interviews with the participants at the swingers’ club to which they belong.

All participants were asked permission to record the interview prior to commencement of the interview (Sarantakos, 2013:287). None of the participants denied permission to record the interviews. Access to the club was granted by the club owners who responded to the initial invitation. Both club owners granted permission that their pseudonyms and club names/address may be published.

4.3.4.6 *Telephonic interviews*

Although it could be argued that the telephone affects the ability of the interviewer to build a rapport with the interviewee, findings of empirical studies conclude that both face-to-face and telephonic interviews provide data of comparable quality and quantity (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017:293). During the telephonic interviews, the researcher established a solid rapport with the participants with the use of humour and genuine non-biased or judgemental interest in the candid discussions pertaining to their sexual habits and lifestyles. An illustration of establishing a rapport is detailed below:

Researcher: So, you like them to be lions and not pussy cats – they need to bite (laughing).

Participant 27: Yes – of course if the bite gets too much then there is a slap – but ja (laughing) – so as the moment heats up and there is scratching and biting – now that is a huge turn on.

Participant 27: It is like doing the taboo – like what the fuck are you doing?

Researcher: [Laughs].

Telephonic interviews allowed for the participants to choose the time, date and place where the interview took place, and therefore potentially limited the prospect of inconvenience on the part of the participant (Tracy, 2013:245). It allowed the participant to be in a place where they felt comfortable and safe enough to freely discuss the topic (Ashton, 2014:28) without any interruptions or possible exposure of their participation in the “swinger’s lifestyle”. Telephonic interviews also allowed the researcher access to participants who were not in the same province and who were willing to partake in this study. Below is an example of correspondence between **Participant 20** and the researcher setting a time and date for an interview that was most convenient to the participant while he was abroad.

“I may disrupt your routine, but the best way to contact me is on what’s-app, video voice, I personally prefer video; It just feels more personal, if you don’t mind – at around 19:30 SA time – seen as I am still at work until 17:00 our time. Any day, just as long as you confirm beforehand.”

Although swinging is not illegal, it is not socially sanctioned. Therefore, swingers keep their participation in the lifestyle private and confidential (Adultland, s.a) to avoid potentially negative social repercussions. Based on the filter criteria available on swingers’ sites, such as Swingers Heaven (2020), swingers are to be found in all nine provinces of South Africa, maintain employment in all sectors of the economy, and work different and diverse hours. Therefore, telephonic semi-structured interviews were deemed most cost-effective and most suitable to address the challenges associated with interviewing participants with diverse demographic and geographic characteristics.

Telephonic semi-structured interviews are dependent on the effective communication skills of the researcher. A limitation to this type of interview is the need for the interviewer to clearly structure and articulate questions in a way that the participant can understand and respond to (Keller & Conradin, 2019). In those instances where the participant

seemed to hesitate, strategically placed probes, pauses and prompts made it easier for the participant to respond. Below is an example of how the researcher used a probe to fully understand what the participant was alluding to.

Participant: In my situation – a lot of people don’t realise – the longer you are in the lifestyle the more you get to see. I think I might be going a little further into the swinging thing and that is how I landed up into a polyamorous relationship. He was single and I was single and the other lady in the poly relationship was married. I can tell you – even though I am not bisexual – I am bi-curious – I am not bi-curious anymore. I realized I am definitely not bisexual. I did fall in love with this woman. Not sexually. Because she was able to give this man something that I was not able to bring to the table.

Researcher: What was that?

Participant: She managed to calm him down.

Researcher: So, it is not sexual – it is on an emotional/mental level?

Participant: “Yes – so I was so in awe of her – I actually had feelings and emotions for her. I actually saw it as a threesome – we each had our role in the relationship in a positive way of building the relationship.

Additional extrapolation and exploration of participants’ responses were often required in the present study. In such cases the researcher asked questions that asked of the participant to express their feelings in more detail. It is not uncommon for variations or contradictions to be part of what the participant says. In such cases, appropriate probes were initiated where these contradictions or ambiguities were addressed and clarification sought (Kennedy, 2006). Probes can take the form of clarifying questions where the researcher seeks more detail in relation to what the participant is saying. For instance, such questions may contain phrases such as: “what do you mean by...?” The probes may also explore a theme the participant alluded to or discussed during the interview, where the researcher could ask questions such as “tell me more about that” (Kennedy, 2006). Below is an excerpt of the interview between **Participant 6** and the researcher, indicating

how probes were used to elicit more information on how the participant felt about a specific incident.

Researcher: Have you ever come across a situation where there wasn't respect?

Participant 6: I actually have yes.

Researcher: Would you care to tell me about it?

Participant 6: Uhm, what I did find strange once, I was at a club. This guy wanted numerous men to please his wife. And he wanted to see them all come on her and things like that. And there was not one guy, but eight or nine. I just found that very disrespectful.

All interviews were audio-recorded, with the informed, voluntary, and specific consent of the participants, for transcription and reference purposes. Permission was obtained from each participant beforehand to ensure that they did not object to being recorded (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

4.3.5 Data analysis

Once the data collection was concluded and the interviews had been transcribed, thematic analysis was conducted to identify specific themes pertaining to the research questions underlying the study. Braun *et al.* (2016:191-205) maintain that thematic analysis is more flexible than, for instance grounded theory, and as such allows for the identification of patterns and interpretation of data without tying it to a specific epistemology. This flexibility allowed the researcher to engage with the data on various levels.

4.3.5.1 Qualitative data analysis: Thematic analysis

During the first step of the analytic process, the researcher immersed herself in the interview data and inductively attempted to derive themes from the interview data (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016:34). The themes were subsequently coded. Coding is an essential tool that allows for the transformation of data into usable information (Curtis & Curtis, 2011:44). Coding is the process through which descriptive labels are assigned to

segments of text that capture the perceived essence of the data (Tracy, 2013:190; Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016:34).

Constant comparison of the data took place throughout the analysis process, which included coding and recoding. This process is referred to as primary-cycle coding and occurred more than once during the initial stages of coding (Tracy, 2013:189). A code book was developed from the analysis process. This was done with the aid of a computer program specifically designed for thematic analysis – Atlas.ti 8. All detail pertaining to the inclusion and exclusion criteria of each code was clearly recorded. This allowed for the analysis of the data applicable to each code to be modified as needed and as new codes emerged (Tracy, 2013:190).

The coding process was followed by a search for themes (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016:34). The process involved grouping codes with similar aspects together into possible categories. These categories were further grouped into themes. With the analytic process being primarily inductive in nature, the emerging themes were identified from an examination of code groupings with no preconstruction input by the researcher (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016:36). The themes and patterns that emerged from this analysis provided insight into activities that may have been overlooked through the use of structured surveys (Tracy, 2013:5). It had the potential to answer questions such as “what do people think about this phenomenon?” (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013:400), which is applicable to the study at hand. Once the themes were identified, they were contextualised in terms of the relevant social theories that were selected to frame the study.

4.3.5.2 Discourse analysis

According to Taylor (2013), discourse analysis can be defined as “the close study of language and language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life” (Taylor, 2013; Gee, 2014). According to Shaw and Bailey (2009:413), discourse analysis is most applicable to questions such as “What is the social life like?” and “What are the implications for the individual and the wider society?”. The participants did not just formulate sentences but did so after being asked specific questions. Speech events (such as the speech interaction present between swingers) do not take place in isolation. All discourse is replete in paraphrases of prior discourse (Hodges, 2015:42; Willig, 1999:114; Schneider, 2013). It is connected to discourse produced in other contexts (such as

language used in intimate relationships). Through discourse we construct consensual social realities, such as institutions like marriages (Gee, 2014:i). As the social actors interacted, their discourse was indicative of vocabulary used in the swinging lifestyles (Hodges, 2015:42). The social actors not only draw on their established genres (such as that of a swingers' culture) to frame their discourse (using words such as playmate and lifestyle), they engage with the words they have previously encountered and that are fully oriented to the anticipated responses these words elicit (such as knowing that the word playdate means both couples have agreed to a sexual encounter) (Hodges, 2015:42; Janks, 1997).

Foucault (1972:25-26) states that discourse goes beyond speaking. As a social practice its conditions of production can be defined. Communication has an invisible underlying set of beliefs and assumptions upon which it is built. It therefore has a sociohistorical context of production (Carbaugh, 2007; Taylor, 2013:2). Human affairs (such as consensual non-monogamous relationships), derive their significance from the use of language (Potter, 1996; Taylor, 2013:3). Humans co-construct their realities through discourse (which involves various ways in which they communicate, including words, visual images and objects). This is evident in the way in which discourse functions within patterns of relationships (e.g., how swingers use language and gestures to define their reality) (Potter, 1996; Gee, 2014).

4.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance reflects on whether the findings are authentic, trustworthy, and credibly related to the way participants construct their social worlds (Sargeant, 2012:1-3).

4.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness of the research findings. The question that needs to be answered is: "Does the researcher's conclusions find favourable support in the research findings?" (Marsden, 2013). According to Tracy (2013:235-236), credibility refers to dependability and trustworthiness – expressing a reality that is plausible and can be achieved through tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge requires the researcher to investigate below the surface in an effort to understand the core values of the group. For the purpose of this study, credibility was sought with the deliberate purposive selection of participants who are swingers and could therefore provide information that would be

relevant to the objectives of the study. Additionally, a strategy of *member checking* was adopted (Tracy, 2013) in the form of follow-up interviews, in which the researcher shared the emerging findings of the study with participants and requested their feedback in terms of the extent to which the findings were reflective of their views and lived experiences.

4.4.2 Transferability

Transferability denotes the extent to which the results of qualitative research can be applied or transferred to other settings (Tracy, 2013:229). Although transferability involves a leap of faith due to the unpredictable nature of future behaviour, it is possible to transfer the findings of a small group onto another group where a similar context prevails (Tracy, 2013:229). The findings of this study may well be applicable to other groups of swingers whose contexts are similar to those of the participants. To support transferability in the present study, I offered a comprehensive discussion of the context of the swingers' paradigm and to provide sufficient information about the participants to enable readers to make a determination as to whether or not the findings of this study would be transferable to contexts that are of interest to them.

4.4.3 Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to the extent to which findings of a study are indeed fashioned by the participants and not motivated by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:1; Anney, 2014:279). During the process of data gathering in this study, the researcher continuously checked in with the participants to ascertain whether or not the researcher had accurately interpreted what the participants are saying. The following excerpt indicates how the researcher confirmed the correct interpretation of the participants' intended meaning:

Participant 13: I can look at a woman and appreciate her. I am not like other women who look at a woman and get jealous or aroused. I have turned that around in myself – I can appreciate her for what she is.

Researcher: In terms of an appreciation of aesthetics?

Participant 13: Yes – that is why I say I am bi-friendly. I can appreciate the female form but it does nothing for me sexually.

Confirmability was further supported with the electronic recording of the participants' responses. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly revisited during the analytical process.

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics pertain to the morality of human conduct. Within the realm of social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2005:14). I adhered to these ethics' standards of sociological research throughout the research process.

Firstly, I obtained **ethics clearance** to conduct the study from the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the North-West University. After obtaining an ethics number (NWU-02042-20-A7) (see Addendum A), consent was sought from a local swingers' club to post an invitation on their social networking site, inviting active swingers to partake in the study. Once the owners of the swingers' club agreed to do this, I sent **an invitation to the club owners** (see Addendum C). This invitation detailed the reason for the research, introduced the researcher and outlined relevant information pertaining to how the research would be conducted and what types of **questions** the participants could expect during their participation (see Addendum B). It requested willing participants to voluntarily respond to the researcher via email, with a number (to maintain confidentiality), contact details and the answers to the selection criteria.

The participants who were willing to take part in the research then indicated so by means of a reply to the invitation posted by the gatekeeper (i.e., the club owners) to the researcher directly. The reason why a participant recruiter was not considered in this study was to protect the identities of those participants who responded to the invitation. The optional use of assigned numbers rather than names for each participant further protected their identities. Where participants insisted on face-to-face interviews, their identification details were only known to the researcher. The researcher screened the participants to ensure they met the necessary inclusion criteria requirements. The researcher then engaged via email with each of the qualifying participants, notifying them of their preliminary selection.

The importance of ensuring that participants were informed in detail on what is required from them during the research remained paramount (Sarantakos, 2013:17; Tracy,

2013:243). To this end, the researcher emailed an **informed consent statement** (see Addendum D) to the potential participants. Included in the information released to the potential participants were the full interview guide (i.e., the list of questions to be posed during the interviews) and details of any potential risks and stressors associated with the study (e.g., embarrassment, anxiety, etc.) that the participants could potentially experience during the interviews (Tracy, 2013:245). The content in the interview schedule allowed for the participants to be fully aware of the nature of questions to be asked to prevent any undue stress and anxiety that may occur should the participant be unprepared for the nature of the questioning. Only upon acceptance and signing of the informed consent form did the researcher further communicate with the participant to confirm a time, date and venue (if required) that was convenient for the participant to accept a telephone call or meet face-to-face for an interview. As noted, before, all face-to-face interviews were subject to COVID-19 protocols. All the participants gave permission for the interviews to be recorded on the researchers' Samsung phone. All recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed by the researcher herself, which further served to preserve confidentiality.

Secondly, the researcher adhered to the ethics standards for welfare and consideration of the participants (Tracy, 2013:245). They were also informed that if any of the posed questions were uncomfortable or embarrassing, they may decline to answer or withdraw without any repercussions, thus observing the principle of privacy (Edwards & Mauthner, 2005:17). Thirdly, the principle of voluntary participation was observed. No participant was subjected to coercion or forced to partake in the study (Tracy, 2013:243); i.e., participation was voluntary. Furthermore, all the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point in time. This information was first communicated by means of the invitation posted by the various gatekeepers on their webpages. From there, interested parties responded to the researcher. The researcher was, therefore, not able to unduly influence anyone to partake in the research. This was particularly important to participants with high-profile careers who may be at risk of exposure. The researcher sought to accommodate the participants accordingly by treating them all with respect and dignity.

A fourth consideration centred on the importance of observing the confidentiality of the participants. Tracy (2013:243) emphasises the importance of confidentiality. Each participant taking part in the study was permitted to use a pseudonym for the purpose of

the interview. Where participants requested face-to-face interviews, they were informed that their identifying details on the informed consent statement would remain confidential and would only be known to the researcher and her supervisors. It was further made clear that only the researcher and her supervisors would have access to the biographical and personal identification details of the participants, and that this information would remain confidential by means of storing the electronic and printed informed consent statements and interview schedules in a safe belonging to the researcher.

To ensure that the semi-structured interviews were not done in any place that could compromise the identity, privacy and safety of the participants, the researcher conducted telephonic semi-structured interviews at a predetermined time and date identified by each participant. This further protected the confidentiality of the participants – with specific reference to participants who did not want to identify themselves physically through a face-to-face interview. This allowed participants to answer freely and honestly. Although a qualified and **registered psychologist** was available for consultation (see Addendum E), with the first session being free and with the specific purpose of determining if the psychological issue was as a result of the interview session, no participant experienced any emotional, physical or psychological discomfort during the interviews or requested such support. All of the noted considerations were included in the noted Informed Consent Statement.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In order to yield a meaningful interpretation of the data collected in the current study exploring the influence of CNM on marital satisfaction, I opted for a constructionist ontological stance and an interpretivist epistemological approach, applied by means of a qualitative research methodology. These decisions were justified by the emphasis of such approaches and methodologies on the subjective lived reality of each participant (Blumer, 1969:93; Creswell, 2014:37-38), as well as the proactively constructed reality of each participant through their interactions with the social world (Scotland, 2012:10).

A purposeful sampling approach was selected as it facilitated recruiting participants who are self-identified active swingers in South Africa. This sample aided the researcher in exploring the study's research objectives, insofar as the knowledge of the participants spoke to the topic under investigation. Snowball sampling was also used as the swinging community is a closed community (due to stigmatisation) and not easily accessible by

outside parties (Chin-Ortiz, 2008:7; Fernandes, 2009; Shaw, 2018:3). It was therefore beneficial for me to work with a few willing participants, build rapport with them and request their recommendations of other persons in the swinging community. I was able to recruit five participants from referrals.

Interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research. I therefore opted to collect data with the use of semi-structured, in-person and telephonic interviews. According to Doolin (2014:6), when seeking to understand the participants' reasons for getting married, their marital challenges and beliefs associated with sexual satisfaction, semi-structured interviews are a helpful tool. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used that allowed me to gain deeper insight into the meanings the participants ascribed to the research topic (Newton, 2010), and to delve into totally unforeseen issues that may present themselves during the course of the interview (Adams, 2015:493). Furthermore, they are most suited to gathering data because they can be used to investigate the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of the individuals who partake in the research (Tracy, 2013:132).

The data were analysed using thematic analysis, which aims to identify themes and patterns within data. It potentially answers questions such as “what do people think about this phenomenon” (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013:400), using the narratives of participants on the potential influence of the “swinging lifestyle” on their marriages, which was the primary focus of this study.

Chapter 5 highlights the findings emanating from the study via a discussion of the themes and sub-themes derived from the analysed data.

CHAPTER 5:

FINDINGS: A DISCUSSION OF CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the themes derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants about CNM. The chapter is structured according to the following research questions:

- Why do South African couples engage in CNM (or swinging)?
- What are the positive features associated with CNM (or swinging) for the marital satisfaction of South African couples?
- What are the challenges associated with CNM (or swinging) for the marital satisfaction of South African couples?

The first subsection details the findings on the **reasons** why people engage in CNM. The discussion centres on what attracted and predisposed the couples to the swinging lifestyle. Three major themes were identified as reasons why people engage in CNM. Firstly, some couples were introduced to the lifestyle via social platforms, through social connections, and the influence of life partners. The second one, fulfilment of a need, is subdivided into sexual needs (i.e., the need to explore bisexuality) and social needs (i.e., a need to meet like-minded friends). The third theme that encouraged participants' choice to engage in CNM pertained to the trauma they experienced after the death of a loved one or a divorce.

The second subsection provides a detailed elucidation of the themes regarding the **challenges** associated with the CNM lifestyle. Although three inductive themes emerged from the data, there were also two distinct categories that informed said themes: challenges unique to CNM and challenges not unique to CNM. Pertaining to the former, themes included personal challenges such as trauma within the lifestyle, the participants' social challenges and marital challenges associated with, among other things, negotiating a playstyle or engaging in CNM thinking that it will 'fix' a broken marriage. Regarding the challenges not unique to CNM, participants cited personal challenges such as body image, social challenges such as bisexual discrimination, and marital challenges like jealousy and cheating.

The third subsection details the themes relevant to the **positive features** associated with CNM. Two main themes emerged from the data analysis. The first theme pertains to the personal benefits experienced by the individual. This includes that CNM offers a safe space to explore one's sensual side and the so-called "women rule" principle. It also includes aspects such as boosting confidence, better personal hygiene practices, as well as increased sexual fluidity. The second theme pertains to the benefits relevant to the married couple. Here participants related stories of them learning new sexual techniques, how CNM increased trust between them, forming meaningful friendships, as well as the role of CNM in preventing potential infidelity.

5.2 THE REASONS WHY COUPLES ENGAGE IN CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY

The first line of questioning sought to explore possible reasons for engaging in CNM. The analysis revealed three palpable themes that address this research question. These include external influences, fulfilling a sexual or social need and experiencing trauma.

5.2.1 External influences

Couples were found to engage in CNM for a number of external influences that predominantly emanated from social platforms such as the media, social connections and prevailing perceptions of monogamy being flawed.

5.2.1.1 Media

An aim of the study was to explore the pathways that led participants to become involved in the swinging lifestyle. Thematic analysis of the data indicated that various media platforms played an important role in facilitating participants' entry into the swinging culture. These included magazines, social media and electronic media. This trend is exemplified by **Participant 15**, a white heterosexual male who said: "*Before I found out how to use a computer we used to use the contact magazine*". Reflecting on the current situation, **Participant 27**, another white heterosexual male, stated: "*It was triggered by an advert for Swinger's Heaven that popped up on my computer.*" Furthermore, there also appears to be indications of an evolutionary trend in terms of this phenomenon along a continuum starting at printed media and moving along with technological advancements towards the emergence of electronic and social media. In particular, participants indicated that in the past, printed media such as magazines played a catalysing role in introducing

them to the lifestyle. In more recent times, such forms of media is increasingly being displaced by online media, such as pop-up adverts on social media, swinging websites (i.e., websites dedicated to listing swingers per location, age, race, and sexual preference), club websites (i.e., clubs with membership fees and entry criteria) and adverts for house parties.

However, not every participant was motivated to engage in swinging just because they were exposed to some form of media advertising swinging. Analysis of the data shows that some of the participants privately expressed their curiosity about swinging. This included **Participant 11**, a married bisexual female. She stated that she had a friend who had a swingers' website, *"and, then we had a look at it – and then we spoke about it. We decided to do it together because I also have fantasies and am curious. I guess that is how we started."*¹⁷ This curiosity prompted them to further explore media platforms pertaining to swinging. Their exposure to media pertaining to swinging in its various forms served as a catalyst that led to their eventual participation. These sites provided them with information about other individuals, venues and organisations associated with the lifestyle. It therefore enabled them to convert their curiosity into action. **Participant 4**, a single coloured heterosexual man, gave a similar reason, *"So it was always an idea of hers [his partner] and she was just curious about it. ... then she registered us on the club (the swingers club they now frequent) web."*

As noted above, media platforms that advertise swinging encourage participants to act on their curiosity. In the past (during the 1970s in South Africa), swinging was advertised by printed media in the form of magazines where discreetly worded adverts were placed. The written advert contained no sexually explicit imagery to feed their curiosity or further act as a catalyst into the lifestyle. This was exemplified by **Participant 25**, a divorced heterosexual male who said that *"In the 1970s, we did not have cell phones [in order for us to] just send out an invite. We had to send out self-addressed envelopes and see who responded. You generally got back a book with a list of contacts. This was all illegal and was considered pornography."* However, the advancements in technology and the dawn of democracy in South Africa have made it relatively easier for the participants to find information about CNM and to actually engage in it. **Participant 15**, a married heterosexual male, recalled that, *"before I found out how to use a computer, I to used the*

¹⁷ Afrikaans original: "Hy het 'n vriend wat 'n site gehad het – toe kyk ons – en toe praat ons daaroor. Ons het besluit om dit saam te doen want ek het ook fantasies en ek is nuuskierig. Dit is maar hoe ons begin het".

contact magazine. I have not seen it lately, but all [such print] media is dying now. Everything is [available over] computers and all the sites."

Access to advertising materials on CNM is no longer limited to the written word, but now includes sexual imagery on dedicated web pages and pop-up adverts on said web pages. **Participant 25** and **Participant 4** spoke about this. According to them, these ads appeal to the curiosity of the person seeing the advert, thereby enticing them to investigate the intricacies of the lifestyle. These web pages and pop-up adverts are accessible on laptops and computers as well as cell phones, making access to information about the lifestyle, potential swinging partners and meeting places instantaneous and discreet, without needing an introduction from an established swinger. **Participant 12**, a white male, explained how the swinger websites satisfy his curiosity about CNM:

"It is convenient, discreet, a well developed web page. Uhm, and it is well managed. If there are any undesirable behaviours – a person just gets blocked or you can just block them. ... I have been visiting a swinging website – Swinging heaven – I just read the stories there".

Online information, in general, enables participants to access an ever-increasing world of venues and potential partners. In response to being asked how often he engages in swinging due to this mainstreaming of sexuality in general, and CNM in particular, **Participant 3**, a divorced bisexual coloured male, said,¹⁸ *"I would say throughout the year. As soon as an opportunity arises."* The analysis of the data also suggests that increased access to media, such as is now prevalent in the form of social media and webpages, influences the participants by means of the ways in which the adverts are designed to appeal to their consumers. **Participant 14**, a single homosexual male, mentioned the variety of media and applications available: *"In this day and age, there are apps all over the place – where you can certainly – if you're looking for a same-sex encounter, there is Grindr, Scruff, and a whole bunch of online stuff as well. Those are just the ones I know of"*. Many websites publish erotic stories written by the patrons of the clubs on the actual sites. These erotic stories depict, among other plot elements, episodes of fantasy that may consequently act as an antecedent for its reader to pursue such an encounter within the CNM lifestyle, either by going to the club or by contacting patrons on the site. This was evident from a fantasy that was shared by **Participant 17**, a heterosexual married

¹⁸ Afrikaans original: "Ek sou sê, regdeur die jaar. Sodra daar net 'n geleentheid opkom".

male: *"I have always had this dream [of having sex with other people], and used to secretly go onto websites to look. I went to look at Pharos – and it was still Rome that had another name at that time. So it was pleasurable to look at the photos and to read the stories."*¹⁹

With the proliferation of social media and immediate internet access to swinging websites, people are now better able to judge prospective partners, which could add more excitement to their encounters as a consequence. In the past, participants met people without any pictures or background information on them. The internet now allows them to "research" their potential swinging partners and make informed choices about their swinging interactions. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, alluded to her informal research on the matter; *"So, if they saw me at the club and wanna know more, they will go profile hunting. ... They can, [for example], sneak around on Swingers Heaven's [webpage]."* These informal investigations also allow the interested party to obtain information on the swing preferences of the party they are interested in. **Participant 11**, for example, noted this. As a self-identified bisexual married female, she commented on the importance of being aware of other people's sexual preferences and orientations before engaging with them. She noted:

"... and I have – I can't even tell you how many guys looking at our profile that are bi-curious. And I'm thinking, 'But why are you looking at my profile? It says there that [my husband] is straight'. Why? And then they contact, and they message, and they chat and then it comes up that they are only bi-curious. It does not mean that we want to be with your husband. It's just something that, if it is there, and there is a couple, and the guy is bi-curious, then [it is an option]. But [this] still doesn't tell me why you are looking at my profile".

The proliferation of social media has effectively become a filtering agent for swingers through which they can obtain more information and determine if there is a "fit" or not.

While some participants deemed this to be safer than meeting without knowing anything about their potential swinging partner, other participants pointed out that social media also advances unattainable and false ideals and ideologies associated with the 'perfect' swinging partner. **Participant 8**, a married and self-identified bisexual Indian female,

¹⁹ Afrikaans original: "Ek het maar altyd die droom gehad en maar skelm op die websites gaan kyk – dan het ek na Pharos gaan kyk – en toe was dit nog Rome wat 'n ander naam gehad het. So dit is lekker om fotos te gaan kyk en storietjies te gaan lees".

expressed this sentiment by pointing out her own experience on some South African swingers' sites: *"From the little exposure that I've had on the swingers sites, ... there are lots of fakes."* This was mirrored in the response of **Participant 7**, a divorced bisexual white female, who said,

"You have people lying – they aren't who they say they are. Because, online, you can be whoever you want to be. [This is because] that's how you find other swingers. ... They pretend to be single when they are married. You make appointments to meet and they don't pitch because they are not who they say they are".

However, there are mechanisms available on social media and swingers platforms to deal with these supposed "offenders" or fakes. For example, they are blocked and banned from clubs and webpages, a finding to which **Participant 12** alluded. She confirmed that, *"if there are any undesirable behaviours – a person just gets blocked or you can just block them"*. This is clearly an added advantage of online platforms as opposed to print media. This mechanism of having the freedom to block a person deemed to be a nuisance is regarded as a safety measure that further facilitates exploration of websites as a "safe space" in which to explore swinging online.

5.2.1.2 Social connections

A second antecedent to entering the CNM lifestyle was social connections. According to the participants, these include close friends, business associates, as well as casual acquaintances they meet socially.

In some instances, the process is initiated through frank discussions on the topic of swinging between socially connected individuals. For example, according to **Participants 12** and **20**, such discussions focus on CNM's potential benefits and limitations. Depending on how the parties interpret these discussions, meetings with like-minded persons may be initiated. This was noted by **Participant 20**, a married male. He stated,

"I went on a business trip to [an African country]. There I met the friends that live there. Then him and I started talking because they are also in the lifestyle."

We discussed the pros and cons. Then when I got home, we [he and his wife], discussed it, and she said, 'Okay.' ²⁰

However, as in the case of **Participant 12**, a married male, these discussions with social connections about swinging do not always motivate their spouses to actually start this discussion or participate in the lifestyle. In some instances, the discussions between the social connections became catalysts to engage in swinging *without* the knowledge of the respective spouses. This was evident in the narrative of **Participant 12**. He explained how he went to assist a friend with a computer issue, which then turned into a discussion on swinging and eventually into swinging without his spouse's consent. *"Yes – I went to visit her one evening and we had to help sort out some IT problems and the conversation turned to swinging, and so on [i.e., a discussion on the pros and cons of swinging]. At a later stage we engaged in swinging".*

Shared social activities with social connections is another process that acts as a catalyst into the lifestyle. Through the social activities, the participants are introduced to other types of social activities that, in many instances, are synonymous with entry into the swingers lifestyle. One such example is naturism. **Participant 18**, a heterosexual married female, and **Participant 10**, a heterosexual married male, commented on this. For **Participant 18**, the nudist resort is an extension of the CNM lifestyle's activities: *"It is also a nudist swinger place. They also have rooms that you can rent for sleeping for the evening – they are, basically, the usual place [for swinging] get- togethers".* For **Participant 10**, nudism is a precursor to swinging in that, *"... the people come in all shapes and sizes – no one has clothes on, yet everyone can enjoy good conversation. There is no judgement about how you look. That makes it a totally different experience to being with people who are naked."*²¹ It is this experience of freedom that motivates the participants to shift their boundaries and become more flexible in terms of interactions that may filter through from a casual discussion at a naturist resort. **Participant 17**, a heterosexual married male, elaborated on this. When he and his wife went on holiday, they,

²⁰ Afrikaans translation: "Ek was vir 'n werkstrip in Zambië en toe ontmoet ek die vriende wat daar bly. Toe praat ek en hy want hulle is ook in die lifestyle. Ons het oor die voordele en nadele gepraat. Toe ek by die huis kom toe bespreek ons dit toe sê sy, okay."

²¹ Afrikaans original: "Kyk, in die nudiste omgewing wat 'n ander kultuur is wat nou heeltemal anders is – die mense van Sun Eden in all sizes and shapes – niemand het klere maar almal gesels lekker. Daar is nie judgemental nie van oohh kyk hoe lyk jy – dit is net – ek dink dit alleen maak dit heeltemal anders as jy saam mense sonder klere kuier."

“... were on this quiet beach and I told her let’s feel what it feels like to swim naked in the ocean. It tickled her fancy and we both liked it. We were unaware that we had ended up on a well-known nudist beach. And there we met people that frequent [said nudist beach and resort]. They recruited us to also go there. One evening, we had a braai (Afrikaans word for barbeque). All the nudists were together. ... One couple singled us out. They invited us to go to their house. There they said that they want to give my wife a massage, they teamed up and massaged her. And that, led to us entering the swingers lifestyle.”²²

5.2.1.3 The influence of life partners and spouses

Another prominent pathway for entry into the swingers’ lifestyle is the influence of one’s life partners and spouses. This may manifest in the form of a request from one partner that may receive a positive response, or in other instances coercion to submit to the request. The findings suggest that there is a difference between persons whose relationships are characterised by open and honest communication and those who do not; and cases where both parties agree from the onset to engage in CNM or they do not. Where there is a lack of such communication, i.e., where one spouse is initially unwilling to engage, and only does so after their partner or spouse convinces or coerces them to do so, no free will is apparent. Pertaining to the latter situation, a person’s unwillingness is mostly attributed to their fear of the unknown, jealousy and insecurity, which is evident from this comment by **Participant 26**, a married heterosexual white female: She recalled that; *“My husband did [suggest entry into the swingers lifestyle] and I was very scared and dead set against it. But, I then ended up loving it.”* As opposed to this, **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual female, noted: *“Thereafter [the initial entry into the lifestyle] – we still had a problem as he himself played, but I was not allowed. He would go into a jealous rage if I played with another man.”* **Participant 7**, a divorced bisexual female, revealed how open and honest communication allows for discussion and consideration. She commented that, *“... in my marriage, my husband was the one that suggested it. At*

²² Afrikaans original: “Ons was op die stil strand en ek sê vir haar kom ons voel bietjie hoe voel dit om kaal in die see te swem. En dit het haar geprikkel en ons het altwee daarvan gehou. En onbewus het ons by die strand beland en dit is die alombekende nudiste strand ... En daar het ons vir mense ontmoet wat [deel van die strand en oord was]. En hulle het ons toe betrek om ook daar te gaan. En een aand het ons so braai gehad – al die nudists by mekaar – en die een couple het ons uitgesonder – en hulle het ons uitgenooi na hulle huis toe – en daar het hulle gesê nee hulle wil gou vir (my vrou) ’n massage gee – en hulle het toe opgeteam met haar en haar gemassage – en dit het gelei na ’n swinging lewe toe.”

first it was like, 'WOOOH WHAT?' Let's just figure this out first. ... What is it? How does it work? Dah, dah, dah, and then 'Why?' "

Although initiating the CNM lifestyle is not gender specific, women are purported to require the more convincing to act on the suggestion. **Participant 17** elucidated this with the following quote *"But the woman is the one that required the most convincing to enter the lifestyle."*²³ However, males are not exempt from requiring convincing, usually due to similar reasons of jealousy and personal insecurity. **Participant 23**, a heterosexual married male, attributed his fear of enagaging in CNM to, *"being scared of being a failure in the bedroom."* **Participant 3**, a divorced male, echoed this sentiment, commenting on the role of his insecurity: *"That's where we [men] lack – because I don't think a man can satisfy a woman completely."*

Infidelity was a further factor that led some partners to explore and pursue CNM in retaliation for their spouses' betrayal. For **Participants 16, 23, and 27**, the exploration followed a different trajectory than the conventional "discussion and acceptance" route. For **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual woman, the infidelity led to exploration of the internet and eventually led her into swingers' clubs:

"I then also discovered profiles online that he had. I started [reading] them and created one of my own. A guy there told me about the dark Twitter [i.e., Twitter where sexual content is openly posted]. I opened my Twitter account and I ended up having a naughty Twitter account – and ended up having over 1000 followers, not ever posting a picture of myself. Always just sharing sexy pics of other people or sexy jokes and shit. And there I was told about Rome. And that is when I started investigating the alternate lifestyle, and also with the kinks, the baby play, the golden showers, and all that kak²⁴."

The infidelity may lead the spouse who discovered the infidelity to explore greater depths of 'kink' (i.e., an activity that brings extra erotic energy to the sexual encounter through, for example, blindfolding a partner), fetish (i.e., an activity or object that must be present in order for a person to achieve sexual enjoyment or satisfaction, such as urinating on a person in order for them to achieve orgasm), and risk-taking.

²³ Afrikaans original: "Maar die vrou is die een wat dit die meeste gevat het om te oortuig toe ons begin het."

²⁴ An Afrikaans term denoting "faeces" but used in this context to denote "and all such/related things".

For **Participant 22**, a married woman, the infidelity was not an affair, but a visit to a swingers' club without the knowledge or consent of her husband. After admitting that she had gone to a swingers' club, her husband reacted in shock, turning to religion to justify his concern that the demons he felt were possessing his wife had to be removed. Once the initial shock subsided, he actively pursued the lifestyle himself:

"After the experience [going to a swingers club on my own without his knowledge], I told [my husband] that I wanted to engage in the lifestyle. His answer was a perfect, 'no'. He made an appointment with his pastor where it was decided that an exorcism had to be performed on me. I was extremely upset about this. And, just by the way – it was never performed. For some reason or other, maybe because he saw that on this subject I was not going to budge, or perhaps to see what my fascination was regarding this type of lifestyle, he agreed to go to the club with me once. Once there, he immediately took a liking to what was going on."

It is not only married people that experience hurt and change due to infidelity. For **Participant 27**, a divorced heterosexual male, the discovery of the infidelity of his university sweetheart altered the course of his thinking and perceptions on monogamy, which ultimately led him into the CNM lifestyle. During our interview, he professed that,

"You know, when you come out of school and you meet somebody and, you are going to have children together and die together, i.e., being all moonshine and roses, you know I was still living with this lady and, nine months later, there was huge disappointment and that shattered my crystal ball completely. Then I said if that is the case with this whole monogamous bullshit story, then I am not part of it."

Continuing the theme of spousal influence, a further subtheme is the spousal response to requests to pursue a CNM lifestyle. Typically, responses included spousal understanding, where the need to explore sex outside of the marriage or partnership is understood. This was the case with **Participant 7**, a divorced woman and club owner said,

"So, I understood that he didn't have all of the experience that I had had – I had plenty as a non-swinger single girl and he had not had that experience."

So, I kinda understood that he needed that. He needed to find out what it was like with other people”.

Conversely, other spouses reacted with shock, disbelief and rejection of the request, as **Participant 19**, a married woman, elucidated: *“I was not a happy camper, at all. I basically said to him if he is not happy at home, then let me pack [his] stuff and [he] can go. So ja – that is just how I felt.”* The participant now supports the lifestyle and is also a host at a prominent club.

In some instances, understanding the need of the spouse to want to explore CNM comes from the individual’s own multiple sexual experiences and variety of sexual partners. In these instances, the need for sexual variety is therefore not deemed a problem for the marriage, but rather viewed as a journey/adventure the couple embarks on. This was evident in the response of **Participant 3**. He noted, *“But, if you and your husband have an agreement and you do it together, then you do not need to have a guilty conscience the next day. You rather talk about it – the adventure – it’s nice.”*²⁵ **Participant 1**, a female club owner, alluded to the journey couples embark on within the CNM lifestyle: *“You have a partner that embraces the lifestyle with you – is on this journey with you – I mean I always say, ‘People say, for better or for worse, till death do us part’.”* For **Participant 4**, a never-married man, an understanding of his partner’s curiosity was paramount. He attributed this to his personal experiences as a single swinger. He recalled,

“So, I was obviously exposed to swinging and orgies and things prior to it [i.e., his relationship with his current partner]. That [swinging] was obviously her curiosity as well. And, because I was in it and understood what went on, on a basic level, it wasn’t a problem.”

However, not all spouses were understanding about the need to pursue a CNM lifestyle. As a result, said lack of understanding was in some instances met with resistance and conflict. In some cases, the resistance was attributed to religious beliefs and performance anxiety. **Participant 3**, a divorced man, alluded to performance anxiety in his response on why some people may resist entering into the lifestyle. He said that he might be considered too “scrawny to satisfy” his partner sexually.²⁶ In response to the same

²⁵ Afrikaans original: “Maar, as jy en jou man ’n ooreenkoms het, en julle doen dit saam, dan het jy nie noodwendige ’n skuldige gewete die volgende dag nie. Jul praat eerder daaroor – dit is ’n avontuur, dis lekker”.

²⁶ Afrikaans original: “Te maer of stel ek jou nie [seksueel] tevrede nie”.

question, **Participant 4**, a single male in a committed relationship, explained how religion may be ambiguous when considering the nature of swinging. He noted that

“Christianity, on its own, is stuck at a crossroads – where it doesn’t even know what is right and what is wrong. And they [religious patrons and leaders] are sitting with their own dynamics as a norm. Uhm, bringing swinging into it, in certain [religious institutions], polyamorous sex may be allowed whereas, in others, it isn’t.”

The ambiguity seems to stem from one type of multiple sexual partner being permitted by religion, yet another being rejected.

Spouses also sometimes explore a CNM lifestyle as a preventative measure against infidelity. By allowing the spouse to have what he/she craves and feels he/she cannot attain, the need to cheat is taken off the table. Based on her own experience of infidelity, **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, said,

“Being on the receiving end of an extra-marital affair made me realise that people need diversity. We had awesome sex in the marriage – he just couldn’t stick to one chick – he had a threesome fantasy. So, we had a threesome, but he wanted outdoor sex. [Then], we had outdoor sex. He wanted sex in public, so, we had sex in public. All those stupid little tick boxes – I would accommodate everything. I am a ‘bok²⁷’ for sports, but that was never the issue. Kinky, we can do kinky, we can do everything. But, it was just the variety – it is when you see something that you are attracted to and you can’t have it.”

Similarly, **Participant 1**, a female club owner, said *“I think, when you have this freedom to do something with your partner, why on earth would you go have an affair behind their back? It doesn’t make sense. Only somebody stupid would do that.”*

From the above, it is clear that participants felt and expressed a desire to fulfill a need, as an antecedent to engaging in CNM. I discuss this as part of the next subsection.

²⁷ In Afrikaans this denotes an antelope, however in this context it denotes being “game” for or willing to do something.

5.2.2 Fulfilling a need

Another catalyst for entering a swinging lifestyle was the fulfilment of certain needs; these being sexual and social in nature.

5.2.2.1 Sexual needs

CNM is considered to satisfy certain sexual needs arising from the intimate side of a romantic relationship. These needs may be influenced by a variety of factors, such as sexual frequency, sexual orientation, as well as sexual diversity and experimentation.

5.2.2.1.1 Need to explore bisexuality

As alluded to above, one of the needs participants suggested is the need to explore bisexuality. Exploring bisexuality is not necessarily possible in a heterosexual relationship (a man and a woman). Engaging in CNM facilitates the meeting of other bisexual parties who may be willing to engage in this type of sexual activity. This was noted by **Participant 11**, a bisexual married woman and **Participant 14**, a bisexual single man, who found an outlet for their bisexual needs through CNM. In the case of **Participant 11**, she discovered her bisexuality through CNM. She recalled that,

“I am bisexual. I like women and my husband knows that. I am not curious – I was in the beginning, but now I am bisexual. The thing is this, a woman knows what a woman’s needs are and that is why I like to play with women.”²⁸

For **Participant 14**, a bisexual single man, swingers’ websites and other swingers allow him to give expression to his bisexual orientation:

“Ironically, the couple that I often play with, I met them through Swingers Heaven. But I met them through another couple on Swingers Heaven who they used to play with and the four of them wanted a fifth partner. The one guy was desperately trying to arrange something just for the three guys and I [responded], ‘I am not playing with anybody until we meet’. We eventually met for dinner and chatted and agreed that we all [the men], want to play.”

²⁸ Afrikaans original: “Ek is bisexual. Ek hou van vrouens ook en my man weet dit. Ek is nie *curious* nie. Ek was in die begin. Ek is nou *bisexual*. My ding is ’n vrou weet wat ’n vrou soek. Dit is hoekom ek dit geniet om met ’n vrou te speel.”

In some instances, the need to explore bisexuality originates from one or both individuals wanting to explore a sexual fantasy. This fantasy motivates the person to explore platforms where they could live out this bisexual fantasy – mostly in the context of a threesome. **Participant 17**, a married man said; *“It is maybe one of the fantasies that I have to have a threesome with a guy and my wife, where the guy might touch me.”* For some, visiting or joining swingers’ sites or fetish clubs and/or watching porn may bring about a bisexual interest. This was the case for **Participant 25**, a divorced male, who also partook in porn videos in his younger years, and who developed a fetish for so-called “she-males” [i.e., men who look and dress like women] after watching porn with “chicks with dicks”. He said,

“I never was into transexual persons. Now – I stumbled on a porn site with the most beautiful chicks with dicks. They are absolutely outstandingly beautiful. So if you had said to me a couple of years ago that I would be attracted to this, I would have told you to move along. Now, I find it attractive.”

Participant 3 also alluded to the bisexual element of engaging with so-called “she-males” . He is a divorced Coloured male who encountered such a person at a swingers club. He noted,

“There’s something about men that says he is bi – even if he doesn’t admit it. It is so. So now I bring in the she-male transexual, and you do not know it is a man because she looks just like a woman. ... You go with the flow because you are in that motion already. Your fantasy is in motion, you want to do the deed. It’s a vibe. It is the way we are. People deny it, but there is bi in everyone.”

5.2.2.1.2 Need for sexual frequency fulfillment

While some couples pursue CNM as a couple for pleasure, others pursue CNM as a means to fulfil a need for increased sexual frequency. In some instances, the pursuit is in a solo capacity, for instance when one of the spouses begins to lose interest in sex or has a very low libido. CNM is therefore perceived to provide the platform to engage sexually with multiple partners, which may increase the frequency with which people engage in sexual intercourse. This was the case with **Participant 13**, a divorced heterosexual female and **Participant 12**, a married heterosexual male. For **Participant**

13, having a husband who had a low libido was a factor in her pursuing CNM in a solo capacity, but only after she had divorced: *“So, I am a very sexual person and he was only interested in it [sex], once every three months. So I requested that we try swinging. He flatout refused. So, I did think of it but I did not take it further than that in the marriage.”*

Participant 12 however, engaged in swinging while still married to his wife because, *“to be honest, my wife actually lost her interest in sex. So, there is nothing going on there. I’m not promiscuous by far – that is for sure – and I am not looking for a casual partner. But no, I would say that is the reason.”* This perceived need acts as a catalyst for the seeking party to explore other avenues through which to obtain the desired sexual frequency satisfaction.

Life occurrences such as divorce may also act as reasons to enter the lifestyle. The lack of a constant, regular sexual partner due to divorce becomes the motivating element for the party to seek sexual frequency fulfilment elsewhere. The time factor of being single and meeting a partner who you engage with regularly becomes the catalyst for exploring alternative, more viable means of immediate and frequent sexual satisfaction. This need for immediate sexual satisfaction may lead the person to online exploration which, in some instances may expose them to swingers’ websites and clubs, an approach **Participant 6** supported. Through this exposure and subsequent exploration of the swingers club, he entered the CNM lifestyle, where he meets his lifestyle partners for sex. He stated, *“I was divorced. I wasn’t in a relationship and obviously you have needs. I was curious. I went and I found swinging interesting. Explored the Swinging Heaven website, and it tickled my fancy.”* For **Participant 16**, a heterosexual woman who separated from her husband due to abuse and violence, the separation resulted in her going to a swingers’ club and eventually becoming a single female swinger:

“I suppose that is where my inner hippie comes out and, I eventually took him and we went [to a swingers’ club] a couple of times. He eventually found out about my Twitter account. I, then, got accused of being the biggest internet whore alive. I was trying to trick him and all the rest of it. So, I said to him, ‘Listen, you are always having these affairs, ... I am trying to give you a chance to do what you like while I can enjoy myself at the same time’. And that didn’t go well for him. So after about three months we stopped going to [the swingers’ club]. ... It was a very abusive relationship during the last three years before I

left. Three weeks after I moved out, I was back at the [swingers' club]. That was that."

Sexual frequency within the CNM lifestyle, which includes multiple partners, further addressed some participants' need for sexual diversity and experimentation.

5.2.2.1.3 Need for sexual diversity and experimentation

The need for sexual diversity and experimentation is another reason why participants started engaging in CNM. Some participants indicated that sexual diversity is a natural state of being, i.e., that having one sexual partner for life is not a natural state for a human. **Participant 16**, a heterosexual separated female, said *"For me the open relationship is on. I don't think people are built to be monogamous."* **Participant 7**, a bisexual divorced female, made a corresponding statement, *"Yes – there would be no need to swing if we were meant to be monogamous – everybody would be happy with one partner."*

In other instances, sexual diversity and experimentation are important to ensure a more intimate bonding experience between the partners as part of their relationship. **Participant 4**, a coloured single male, attested to this. He stated that swinging actually adds "spice" to one's relationship, *"it's actually that you love so open to each other, that it takes your relationship to another level"*. Others noted how CNM alleviates sexual boredom, a reason to which **Participant 20**, a married male, attests. Consider his justification: *"We have done the prostitute thing. We pick a girl and enjoy her together. However, I told my wife that it is a little rough. Without being funny, a person falls into a groove. You must spice it up [engage in swing]. It must never be a routine."*²⁹

Some of the participants believed that engaging in sexual intercourse with a third party affords one the opportunity to learn new sexual techniques and skills, while maintaining emotional monogamy with your spouse. **Participant 20** expressed this best. They noted *"You learn something new with each person [they swing with]. We are all unique. So you experiment. It is a learning curve"*.³⁰ These sexual techniques and skills are then explored with the primary spouse, which is purported to keep the sexual side of marriage "spicy and interesting." There is the notion that CNM allows access to multiple partners who

²⁹ Afrikaans original: "Ons het al die prostituut ding gedoen. Ons pic 'n girl en ons geniet haar maar saam. Toe sê ek vir haar dit is 'n bietjie rof. Sonder om snaaks te wees, 'n mens val in 'n groef. 'n Mens moet dit opspice. Dit moet nooit 'n routine word nie."

³⁰ Afrikaans original: "Jy leer iets by elke een. Ons is almal uniek. So jy experiment. Dit is 'n leerkurwe."

understand that it is a sexual encounter only, without any emotional or primary commitment. The interaction is purely a sexual one and the participants can learn and experience new sexual techniques and styles, returning to their primary relationship thereafter without any guilt or shame.

Sexual diversity was also cited as a means to address one's sexual curiosity. This curiosity, according to **Participant 22** and **Participant 23**, a heterosexual married couple, becomes the means through which one explores opportunities where one can have sex with another person: *"Both of us never had sexual partners before each other. I was 17 and [my husband] was 21. I was very curious on what having sex with another person was like."* This sentiment was also expressed by **Participant 7**, a heterosexual female and club owner, as she commented on her own experience of entering CNM:

"When I met my husband he was actually a virgin. So, at the age of 22 which was like unheard of. So, I understood that he didn't have all of the experience that I had had – I had plenty as a non-swinger single girl and he had not had that experience. So I kinda understood that he needed that. He needed to find out what it was like with other people."

In many instances, the participant uses the internet to explore the various alternatives and is thereby exposed to swingers' websites and clubs. The ease with which one can become a member of such a club then becomes a factor that encourages the person to pursue a CNM lifestyle.

5.2.2.1.4 Need to fulfil a fantasy

For some persons, as alluded to before, CNM becomes a means to fulfil their sexual fantasies. Such fantasies, as identified by the participants, included having multiple partners (as also alluded to in section 5.2.2.1.1 about sexual diversity) (**Participant 11** and **Participant 14**), or engaging in public displays of sexual acts. This was exemplified by **Participant 1**, a single female and also a fetish club owner, who relayed some acts that have been performed at her fetish club: *"So if you've always fantasised about having sex on the dance floor, in front of people, go for it. You want to do it on the stage go for it. You want to do it on my bar, go for it."* This behaviour includes, in some instances, engaging in sexual intercourse to allow others to watch (i.e., voyeurism). Pertaining to the latter, **Participant 18**, a married heterosexual woman, shared an experience: *"He [her*

husband] actually said to me with last night's story [a swingers party] – the women were going at it and the men were sitting on the sideline and watching.” Participant 14, a single homo/bisexual male, alluded to a voyeurism fetish of one of his female playmates, “And she loves watching guy on guy action. It is a huge turn on for her.”

Fantasies are not only part of what may influence a participant to enter a CNM lifestyle. Swingers also have fantasies they then pursue, and in some instances these fantasies take them further into the realm of their additional fantasy world, as **Participant 2**, a divorced heterosexual male, explained:

“The swingers come in here – they are in their vibe and that. But they have heard and seen things [which now is a fantasy they want to try] and they say, “but I saw you did this rope work [i.e., Shibari, using rope to restrict movement] on this guy – its hot”. So, then I will do rope work on them. And I will explain to them why the rope work and what it does. Then word of mouth will spread. Then it is like they might want to try a flogging”.

Not all swingers go to a club to pursue a BDSM type fantasy. For some participants, the fantasy of being tied up is enacted among their own playmates. **Participant 19**, a bisexual married female, shared one of her experiences with her female lover:

“She planned this whole thing – she tied me up. The guys weren’t allowed to touch me at all. I was blindfolded. I had earphones in – she was playing very sensual, sexual music. And, she was teaching the boys how to touch me without touching me. So, all those organs were going crazy. And, eventually, I went, ‘Stop, stop, I can’t take this anymore. Get me loose now because now I am going to break, grab anybody that is in front of me [Laughing]”.

While some participants entered the lifestyle to fulfil their own fantasies, others discovered new fantasies within the CNM lifestyle as alluded to by **Participant 2** above. Others, however, entered the lifestyle but became motivated to rather fulfil the fantasies of others, deriving pleasure from that. **Participant 16** explained as follows:

“I did enjoy it. The same enjoyment whether a guy is fingering you or whether a woman is fingering you. It is the type of pleasure that you get. So, yes, a girl can stimulate you just as good as a guy can. Also for me – I’ve got a few

girlfriends who, if we know a guy has a threesome fantasy, we will make it happen. We kiss, and touch, and fondle, and whatever.”

Further analysis of the data suggests that, in particular, single women are sought out for bisexual experiences while they, in turn, get intimate attention from both the man and the woman engaging with them. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, offered the following explanation of why single women are sought out for bisexual experiences:

“A lot of the couples who are attracted to single ladies [is based on] the lady, in the relationship, [having] a bit of a bisexual side. Either bi-willing [i.e., partake in bisexual interactions willingly, knowing they are bisexual and enjoy those encounters] or bi-curious [i.e., curiosity to explore bisexual interactions. The participant is not sure if they are bisexual]. It is for her pleasure, that [the couple] would join.”

It is not only single women who are sought out. Couples also seek out single men for bisexual fantasy play as **Participant 6**, a divorced male, hesitantly suggested: *“Uhm, that would depend on the couple itself. If they are looking for another couple or a single male or a single female. Uhm, that would depend on them [if it is a bisexual experience for the man or for the woman]”.*

5.2.2.2 Social needs

Social needs, including the need for intimacy from a spouse after the birth of a child, are not unique to the swingers' lifestyle. However, within a swingers' lifestyle these needs are characterised by a unique set of dynamics. These are discussed below.

5.2.2.2.1 A need for having like-minded friends

For some participants, entry into the lifestyle came from a need for friendship. In some instances this need arose from experiences where 'vanilla' (i.e., non-lifestyle friends) friendships were considered to be troublesome. **Participant 17**, a heterosexual married male, explained this need by recalling his own transition into the swingers' lifestyle:

“Before we engaged in the lifestyle, it was really difficult for us to make real friends. In the lifestyle we met wonderful friends. The friends in the lifestyle are honest and true – it is more the vanillas that created trouble.”³¹

This was also expressed by **Participant 26**, a heterosexual married woman, who said

“We will never go back to supposed ‘normal’ friendships again, as those are the most dangerous and the ones that cheat and lie and are not honest with their partners. Lifestylers still make the best friends as there is no judgement and they live and let live”.

For some participants, it is possible to navigate between the “vanilla friends”, and the “lifestyle friends” with certain protocols. **Participant 7**, a divorced bisexual female club owner, alluded to this:

“So, I have vanilla friends and I have lifestyle friends. I must say, in my circle of friends it is mostly lifestylers – because we just have more in common. Where we can be more free together. However, when I go to a vanilla event, uhm, we do watch our words, especially if there are kids around. We are adults. It is just [about] respect, either way. If you are at a swingers party, you are more free and you will talk more about blowjobs and things.”

5.2.2.2.2 A need for intimacy after having children

Some participants have the perception that having children can signify the end of the intimate side of a relationship because it is believed that the after-effects of pregnancy often include gaining weight and a neglect of personal care. This may contribute towards eroding the sexual side of a relationship. In some instances, this may make some couples susceptible to the allure of affairs or swinging as they seek intimacy. **Participant 1**, a single heterosexual female and club owner, for example said:

“People have affairs (or seek out swinging) when they are bored with each other, because once they have kids its like, ‘We have done it all and now we are done. I can sit and get fat. I can stop doing this, [and] I can stop doing that;

³¹ Afrikaans original: “Voordat ons in die leefstyl was, was dit vir ons regtig moeilik om regte vriende te maak. In die leefstyl het ons die wonderlike vriende ontmoet. Die vriende van die leefstyl is eerlik en opreg – dit is meer die vanillas wat moeilikheid strooi”.

go to bed with my rollers now, I just don't care'. You just let yourself go, you know".

Participant 10 and **Participant 6** mentioned the difficulty to secure time for intimate encounters, saying that having young children is problematic even if you are in the lifestyle. **Participant 10**, a married heterosexual male said, *"People with young children are like our children with grandchildren, and that comes with its own set of challenges. It just does not work"*³². **Participant 6**, a divorced heterosexual male, explained how couples with children present a problem when having to plan meetups and play sessions; *"Mostly arrangements for meet-ups. You know, people being married and having children, or other social engagement and things like that – so you have to plan around these things."*

5.2.3 Trauma as source for CNM

Certain types of traumas may act as a catalyst for entry into CNM. The trauma is usually associated with emotionally intense experiences emanating from, among other things, the death of a loved one, rape and abuse, or the infidelity of a life partner or spouse.

5.2.3.1 Death of a loved one

Some participants commented on how the death of their life partner or spouse altered the way in which they viewed or conceptualised permissible sexual relationships – particularly as it relates to fulfilling a sexual need. This was best explained by **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual woman, who shared the trauma of a lifestyle friend whose fiancée died in a car accident days before their wedding. He never remarried and entered the CNM lifestyle to fulfil his sexual needs. He remained emotionally monogamous with his dead fiancé, but was sexually non-monogamous thereafter:

"His fiancé [fianceé?] passed away in a car accident days before their wedding. He never got married. He tells [those women he meets in the CNM circles] about his lifestyle [choice] and he then takes it from there. He is not willing to let the lifestyle go, [so,] she [the prospective partner] has to consent to it otherwise the relationship is not going anywhere."

³² Afrikaans original: "Soos, mense met klein kindertjies is maar soos ons kinders met kleinkinders – hulle kom met hulle eie uitdagings. Dit werk maar net nie".

5.2.3.2 Sexual infidelity and divorce

Participants experienced varying degrees of trauma on finding out that their spouse had cheated on them. The ensuing narrative of **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, exemplifies the trajectory of trauma response when infidelity is discovered. For **Participant 16**, it initially rendered her emotionally numb and passive, so that she ended up accepting the cheating.

“He [her husband] was never monogamous. He always had an affair or two on the side. I always knew about those affairs throughout our relationship. Every now and again it would blow up like Hiroshima, but I still stayed with him. So, our tenth year [together] was a leap year. Everyone just said that we ran out of excuses and we got married. I knew about all the floozies in between. Two days before the wedding I was at the flower market buying flowers for the wedding and, that morning, I discovered another floozy. I spoke to a friend of mine and she asked what I was going to do. I said, ‘I am going to do nothing. I will do like every other woman and ignore it and carry on’. It is what it is. He will never change”.

The passivity does in some instances change, as the frequency of the infidelity increases. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, tells how she sought personal sexual fulfillment due to her husband's infidelity. She recalled:

“So, I thought if he wants to fuck other people, then he can do it there [at a swingers club] and, at the same time, I can enjoy myself. So, I eventually took him and we went [to the swingers club] a couple of times. I said to him, ‘Listen... you are always having these affairs ... I am trying to give you a chance to do what you like, while I can enjoy myself at the same time. And that didn't go well for him. So, after about three months we stopped going to [the swinger's club].”

She continues that this resulted in her husband's stringent policing of her movements. She notes:

“Two months later [after stopping the visits to the swingers club] I lost my job and I was, as I call it, under house arrest. I stayed at home and I was only allowed to go to shops and pick up the kids. And that was me for three years.”

The strain in their relationship spilled over into the relationship between her husband and their eldest daughter. After catching her father having an affair:

“They [husband and daughter] started fighting. He became more violent. Eventually he grabbed her by the throat and that is where I took the kids and walked out. Both my kids landed up in the psych ward and attempted suicide and, all that kind of kak. It was a very abusive relationship in the last three years before I left. Three weeks after I moved out, I was back at the swingers club. And that was that.”

She therefore engages in CNM to fulfil her need of multiple partners. Other participants alluded to the need for multiple partners too, as stated in section 5.2.2.1.3.

5.3 THE ENABLERS OF CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGRAMY

Although certain types of events and interactions have been suggested as pathways into CNM, further analysis of the data suggests that there are various characteristics that create a disposition or enable a CNM lifestyle.

5.3.1 Criticism of institutionalised heterosexual hegemony

Perceptions of monogamy are linked to the participants’ partiality to CNM. From the findings, it was clear that some of the participants ascribed their cynicism about monogamy to their past experiences with said romantic relationships (e.g., **Participant 23** and **Participant 27**). **Participant 27**, a divorced heterosexual male in a current long-term relationship, engaged in romantic relationships with an idealistic notion that the relationship would last forever, and that they would love and be loved by only their partner: *“You know when you come out of school and you meet somebody and you are going to have children together and die together and it is all moonshine and roses.”* However, many of these initial romantic relationships ended because of infidelity. **Participant 27** continued in his discussion and noted: *“And nine months later there was huge disappointment [partner cheated on him] and that shattered my crystal ball completely.”* **Participant 23**, a married heterosexual man, also experienced this. He was shocked that his partner wanted sex with another person:

“I was taken by surprise and was extremely upset. My wife went to club the first time on her own to explore without my knowledge. She then suggested we

engage in the lifestyle. My answer was a perfect NO. I made an appointment with my pastor where it was decided that an exorcism had to be performed on her.”

This infidelity and knowledge that their romantic partners desired another person changed the perceptions that the participants held of monogamy. This was perfectly elucidated by **Participant 27** after discovering his school sweetheart had cheated on him:

“I said if that is the case with this whole monogamous bullshit story, then I am not part of it. For me this monogamous getting married story is a failed contract. Fatally flawed. If I love you unconditionally, then I must accept you unconditionally. So if you have an urge to have sex with another man, then I must accept that unconditionally as part of who you are.”

In CNM, the concept of monogamy is furthermore perceived to have two levels. The symbolic meaning of monogamy within the swingers’ paradigm distinguishes between emotional monogamy and sexual monogamy. Unlike the monogamous relationship, which is characterised by emotional and sexual monogamy, a CNM relationship requires only emotional monogamy and permits sexual non-monogamy – depending, of course, on the negotiation between the couple. This was mentioned by **Participant 14**, a single homosexual male, who said: *“I think the deal breaker is really that we don’t become emotionally involved with the people that we play with. In a sense, we are emotionally monogamous”*. Similarly, **Participant 19**, a married bisexual woman, stated:

“I don’t know – to be quite honest with you, they don’t have to be drop dead gorgeous. But, if I see there is a major, major [emotional] connection, I watch and I see and, but basically, there have been those two girls that I don’t trust him with. But that is it.”

There are conditions for what is considered acceptable non-monogamous interaction, which specifically excludes emotional bonding with outside parties.

Furthermore, a gender difference is evident among the participants in terms of how emotional monogamy is considered. Women deem the boundaries of emotional monogamy to be transgressed when their partner engages in excessive verbal interaction and displays of overt sexual attraction to the swinging partner. This is clear from the following quote by **Participant 19**. They said,

"I don't know – to be quite honest with you, they don't have to be drop dead gorgeous because the one girl was not, but [her husband] had such a strong physical attraction to her – but I think it was also an emotional attraction... but if I see there is a major major connection ... [trouble]".

Men, on the other hand, regard their partner as transgressing the emotional monogamy boundary when they want to explore CNM or alternative sexual partners on their own – because that is viewed as negating the presence (of the husband) within the married couple. **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual female, illustrated this by sharing a personal experience as follows: *"[My husband] was taken by surprise and was extremely upset when he found out I went to a club on my own without his knowledge"*.

5.3.2 Rejection of religion

Another factor that enabled the CNM lifestyle is the rejection of Christian religion, specifically in relation to its taboos on sexual relations between the couple and other parties. In some instances, participants (**Participant 7** and **Participant 18**) view religion as enforcing an unnatural state of being (enforced monogamy), as **Participant 7**, a divorced bisexual female, commented:

"Yes, religion has caused a lot of the problems especially with the notion that man has to be monogamous. Millenials are not necessarily religious. They don't have that indoctrination that you find in the older generation".

This creates a division between monogamy (enforced indoctrination of preserving the sacredness of sex between a married couple) and CNM (consensual sex with third parties without harming the married couple). This was best explained by **Participant 18**, a married heterosexual woman:

"The bible obviously tells you that you have to stay with one partner. So, yes. I do think that there will be clashes within yourself and your beliefs. And, that, is also a big thing for us with religion and the swinging lifestyle. It kinda just happened for us. We found there are a lot more hypocrites in the religion arena than there are actually in the swinging lifestyle".

This division between monogamy as a religious instruction that forbids adultery and CNM, where sexual variety is considered the natural state of being, became the enabler for pursuing CNM to relieve the perceived forced unnatural state of monogamy. **Participant 7** explained: *“There would be no need to swing if we were meant to be monogamous – everybody would be happy with one partner.”*

5.4 SWINGING CHALLENGES

The challenges involved in the swingers’ lifestyle touched on three main elements: i.e., social challenges, personal challenges, and marital challenges. Each of these categories comprises themes and sub-themes. This suggests that the challenges associated with a CNM relationship are layered with complexity with respect to the relationship structures, which include the relationships between primary partners (marital challenges), relationships between CNM participants (personal challenges) and relationships between CNM participants and their direct families and friends/society, amongst others (social challenges).

5.4.1 Personal challenges

Some participants had to overcome personal challenges as they entered the CNM lifestyle, such as negative body perceptions (**Participant 11** and **Participant 26**), and the trauma of divorce or infidelity (**Participant 19**).

5.4.1.1 Body image

Although swinging is recognised as a lifestyle that offers a safe space to be your authentic self, some participants stated that, especially in the early stages of their CNM lifestyle journey, their body image was a particular challenge. This point was well expressed by **Participant 11**, a married bisexual woman: *“Oh yes, definitely. In the beginning I was very shy because I have stretch marks. I have had two children”*.³³ Analysis of the data suggests that this challenge was especially common among many of the fuller-figured swingers, as elucidated by **Participant 26**, a married heterosexual woman: *“I was dead against it because I am a fuller-figured woman.”*

³³ Afrikaans original: “Ja-nee, beslis. In die begin was ek maar baie skaam want ek het rekmerke. Ek het twee kinders gehad”.

Within this context, the data suggests that their concerns were not unfounded, as participants commonly reported that there is a physique bias within the South African swingers' communities. Larger and fuller figured women are less likely to be found attractive as opposed to thinner, more petite women. **Participant 7**, a divorced bisexual woman, exemplified this view when she stated: *"I don't like people that are overweight – although I am chubby myself. But for me it just shows that you don't look after yourself."* Likewise, when **Participant 12**, a married heterosexual male, was asked about his preferences, he responded, *"Petite to medium build, ... I don't feel attracted to [larger women]."* This is compounded by some clubs who have physical criteria for entry. The data suggests that some clubs may be excluding the fuller-figured person, in particular women, and promoting admission of thinner more petite women. This trend is evident in the response of **Participant 25**, a divorced heterosexual male: *"If they are overweight – I think they experience a lot of frustration because they are not invited in."*

5.4.1.2 Trauma

Trauma is not only a catalyst of entry into the CNM lifestyle but is also prevalent as a challenge within the lifestyle. The data suggests that even within a CNM lifestyle, traumatic relationship events can take place that adversely affect the participants in the CNM relationship. When the ethos of swinging is transgressed (i.e., the formation of emotional attachments to swinging partners occurs), a termination of that relationship triangle may result in emotional trauma, which ultimately changes the perceptions of the swinger. In some instances, it changed the play style of the couple as was noted by **Participant 19**, a bisexual married woman:

"So, when this all fell by the way side, I was terribly devastated. And that is when I said to [my husband], that going forward, we will shag and release."

Not only does it alter perceptions, but in some instances, it may lead to divorce or even self-loathing and guilt. Furthermore, the severing of emotional attachments within the CNM lifestyle is experienced in a similar manner as a primary relationship breakup. The same feelings of loss, helplessness and bewilderment are commonly present, as highlighted by **Participant 19**:

“Well, that is actually what happened after the seven-year friendship relationship we had with the single guy. I was devastated – because he was like part and parcel of the family. I mean, we went on holidays together”.

Participant 13, a divorced heterosexual female, described a similar experience:

“I phoned him and asked him what he was doing. He said, no, he had to go someplace. I then asked, ‘Oh, is so and so here today?’. He said, ‘No, not at all’. Those were his exact words. And I said, ‘You know what, you are lying. I am actually outside’. I started crying.”

The trauma of being lied to was overwhelming and left her emotionally broken: *“I put the phone down – and started driving away. I actually passed out from all the emotion. My son had to pull up the hand brake and get me over onto the other side.”* The repercussion of the trauma also left her feeling that her body was not perfect, feeling let down and betrayed: *“I am not a very small woman. For me it was not that he let me down. She let me down because I actually loved this woman.”*

5.4.1.3 Faking an orgasm

Some women who participate in CNM, fake orgasms. A male orgasm is visible through the ejaculation, whereas a female orgasm is not visible and, therefore, a faked orgasm is in most cases undetectable. The pretence is facilitated by what transpires during the process of faking the orgasm. The data suggests that, in some instances, the faking of the orgasm is intended to preserve the feelings of the partner the woman is engaging with. When he is experienced as a less than ideal lover, as **Participant 7**, a divorced female club owner, explained: *“Yes. When the sex isn't great or there's just not a good connection and, you want to get it over with but not hurt anyone's feelings [women fake their orgasm].”* In other instances, women fake their orgasms in an effort to hide feelings of sexual performance inadequacy, due to flawed perceptions of what sex with a swinging partner must be like. This was described by **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual female, who said: *“With me it is a case of performance fear. All the aspects are there but I think I set the bar so high for myself that I fail.”*

5.4.1.4 Concealing erectile dysfunction

Some male participants conceal the onset of erectile dysfunction, which places undue stress on the unsuspecting partner with whom they are engaging. In some instances, it leaves the swinging partner feeling inadequate because they do not realise that it is not of their own doing. To counteract the feelings of inadequacy, the woman pretends to enjoy the experience. **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual woman, discussed this as follows: *“Yes most definitely. We tend to make it our problem if he cannot “get it on” and even though we know that it should not be it still is.”* In other instances, it might offer an opportunity to explore other means of sexual play without penetration. **Participant 28**, a divorced heterosexual female in a committed relationship, offered the following example: *“Make as if erectile dysfunction does not exist and make use of what is available (hand, hug, body hug, kiss, etc.)”.*

5.4.1.5 Condom use

For some participants in the CNM lifestyle, condoms are considered essential and non-negotiable. However, there are instances where the use of condoms is seen only as a method of birth control, meaning that some participants do not use condoms at all. The prevalence of oral sex contributes to this. It is performed without the use of condoms and part of the sexual play within the CNM lifestyle. However, STIs can be transmitted through oral sex too. Sexual health and safety within CNM centre more on knowing who you are having sexual encounters with rather than random encounters using condoms as protection. **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual female, best explained this notion in the following excerpt:

“Condoms was for us the answer but after speaking with urologists and doctors it does not make sense. It really only is a precaution for pregnancy. If you have oral sex, then you can also get an STI. So, trust is a big issue. When playing you need to know who you are playing with. Strangers are a no, no”.

5.4.2 Marital challenges

It became apparent during my interviews that swingers often face a number of marital challenges. These include challenges specific to a CNM lifestyle and marital challenges not related to CNM. Challenges specific to the lifestyle pertain to the belief that CNM might “fix a broken relationship” as mentioned by **Participant 1** and **Participant 13**.

Another challenge associated with CNM is the disharmony people experience during the initial stages of entering the lifestyle (**Participant 7**), transgressing racial barriers (**Participant 15**), as well as the challenges associated with negotiating a playstyle suited to both partners (**Participant 22** and **Participant 23**). Challenges not unique to CNM, included infidelity (**Participant 25** and **Participant 26**), jealousy (**Participant 25** and **Participant 17**), and the effects of, among other factors, erectile dysfunction on the sexual relationship of the couple (**Participant 12**).

5.4.2.1 Challenges not unique to a consensual non-monogamous relationship

5.4.2.1.1 Cheating

There is a dichotomy regarding the symbolic meaning of the concepts of cheating between couples in CNM relationships and couples in monogamous relationships. In a CNM relationship, cheating is assumed when a partner breaches the boundaries of emotional connection rather than a sexual connection. **Participant 14**, a single homosexual male said: *“I think the deal breaker is really that we don’t become emotionally involved with the people that we play with. In a sense we are emotionally monogamous”*. However, in a monogamous relationship, the breaching of boundaries includes sexual and emotional connections. No third person is accepted into the space of the married couple. The analysed data further suggest that the reason why crossing the emotional boundary within the CNM relationships is construed as a deal breaker is because it is thought of as evolving into a relationship or affair, which is seen as cheating under the guise of swinging. **Participant 7**, a divorced woman and club owner, spoke to this. She noted,

“Let me explain to you – the cheating is an emotional cheating. So, to have sex with somebody is fine ... the partner is fine with it. But when you want to get more personal with that person because now you hit it off with that person, there is a connection there. So, instead of keeping as play, it now becomes more of an emotional connection. Now they want to go out and have coffee with the person. They want to engage as a person, as an emotional connection – not so much as for sex”.

These narratives potentially indicate that when swingers form an emotional bond, it transgresses the boundaries of swinging and evolves into what is deemed “falling in love”

with the other person – a consequence **Participant 19** and **Participant 25** are wary of. According to them, in such cases relationships are maintained under the ‘guise’ of swinging, which they consider as a “breach” of trust and swinging rules. **Participant 25**, a divorced heterosexual male, shared recollections of personal experiences pertaining to the topic: *“I have seen guys fall in love with play partners and then disguise it as swinging. Women too.”* **Participant 19**, a married bisexual female, elaborated on the consequences of this ‘emotional bond transgression’: *“I do think there are swingers that cheat because we have seen lots of friends who have cheated on their partners with other peoples’ partners. They have split up and the cheating parties have paired up”*.

In keeping with the theme of cheating, there may be various reasons for crossing the relational boundaries with swinging partners. One of these factors is the ease with which clubs facilitate encounters for those who are possibly cheating. Events such as “DTF”, (i.e., day time fun) are purported to be notorious for catering to cheating spouses. **Participant 13**, a divorced heterosexual female, commented on this as follows:

“You have daytime fun with guys that will go to the club during the day. Obviously, they are catering for the ones that are doing it without permission. You actually get a lot of that”.

On the surface, this is connected to the challenge of singles who are admitted into the clubs. The perception is that they become attached, and that they then start transgressing the “non-negotiable” rule of maintaining emotional monogamy. **Participant 19** clearly stated this: *“Singles get attached”*. **Participant 27** echoed this sentiment. Singles who, according to him, give *“themselves out as swingers, [to them], I say sorry, you are only a toy, not a swinger. And that is a problem. So these singles come in hoping to meet someone”*. They tend to treat CNM like a dating agency – which it is not. The consequences of such affairs are not that different from those experienced by persons in monogamous relationships. The affairs may result in divorce and painful emotional guilt and shame. **Participant 26** illustrated this as follows:

“I did it without my partner’s 100% consent [since] I was told so many times to do what makes me happy and, that my hubby was not a jealous man. I pushed the boundaries way too far. I ended-up regretting it. It took me two years to forgive myself and make things right with my partner.”

Participant 26 ended the affair and found a workable solution to prevent a recurrence. She recalled:

“We [now] play together and we do not rush in, we believe that we have to take things slow. Because it helps us to not make foolish choices. One person has to be the sensible one, one of you needs to be the handbrake so to speak or it can lead to problems.”

5.4.2.1.2 Jealousy

As a lifestyle, CNM is considered an activity that is expected to be mostly devoid of jealousy due to the openness of the relationship. However, the findings indicated that, similar to monogamous relationships, jealousy is a challenge that CNM couples also contend with.

In some instances, the emotion of jealousy results from some form of interaction that the observer's partner may have with another person, such as interaction that may be regarded as crossing boundaries or a comfort zone of the observer. Consider **Participant 16's** view in this regard:

“I am the plompy wife and here comes the plastic poppie with the big tits and hubby goes weak in the knees. Then the poppie goes to the bedroom with him and you can hear her scream a mile away and, it is all fake in any case. But then that will trigger your own insecurities. Jealousy, 99% of the time comes from your own insecurities. Where you are actually doing something that you are not comfortable with”.

In some instances, it may be as simple as a look or passing glance that is exchanged between two people, as **Participant 1**, a club owner, stated: *“Now you want to go into an environment where he is looking at somebody else or she is looking at somebody else, and the whole insecurity thing comes up.”* When this emotion is not addressed, it may evolve into an expression of jealousy through verbal outbursts between the couple. These outbursts may in some cases escalate into aggression, an experience **Participant 22**, a heterosexual married female, commented on: *“We still had a problem as he himself played, but I was not allowed. He would go into a rage if I played with another man.”* In extreme instances it also creates an opportunity for conflict within the club setting, which

may then involve more than just the spouse/partner. **Participant 1**, a club owner, provided an example of this. She described it as follows:

"[Jealousy is] terrible! You know, as a club owner, you've got to step in at some point and, usually the couple sorts it out, because usually it is little things that are just stupid things. ... Sometimes, you just have to stop it there, because it can blow up in your face and it can be a problem".

Although **Participant 1** did not elaborate on how the situation can "blow up", **Participant 4**, a coloured single male in a committed relationship and patron of club said:

"Black couples won't play with other black couples because the guy would immediately feel insecure that he is maybe not as big as the other guy, and that right there is a problem because then the chances of them ending up in a fight [is real]".

Furthermore, the different genders express jealousy differently. On the one hand, men are more inclined to express jealousy in a physical way (such as by becoming confrontational), as **Participant 19**, a bisexual married female, experienced at a club party: "When [my husband] got upset at a party and threatened to leave me there if I did not leave now with him." On the other hand, women are more inclined to express jealousy verbally and towards the other women. **Participant 16** commented on this. She explained that "is where the jealousy issue comes in. The ladies as well. It is usually body issues – jissie, those girls can be fucking bitchy. The inner bitch just comes out". However, **Participants 4** and **5** indicated that they seek to navigate the jealousy by putting rules in place to protect the married couple from potential jealousy during their playspace time. **Participant 4** said: "So, when you approach a couple, you say this is our play dynamic – condom always on – so you already always know what the dynamic is." **Participant 5**, a bisexual divorced female added, there "is a discussion [on the rules] that happens upfront – it's not like everyone knows."

In some instances, the jealousy is curtailed through agreed-upon play rules. **Participants 22** and **23** (a married heterosexual couple), noted this:

"This is when we started discussing our rules. He had thousands – as I say joke wise – a Venter trailer full. I also undertook that I would not play first ever. He needed to be comfortable in the LS [i.e., he was with a partner he felt

comfortable with and attracted to] and go play first and only after that I would allow myself to have fun.”

In other instances, the type of interaction that may encourage jealousy is limited. The following excerpt provides proof of this. **Participant 15**, a married heterosexual male, said that his wife *“has often said to me that, if I like the woman, I must go to the room by myself, but I won’t do that because I won’t let [her] go by herself.”*

Jealousy also reared its head in the negative stereotyping of others’ physical characteristics. For some participants, certain physical characteristics in others are perceived as indicators of unacceptable behaviour traits, which elicits jealous reactions. This notion was illustrated by **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, who said

“It is normally about the other guy being better build or better endowed and his wife screams 10 tones higher than what he got. That is where the jealousy issue comes in. The ladies as well. It is usually body [physical] issues.”

However, the emotion of jealousy can also arise a response to certain behaviours, such as lying, breaking of trust and displaying disrespect. These negatively judged behaviours create suspicion in future actions, and may lead to feelings of insecurity as to the spouse’s intentions. It is that insecurity and suspicion that sparks the jealous outbursts. Jealousy and insecurity alter the respect between the married couple. Without respect, there can be no grounding for trust within a CNM setting, where trust is paramount to the success of the relationship. **Participant 27**, a divorced heterosexual male in a committed relationship, explained this as follows:

“Don’t lie to me’. That is why the lifestyle is attractive to me. It is open and honest – in other words you share your intimacy with me and you open up to me. I am part of it, you do not exclude me. So if you exclude me ... jealousy will be my reaction”.

While most of the jealousy triggers suggested by the analysed data pertain to some behaviour of the partner, further thematic analyses suggest that, in some instances, it is also related to the participants’ own behavioural patterns of engaging in interactions outside of their comfort zone. This was evident in the responses of **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female. It highlighted the need for absolute honesty, as it suggests that some participants may be coerced into participating in the lifestyle under

the guise of engaging with mutual consent. **Participant 22**, heterosexual married woman, elucidated this as follows: *"I also still have the worry that [my husband] would 'strip his moer'³⁴ if I played, even though he has no worry about my feelings on what, where and with whom he does anything."*

5.4.2.1.3 Erectile dysfunction

The occasional occurrence of erectile dysfunction among men is met with two responses by those engaged in CNM. In some instances, the partners agree to end the CNM lifestyle and seek other avenues for sexual satisfaction, particularly for women. **Participant 12**, a married heterosexual male, shared a story about how his swinging partner's husband's erectile dysfunction and prostate cancer diagnoses resulted in them ending their CNM lifestyle:

"The husband [of my swing partner] developed erectile disfunction and after the third time he developed medical problems. So, they decided if he cannot take part then we will suspend it for a while."

In other instances, the man will remain active in the lifestyle, but the playstyle changes. Said changes result in the renegotiation of men and women's roles during their playtime. Men with erectile dysfunction may then become primarily responsible for providing intimacy in this regard. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, speaks to this. She notes her experience with her playmate in this regard:

"But he has ED, so for him it is all just about satisfying me. So, I feel like an asshole because I am always just on the receiving end. I am a very touchy-feely kind of person. So, you don't often find that in the lifestyle, so that is where I get my hugs and kisses."

5.4.2.2 Challenges unique to consensual non-monogamy

Due to the perceived liberal nature of a CNM relationship, certain challenges appear to be unique to the lifestyle. Predominantly appearing in the initial stages of CNM, it includes conflict surrounding the suggestion of entering the lifestyle when one of the parties is not open to the suggestion, the perception that CNM can fix a broken

³⁴ Slang or swear word used to denote someone getting very angry.

relationship and the negotiating of a playstyle. Without skilful navigation through these challenges in a manner that meets each member of the couple's needs and expectations, the transition into the lifestyle may not be beneficial to the married couple.

5.4.2.2.1 The myth that consensual non-monogamy fixes broken relationships

Some participants were of the opinion that CNM can fix a broken relationship (**Participant 7**), whereas others noted that it may result in the relationship ending altogether (**Participant 25**). Couples with troubled relationships may be unable to discuss boundaries, expectations and levels of interaction, which becomes the catalyst for disharmony in the process of engaging in CNM. **Participant 25**, a heterosexual divorced male, explained this as follows:

"You see so many times that couples think swinging will fix the problem. Above that is trust. You need trust between the parties. Couples need 100% trust and 100% communication. This [swinging] is about recreation. If there is just 1% that is not in sync [between the married couple], it is game over".

However, **Participant 7**, a divorced female and club owner, contends otherwise:

"... what I would say. If you do have problems in your marriage and you feel that swinging ... can fix it but guided into it by ... a sexologist or a psychiatrist or a psychologist, if you have that guidance and you have the communication before, ... after and, in between, I think it can. I really think it can. But you have to be guided."

5.4.2.2.2 Disharmony associated with the initial stages of entering the lifestyle

Although the idea is that both partners in a couple should enter CNM consensually and willingly, the data suggests that the initial stages of entry into CNM may be characterised by disharmony between the married couple, particularly when one partner is not open to the idea and requires coaxing. This was elucidated by **Participant 7**: "At first it was like WOOOH WHAT?? Lets just figure this out. Firstly what is it and how does it work dah, dah, dah, and then why." **Participant 17**, a married heterosexual male, added the

following: *“However, it was my wife who required the most convincing when we started [with CNM]”*.³⁵

Initial disharmony also seems to stem from the expectations the couple had from swinging versus what they experience in reality. This was evident in the narrative of **Participants 22** and **16**. In the case of **Participant 22**, a heterosexual married woman, her husband had expectations he later retracted:

“Both of us never had sexual partners before each other. I was very curious on what having sex with another person was like. [My husband] was of the opinion that all vaginas and all penises looked and acted the same. And, ‘Oh, boy! Was he wrong’.”

However, in the case of **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual woman, her husband was not willing to engage in swinging. He rather sought out illicit affairs:

“So I said to him listen... you are always having these affairs ... I am trying to give you a chance to do what you like while I can enjoy myself at the same time. And that didn’t go well for him.”

The participant later separated from her husband, as explained earlier, as the relationship became physically abusive. However, once a couple engage in clear communication about expectations and needs, they start to alter their boundaries automatically as **Participant 7** explained: *“Yes – it does. But they also establish boundaries as they go along and the boundaries shift as they gain experience [in the lifestyle].”*

Club owners do try to assist ‘newbies’ when they enter into the lifestyle by means of concise communication and instruction as to how the lifestyle works and what the pitfalls are. This was articulated by **Participant 7** who said:

“My first two venues, when we first started out, we had already been in the lifestyle a while and we had already bumped our heads a few times. We decided that we were going to introduce swinging to the newbies. Take them through the steps and explain to them what it is and how it works, [i.e.,] what

³⁵ Afrikaans original: “Maar die vrou is die een wat dit die meeste gevat om te oortuig toe ons begin het.”

to look out for, what you are going to be feeling, and how to communicate with each other. We used to do this – like really.”

5.4.2.2.3 Negotiating a playstyle

Another challenging aspect for married couples who embark on a CNM lifestyle is that of negotiating a playstyle at the onset of entering the lifestyle. Participants identified multiple CNM playstyles. These include, among others, a soft swap (just petting and no penetration), as **Participant 24**, heterosexual married female, described: *“Yes, we do not have intercourse with the other couple. We only swing in the presence of our partner, same room swapping.”* The converse to soft swap is referred to as full swap (penetrative sex), as stated by **Participant 13**, a divorced heterosexual female, *“Currently full swap definitely [penetrative sex]. I like to play separately with the man and also in the pool.”* Some participants prefer to play in the same room with another couple as **Participant 10**, a married heterosexual male, stated: *“Our rule is we play together – same room, same everything”*.³⁶ The opposite to playing in the same room, is playing in separate rooms with random people. **Participant 6**, a divorced heterosexual male, elaborated more on this playstyle: *“It would be separate rooms. But it would be full sexual relations.”* Each of the playstyles comes with a set of advantages and limitations. **Participant 4** explained what may be expected with a same room playstyle:

“And there is a discomfort of seeing that person (your partner) with someone else, it’s changing the dynamic of the situation. Because it is going to create more animosity, create more doubt. It’s going to create more jealousy and insecurity.”

However, for **Participant 24**, same room interaction was preferred because *“Same room is for basic safety precautions.”* For **Participant 18**, a married heterosexual woman, the playstyle changed from same room to separate room as they gained experience in the lifestyle:

“We initially started in the same room because we were new and didn’t really know what to expect. But you quickly learn that we each have different preferences and things like that. And sometimes he is attracted to a woman and I am not attracted to her husband and then it doesn’t work. And we also

³⁶ Afrikaans original: “Ons reël is ons doen dit saam; dieselfde vertrek alles”.

found that it is extremely difficult in the lifestyle to find two couples that are exactly compatible with each others partners. So we decided no – its not gonna work”.

An additional challenge for couples is finding play partners that would match the (often differing) sexual styles and expectations of *both* partners. For some people, a spontaneous physical attraction is sufficient to warrant a sexual encounter, as **Participant 8**, a married heterosexual woman described it:

“I don’t enjoy planning play sessions – if we go to a club – in the spur of the moment we would join a couple [that we find attractive] in a room – they don’t know who we are, I will never see them again. If I do see them next week I will anyway not remember.”

If they like what they see, they will initiate and engage sexually. For other people, it takes a solid, meaningful conversation, often more than one, which may lead to a mental attraction that leads to physical arousal, which in turn may lead to a sexual encounter. This was illustrated by **Participant 20**, a married heterosexual male: *“Seduce my mind and the body will follow.”*

It follows that this may cause friction between a couple if one is visually stimulated and one is mentally stimulated. The friction will arise where the visually stimulated partner is easier to arouse and engages more readily than the mentally stimulated one, as **Participant 3**, a divorced bisexual male, explained: *“Because the one is like this [mentally stimulated] and the other like that [visually stimulated]. And this leads to fighting and arguing.”*³⁷

5.4.3 Social challenges

Social challenges affect the relationships between the participants and those with their friends, families and society. One of the social activities in the CNM lifestyle is club interactions. Emerging from the interviews analysed, is the suggestion that some have the perception that clubs may inadvertently be exploitative. Furthermore, social

³⁷ Afrikaans original: “Want een is so, en een so. En kort-kort is dit ’n bakleiery en ’n stoeiery”.

challenges occur with respect to race, religion and sexual orientation, as is described in this section.

5.4.3.1 Heteronormativity: challenging male bisexual orientation in CNM

It was evident from the interviews that two views were represented with the theme of acceptance of male bisexuality. On the one hand, CNM is reportedly a safe space to explore sexual fluidity and bisexuality, as suggested by **Participant 1**, a coloured single female who is a fetish club owner:

“Swinging on the other hand is – it is a lot of – a lot of people is into swinging because of the freedom sexually that you get. The experiences that you get. The different dynamics that you could experience – it’s in that – you know – be that with another lady, be that with another couple, be it on your own, another man, whatever. That is swinging.”

Conversely, the other view suggests a strong heteronormative undercurrent. **Participant 27**, a divorced male, gave an example of a typical heteronormative response where any interaction with a bisexual man would not be tolerated: *“Not by a long shot NO! I do not have a negative thing about homosexuality – I respect him for what he is. I communicate my straightness. Do not make a pass at me.”* A similar view was held by **Participant 12**, a married male, *“Swinging has created an element for potential bisexuality exploration, but I do not – I am not comfortable with that. So I will keep it heterosexual for myself.”* This view is not only prevalent among heterosexual men, it seems to surface among the heterosexual women too, as **Participant 18**, a heterosexual married woman said: *“The women are more likely to say no to watching two men getting it on. I think there is a big difference between two men going at it and two women going at it.”*

However, it would seem that the heteronormativity is biased as expressed by the men. This is best described by **Participant 14**, a homosexual single male in a committed relationship, as follows:

“I remember distinctly we were in the dark room [a play style room at a swingers club] and then there was this brief mention that that little room is the bisexual play room, and let’s move on. I remember distinctly the nervous laughter from all the men in the group. The laughter stuck with me and I thought about it afterwards – I think that part of the reason for that laughter is – it is

[bisexuality] not something men can admit to. I thought about it and I think the problem is machisimo."

Participant 14 went on to explain what he felt the reason was for machisimo attitudes among heterosexual people:

"During the apartheid era, it was illegal to have any form of homosexual relationships. I grew up in that society. And then, off course. I went into the theatre. I think it is just easier [in theatre] to be open about it [homosexuality]. Or it certainly was at that time. So I started meeting people who identified as gay – and some were really nice people. I think the thing is no straight person has ever been asked, 'When did you discover you were straight?' It is a process of self-discovery that someone who is straight never has to go through. Whereas most gay people, have a process to go through. I am different. Why am I different? What makes me different? How do I become comfortable with this? There is, [in my opinion], no female equivalent to machisimo. For a woman to be bisexual, does not change her female essence. But there is this machisimo that comes down to as blunt as, 'men fuck women and if you don't fuck women you are not a man'".

However, for **Participant 3**, a divorced coloured bisexual male, the reason for the bias was *"Because I am afraid to tell them – guys I am bi – so I rather not talk about it. Because in most cases – most men are bi. There is something about men that [says] he is bi – even if he says he is not, he is".*³⁸ This suggests that heteronormativity is prevalent in CNM as far as bisexuality in men is concerned. As a result, the CNM lifestyle may not necessarily be as accepting of all sexual orientations as is perceived.

While some participants denied their bisexuality, or were scared to admit it, others justified their orientation religiously or rejected religion. In some instances, participants changed their religious orientation to accommodate their bisexual or homosexual orientation: **Participant 21** noted the following: *"I was brought up Roman Catholic, but due to being gay, I am now agnostic"*. In doing so, participants reject religious norms that advocate against bisexuality. Some participants used religious doctrines to justify the essence of their bisexuality. This was best illustrated by **Participant 3**, a divorced bisexual coloured

³⁸ Afrikaans original: "Want ek is nou bang om vir hulle te sê, ouens ek is bi, so ek gaan nou nie daar praat nie."

man, who said: “*The bi is not about being a ‘moffie’³⁹ – No. It is something sexual that God put in you*”.⁴⁰

However, despite the various justifications and denials, it would seem that certain behaviours by some bisexual swingers created a negative perception of them. This perception was formed due to various interactions where the bisexual partner crossed the boundaries in a manner that was deemed as deceptive. **Participant 20**, a married heterosexual man, shared the following experience: “*We were in a threesome. He just leaned over her and began fondling me*”.⁴¹ This was also alluded to by **Participant 15**, a married heterosexual male, as follows: “*I just don’t like the idea of playing with someone that is bisexual or homosexual because you never know if the oak [guy] touches you on purpose or by accident*”.

While bisexuality is not unique to either gender, the analysed data suggests that there is a gender bias in the fulfilment of bisexual curiosities in men. The findings of this study showed that women are more likely to express the need to explore bisexuality than males. This was exemplified by **Participant 11**, a bisexual married woman: “*Yes – I am not curious. I was in the beginning. I am now bisexual*”.⁴² Another example of the ease with which women can express their bisexuality was shared by **Participant 25**, a divorced heterosexual male: “*The other interesting one was that my first wife was seven years older. She was bi and she was the one who would get the girls home and she would seduce them big time.*” While female bisexuality is regarded as more acceptable than male bisexuality, which **Participant 14**, a bisexual single male, attributed to “[f]emale bisexuality is very titivating and everybody is cool with it,” male bisexuality is deemed as an example of men negating their hegemonic and dominant masculinity ideals. This was expressed by **Participant 14**: “*For a woman to be bisexual does not change her female essence. But there is this machisimo that comes down to as blunt as “men fuck women and if you don’t fuck women you are not a man*”. The latter provides one reason why men’s bisexuality is not socially tolerated. Furthermore, the repercussions of the intolerance becomes tangible when the bisexual man experiences fear of rejection from their friends and society if they express a desire to pursue or explore bisexuality. This

³⁹ Derogatory term used for homosexuality.

⁴⁰ Afrikaans original: “Die bi gaan nie ek is ’n moffie nie, nee. *It’s a* – iets *sexual* wat die Here in jou ingesit.”

⁴¹ Afrikaans original: “Ons was in ’n *threesome* gewees. Hy het toe begin oor haar hang en my bevroetel. Wat my afgepis het was dat die reëls sê jy moet eers vra – jy vroetel nie net nie.”

⁴² Afrikaans original: “Ja – ek is nie curious nie. Ek was in die begin. Ek is nou biseksueel.”

was elucidated by **Participant 3**, who shared his fear of being exposed as bisexual to his friends: *“Because I am afraid to tell them, guys I am bi – so I do not talk about it. I then feel my way through encounters and see if I can find a bi partner whom I can play with”*.⁴³ Therefore male bisexuals are not as willing to express their desire to explore bisexuality for fear of rejection by their social groups and peers.

5.4.3.2 Swingers’ clubs and exploitation: Fact or fiction?

Despite swingers’ clubs being thought of as a safe space to explore sexual fantasies and experiences, the study findings suggest that there is a subtle exploitative undercurrent involving drugs, alcohol abuse and the admission of singles into swingers’ clubs.

5.4.3.2.1 Drug abuse

Swingers’ clubs may inadvertently provide a space for certain categories of professionals – such as medical doctors – to introduce recreational drugs into the swing scene. The access these medical doctors have to the recreational drugs, coupled with the easy-going setting of a swingers’ club, creates an ideal opportunity for the sale and distribution of drugs. The following excerpt details a particular event experienced by **Participant 8**, a bisexual married Muslim female, illustrating the ease with which a medical practitioner offered recreational drugs during a play session at a club: *“I mean, the last play session that we had was with a doctor and, in the middle of this, he offers us poppers⁴⁴!”*, which enforced her perception that clubs may create a space for drug use.

5.4.3.2.2 Alcohol abuse

The sale of alcohol serves two purposes. It is a source of revenue for the club, as well as a ‘crutch’ for some swingers who experience discomfort with certain CNM situations. As a revenue source, its consumption and sale at the clubs is not restricted and there is no limit to how much a patron may consume. A patron may abuse the privilege to buy and consume alcohol, becoming intoxicated to the point where they lose focus of the purpose of the event and conduct themselves inappropriately. **Participant 26**, a heterosexual married female, recalled of a specific club excursion where they witnessed the effects of

⁴³ Afrikaans original: “Want ek is nou bang om vir hulle te sê – guys ek is bi – so ek gaan nou nie daar praat nie, so ek gaan nou voel – kyk dit is hoekom ek nou ’n partner kry wat miskien bi is dan kan ek met hulle speel.”

⁴⁴ Poppers are substances that are used recreationally to induce feelings of euphoria during sexual intercourse. It is also associated with anal sex practices, particularly in the gay community, insofar as it relaxes the anal muscles (Urban Dictionary, 2023).

excessive alcohol consumption: *“Also there was too much drinking and they [the drunk patrons] lost track of why we where there [at the swingers club].”*

The use of alcohol as a source of courage is most prevalent in a club setting and is particularly prevalent among swingers who are not secure in their boundaries and interaction rules. Furthermore, the use of alcohol as a crutch makes users susceptible to out-of-character behaviour, because the alcohol diminishes their inhibitions. They are then prone to engaging in sexual behaviour, which they would not normally consider. This was illustrated by **Participant 8**, a married bisexual Indian woman, who described the following personal encounter at a club:

“And you could tell that the woman [white] was not all that chatty. She gave me the up-and-down look and that was it. So, we carried on – and did not mix with them. But then, after they had gotten pissed, she came to look for us. But then, [the white lady] was all touchy feely with my husband.”

Furthermore, the excessive consumption of alcohol made some participants incapable of exercising the discretion and restraint required when frequenting a swingers’ club. **Participant 3**, a divorced bisexual coloured man, elucidated the effects of excessive amounts of alcohol consumption: *“But it depends on if you are sober. If you are intoxicated, then you can’t stop”*.⁴⁵

5.4.3.2.3 The cheating element

Although some participants perceive CNM as a lifestyle free of infidelity and cheating, the reality is quite the opposite. Cheating is prevalent in the swingers’ lifestyle and may be inadvertently encouraged by certain admission criteria and activities arranged by clubs. There is a perception that the admission of single persons or married persons frequenting the club without their spouse creates the potential for cheating. It is suggested that these single players are either playing without permission, or are partner to a cheating spouse. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual, explained the reasons behind the negative perceptions regarding the single and solo playing swingers: *“I don’t enjoy solo flyers because of the lying that goes with it. He had to lie to her to get out of the house in the*

⁴⁵ Afrikaans original: “Maar dit hang af of jy nugter is. As jy dronk is, kan jy nie stop nie”.

first place. And I don't appreciate that. If he can lie to her, what else are you going to lie about."

Such cheating was found to cause personal psychological discomfort and guilt. In some instances, the cheater experiences guilt and shame over their actions, because they know their actions were wrong. **Participant 3**, divorced bisexual man, stated *"You feel the following day it was wrong – it was not nice – it was not okay, because you are not 100% in this thing"*.⁴⁶ Cheating also strains and damages the primary relationship in ways that often require years to repair. This was the case in the marriage **Participant 26**, a married, heterosexual woman. After explaining how much her cheating hurt her husband, she said *"It took me two years to forgive myself and make things right with my partner"*.

In some instances, the aftermath of cheating has far-reaching effects on the marriage and the couple itself. The reality of the cheating forces the couple to review their relationship in its entirety. In some instances, the honesty of the relationship review leads to divorce. **Participant 4**, a single heterosexual coloured man in a committed relationship, explained the process of facing the reality of what cheating does: *"So when you take all the layers and bullshit off, and its just the pure truth, which is why a lot of people get divorced – because they see the truth"*.

5.4.3.2.4 Single men exploiting female swingers

Some participants have the perception that some single men may exploit the club setting. This exploitation can take place in one of two ways. The first is by using the club as a means to obtain free sex, rather than having to pay for the services of a prostitute. This notion was plainly stated by **Participant 14**, a bisexual single male: *"You are always going to get guys who think it is a cheap whorehouse"*. The second abuse is using the club as a dating agency in a setting where there is an NSA (no strings attached) ethos. **Participant 27** elucidated this, as mention before.

5.4.3.2.5 Exploitation and discrimination of singles

The preceding theme discusses the perceived exploitative behaviour of some single men who attend swingers' clubs. However, contrary that perception, some of these single men feel that the clubs discriminate against them. Not only are these single men required to

⁴⁶ Afrikaans original: "Want jy voel net die volgende dag dit was verkeerd – dit was nie lekker – dit was nie *alright* nie – want jy is nie 100% in die ding nie".

pay an entry price equal to that of a couple, but in some instances, they may be refused entry to a club entirely. Furthermore, unlike single women, single men have no guarantee that they will be invited to engage with other participants. This was elucidated by **Participant 14**, a homosexual single male, who shared his personal experience as a single swinger:

“Because I largely play on my own – the clubs are more geared to couples. Single men pay as much as a couple and single women pay half of what a couple pays. There is a very clear thing with the clubs. Some of the clubs have a thing that single men can’t go – period. I sort of understand why – you are always going to get guys who think it is a cheap whorehouse. But at the same time – to cut out guys who could be an asset to the club seems to be short-sighted to me. All the clubs seem to encourage single women. They get privilege entry. I think the clubs can be a little tricky for a single man”.

Despite the perception of some single male swingers that single female swingers are privileged when it comes to a club setting, some single swinger women perceive the clubs as exploitative spaces. This perception seems to stem from the idea that single women are used as bait to attract couples who wish to engage in threesomes and for married women who wish to explore bisexual curiosities. In order to encourage single women to be part of the scene, they are only charged half the price. This may result in there being more single women than men in the club, which may expose the single women to possible exploitation or abuse. **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual woman, explained why single women feel they are being exploited: *“Some of the clubs single women are really dished out like fresh meat or displayed like in a butchery shop. I don’t enjoy that”.*

5.4.3.3 Consensual non-monogamy and racial dynamics

Racial challenges are not limited to matters between races (interracial), but include challenges within each racial group (intraracial) as well. Interracial challenges may be attributed to cultural norms and mores, whereas intraracial challenges are mostly attributed to stereotypical behaviour perceptions of a race by members of that same race.

5.4.3.3.1 Interracial dynamics

Analysis of the interviews suggests that there is still some alignment with racial attitudes of apartheid among whites with respect to racial interaction. Swingers of colour prefer to

swing with mostly white persons, whereas the latter mainly prefer to only swing with other white persons. This may be attributed to the manner in which the participants were socialised regarding racial interaction. This was explained by **Participant 17**, a married heterosexual male, who said: *“Ag, I think it is as one says, as you are raised as an Afrikaner. And the Christian principles also play a role. Your upbringing as a white person in this country”*. This may suggest that social conditioning in relation to race is perpetuated across time. However, for persons of colour, sexual interactions with a white individual is considered a status symbol, which may stem from a “trophy paradigm”. **Participant 19**, a bisexual married female, illustrated this by simply stating: *“Black persons regard the whites as a trophy”*. **Participant 4**, a single heterosexual coloured male, suggests the following: *“So, it’s not because I want the white woman, I would rather play with a white woman, because I would be the man,”* which may serve as encouragement for swingers of colour to pursue sexual interactions with white swingers.

5.4.3.3.2 Intraracial dynamics

However, while black, Indian and coloured persons may *prefer* to engage with white persons, in practice they predominantly engage with other races and tend to avoid their own race when choosing swinging partners. This was elucidated by **Participant 4** who said: *“So you’ll have a lot of coloured couples in the swinging lifestyle, but they don’t play with other coloured couples”*. It was echoed by **Participant 8**, a married bisexual Indian women, who said: *“Uhm, I find my own race to be really narrowminded and very petty.”* These quotes allude to intrarace prejudice in the South African context. This prejudice may be ascribed to symbolic perceptions of race-specific behaviours and characteristics. **Participant 13**, a divorced, white heterosexual female, spoke of her perceptions of racial groups in South Africa:

“I am very aware of the differences between cultures. So, I find some cultures [black persons] are far more aggressive in their pursuit and in their behaviour within the sexual realm. I really respect the Afrikaans culture which is more respectful; the majority of swingers are Afrikaans. I am very aware of these cultural undercurrents.”

The perceived aggression of black and coloured men is related to penis size. It seems that black and coloured men perceive themselves as having large penises, and based on those perceptions, they take an aggressive stance when it comes to sex and sexual

prowess. However, it is this very factor that in some instances leads to intraracial prejudice, predominantly perpetuated by the men. Penis envy causes jealousy, which in turn creates the intraracial divide where races do not mix with their own for fear (insecurity) of having a smaller penis than that of their partner's playmate. It was not only the black men that were concerned with penis size and the ensuing envy. The data suggests that some coloured men are also prone to perceive their penis as larger than that of the other races – especially than that of the white men. The coloured men use their assessed penis size as a trump card over the white men, which was illustrated by **Participant 3**, a self-identified coloured, divorced bisexual male, in the following excerpt: *“A coloured man, has a weapon, his big penis. Truly, and that is what a white woman wants. A white woman is looking for a big penis. A nice stiff penis, and ... you do not get many white men with pig penises”*.⁴⁷ Although women do acknowledge that coloured and black men have bigger penises, they do not consider it a trump card. **Participant 5**, a divorced, bisexual coloured woman in a committed relationship recalled of one of her experiences with a coloured man:

“Like there's this couple [coloured] where the guy is just like so big and I said to him no – never again. It became painful after a while, and I said my safe word. As much as it was a certain level of fun, it wasn't fun any more because the guy was just that big [penis size].”

5.4.3.4 Non-lifestyle acquaintances/friends and the element of secrecy

There is an unspoken rule of secrecy in the swingers' community, where keeping their CNM lifestyle a secret from their non-lifestyle friends and family is a priority. **Participant 7**, a divorced, heterosexual woman who is also a club owner, described this as: *“Well you see you are not supposed to talk outside the lifestyle – you are not supposed to because you don't know who that person is with”*. This element of secrecy is mostly attributed to the stigma attached to CNM, and the possible professional and social repercussions should non-CNM parties become aware of their lifestyle. **Participant 6**, a divorced heterosexual man, speaking from a corporate perspective said: *“I suppose I work in a corporate environment – uhm, and this lifestyle is still frowned upon. So I just choose the*

⁴⁷ Afrikaans original: “Want ons het die – kan ek dit so stel – die kleurling man – né – het 'n wapen – groot piel. Ernstig – en dit is wat 'n wit vrou soek – 'n wit vrou soek 'n groot piel. 'n Lekker stywe piel om, uhh, en dit is – kyk, en die wit manne – jy kry nie baie wit manne wat groot piele het nie”.

anonymity that uhm I would rather work colleagues and close friends did not know about it.”

Furthermore, in many instances, once a person enters the CNM lifestyle, their social circle changes. The swinger acquaintances evolve into close friendships and vanilla (non-swinger friends) friendships seem to fall by the wayside. For some participants, this occurred because they share more commonalities with their lifestyle friends than their vanilla friends – as **Participant 7**, a divorced, heterosexual woman who is also a club owner, expressed: *“I must say, in my circle of friends it is mostly lifestylers – because we just have more in common.”* This sentiment was also put forward by **Participant 26**, a married, heterosexual female who said: *“We will never go back to supposed “normal” friendships again. Lifestylers still make the best friends as there is no judgement and they live and let live.”* It is also evident that swingers undergo changes in their mindset once they enter the lifestyle, as **Participant 23**, a heterosexual married male, noted: *“Long-term vanilla friendships have ended as mindsets has changed a lot”*, which makes vanilla friends problematic to socialise with.

The difficulty of socialising with vanilla friends is not only because of the mindset shift from monogamy to CNM, it is also because, as noted before, for some participants it is vanilla friends who create most of the problems. This was echoed by **Participant 26**, a married heterosexual female, who said: *“We will never go back to supposed “normal” friendships again as those are the most dangerous and the ones that cheat and lie and are not honest with their partners”*.

5.4.3.5 Religion

The role of religion and how it affects the practice of CNM is in some instances challenging, particularly in relation to rigid religious ideas pertaining to sex. Religiously speaking, sex is observed as sacred and only meant to be shared between a husband and wife. However, this is not congruent with the more liberal stance of CNM, where sex with multiple partners with the consent of a spouse or partner, is permitted. Many swingers acknowledge that religious doctrines clash with the lifestyle ethos, resulting in them formulating their own justifications to assure congruency between their religion and their CNM lifestyle. One example of how the justification is applied was provided by **Participant 8**, a Muslim, bisexual married female, who said:

“Yes – that is how I see it – I see it as I am not doing anything wrong because, uhm, religion dictates that you do everything to please your husband – if he says that that’s cool – then that’s okay”.

Therefore, because it is practiced with a spouse/partner’s consent, as well as for mutual pleasure, the element of sin (sex with another person who is not your spouse) is eliminated. Other participants emphasised the sacred space of their romantic relationship to justify their engagement in CNM. Their premise is that just as the church is in a sacred relationship with God and the biblical teachings can be altered to suit the time and space in which the congregation find themselves, so couples have the right to alter the boundaries of their relationship to suit their relational needs. This notion was best described by **Participant 10**, a married heterosexual male, in the following excerpt: *“I feel what we do is what we like to do. The church got their rules and I respect that but – they also do their own thing – so ja.”* In essence, the rules surrounding the boundaries set by the couple are not seen as any different to the rules of the church. By ascribing similar rights to the relationship as the church to its doctrines, the married couple is deemed to not be acting against the teachings of the church, but rather to be exercising their right to conduct their sexual relations in a manner they choose.

For some participants, certain doctrines create unnecessary stress between the married couple. This was best described by **Participant 12**, a heterosexual married male, who said; *“I think it’s (religion) [that] actually constricted the behaviour of people and created unnecessary stress between the parties [married couple].”* For other participants, the stress is caused by a gender bias, which **Participant 25**, a divorced, heterosexual male, explained as follows: *“I still see it at my age – especially with women. As soon as you discuss something sexual they close up because of the way they are indoctrinated in religion,”* which negatively affects a women’s ability to enjoy sex. It is suggested that women are indoctrinated through religion not to enjoy sex, but rather to see it as a chore in which they satisfy their husband or procreate. **Participant 13**, a divorced heterosexual female, explained:

“Because you know in a religious family people don’t talk about these things. What do you know about sex. At that stage we had not been told about sex other than you have got to save yourself for marriage. You get told that when you get into your puberty and get your periods. That’s when they talk about sex and they explain it to you like you are a baby. And psychologically I did

actually behave in a way that would make sure that no man would be interested in me”.

The woman will, therefore, be less likely to want to engage in sexual relations with her husband, because she is not enjoying it. This may make her husband predisposed to straying in search of sexual gratification.

5.4.3.6 Younger persons in the lifestyle

Although older swingers in this study perceived the influx of younger individuals into the lifestyle to be problematic, the findings indicate that many younger women find their way into the lifestyle through older men.

Older male participants regarded having a much younger lover as a validation of sexual prowess, and consequently regarded such women as trophies. Despite this, these older men often found the perceived immaturity and insecurity of these young partners frustrating and sexually disappointing. This was highlighted by **Participant 3**, a divorced bisexual coloured male, who said: *“You can have a young girl that disappoint you – because its got a limit, its got this and that. And its not got experience or both. And experience is what I like.”* **Participant 17**, a married heterosexual male, echoed this sentiment when he lamented: *“I call them the dolls. They, they – everything actually has to revolve around them – do you understand what I am telling you? And that does not do it for me”*.⁴⁸ However, not only were older men attracted to younger women, older women, likewise, expressed a preference for younger men based on their perceived greater sexual stamina. Furthermore, this reportedly boosted these women’s self-esteem and made them feel young again. These views were exemplified by **Participant 19**, a heterosexual married woman, who explained: *“Whereas the younger ones seem to go a bit longer and have more stamina. Kind of making myself feel young again.”*

Analysis suggests that the older swinger may inadvertently be influenced to recruit the younger participants into the lifestyle through the youthful profiling criteria set by some clubs as entry requirements. The older swinger who does not fit the profile criteria may seek a much younger partner to ensure entry into the club. Criteria profiling was explained by **Participant 1**, a fetish club owner as

⁴⁸ Afrikaans original: “Ek noem hulle die poppies – alles moet eintlik om hulle draai en, verstaan jy wat ek vir jou sê, en dit doen dit nie vir my nie”.

“[s]ome people are chubby other people love skinny. I mean there is (pause) most of the swinger clubs – not mine – but most of the swinger clubs have a criteria for getting in. So if you are not sexy, you are not pretty. If the tendency is to look for pretty and skinny, then the younger age group would fit the criteria.”

Participant 26, a married, heterosexual female, also felt that the clubs were yielding to pressure and typifying the swing scene with the younger generation: *“For a while politics took over [in the clubs] and it became too aimed at the younger generation.”*

The manner in which the younger generation perceive and do relationships also exposes them to the world of alternative sexual encounters, which in some instances leads them to exploring CNM. The sexual trajectory of the younger swinger is reported to start in their early teens. It is coupled with a less committed relationship ethos, which leaves them wanting new and more exciting sexual experiences by the time they reach their early twenties. The following excerpts elucidate this trend. **Participant 7**, a divorced heterosexual woman and club owner, described her perspective on the manner in which younger people view relationships: *“They [the youth] are less committing – if the relationship does not work – well so be it. Maybe, that is the way – it brings in a whole new thought of where is swinging going in the future”*. **Participant 8**, a married bisexual Muslim woman, alluded to the trajectory of the sexual activity of the younger generation:

“I think it is perhaps because the younger generation, they start so early – so I think where we began experimenting in our 20s maybe late teens for those early starters, I think now they – [the] kids are like sexually active around 13 and 14. So by the time they get to their 20s they are like sexually so mature that they have done it all”.

5.5 BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY

CNM is reported to carry certain benefits for the participants. These benefits can be grouped into three main themes, namely social benefits, personal benefits and marital benefits, as is discussed below.

5.5.1 Social benefits

Social benefits manifest in the domain of interaction between friends, family and social activities. These may include, but are not limited to, safe spaces to explore sexuality, the formation of meaningful friendships, as well as the gender rule: Women rule.

5.5.1.1 Forming of meaningful friendships

While participants enter the lifestyle for sexual reasons, the need for likeminded friends accompanies the lifestyle. This was the case for **Participant 16**, a separated heterosexual female, who said *“When he [ex husband] and I went to the club together we met a few couples and we stayed friends. Many are still my friends today,”* and **Participant 21**, a homosexual single male, who stated that *“Approximately 95% of my social circle is made up of swinging/hedonistic/adult lifestylers. Most of which were not part of any sexual encounters, but were found to be really great and supportive friends in the platonic sense.”*

Furthermore, it seems that there is an evolutionary trajectory in the formation of these friendships. What may start out as a potential swing encounter, in some instances evolves into a mainstream heterosexual friendship, where the participants and their lifestyle friends attend family weddings or other social gatherings as part of the close family and friend’s circle. This was best described by **Participant 24**, a married heterosexual female, as *“We have made very good friends and are involved in a great group of friend with whom we socialise often. We have not played with anybody in this group though,”* and by **Participant 15**, a heterosexual married man, as *“We have friends from the beginning of the lifestyle. We don’t always play together but we like to kuier and chat on Facebook. We go to birthdays and the kids weddings. So not just a meet and wham bam, thank you m’am.”*

The open and honest ethos of the lifestyle filters into the social settings, allowing for open and honest communication between the parties, coupled with transparent intentions, which are thought of as being ideal friendship characteristics. Furthermore, the swinging friends are reportedly non-judgemental and accepting of all that forms part of the swinging lifestyle. **Participant 15** described a typical social gathering between swingers:

“Before that we used to have a braai together and the manne would stand around the braai and talk about the other womens’ breasts. Now, you sit with

the women and you talk about it. To me it is so much more freedom. It just makes more sense.”

This may be attributed to the open communication between both genders. There is no segregation between men and women when they socialise. However, despite the freedom and openness among the swinger/friend associations, there remains mutual understanding and respect so that the social encounters do not lend themselves to a sexual abyss associated with a “free for all” ethos. This was best described by **Participant 21**, a homosexual single male in the following excerpt: *“The open-minded and less judgemental attitude of like-minded persons, the mutual respect and a clear understanding that open-minded did not mean “free for all”.”*

However, not all swingers choose to form social connections with their swinging partners. One of the reasons for this was explained by **Participant 24** who said: *“We find friend with benefits challenging. It is easier to engage with a couple not knowing them that well and not seeing them too often as it might be a challenge to our relationship.”* The challenge arises when the swinger encounter crosses certain boundaries, such as over-familiarity with the swing partner or getting emotionally attached, as explained in section 5.5.3.3.

5.5.1.2 Safe space to explore your sensual being

Some participants reported feeling trapped in ordinary life situations where they are ‘forced’ to act and dress according to certain social prescriptions. In their daily lives, there is little scope for exploring fantasies and sexual desires, which in some instances may be considered taboo. However, within a CNM lifestyle, the participants are able to live out those fantasies and sexual desires without judgement. This was plainly stated by **Participant 24**, a married heterosexual female, who said *“Being able to talk and dress ‘adult’ or sexy without being condemned or judged.”* Not only is the space considered safe, but due to the interactions with the many other swingers who share similar experiences, a sense of ‘normalising’ an otherwise taboo self-expression becomes attainable as elucidated by **Participant 1**, a female fetish club owner: *“A lot of people just love the lifestyle and love the fact that you can just be you. Whether you like walking naked, or you just like being with people that are non-judgemental, that is a huge thing for a lot of people.”*

5.5.1.3 The “women rule” principle in CNM

From the viewpoint of a CNM lifestyle, swinging is seen as an “empowering” platform for women based on the unspoken “women rule” principle. This principle engenders a sense of empowerment for women in that they are deemed to have control over the choices made in the lifestyle, such as the choice of whom the couple engages with, how the terms of engagement are negotiated and where the engagement takes place. This sense of empowerment further extends to the notion that the woman has the right to refuse a male prospect and to openly pursue one without guilt or social reprimand. The following excerpts speak to this. **Participant 4**, a single heterosexual male in a committed relationship, explained how the entire encounter vests on his partner’s decisions: *“So its, its totally dependent on that [her decision]. So she will decide – right – if there is play dynamics,”* while **Participant 1**, a female fetish club owner, stated the unspoken rule in *“the swinger community [is that] the woman has the say.”* This creates the perception that the woman is the one who is in control and who makes the final decisions.

However, the “women rule” principle does not only apply to the decision making. It is also applicable to the pleasure of the woman. The pleasure of the wife is deemed paramount within the “women rule” principle, further empowering the woman to break free from social and religious indoctrinations regarding sex and expressions of sex. The sexual encounter is reportedly therefore mostly for the pleasure of the woman. However, the pleasure is not only one-sided, in that the man may experience enjoyment by watching his wife/life partner enjoy herself while engaging sexually with another man or woman, as **Participant 15**, a heterosexual married man explained: *“I enjoy seeing (my wife) enjoy herself and she enjoys being with different partners you know. To me that is a great turn on.”* The woman’s ability to enjoy sexual encounters with varied partners may be attributed to the fact that she feels safe to explore her sexual side with the blessing and mutual pleasure of her husband. In some instances, the sole enjoyment of the woman is deemed essential and non-negotiable, as **Participant 10**, a married heterosexual male, stated: *“My wife likes this [sex], so it is not about what you like. If she even has the slightest dislike, then nothing is going to work”.*⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Afrikaans original: “My vrou hou van dit, so dit gaan nie net oor dit waarvan jy hou nie. As sy net so effens ’n afkeur, kry dan gaan niks werk nie”.

Despite the perceptions that the “women rule” is empowering, women are in some instances subtly coerced and manipulated into behaving in a manner conducive to the man’s desires, often disguised as concern. In some instances, the freedom of choice is manipulated through negative reactions to certain situations. This was described by **Participant 22**, a married heterosexual woman, when she told of her personal experience where her husband “plays”, but he does not allow her to do so. If the woman does not comply with the man’s will, his negative reaction often manipulates the situation into his favour.

Regardless of the perceived coercion and manipulation, it would seem that women are the ones who perpetuate the lifestyle and enjoy it most once they have established a play space and routine that resonates with their sexual needs and fantasies. This was exemplified by **Participant 17**, speaking from a masculine perspective, who said: *“But it is the woman that enjoys it the most at the end. But it is also the woman that requires the most convincing to start”*.⁵⁰

5.5.2 Personal benefits

Engaging in CNM motivated some participants to take better care of personal hygiene and sexual safety and boosted their confidence.

5.5.2.1 Boosting confidence, ego, and a positive body image

The themes of boosting confidence, ego and a positive body image seem to be interconnected. The close proximity of people, as associated with a CNM lifestyle, is reported to increase positive body image due to the way in which the participants learn to perceive their bodies in relation to other swingers’ bodies. By accepting their own bodies, the participants report experiencing more confidence, which also boosts their ego. This was explained by **Participant 11** from a bisexual female perspective, who said: *“They do not look at your body. So you become more comfortable with your own body. I definitely become more comfortable with my own body.”*⁵¹ However, not all participants accept their bodies, and some explored alternative means to correct body issues, as **Participant 19** described of her own body enhancements:

⁵⁰ Afrikaans original: “Maar dit is die vrou wat dit die meeste op die einde van die dag geniet. Maar die vrou is die een wat dit die meeste gevat om te oortuig.”

⁵¹ Afrikaans translation: “Hulle kyk nie vir jou lyf nie. So, dan word jy meer gemaklik met jou eie lyf. Nee ek het definitief meer gemaklik geraak met my eie lyf.”

"I had a boob job done – I love it. It is the best thing that I could have ever done for my self-confidence. I went from a 34A to a 40C. I went from having nothing to something much to [my husband] disgust – well not disgust – he didn't want it done because he was happy. But once I had it done, he said it was the best thing ever for him".

Confidence and positive body image are further boosted by interaction and exchange of attention between random strangers who desire each other, as is prevalent in a club setting. Feeling desired and wanted also enhances sexual attraction. The desire seems to be preceded by flattery, which evolves into desire and ultimately into sexual encounters. This was elucidated by **Participant 7**, a bisexual married woman, who noted: *"But I think it means a lot more when it is just like a total stranger who doesn't know you and like finds your attractive. I think that is what it is – it is just an ego boost."* **Participant 24** explained how flattery made her feel good: *"There is a lot of flattery, which made me as a 'middle aged' woman feel good about myself."*

5.5.2.2 Hygiene and safety

The interpersonal interaction of the lifestyle exposes participants to a variety of hygiene practices and preferences. In some instances, the hygiene and grooming preferences of the swinging partners may be a deciding factor for any interaction to take place, as **Participant 12**, a heterosexual married man stated: *"They must be clean – I won't engage with anybody that in general anyway that is not clean. I need to experience them as clean."* However, the lifestyle also exposes participants to hygiene practices that may not have been part of their routine, yet are incorporated after exposure, as **Participant 26** shared from her own personal experience: *"Also I (now) take better care of my body since being in the lifestyle, I know what my partner enjoys, and now I shave (genitals) and keep myself 100% clean and we enjoy each other's bodies so much more. We also have more naughty sex talks."*

More knowledge about HIV/AIDS and STIs is reported to have also increased the awareness about the importance of hygiene and (health) safety among the swingers. Due to the ease and speed with which swingers can now connect and interact, and the multitude of venues available for interaction, extra attention is paid to health safety, as **Participant 25** explains: *"As AIDS had just started creeping in. Then we started taking it [health and safety precautions] seriously"*.

5.5.2.3 Sexual fluidity

The many different types of sexual activities and sexualities encountered within CNM are reported to enhance a perception of increased sexual fluidity. In some instances, this transcends the extravagant realms, often influenced by the group dynamics at the particular event taking place. This was previously noted by **Participant 16**'s proclivity for all the "kinks", "baby play" and "golden showers", among other practices. It is worth to also recall **Participant 19**'s bisexual interpretation of the full "*club experience ... [e.g.], the voyeurs room with glass windows*". In other instances, the mood lends itself to openness to explore restrictive processes such as is common in bondage and roping, which entails the constraining of a person by tying them up with ropes or cuffs or similar items (cf. **Participant 18**).

5.5.3 Marital benefits

Participants in CNM report that marital well-being is enhanced through exposure to various sexual styles, which add value to the couples own sexual skill sets. It is further suggested that a CNM lifestyle enhances open and honest communication, increases trust and honesty between the married couple and is considered to prevent illicit affairs.

5.5.3.1 Learning sexual technique

It is suggested that CNM may add to the sexual skill set of a married couple because of the many different play styles they encounter with their swing partners. In some instances, the things couples experiment with during a play session is later incorporated into the primary couple's sex play, as **Participant 20**, a married heterosexual male, explained:

"So, you experiment. It is a learning curve. A person must spice things up. It must never become routine. That is where the learning comes in. I do something with a woman – and I see that she likes it. What do I do? I take it home".⁵²

Participant 1, a single female fetish club owner, elaborated on what the learning curve entails: "*Sex is about everything. It's about exploring together, it's about learning. It's*

⁵² Afrikaans original: "So jy eksperimenteer. Dit is 'n leerkurwe. 'n Mens moet dit 'opspice'. Dit moet nooit 'n roetine word nie. Dit is waar die leerkurwe inkom. Nou doen ek iets met 'n dame – en ek sien sy hou van dit. Wat doen ek met dit – ek vat dit huis toe."

about doing a journey together, of discovering things of each other – of other people – of life.” The learning does not only pertain to sexual skill sets, but also learning about what your partner likes and what you like.

5.5.3.2 Increased trust, honesty and communication between the primary partners

A CNM lifestyle necessitates a deeper level of communication, which is characterised by sexually candid discussions. By virtue of their candidness, these discussions are perceived as enhancing honest and open communication channels between the married couple. The benefit of these candid discussions include prevention of a need to be deceptive and providing the primary couple “a degree of protection”, which was best illustrated by **Participant 21**, a single homosexual male, in the following excerpt:

“Communication is critical in the swinging lifestyle, and in some way is what separates a swinger from an outright cheater. A swinger/lifestyler likely has more control because he/she engages in [candid communication] with their partner and is involved in the third party process in varying degrees depending on the particular instance. This prevents the need to be deceptive, and provides both partners with a degree of protection should the third party overstay their welcome, be it on social media or in-person.”

There is the further perception that candid communication increases levels of trust, which seem to be characterised by behaviours such as open cell phones with no passwords, the sharing of Facebook communications and the sharing of daily discussions among swinging partners. **Participant 23**, a married heterosexual male, said the following in this regard: *“We have no problem with it as we share what is being said, and our phones are open for the other to read at any time.”* It would seem that this behaviour fosters a “no secrets” space between the married couple, as elucidated by **Participant 18**, a married heterosexual female:

“We have been together for so long and all the shit we went through. He will not hide something like that from me. And if I get to chat with somebody, maybe on Facebook, I share that with him and he will share with me. He will let me read that whole thing. We haven’t got that thing that I am going to throw my toys because he is chatting to this woman”.

5.5.3.3 *Alternative to infidelity and related aspects*

In the context of CNM, infidelity takes two primary forms, i.e., emotional infidelity (forming an emotional bond with a play partner by for instance, becoming personally involved in their life) and sexual infidelity (engaging in sexual activities without the consent of a spouse either through deceit or concealing the intention to engage with such person). In some instances, a third form occurs where both emotional and sexual infidelity occur simultaneously. In the traditional sense of the word, having sexual intercourse with a person other than your spouse/partner and without the consent of your spouse/partner is considered cheating. However, within the boundaries of CNM, forming an emotional connection with a person you have permission to engage with sexually is considered cheating, as discussed in section 5.4.2.1.1. The responses of the participants suggest that infidelity/cheating may be addressed through CNM as a model for marital well-being.

For some participants, engaging in CNM takes away the need to lie and be deceitful.

Participant 7, a divorced heterosexual female and a club owner, explained:

“But then they participate in swinging because it is for them as a couple. They find that they need that. So the commandment says that no adultery [is permitted in a marriage]. He [the husband] feels they are not being adulterous [by engaging in CNM] because he is not lying to her [the wife]. The whole thing is that adultery is about lying and deceit.”

In other instances, CNM is perceived as preventing emotional connection between swing parties through the process of reconnecting the married couple after the experience of a swing session. During this “reconnecting”, they discuss what they liked and what they disliked, and by doing so avoid emotional connections with their swing partners and possible infidelity. **Participant 5**, a divorced bisexual female, best described the process as follows:

“So for us it is about the experience together – it is not because we are lacking in our own sexual relationship. It is really about the experience and when we leave here, we go reconnect and have another session and talk about what it was, what the experience was like, how was that person, the person he was with – that sort of thing. So, it is about the entire experience.”

However, for others, sex is still a bodily function and CNM a means to satisfy this need while avoiding any emotional connections, which are deemed to detract from the satisfaction of the sexual need. This was explained by **Participant 27**, a divorced heterosexual male in a committed relationship:

“My basic premise towards sex is that it is a bodily function – like breathing – like relieving yourself – like eating – like exercising – it is a basic bodily function. And that is where it ends, so the emotional things, the (attachments) that form, all take away from the essence of the matter which is that it is just a bodily function”.⁵³

5.6 CONCLUSION

The sample of South African swingers interviewed revealed that swinging, at least from the South African perspective, is not as elementary as only being concerned with the gratification of sexual desires and variety.

In the first instance, it is not only sexual gratification and variety that brings people to the CNM lifestyle. Curiosity, media exposure, trauma and intimacy needs are among the reasons cited for entry into the CNM lifestyle. Furthermore, the lifestyle is not devoid of challenges. Not only is the risk of damaging the primary relationship a reality, but the lifestyle may also evoke jealousy, disharmony and body image perceptions, to name a few. This happens primarily during the starting phase of pursuing CNM. There is also the element of perceived exploitation by clubs of singles in particular. Although CNM is considered to be accepting of all sexualities, there is a strong undertone of heteronormativity, which discriminates against bisexual males. CNM also highlights race dynamics. Racial prejudices are not only found as remnants of the apartheid social conditioning but are rife among people of the same race as well. However, despite these challenges, certain benefits have been suggested, such as CNM being an alternative to infidelity, improving and acquiring new sexual skillsets to the benefit of the married couple, as well as the perception of increased trust and honest communication, to name a few.

⁵³ Afrikaans original: “My basiese benadering tot seks is dat dit ’n ligaamsfunksie is; soos asemhaal – soos toilet toe gaan – soos eet – soos oefen. Dit ’n ligaamsfunksie. Dit is waar dit dood loop – so die emosionele goed – die frilletjies wat bykom neem weg van die essensie van die saak. ... Dit is net n ligaamsfunksie.”

The following chapter – Chapter 6, offers a critical integration of the findings, academic sources and the meta-theoretical and theoretical tenets of the present study. This is done to foreground the inductive contributions to the study of CNM in South Africa.

CHAPTER 6:

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

“In a perfect world you could fuck people without giving them a piece of your heart, and every glittering kiss and every touch of the flesh is another shard of a heart you’ll never see again” (Gaiman, 2006).

The above quote encapsulates the ethos of swingers and the conceptualisations of the participants in this study of their respective CNM lifestyles. Swinging is an *interpersonal arrangement between a committed couple, married or cohabiting, in which the partners agree to extradyadic sexual relationships, at the same time, for the purpose of sexual recreation and accruing sexual variety* (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961; Conley *et al.*, 2017). Unlike polyamory, swingers may engage in extradyadic sex for hedonistic reasons (Townsend, 2013:5) too, while remaining emotionally monogamous to their primary partner (Hatcher, 2014).

Nonetheless, it is widely assumed that monogamy yields higher levels of relational functioning than alternative romantic configurations such as swinging (Conley, *et al.*, 2017). Conversely, relatively recent studies in the UK (Cohen, 2015; Sheff, 2016) and US (Conley *et al.*, 2018) suggest that CNM couples have a higher rate of sexual satisfaction than their monogamous counterparts. Findings of the present study contradict this binary logic that favours an either/or interpretation of the antecedents to, consequences of and possibilities for couples who engage in CNM. I address this statement in this chapter through a critical discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 5. I do this by engaging the theoretical tenets of symbolic interactionism and the individualisation thesis. In so doing, I am guided by the general research objective of the study, i.e., to **explore the influence of swinging on marital satisfaction of South African couples**. The discussion commences with a critical demarcation of inductive themes associated with the antecedents to enter the CNM lifestyle.

6.2 ANTECEDENTS OF SWINGING

“We are all born sexual creatures, thank God, but it’s a pity so many people despise and crush this natural gift” (Monroe, quoted in Nesvig, 2014).

In the preceding quote, Marilyn Monroe, an iconic sex symbol of the 1950s, alluded to the fact that unbridled sex is a natural part of being human. Irrespective of her view, some people still frown on such sexual fluidity in contemporary South African society and abroad (Burleigh *et al.*, 2017; Conley *et al.*, 2017:206; Mogilski *et al.*, 2020:2; Thompson *et al.*, 2018). It stands to reason that some people will seek out means and ways to fulfil their sexual needs for reasons of pleasure and not necessarily simply for the purpose of procreation (Chambers, 2012). Sexual and romantic relationships provide prospects for individual and interpersonal fulfilment, as well as the enhancement of their well-being, albeit outside the parameters of heterosexual marriage and coupledness. This was evident from the findings. Three inductive subthemes served as antecedents for the participants to consider engaging in CNM. These included **external influences**, **trauma** and **diversity-needs fulfilment** (i.e., whether sexual, social and emotional). These are represented in Figure 6.1 below.

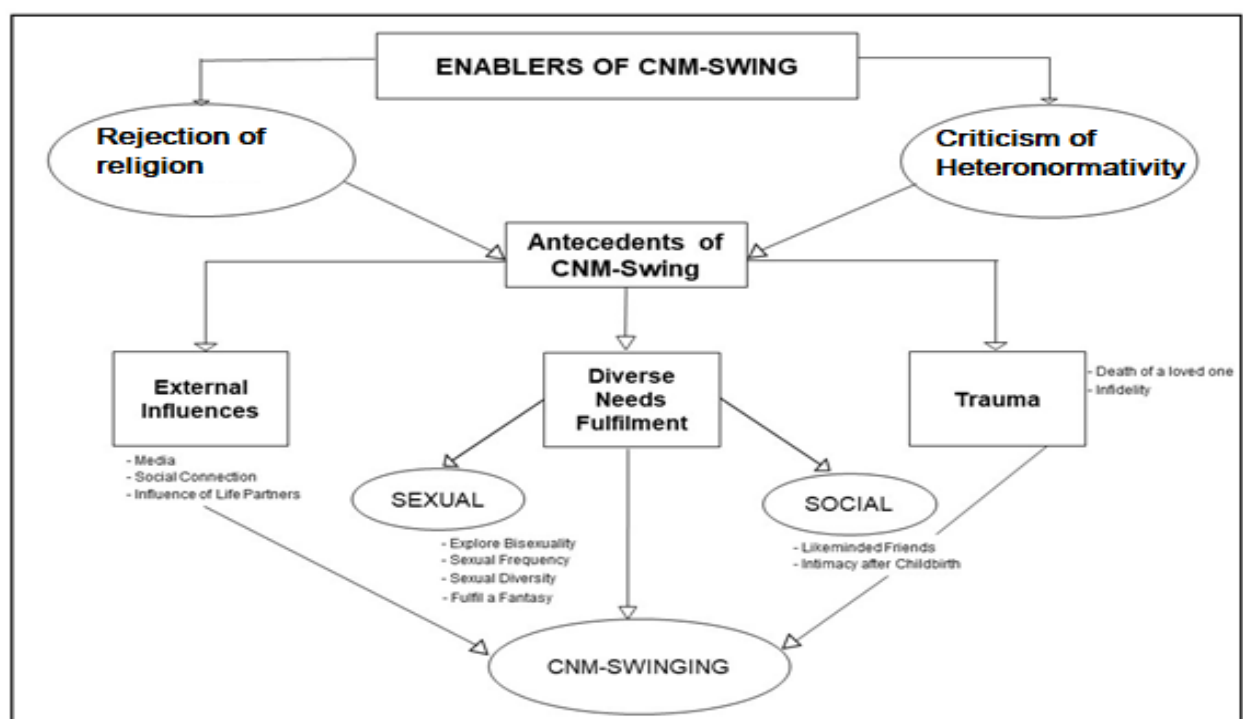


Figure 6.1: Thematic mapping of antecedents to swinging

Figure 6.1 illustrates the reasons why participants pursue(d) swinging. Interestingly, their reasoning superseded a simple need to achieve their individual contentment (i.e., their need to experience pleasure), relational needs (i.e., a need for sexual variation) or marital well-being (Wood *et al.*, 2021:1253). Rather, **external influences** also informed their choice to do so, mainly through their social interactions with other swingers (Muise *et al.*,

2019), open-minded life partners who developed a curiosity of the lifestyle, and/or the media – either through random advertising pertaining to swingers' clubs, or where a simple Google search revealed a host of information, sites and clubs (Bleep, 2021; Pleasure seeker, 2021). Furthermore, certain traumatic events created needs that may be fulfilled through CNM (swinging) (DeFord & Gilbert, 2017).

6.2.1 External influences

To this point, the present subsection outlines the specific **external antecedents** that the participants cited as precursors to them engaging in the swinging lifestyle.

6.2.1.1 The media

For some participants, the media was a central influence facilitating them to engage in CNM – for example, by viewing magazines (particularly during apartheid) (Posel, 2011). In other instances, also during the apartheid era, they used inconspicuous self-addressed envelopes to reply to adverts by other swingers. While this method avoided overt identification, it still provided a means for those who were interested in CNM to access other swingers. **Technological advances** and **social changes** have changed how participants are presently exposed to and could access information on swinging, swinging events and other swingers, through a plethora of media platforms. These include **pop-up adverts on computers** (Shore, 2020), **advertising campaigns** (Zawisza-Riley, 2019) about CNM, and **accessing online swingers' web pages** (Bleep, 2021; Pleasure seeker, 2021). This concurs with previous studies that cite the value of marketing, in this instance CNM, as sources to introduce people to the lifestyle (Barbro, 2021). Historically, sexual minority persons, including self-identified gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals and swinger groups, were policed by the stringent legislation of the apartheid government (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995; Posel, 2011; Venzo & Hess, 2013:1540). However, since 1994, with the dawn of South African democracy, the country followed in the footsteps of more sexually liberal countries worldwide by exposing its citizenry to more liberal policies regarding the display and representation of sex. This meant that access to swingers' sites and other swingers became easier (Posel, 2011; Weiss, 2019) and the ease of access became a motivation to not only explore the lifestyle, but subsequently also to engage in it.

Additionally, **constitutional and legal changes** in South Africa since 1994 (e.g., black economic empowerment, the decriminalisation of homosexuality and pornography (RSA, 1996b) and the abolishment of the Immorality Act and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act) (RSA, 1950a, 1950b, 1961), have also resulted in shifts in cultural politics of class, status and the emergence of a new black elite (Posel, 2011; RSA, 1996a, 2006, 2009). The propagation of sex talk (such as radio discussions and magazine articles about various sexual topics) has also created discrete discursive nodes. This is seen in the sexual discussion groups that have emerged on social media platforms such as Facebook, as well as the web pages for swingers as noted by participants (e.g., *Sex with Emily* and *CBD Sexlife*, among others). The media not only constructs social norms, but also **conveys** these to its audience, sometimes by **subtly instructing** them on how to respond to a variety of events, such as swinging. The media can thus be likened to a social collective that informs its audience on previously taboo matters, thereby encouraging exploration of and engagement in the lifestyle.

One noteworthy result of the newly enacted legislation was the extent to which sexual imagery was “thrust into public prominence – something that was unthinkable during apartheid” (Smuts *et al.*, 2015:66). This happened through the increased circulation of sexual messaging on various media platforms (e.g., television, films, magazines and pornographic publications) (Posel, 2011). These changes in the South African political and media landscape enabled participants to **challenge** the stringent heteronormative (read traditional Puritan and religious values and norms) policing to explore alternative sexual lifestyles that were previously deemed taboo (Smuts *et al.*, 2015).

Stodard and Kern (2022) maintain that the media is prolific in its role of de-traditionalising personal life through social platforms such as dating and swingers’ sites, which serves as a subtle encouragement to explore and pursue the lifestyle. However, some participants remained **cautious** about an overly optimistic interpretation of such supposed sexual freedoms in South Africa. They noted that the potential for pretence and fake-ness of people who present themselves as someone/something that they are not with respect to their appearance, gender, or occupation, continue to stifle their attempts at fully embracing their sexually diverse lifestyle. Specific examples that emerged from the findings included married men or women who pose as single swingers and bisexuals posing as heterosexual players to gain the benefits of CNM. These persons, the participants noted, reinforce some of the **deceptions** that have become staples on

internet dating and swingers' webpages; a finding reminiscent of the work of Leano (2021) and Fuchs and Fuchs (2022). Social media platforms, which allow access to the profiles and preferences of each swinger (such as those of swingers on the various swingers' websites), allow participants the opportunity to make meaningful decisions regarding choosing potential partners. Additionally, swingers are able to identify examples of possible deceptions or challenges that may be present in the profiles of other users. This creates a sense of security for the participants, as they feel they are in control of the process and thereby feel encouraged to explore the lifestyle on their own terms.

6.2.1.2 Social connections and influence of life partners

For some participants, the initial discussions about swinging took place among colleagues, friends and with their significant others. Although swinging may be considered a taboo topic for some (cf. Loftus *et al.*, 2003; Wilt *et al.*, 2018:4), the various platforms where initial discussions took place suggest that it is more of an '**open secret**' than taboo (Fernandes, 2009:2; Hatcher, 2017:1), albeit for **an exclusive community of like-minded persons**. This finding resonated with previous scholarship on the topic, including the work of McKeever (2015) and Moors *et al.* (2021) about the "normalisation" of alternative relationships in specific contexts.

Where the initial discussions took place between **co-workers and friends**, the information was taken home and shared with the participant's significant other. Its pros and cons were discussed. Said discussion became the catalyst for entering the lifestyle, a finding similar to that of Taormino's (2008) research. In instances where the discussions were between the **significant others** (i.e., the life partner or spouse), the couples most often resorted to using the **internet** for more information about CNM before deciding to enter the lifestyle. This recalls the earlier writings of the symbolic interactionist, George Herbert Mead (1934), who stated that the process of **secondary socialisation**, which includes communication through verbal and non-verbal language, is a means to ascribe meanings to things called symbols (e.g., assigning a specific meaning to the practice of swinging).

These meanings are then negotiated during human interactions (such as the discussions taking place between couples and friends), which occur using said symbols (e.g., language and gestures or the exchange of internet images and messaging, respectively). The symbolic meanings that people attach to these interactions are not inherent but rather

grounded in social relationships and influence (Coakley & Pike, 2007:29). My findings reflected this, i.e., that a person's initial introduction to and discussions about swinging **encouraged experimentation with the lifestyle**. In keeping with Scoats's (2020:11) UK study, sexual behaviours that were previously (or mainly) criticised have, as my findings show, become more commonplace in South Africa. For some couples these have actually become a **requirement to retain a healthy marital relationship** – a view Moors *et al.* (2017) share. Sexual experimentation is therefore encouraged. This finding extended to the participants' own experiences – irrespective of their race, creed, and culture. They echoed Chambers' (2012) assertion that, context permitting, some individuals are increasingly able to **transgress structural constraints** associated with **sexual expression**, resulting in reflexively creating and recreating their sexual selves, akin to Plummer's (2015) work about individualised and reflexive sexualities.

Both of these typologies posit the sexual actor as being able to express their rights and responsibilities along liberated lines. This is applicable to the South African context given my preceding references to the political and social changes that have taken place after 1994. Democracy has contributed to changes associated with sexual freedom of expression and association (Posel, 2005; Weiss, 2019; Reid & Walker, 2004:79), albeit alongside present-day challenges associated with the “second pandemic” of gender-based violence (hereafter GBV) (Ellis, 2020). This change in sexual freedom and expression of association has brought about an autonomy (control over one's body and the way one interacts sexually) as well as authenticity (being able to engage in a manner that is natural for them without judgement) (Wood *et al.*, 2019:1255) for the participants who claim that the lifestyle allows them to be “free and natural”, thus to “be themselves”, which paved the way for entry into the lifestyle.

However, not all significant others of the participating swingers were open to the idea of swinging. For some participants, the idea was met with **resistance** and **required discussion and convincing**. It would seem that for some, the resistance was due to personal insecurities related to their partner's **body image issues** (Watson, 2018; Balestrieri, 2019), while for others it was due to their perceptions of relationships as having to be **monogamous and heteronormative**; i.e., **monosexual** and **heterosexually compulsory** (Ingraham, 2002; Rich, 1980; West & Zimmerman, 2002). According to Orion (2018), resistance to the idea of swinging may be due to negative stigmatisation, and in some instances fear of complex intimate relationships. Given the

fact that modern relationships are faced with modern choices and requirements (Chambers, 2012), it is noteworthy that resistance to swinging was met in different ways, either with acceptance and enjoyment (Cassidy, 2000; Moors *et al.*, 2014) or as threat (Cassidy, 2000) after discussions and reconstructions of symbolic meanings pertaining to swinging (Wilson, 2022).

Some relationships end due to the perceived threats CNM poses (Cassidy, 2000; Moors *et al.*, 2014). The latter thought mirrors Giddens's (1992) work about **institutional reflexivity**, which allows partners to end their relationships if, in their agentic opinion, it no longer provides them with the required emotional, physical or sexual contentment. Modernisation has facilitated such individualisation which, on its part, encourages individual reflexivity to create and recreate coupledness (Chambers, 2012:35). Giddens (1992), however, conceded that such reflexivity does not necessarily translate into unbridled individual agency – the latter is always informed by societal and cultural scripting and scenarios (Anderson & Magrath, 2019; Anderson & McCormack, 2018; Jackson & Scott, 2010). Therefore, engagement in CNM is not an automatic transition and may require negotiation, communication and understanding of each other's worldviews between the primary couple.

Next, I discuss the second inductive subtheme that informed the participants choice to engage in CNM, i.e., **diversity needs fulfilment**.

6.2.2 Diversity needs fulfilment

For some participants, the entry into swinging was preceded by experiencing and expressing **diverse sexual needs** they were not able to satisfy through monogamy. One such need pertains to **bisexual exploration**, or **bi-curiosity**. The trajectory towards exploring this need was two-fold. On the one hand, a single encounter with a like-minded swinger was sufficient to determine whether the need was due to a bisexual orientation or whether it was simply based on their curiosity, which was fulfilled after that single encounter. This observation relates to Anderson's (2008) reference to the "one-time" rule, which maintains that in some instances a single same-sex sex encounter is for the most part, viewed as an acceptable form of sexual recreation without threatening one's heterosexual identity. Even though some participants realised directly following said encounters that they were not bisexual, the sexual encounter left no pressure to self-identify as gay/lesbian or to commit to a bisexual orientation (Migala, 2020). Regardless

of whether or not bisexuality was confirmed through the sexual encounter, participation in a swingers' lifestyle was typically consequently pursued. This echoes the work of Manley *et al.* (2018) and Wood *et al.* (2021), who maintain that swinging allows for **sexual and relational autonomy** and is a means to **affirm a bisexual identity** along a continuum of sexual discovery and enjoyment (see Kinsey *et al.*, 1948).

Furthermore, participants cited the need for **sexual variety** as antecedent to swinging. For some participants, the need for sexual variety centred on having sexual intercourse with someone other than their spouse or primary partner. I found that, in some of the narratives, these participants had married their school crushes. Therefore, they had never had sex outside that dyad. The need arose from wanting to know what sexual intimacy and intercourse could be like with another lover. This mirrors Garner *et al.*'s (2019) contention that swinging is often explored when couples determine that one partner cannot satisfy all their needs, even though they love their partner and do not want to terminate the relationship. In addition, research undertaken in the US suggests that swinging allows for persons to participate in sexual activities that may otherwise go unexplored (Kimberly & Hans, 2017), as was the case with the participants of the present study. Such experimentation, due to fantasies of CNM, is not that uncommon among monogamous couples (Lehmiller, 2020b; Moor, 2016).

Furthermore, the participants cited **fantasies** about sexual intercourse with multiple partners at the same time (Fernandes, 2009; Hatcher, 2014; Wilt *et al.*, 2018), engaging in sexual intercourse in front of others (i.e., exhibitionism) (Lehmiller, 2020a), or having bisexual encounters (Wilt *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, their fantasies extended to watching strangers have sex with their partners or engaging in BDSM. Although not every fantasy is necessarily realised (Lehmiller, 2020b), the mere consideration of such acts may encourage persons to explore avenues that may lead to enacting the fantasy (Gormezano *et al.*, 2022). Sexual fantasies, therefore, may encourage mental imageries that may incite sexual activation, desire, and eventual action (Anzani & Prunas, 2020:763) for the purpose of sexual and personal satisfaction (Lehmiller, 2018a), which includes engaging in CNM.

This was an evident finding in the present study. In some instances, for example, fantasies may influence sexual behaviour (Anzani & Prunas, 2020:763) and the planning of sexual encounters (Lehmiller, 2020b), as noted by participants. A swingers' lifestyle presents a suitable platform to act out fantasies at swingers' clubs, where there are

dedicated rooms tailored for this very purpose (i.e., exhibitionism, voyeurism and BDSM). This need is attributed in part to the Coolidge effect, which suggests that swingers may experience familiarisation of arousal to the same sexual stimulus over time and therefore seek alternative sources for arousal (Hughes *et al.*, 2020). This echoed what most of the participants said about swinging as adding that elusive “spice” to their relationship. However, as was evident in Chapter 5, following these fantasies may lead to the exploration of darker fantasies over time, including arousal at being excreted (coprophilia) or urinated (urophilia) on. Through the introduction of a novel sexual stimulus, the habituation may be reversed (Dawson, *et al.*, 2013), as the findings of my study attest.

Finally, the findings commented on participants’ need to **establish meaningful friendships**. Finding like-minded people was important for those in the lifestyle as they felt that they did not need to mind their proverbial ‘p’s and q’s’ around these individuals (Fernandes, 2008; Taormina & Gao, 2013:158). These lifestyle friends were also considered as being **less gender-conscious** during social events (Davis & Mehta, 2022). This related to how these men and women socialise together, discussing sex without inhibition and openly admiring others without the need to be secretive or ashamed of doing so. This, according to Kolak and Markic (2019), allows for uninhibited self-revelation, authenticity, emotional and physical intimacy and the sharing of thoughts, emotions, fears and hopes with the goal of being understood and to understand others. Therefore, having such like-minded friends is more fulfilling in social contexts than the number of friends, or even having “vanilla” friends.

A final antecedent to swinging spoke to how **traumatic life events** led participants to joining the CNM lifestyle.

6.2.3 Traumatic life events

Many traumatic life events, such as death of a life partner or infidelity, causes grief, sadness or anger, among other emotions. These emotions are experienced differently by each person. However, the way in which each person copes with these emotions is dependent not only on their worldview, but also on their relationship with their estranged/deceased partner (Mastrangelo *et al.*, 2019). For some, the trauma accompanying the experience of a **romantic disappointment** such as infidelity changed their perceptions about monogamy and the so-called “till death do us part” expectations of a romantic relationship (Giddens, 1992). The ensuing grief over the breakdown of a

romantic relationship, altered their perceptions of what should be deemed as a permissible sexual relationship. That is, it afforded the participants the opportunity to use their reflexive agency to reflect on the institutions of monogamous marriage and coupledness. In so doing, they engaged in “using gender” (Johnson, 2009); i.e., negotiating permissible behaviour that provided them with the required emotional energy to construct, define, enact and even deconstruct their gendered and sexual performances. They in fact “undo” their gender through such intrapersonal and interpersonal negotiations (Adeagbo, 2015; Simon, 1996).

In other instances, trauma due to the **death of a partner or loved one** altered the participants’ perceptions about monogamy. The need for sex arises out of the loss of a spouse. Swinging is seen as an ideal avenue to fulfil their sexual needs while remaining emotionally committed to their deceased spouse. However, existing literature about the matter provides divergent views. On the one hand, some studies maintain that swinging, as a solely sexual practice, is devoid of the intimacy and emotional connection that is traditionally reserved for the primary couple (Shane, 2020; Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Tigar, 2022), while others seek out emotional attachments rather than solely the act of sex as primary motivation (Marriage helper, 2019). This raises a potential conflict with regard to the intentions of those who may seek intimacy as opposed to merely sexual satisfaction from swinging. Furthermore, research suggests that sexual intimacy is often used as a means to obtain love, security and acceptance, among other things (Girard *et al.*, 2018:125). This may explain why singles are, in some instances, perceived as problematic by the coupled participants of the current study. This topic is discussed in detail later in the chapter.

In other instances, the grief associated with the death of a spouse became a catalyst for the participant **to become non-monogamous and opt to never remarry**. This mirrors the work of DeFord and Gilbert (2017), who maintain that death jeopardises the ability to meet sexual needs, but also creates a space where one can re-evaluate their relationships with themselves and others. It is also a time during which people get to differentiate between the familiar and the unfamiliar. As opposed to the situation outlined in the preceding paragraph, persons engage in CNM to fulfil their sexual needs without the need for and commitment to a relationship. The fulfilment of the sexual needs therefore does not interfere with the emotional commitment the participant may have had

with the deceased (Ehrenfeld, 2012; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Harviainen & Frank, 2016:2; Hatcher, 2014; McDonald, 2010).

In addition to death or mutually dissolving a relationship, some participants also cited **infidelity** as precursor for refraining from monogamy and entering CNM. Some try and mitigate the infidelity by suggesting swinging to their cheating spouse as an alternative to ending their relationship. However, other participants noted that they were not able to cope with the reality of a cheating spouse and opted for divorce, which made them susceptible to swinging as a means to fulfil sexual needs. Bond (2015) suggests that infidelity may result from biological or evolutionary predictors, which suggests that monogamy is not natural to humankind. This echoes the views of participants who mostly maintained that men and women, as sexual beings, are not meant to be monogamous because monogamy, and, as Ingraham (2002) humorously remarked, “heterosexuality, [are] just not natural”.

6.3 ENABLERS OF CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY

In addition to the noted antecedents, two specific features encouraged participants of the present study to pursue involvement in the CNM lifestyle. These included their **criticism of institutionalised heteronormativity** and the **redundancy of religion**.

6.3.1 *Criticism of institutionalised heterosexual hegemony*

Some participants developed perceptions about the unquestioned centrality of **institutionalised heterosexual hegemony**, which enabled them to transition to CNM. This was primarily due to their past negative romantic experiences. In some instances, the participants felt that monogamy was a failed contract and doomed from the start after they had experienced romantic disappointment when they were younger. A contributing factor to this was their realisation that their “life partner” desired other partners – not only them. This altered their “fairy tale” outlook of love as being “till death do us part”. Relationships, they contend, mirrored Giddens’s (1992) humorous reference to a marriage as being valid “until further notice”. In some instances, the participants ascribed to the mantra of “what works for us **now**”.⁵⁴ Similarly, Morgan (1996:193-194) is worth noting in this regard. He, like Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Chambers (2012), and Finch (2007), speaks to the practice qualities that individualisation affords people in

⁵⁴ Emphasis added.

contemporary society to constantly reflect on and redefine the meanings of family, relationships and intimacy. Persons engaging in the CNM lifestyle in effect “practice” (Morgan, 1996), “re-do”, “display” (Finch, 2007) and “use” (Johnson, 2009) their relationships to create new opportunities for the dyad through their experimental intimacies (e.g., CNM). This challenges South African understandings of traditional monogamy, marriage and gender. Through CNM, these participants no longer blindly “do their gender” (West & Zimmerman, 2002), but co-script their own gender and sexual intimacy with others through their agency on a micro and meso level, amid the larger cultural scenario that may favour heteronormativity (Simon, 1996).

6.3.2 Rejection of religion

In some instances, the participants rejected certain aspects of religious teachings, in particular those related to its draconian policing of their (desired) sexually diverse (read taboo) practices (Klause, 2010). In so doing, they were able to re-construct the meaning of monogamy vs CNM. This follows on the writings of Bond (2017) and Mueller (1995), among others, who maintain that monogamy is a Western ideal and relatively modern as opposed to some cultures who historically sanction(ed) polygeny. However, despite their rejection of certain religious aspects, some participants continued to ascribe to some form of justification to rationalise their CNM lifestyle, as opposed to the dictation of monosexual lifestyles according to religious teachings. While some acknowledged the existence of religious doctrines, they refuted the uncritical association between swinging and sin, because both partners engaged in the lifestyle with the full consent and knowledge of their partner (Swingers Help, 2022; Shepherd, 2018). Others felt that religion belongs in the church and therefore does not form part of what the dyad does in private – specifically how it continues to relate to women’s sexuality and the continued sexual gender hierarchy in heterosexual relationships (Gqola, 2021; Graaff & Heinecken, 2017:624). This separation of “the church” from “the home” allowed the participants freedom to pursue CNM and practice it without guilt.

Having reflected on some of the views of the participants in this study pertaining to antecedents and enablers, the findings showed that participants opted to either embrace the swinging lifestyle, or to reconstruct their understanding of it in such a manner that it could be reconciled with factors such as their religious beliefs. Next, I consider specific **social factors** that informed their decisions to do this.

6.4 EMBRACING, CHALLENGING OR ENDING CONSENSUAL NON-MONOAMY: INTERVENING FACTORS

The following diagram depicts the findings described in the next two subsections pertaining to the challenges and benefits of CNM.

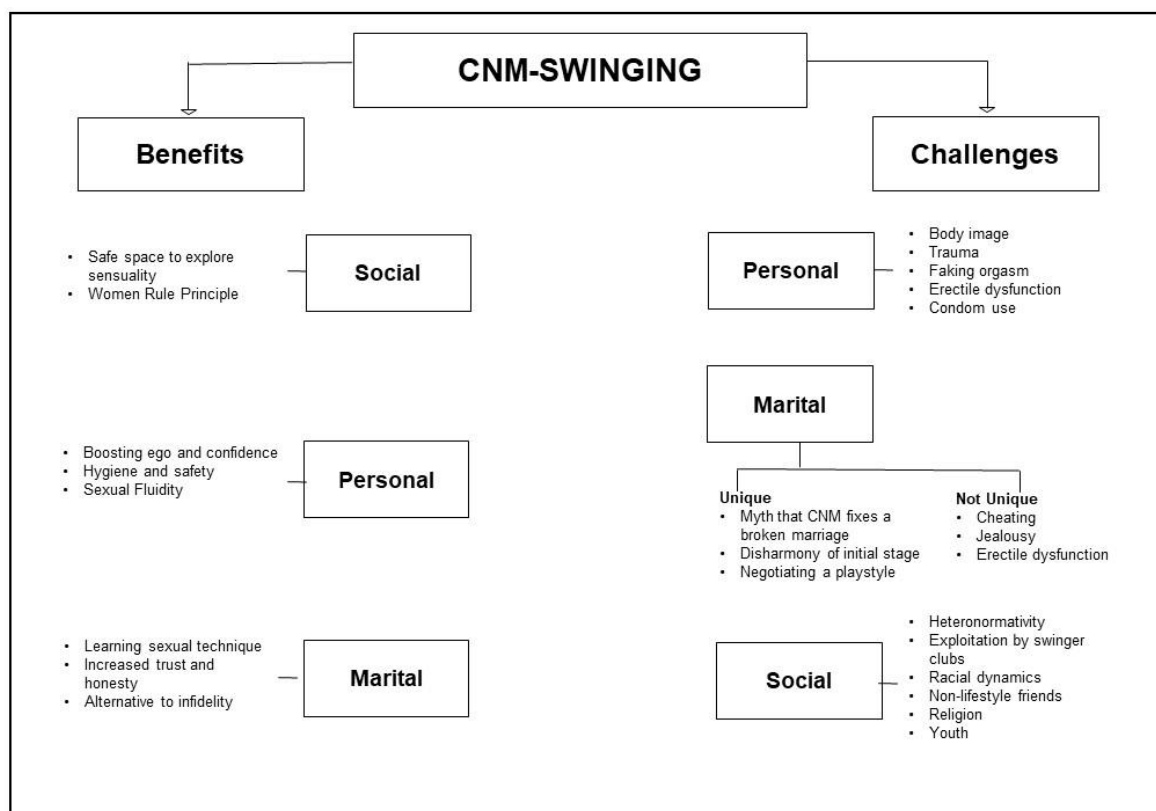


Figure 6.2: Diagrammatic representation of challenges and benefits pertaining to consensual non-monogamy

The average age of participants was 50 years. Most of them entered the swingers' lifestyle in their middle to late forties; a finding supported by similar international studies ranging from the mid-1970s to the present day (Fang, 1976; Fernandes, 2009; Jenks, 2014; Jenks, 1998; Kimberly & McGinley, 2018; Rubin *et al.*, 2014). The present study, however, suggests an evolution of sorts regarding swingers' **age** and their participation in CNM. Some disassociated themselves from younger swingers who, in their opinion, do not belong in the lifestyle – regardless of the fact that older persons were indirectly partial to welcoming younger men and women in their respective clubs for sexual reasons. Conversely, pertaining to the latter point, older men also felt that younger women are too immature and sexually inexperienced to partake in the intricacies associated with swinging. This finding contradicts existing literature, which suggests that older men seek

out younger women to validate their sexual prowess, irrespective of him advancing in age (Hagy, 2017).

Based on what the participants said, the findings suggest that although clubs deny imposing objectifying criteria for entry, those not meeting the “unspoken criteria” are simply not registered, and thereby denied entry. This is evident from the minimum age requirement of participants having to be 21 years and older (with an identity document as proof) to register online and attend the in-person socials (Club Defy, 2021). Similar *modus operandi* was noted by participants regarding the entry requirements imposed by their South African clubs. Along gendered lines, it was also interesting to find that older women similarly invite younger men into the lifestyle due to their stamina and sexual prowess. Various scholars have commented on the allure the younger man holds for an older woman, based on the former’s perceived sexual prowess (Sruthi, 2022). A younger man, as lay and academic literature attests, sometimes boosts the social and sexual status of the older woman (Sruthi, 2022). Given the above, the swingers’ lifestyle has become a platform for younger players as the older players invite them in as a means to gain access to certain clubs who require specific physical criteria for entry. Furthermore, engaging with the younger players is commonly regarded as an ‘ego boost’ for the older players, which in turn impacts positively on the marital and sexual well-being of the primary couple.

Regarding **race**, the present study showed how **intraracial dynamics** informed the participants’ swinging experiences. Although one would expect interracial dynamics to feature, partly due to the apartheid era and the ensuing racial segregation in South Africa (Khan *et al.*, 2021), it was mainly the self-identified black and coloured⁵⁵ men who expressed a disdain for one another (cf. Hancock, 2008:21; Harvey, 2016). Likewise, I found that Indian swingers also expressed negative attitudes towards members of their own ethnic group, specifically referencing petiteness. Pertaining to racial preferences, black and coloured men preferred playing with white women, whom they described as ‘trophies’, which is in line with the research by Foeman and Nance (2002:241) among mixed race couples in America – i.e., black men wanting white wives or partners due to what they termed as the “trophy effect”.

⁵⁵ The apartheid government assigned the racial classification of “coloured” to mixed-race people and racial groups they did not identify as (or could not be classified as) “white” or “black”. Some criticise the use of the term, whereas other “multiracial” South Africans have reclaimed the classification to distinguish it from its pejorative meaning under apartheid (Erasmus, 2012).

Existing literature alludes to ideologies about penis size and the ensuing assumption that “bigger is better”, such as the writing of Pinar (2001:866-867), who found that white men mostly envy the size of black men’s penises. However, the current study suggests that penis envy is also prevalent among black and coloured men who tended to avoid being in the presence of other self-identified black and coloured men due to insecurities about their penis size. This study further suggests that black men preferred that their partners swing with white or Indian men due to their perception that the latter groups have smaller penises and are, therefore, not considered competition. Oswald *et al.* (2021) have also commented on how this penis-centric attitude about masculinity, irrespective of the racial identity of men, results in discriminatory attitudes. In addition to physical attributes, the participants expressed their concerns about the aggressive behaviour of black men, whereas white men were regarded as being more respectful in terms of the way they treat their partners. These findings mirror those of Ogungbure (2018) and Verwey and Quayle (2012). They found that perceptions surrounding black men and other men of colour in the US and South Africa centre around stereotypes of hypermasculinity, hypersexuality and hyper-aggressiveness, among other qualities.

In terms of **gender**, although the men mostly initiated *entry* into the lifestyle, it was actually women who *maintained participation* in the lifestyle; this despite the fact that they sometimes required more convincing to engage in it initially (Chase, 2002; Popplewell, 2006; Wilt *et al.*, 2018). Regardless of women maintaining the lifestyle, the assumption that CNM rejects heteronormativity at the same time reinforces it, with particular reference to the “women rule” gender ethos of the lifestyle. However, gender roles are still at play. Even though women are assumed to take the lead in determining whom the couple play with and where the play session may occur, the man may still decide *what is* or *what is not* acceptable or preferable. In some instances, this results in men coercing women into conforming to *their* preferences, while preserving the notion that the woman is in control – thereby, arguably maintaining *patriarchal* and *heteronormative influence*, albeit sometimes subtly. Furthermore, patriarchy is engendered in the sexual agency of some women who fake orgasms so as not to offend their swing partner. This suggests that they may not necessarily be enjoying the encounter, but merely engaging in it for the sake of the man, i.e., engendered patriarchy. This echoes the work of Frith (2015:386), who maintains that women feel obligated to produce a “noisy” and “exaggerated” display of orgasmic ecstasy as a response to reaffirm their male partner’s sexual confidence.

Additionally, swinging may in theory require that both parties negotiate and agree on the manner in which the interaction takes place, which implies an undoing of preconceived gender roles and a democratisation of their sex life (Chambers, 2012). However, this study suggests that most female participants still feel compelled to preserve the male ego, i.e., faking an orgasm, thus preserving patriarchy under the guise of individualisation and democratisation of their female sexual agency. This finding also extended to men who suffer from erectile dysfunction. With the man not being able to engage in penetrative sex, his role is altered from dominant sexual pursuer to an alternative role as the giver of intimate contact, thereby preserving his masculine importance within the relationship. This intimacy is particularly sought out by single women in the lifestyle who have no other way of getting emotional and physical intimacy. For example, physical tactility in the form of kissing and hugging has been shown to replace men experiencing an actual orgasm as alternative means of intimacy (Smith, 2020).

References to **sexual orientation** also emanated from the participants' narratives. Women were more likely than men to admit to having fantasised about or expressed their willingness to explore bisexuality, a finding Diamond (2004) and Wilt *et al.* (2018) support. Male participants generally expressed a clear aversion to male bisexuality. Gay and bisexual participants, however, typified their straight counterparts' views as being "fake", i.e., they simply hide or suppress their secret desires to explore bisexual practices – a finding that corresponds with relative recent scholarship (Eaklor, 2008; Jackson & Scott, 2010; Meem *et al.*, 2010). Persson *et al.* (2017), for example, found that "some heterosexually identified men engage in sex with men; however, they remain largely hidden and little understood". Heterosexual men in this study inferred that, based on their personal experiences, bisexual men often conceal their sexual orientation. This, in their opinion, made them less trustworthy – especially during a threesome. This echoes the finding of Dodge *et al.* (2016), who speak about "sexual irresponsibility". This means that bisexual men are perceived as taking sexual risks that may carry negative health consequences for their sexual partners – irrespective of the latter's gender or sexual orientation.

A further factor that featured prominently in the experiences of my sample of South African swingers was **trust**. This, according to the study, remains a fundamental aspect of the swinging lifestyle, regardless of a person's gender, race or sexual orientation. To successfully navigate challenges that may arise from a CNM lifestyle, trust between the

primary couple is essential (Brennon, 2008). For example, Chambers (2012) and Giddens (1992) refer to the “pure relationship” that is shaped by the couple, which is based on their reciprocal trust. Various behaviours are perceived to enhance and build trust between the dyad. These may include, among others, having an *open, honest* and *sexually candid discussion* about CNM, always being transparent regarding, for example, one’s passwords on phones and computers, and sharing Facebook accounts and all correspondence between themselves and their swinging partners with their marital or primary partners. Trust also provides the couple with a *sense of safety*. Participants referred to the use of predetermined safe-words to indicate when one of the dyad is not comfortable in the current swinging situation or encounter (Wray, 2021). Similar to the work of Hosking (2014) and McLean (2004), the study showed that trust is deemed important to avoid relational problems such as jealousy, cheating and even the dissolution of the primary relationship. Such trust extends to the playpartner through *minimising random sexual encounters*, establishing a *closer friendship* with said playpartner and *negotiating safer sex practices*, to minimise the possibility of contracting STI, due to knowing your swinging partner well.

Although CNM is often claimed to be an activity that is mostly devoid of **jealousy** due to the supposed openness between partners about their relationship, the findings indicated that, similar to monogamous relationships, jealousy is prevalent among swingers as well. This finding was also noted by Deri (2015). It is most prevalent in the beginning stages of swinging, in particular while the couple work through their *preferences of playstyles*, *engagement in CNM* and *frequency of engagement* (Mogilski *et al.*, 2019:1812). Gender was found to be a significant factor in the nature of such displays of jealousy. While previous research suggests that men were jealous due to their partners’ sexual extra-pair scenarios (i.e., having sex with another man) and women were jealous due to their partners’ emotional extra-pair scenarios (i.e., becoming emotionally attached to the other woman) (Fernandez *et al.*, 2015; Zandbergen & Brown, 2015), this study showed women’s jealousy primarily resulted from their personal expression of body dysmorphia – i.e., when they are not comfortable with their own bodies and perceive other women, who epitomise their ideal of what constitutes a sexy body, as a threat.

This contradicts earlier findings of Sandoval *et al.* (2022), who found that jealousy was not directly related to body dissatisfaction. They found that jealousy mainly centred on their partner’s behaviour and the meanings they, as observer, attached to it. Judged

negatively, these observed behaviours create suspicion of future actions and may result in feelings of insecurity and distrust of their partner as to the spouse's intentions or commitment to the primary relationship. Although current research suggests that jealousy is sparked by feelings of uncertainty about what the partner may be doing (Vilkin & Sprott, 2021), this study suggests that jealousy is also a response to pursuing behaviour outside of one's comfort zone; i.e., not keeping to the boundaries set between the couple prior to a swinging encounter.

The setting of boundaries and the negotiation of what constitutes a comfort zone for the couple is only possible through the next social factor, i.e., **communication**. In keeping with previous research (Moors *et al.*, 2014:3), *sexually candid communication* between the dyad was found to usually occur *prior* to entering the lifestyle. This is where all the rules, boundaries and comfort zones are established and agreed upon (Wilt *et al.*, 2018:12). Once a couple has established their rules, the communication extends to the potential swing partners *prior* to sexual engagement. This ensures that all parties partake in full agreement and understand these boundaries and rules. Through honest and candid discussions, the couple should be able, as noted by the participants, to build on their reciprocal trust and respect for one another (Bonello & Cross, 2010). This strengthens the relationship and allows for fluidity and agency when interacting with other swingers, because there is a sense of security and commitment between the dyad.

The **playing field** of swingers can be described as their ideal venue, based on their personal choices grounded in their perceptions, boundaries and playstyle in the lifestyle. Two main types of swinger playing fields were noted by the participants of the present study: *The House Party* and *The Club*. The participants expressed varied views about which of the two they preferred. Not all of the swingers enjoyed going to a *club* setting. Some preferred smaller and more intimate settings such as *house parties*. Here attendance is invitation only and most of the guests know each other through their mutual sexual interests and negotiation of safe-sex practices. The latter finding, albeit partly, adds to existing literature about how clubs, not the house parties, are more conducive for safe-sex practices as they provide condoms and lubricants, which are freely available in the play rooms (Sly, 2019). The latter finding relates to the supposed **visibility** and **invisibility** of the two contexts. Those persons who go to clubs, learned about it from advertisements over social media platforms and webpages. This, therefore, may attract a larger and more diverse variety of guests who do not necessarily know one another.

The clubs themselves cater to many different fantasies and kinks, thus enabling like-minded swingers to meet and interact in the space they most desire. However, some patrons alluded to a perceived *exploitative undertone* of clubs. Single swingers are exploited at the expense of couples who wish to engage in threesomes or bisexual encounters. Furthermore, *gendered discrimination* is also more likely in clubs. Examples included participants' references to how single women are able to access the clubs much more easily than single men, because couples tend to perceive single men as prone to exploitation of married women (Akers, 2009; Kay, 2021). Kay (2021) also attests to findings that posit single swingers as being prone to becoming too emotionally attached to couples; i.e., posing a threat to the stability of the dyad. The current study suggests that some clubs are perceived to create opportunities for cheating through certain events they host. For example, "Day Time Fun" allows for interactions during the day, when it is less conspicuous for people to not be at home or to attend an event without their primary partner or their partner's knowledge. However, current literature suggests that there are people who regard these clubs as empowering and not as exploitative or deceptive (Jones, 2019).

6.5 POSITIVE FEATURES OF SOUTH AFRICAN CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY

The findings of the study suggest that there are a number of benefits associated with CNM that contribute to marital satisfaction. The participants in this study mentioned increased levels of open, sexually candid and honest communication (i.e., sharing intimate thoughts, desires, pleasures and fetishes within the dyad). It emerges at the onset of engaging in or entering a CNM lifestyle as a determining factor in increasing marital satisfaction. This finding is similar to those of Fernandes (2009:2), Hatcher (2017:1) and Moors *et al.* (2014:3). The **open communication** creates a transparency of intentions and provides a sense of protection in the dyad – a finding echoed by Kimberly and Hans (2017:797). They found that couples have to be aware of the underlying intentions of third parties with whom they swing. The sharing of intimate secrets, such as sexual desires and fantasies, allows for the dyad to embrace sexual experimentation more openly and freely, resulting in the creation of a closer bond between the primary couple, promoting sexual satisfaction, which in turn contributes to marital satisfaction (cf. Kimberly & Hans, 2017:797).

Due to this, some couples expressed that swinging became the platform where they could freely engage in **sexual experimentation** in **diverse, plural** and sometimes **sexually fluid** ways. Examples of such boundary-transcending performances included role play and dress-up, among other activities. Sexual plurality was evident in women's partiality for (and ability to) espouse their bisexuality; a sexual performance that also contributed to marital satisfaction due its positive sanctioning of sexual variety (cf. Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961). Although men and women expressed divergent views about bisexuality (the gender bias discussed in the previous chapter), when such plurality is endorsed by the dyad, same-sex and/or bisexual swinging could further contribute to increased marital satisfaction. Sarno *et al.* (2020) mirror this finding, insofar as the **personal preferences, biases, context-specificity** (e.g., the *house party* versus *the club*) and the **homogeneity or heterogeneity of the players** always inform *who* is (un)willing to engage in (what kind of) sexual experimentation and *how* (i.e., in private or communally).

This study further suggested that CNM or swinging added to the **sexual proficiency** of the couple, which enhanced marital satisfaction. Sexual proficiency was deemed to be enhanced by learnt sexual behaviours based on encounters during sexual interactions with swing partners (i.e., "**sexual skilling**") (Jackson & Scott, 2010). Not only do these 'skill-sets' add to the enjoyment of the sexual encounters, it also contributes to increased sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency between the dyad, and ultimately enhances marital satisfaction. A similar finding was reported by Farah and Shahram (2011). They noted that learning new sexual skills could improve marital satisfaction.

Establishing **meaningful friendships** is a basic human necessity. Due to the stigmatisation of CNM, participants were more likely to form friendships with other like-minded swinging lifestyleers than with monogamous couples. Not only did these friendships transcend the sexual arena, they actually extended into non-sexual, socially sanctioned activities, including weekend braais and sporting activities, such as swimming, invitations to the other players' children's weddings and birthday celebrations. In keeping with a traditionally typified friendship, friends become family (cf. Chambers, 2012). Through the engagement in socially sanctioned non-sexual activities, the need for establishing and maintaining meaningful friendships is fulfilled. Furthermore, because these friendships are devoid of secrecy and pretence in favour of mutually beneficial social interaction, they are deemed to enhance marital satisfaction as well as the need

for meaningful friendship. Wood *et al.* (2021) similarly commented on how CNM established a sense of community and family – connections that swingers nourish in a sometimes unforgiving sexual climate.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a critical discussion of the specific research objectives and findings of the present study. The themes that emerged from the collected data informed the discussions to answer the general and specific research questions. It furthermore identified the main antecedents and social factors that either benefit or challenge marital satisfaction for those who engage in CNM.

Next, Chapter 7 provides concluding remarks. Here I answer the **general** and **specific research questions**, provide theoretical and empirical recommendations and conclude with a concise reflection on my own positionality in the study.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to the research objectives, provide empirical and theoretical recommendations and outline the practical implications of the findings. I also detail the limitations of this study, and in the final section, I briefly reflect on my own positionality vis-à-vis the study.

7.2 CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG SOUTH AFRICAN COUPLES

In order to answer the general research question that guided the study (i.e., “**How does the consensual non-monogamous lifestyle of swinging affect marital satisfaction among South African couples?**”), three secondary objectives were formulated in support of the primary objective. The **first specific secondary empirical research objective** sought to critically analyse the **reasons** why South African couples engage in a swinging lifestyle. Findings derived from thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews suggest that these reasons centre on external social influences, such as the media, life partners and social connections, experiencing a traumatic life event (e.g., death of a spouse or infidelity) and diverse needs fulfilment (i.e., a need for like-minded friends). Moreover, it became apparent from the analysis that these antecedents were preceded by certain *enabling factors*, such as criticism of institutionalised heteronormativity and the notion that religious conceptions about monogamy and sexuality are unimportant, outdated, or irrelevant.

The second **specific secondary empirical research objective** focused on the challenges associated with swinging, and how these might detract from marital satisfaction for South African couples. What became apparent was that the challenges affected all aspects of the participants’ lives; i.e., personal, social and marital aspects. The *personal* challenges included (among others) a negative body image, primarily among the women who perceived themselves as being too ‘fat’, making them reluctant to engage in CNM. In some instances, the trauma that followed due to the infidelity or death of a partner or spouse made the participant susceptible to CNM. This was the case

because the experience functioned as a catalyst for the reconstruction of what monogamy means, which included the exploration of alternative relationship styles such as CNM.

Given the average age of the participants, erectile dysfunction was commonly encountered in the context of the play space. The challenge was in finding creative ways to work around this constraint. For some participants (especially single females) it provided an avenue to intimate touch and kissing, which they did not have access to otherwise as they do not have a steady partner. For the married women, however, the experience was more emotional, as it often left them feeling inadequate or not able to satisfy their swing partner – especially if it was the first time they were playing with such a partner. The study showed that, despite the women rule principle, women faked orgasms so as not to offend their male partners, which suggests that patriarchy and gender roles are still prevalent in a lifestyle generally deemed to be devoid of such. A final challenge noted within the personal realm was the lack of condom use, which is attributed to the perception of contraceptive value of condoms as opposed to the disease prevention value. Participants stated that because oral sex is practiced, condoms are used only to prevent pregnancy, and therefore not always needed.

Regarding the *social* realm, the challenges included, among others, displacing heteronormativity as the only mode of sexual orientation, allowing instead for the exploration of bisexuality as well as same-sex intimacy. Furthermore, although clubs are deemed to be a safe space to engage in bisexual encounters and sexual diversity, some participants perceived clubs as exploitative. On the one hand, single men are expected to pay the admittance fee of a couple while single women are in some instances not charged at all. Single women on the other hand feel that they are exploited for the benefit of couples who wish to engage in threesomes or bisexual encounters. Social challenges further extend to interracial and intraracial dynamics in terms of how each race perceives and does swinging. While white persons most commonly engage in swinging due to its potential for sexual diversity, friendship and agency, the study showed that black and coloured participants tend to approach swinging with the belief that everyone wants to swing with them because they have larger penises than white and Indian men. Furthermore, white swingers mostly play with white persons, while black and coloured members seek out white women as trophies. Black and coloured men avoid swinging with others of their own race due to a penis-centric outlook.

Another social challenge is that of navigating between lifestyle friends and non-lifestyle friends, which centred particularly on the freedom to be authentic rather than having to mind what is said and done at social gatherings, as is the case with non-lifestyle friends. Lifestyle friends are also deemed to be more honest than non-lifestyle friends who, in some instances, tend to be more prejudicial about CNM. The influx of younger swingers into the lifestyle was also deemed a challenge, despite the older swingers being the ones who invited them to join. The participants perceived younger women as being sexually immature, irrespective of the stereotypical idea that older men with a younger female counterpart supposedly gain more social, sexual and erotic capital due to their player status (arguably akin to patriarchal conceptions). Meanwhile, younger men are seen as virile and sexually exciting for the older female swinger. Therefore, swinging with a younger man-made older women feel more desirable.

The *marital* realm suggested challenges within two specific sub-divisions: *challenges not unique to CNM* and *challenges unique to CNM*. With regard the former, the challenges are the same as challenges found in monogamous relationships, such as cheating. Thus, even though there may be a mutual agreement to engage in CNM, one partner may fall in love with their swing partner and disguise it as swinging. This may take the form of communication with the swing partner outside of the agreed terms of engagement by the primary couple and often without their spouse's knowledge. This behaviour may give rise to jealousy and anger, which are also prevalent in monogamous relationships.

Challenges unique to CNM specifically focus on the initial stages of CNM, which include the myth that 'swinging can fix a broken marriage'. Findings from the present study challenge this view, suggesting that, if anything, CNM may result in marital discord due to jealousy, failure to set boundaries and a failure to communicate candidly about sexual expectations and needs. Furthermore, additional marital challenges include disharmony in the initial stages of CNM, particularly if one partner is not willing to engage in the lifestyle or if they feel unwanted by their partner. Disharmony also occurs as the couple navigates and negotiates the rules, terms of engagement and boundaries relevant to their unique playstyle and relationship level. Thereafter, they need to negotiate a playstyle that includes discussing whether they will engage in a 'full swap' encounter, which implies that they will have penetrative sex with the other couple, or a 'soft swap', which implies flirting and perhaps petting but no sexual intercourse.

This recalls my use of Finch (2007) and Morgan's (1996) theoretical tenets of "displaying" and "doing" one's relationship through "institutional reflexivity" (Giddens, 1992). The present study relates that couples favour said approaches to jointly negotiate (Martin, 2016) how, when and with whom they "do" (Morgan 1996), "use" (Johnson, 2009) and "display" (Finch, 2007) their swinging. In so doing, it could alleviate some of the participants' discomfort seeing the partner with another in a sexual encounter; i.e., it could have been avoided if the couple openly reflected and discussed whether they intended to play in the same room or separate rooms.

The **third specific secondary empirical research objective** focused on the benefits that a swingers' lifestyle yields and how these may promote marital satisfaction for South African couples. Once again, the analysis of the data revealed that the benefits are not domain specific, but rather encompass all aspects of the participants' lives from within the social, marital and personal domains. *Social* benefits included the forming of meaningful friendships, the providing of a safe space to explore sexuality and sensuality, and the embrace of the 'women rule' principle, which is viewed as a direct challenge to patriarchy. From a *personal* perspective the benefits included better hygiene practices, such as shaving, sexual fluidity (such as exploring bisexuality and sexual diversity) and the boosting of confidence and ego from a female perspective as a result of the attention these women received from other men.

The benefits directly associated with *marriage* included the learning of new sexual techniques through the various sexual encounters, techniques that were then transferred to the marital bed. It also entailed increased communication between the dyad with relevance to their sexual needs, preferences and fantasies. Such increased communication enhanced the trust and honesty between the dyad, leading to feelings of enhanced marital satisfaction. In addition to the benefit of enhanced marital satisfaction, CNM is also perceived as providing an alternative to infidelity based on the consensual agreement of freedom to explore and engage in sexual fantasies, needs and desires.

I critically analysed the findings to achieve the noted research objectives, which culminated in my inductive contribution of the present study; i.e., a **conceptual model of CNM and marital satisfaction in South Africa**. I discuss this model in the next subsection.

7.3 CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGAMOUS MARITAL SATISFACTION MODEL (CNMMS)

The **final specific research objective** was to provide a conceptual model of how CNM may affect the marital satisfaction of South African couples. Next, I discuss the main tenets of the **Consensual Non-Monogamous Marital Satisfaction Model** (hereafter **CNMMS**), as reflected in Figure 7.1.

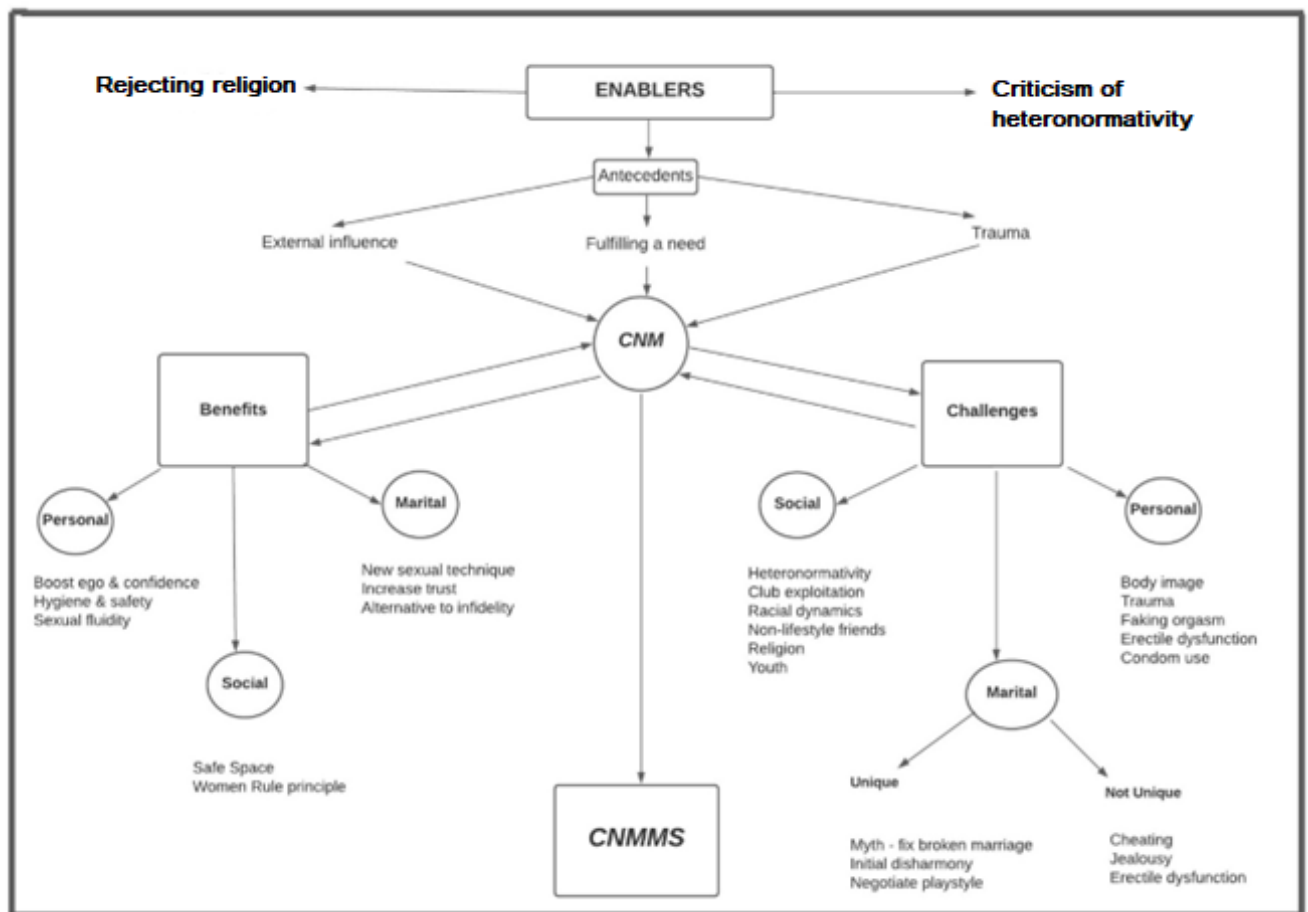


Figure 7.1: Graphic representation of the Consensual Non- Monogamous Marital Satisfaction Model

In proposing a model for marital satisfaction, I focused on what the term CNM means to swingers. For some, CNM meant sexual satisfaction, both in their marriage or relationship and in their participation in the CNM lifestyle. I therefore propose a CNMMS model that emanates from the findings related to how couples may gain sexual satisfaction in their marriages through CNM, which may ultimately contribute to their marital satisfaction.

Firstly, the antecedents to swinging are preceded by certain **enablers**. My findings show that these encompassed two factors: **Religion** and the **institutionalisation of heterosexual monogamy**. Both informed the participants' decision to pursue or refrain from pursuing CNM. Religion has long been a cornerstone and agent of socialisation pertaining to monogamy, heteronormativity and patriarchy. Religion and institutionalised heterosexuality overlap and mutually reinforce the idea that “sexual identities and practices are organized into systems of power, which *encourage*⁵⁶ heterosexual and monogamous practices and, likewise, *stigmatise*⁵⁷ practices and identities deviating from these practices” (Moors *et al.*, 2021:1390).

There is thus “a set of sexual identities and practices that are deemed appropriate” versus those that, owing to traditional African and Afrikaner ideologies, are deemed “perverse” (Moors *et al.*, 2021:1390). This extends to persons in polyamorous relationships who similarly stigmatise those who practice CNM (Matsick *et al.*, 2014). If internalised uncritically, swingers could experience “internalised CNM negativity” – i.e., self-stigmatising oneself due to the negativity with which a heteronormative society views you due to your counter-normative sexual expressions (Moors *et al.*, 2021). I found that some participants transgressed heterosexual hegemony, monogamy and patriarchy by opting to engage with the potential benefits that CNM affords them, such as sexual fluidity, plurality, gender egalitarianism and sexual democratisation (Smuts, 2021). According to Budgeon and Roseneil (2002) and Chambers (2012:186), this democratisation of sexual intimacies “emphasize[s] the counter-normative nature and radical potential of such relationships”. Of particular relevance is how many participants alluded to a worldview that people are not meant to be monogamous. Schippers's (2016:14) criticism of what she terms as “compulsory monogamy” is relevant here. She argues that such monogamy places a great deal of strain on couples who engage in CNM because it:

... renders consensual non-monogamies perverse, abnormal, impossible, or a threat to “normal” relationships. ... In contrast to the social accolades and support that come with coupling in a monogamous relationship, oftentimes others will push back with warnings about how such a relationship could never work. (Schippers, 2016:14)

⁵⁶ Emphasis added.

⁵⁷ Emphasis added.

Although the participants in this study affirmed these challenges, they sought to “push back” against heterosexual and compulsory monogamy to reconceptualise what a supposed “normal” relationship *actually* looks like. Consider their references to religion and sexuality. To this point, they argued that CNM cannot be sinful, because both partners are engaging in swinging *consensually* and with *full knowledge* of what their partner is doing. The participants also challenged ideologies that posit being gay, lesbian or bisexual is sinful. Equally so, the challenge against institutionalised heterosexual hegemony allows the participants to consider other possibilities of relationship formations and performances. This is particularly evident in those examples of same-sex and bisexual swinging that criticises monosexuality and rather encourage sexual fluidity. Changing ideologies regarding the influence of religion and heteronormativity precede my discussion of the **antecedents** to CNM. I discuss these next.

As the first of the antecedents outlined in Figure 7.1, *external influences* include the media in the guise of magazines, swingers’ sites, pop-up adverts, the influence of lifelong partners and social connections. The predisposition to CNM that stems from the enablers such as the challenge against institutionalised heterosexual hegemony and the reconceptualisation of religious teachings, prompt the participants to consider alternative styles of romantic relationships such as CNM. Various needs, both social and sexual, also influence participants’ decisions to engage in CNM. The needs for sexual diversity and fluidity, such as exploring bisexuality or sexual fantasies involving more than one partner simultaneously, are highly suited to being fulfilled in the context of CNM. This is particularly true in terms of bisexual exploration or sexual diversity, which may not be possible within a monogamous, heterosexual relationship.

Social needs such as forming friendships with like-minded persons who are open and honest also predisposed many participants to engaging in CNM. In particular, this includes the ability to speak freely among peers, as well as enjoying social encounters that also include the fulfilment of sexual diversity and frequency needs. Experiencing trauma, such as the loss of a loved one or infidelity by a primary partner, prompted some participants to re-evaluate monogamy in a manner that allows them to explore alternative relationship styles, while still retaining *emotional* monogamy between the primary couple, even in instances where a spouse has died. In such cases, the need for sex does not override the emotional bond the surviving spouse still harbours. In the case of infidelity, opening the relationship to incorporate CNM may provide an alternative to adultery, as

the ethos of swinging is centred around fulfilling sexual needs without transgressing the emotional boundaries between a primary couple. By satisfying the need for sexual diversity, the couple preserves emotional monogamy. However, this does not mean that the individuals concerned will simply engage in the lifestyle.

Specific **social factors** intervene in the choices, experiences and eventual consequences of choosing to participate in or refrain from CNM. These include **age, race, gender, sexual orientation, playing field, communication, trust and jealousy**.

Regarding the first of these social factors (i.e., **age**) it was apparent from the participant sample of this study that swingers enter the lifestyle around the age of 40 years old, with the average current age of the participants being 50 years old – indicating that the sample consisted of relatively older and arguably more sexually experienced swingers. However, it would seem that an emerging trend, as identified by the participants, is an influx of much younger players into the swingers' arena (Chris, 2021). This was primarily attributed to older players inviting such younger persons into the swingers' field for a variety of reasons. Older men, for example, reportedly sought out younger women as an affirmation of their sexual prowess. However, these men were also critical of the apparent lack of sexual experience of younger women as swinging partners. Conversely, women were partial to the opportunity to play with a younger man because of the latter's supposed sexual stamina (Hagy, 2017). For both genders, playing with a much younger partner was often considered to be a proverbial 'ego boost'. Regardless, both genders expressed their concern about how younger people contribute to the changing ethos of swinging due to the younger swingers' propensity for non-committed relationships, favouring instead confluent relationships without the need to get married.

Although CNM is not unique to a single South African racial group, the findings show how the respective groups attached different meanings to their participation in the lifestyle. Furthermore, they noted varied reasons for engaging in or refraining from interracial swinging. While the self-identified white participants attributed their swinging to the need for experiencing sexual diversity, exploring their bisexuality and forming meaningful friendships, they refrained from interracial encounters (St. Vil *et al.*, 2021). They attributed this to their upbringing and personal sexual preferences. Conversely, having larger penises than their white male counterparts, self-identified black and coloured swingers believed that swingers, irrespective of their race, want to play with them, mirroring previous academic research about the penis-centric mentalities (Lewis, 2011).

Furthermore, they swing with white women to prove and reassert their sexual prowess and attain the women as so-called “trophy”. In addition, intraracial conflict was evident within black and coloured race groups. For example, these men do not want their wives or partners to swing with other black or coloured men, for fear of the other men having a bigger penis. Hence, they prefer their partners to swing with white and Indian men.

The **gender** of swingers was also telling about CNM. Men were most inclined to instigate entry into CNM, while women required the most convincing. However, once into the CNM lifestyle, the latter were the ones to maintain it, which enhanced marital satisfaction due to the sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction derived from the lifestyle (St. Vile *et al.*, 2021). **Sexual orientation** also provided varied views among men and women. These differences in swinging ideologies influenced their sexual playing. This included the exploration of bisexuality. Women were more likely to admit to bisexual curiosity and engage in bisexual encounters than men – a finding that is consistent with relatively recent South African research about women’s propensity for and openness to sexual diversification (Rothmann *et al.*, 2022; Smuts, 2021). This lends itself to the sexual agency of women and the ensuing freedom to pursue bisexual fantasies and desires. However, many men were adamant that they did not entertain bisexual fantasies (i.e., arguably exuding homophobia – thus, the fear of being labelled as gay) (Anderson & McCormack, 2018), but that they nevertheless had fantasies of seeing their wife/life partner with another woman, which brought about increased sexual pleasure and added to their marital satisfaction (cf. Benamati, 2016:1; Fernandes, 2009:2; Girard & Brownlee, 2015:463; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015:961). The same does not apply to the women, as many women admitted that they did not have any fantasy of seeing their husband/life partner with another man. They indicated that the idea nauseated them.

The choice of the geographical **playing field** also introduces unique social dynamics. Those who opted for playing in a club felt that the rules were better enforced to ensure safety (particularly of women) than was the case at house parties, where the rules were generally a lot less stringent and less likely to be enforced. Clubs are more suited to fantasy play, in that they cater for many different fantasies in their themed rooms, such as the voyeur room or the dark room. This adds to the sexual pleasure experienced and subsequently to marital satisfaction, as each partner can pursue their respective sexual fantasies freely and with relative safety. By comparison, house parties are in many instances limited in what they can offer. Furthermore, clubs can host many more people,

which means that the choice of partner and variety of sexual activity is expanded. Couples can enjoy agency as well as frequency and variety with greater ease than at a house party. This increases sexual satisfaction, which in turn enhances marital satisfaction. Despite this, clubs were cited as being exploitative, particularly in their attitude and approach towards single players. Single male players are expected to pay the price of a couple, while in many instances single women are admitted for half price or no fee at all. Furthermore, single female players feel that they are used as “bait” to attract more couples who seek a single woman for bisexual experiences. In contrast to single females who are used to attract couples who wish to explore bisexual encounters, single men are perceived as problematic and inclined to misuse the married swinger women as cheap sex.

Communication as a social factor has a substantial bearing on CNM and how it may add to or detract from marital satisfaction (see Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Without honest, open and candid discussions of intentions, sexual desires, fantasies and likes and dislikes, problems could arise within the dyad. This is particularly relevant during the initial stages of entry into CNM where the couple has to establish boundaries to ensure that both are content and happy. Failure to communicate properly could lead to negative emotions such as **jealousy**, which could jeopardise the relationship through negatively perceived behaviours such as angry outbursts and verbal abuse. Jealousy also arises when a couple plays outside their communicated boundaries. This alludes to the **trust** between a couple. The ability to know that neither will transgress the boundaries or act in a manner that is harmful to the ethos of the couple and the reasons they are engaging in swinging is very important to ensure that the act of engaging in swinging is adding to sexual pleasure, which will increase marital satisfaction. Communication is also important between swinging partners. The ability to effectively communicate what is permissible, such as ‘soft swing’ only or ‘full swap’ or ‘no kissing’, significantly influences sexual satisfaction within the context of CNM.

Depending on how the couples engage with these social factors, **marital satisfaction** is supported by five interdependent outcomes, i.e.:

- More open communication within the dyad
- The willingness to experiment sexually
- Welcoming gender and sexual diversity, plurality and fluidity into their relationship

- Increased sexual proficiency
- Establishing social and friendship networks in the CNM community

Regarding the first point noted above, the couple's relationship is characterised by increased honesty, sexually candid talk, transparency, trust and less overt displays of jealousy. However, the findings suggest that CNM does not fix and can not fix a broken marriage/relationship. Once the couple has established their relationship on the noted grounding factors, they may find it relatively easier to transition into swinging. This relates to their willingness to experiment sexually, i.e., transgress gendered and heteronormative boundaries regarding sexually permissible behaviours. In a word, they "undo" gendered expectations (Adeagbo, 2015; Johnson, 2009) by challenging patriarchy and heterosexism by, among other things, allowing women to take the lead in the decision-making process of the lifestyle.

The lifestyle itself may thus offer the couple the opportunity to enhance the quality of their marital relationship. In so doing, introductions to and partaking in sexually diverse and agentic playing encourage the dyad to express their sexual fantasies across sexual orientation boundaries through bisexual encounters during threesomes. Pertaining to sexual proficiency, new sexual skill sets are learned from the sexual variety of multiple partners and can then be transferred to the dyad or to other swinging partners, which not only improves sexual satisfaction but will ultimately add to marital satisfaction as the sexual aspect between the dyad is enhanced through experimenting with the new skill sets (cf. Jackson & Scott, 2010).

Finally, the study shows that CNM facilitates establishing, building and maintaining friendships with other like-minded swinger couples without concerns about heteronormative judgement or isolation. The findings show that such friendships transcend mere sexual encounters and incorporate various activities, such as participating in family events like weddings or meeting for a weekend braai. The latter finding is consistent with relatively recent theorisation about the "friends as family" (Chambers, 2012), "families of choice" (Weeks *et al.*, 2001) and "personal communities" (Spencer & Pahl, 2006) typologies. These models relate to the changing sexual mores and noted sexual diversification associated with heterosexual, homosexual and non-binary coupledness. Weeks *et al.* (2001:11), for example, echo Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), Finch (2007), Giddens (1992) and Morgan (1996) by stating: "Friends are *like*

family; or they *are* [and, as the findings show, *become*] family. The family is something external to you, or something you *do*.’⁵⁸ Similarly, I find it worth associating Spencer and Pahl’s (2006:154) reference to “personal communities” with CNM couples. Although they contend that one’s membership and choice of families, as social institution, remains “complex”, my findings show how “significant others who are part of [CNM’s] micro-social worlds. [These] individuals are no longer steeped in extended family or community ties. Rather, they tend to draw on a *combination* of ‘given’ or ascribed (kin) and ‘chosen’ or elective (friendship) relationships of social support” (Chambers, 2012:184).

7.4 LIMITATIONS

No study is without limitations. As will be discussed below, the limitations of this study centred on representation of race, representation of age, participant demography and the lack of inclusion of swingers who left the lifestyle.

Regarding **racial representation**, South Africa has four distinct main racial groupings, namely black, white, coloured and Indian. The former constitutes the majority of the population. Given that the study suggested that the various races represented in South Africa may swing for different reasons, a more proportionate representation of the races could highlight the differences with more clarity. It could also yield new understandings of the diversity of reasons why participants from various races engage in swinging. Furthermore, even though this was not a stated aim of the study, the intraracial challenges that were noted in the analysis could not be comprehensively explored due to the imbalance of racial representation in the sample. This limitation relates to the difficulty to expand on more **in-depth and thick descriptions** about the private and more public contexts of the participants. Said limitation relates to the sensitivity of the topic and the secrecy about the subculture. This made it difficult (and, in some instances, nearly impossible) to fully describe the participants’ contexts, as many significant details about the participants’ personal lives were purposefully excluded from my reporting to safeguard their anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.

Pertaining to the **age** of participants, the average age of the participants was 50 years. This may therefore limit the transferability of the findings to younger persons who engage in CNM. However, the data suggested that the age demography of swingers is getting

⁵⁸ Emphasis added.

younger and that younger persons (between 20 to 35 years old) are entering the South African swingers' community (Swinger's Help, 2021). Furthermore, initial findings indicate that motivations for swinging differ among older and younger swingers. The findings do not account for those who are younger than 35 years old. As such, additional research may provide inductive contributions to the theorisation about the changing social and sexual dynamics among and between different age cohorts. Finally, one of the main inclusion criteria required the participants to be an **active swinger at the time of conducting the fieldwork**. No data was gathered on why swingers would exit the lifestyle and what the implications of this is for the primary relationship. Although this topic falls outside the scope of the present study, it may provide a worthwhile focus for scholars to explore.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation centres on conducting **further academic and sociological research**. Based on my findings, future South African studies, whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed, are necessary due to the lack of current research on this topic from a South African perspective. Foci could include, among others, how individuals and couples who partake in CNM differ in their choice to do so, how their choices differ and the actual practices that they favour when pursuing the lifestyle. This is particularly relevant with respect to race in relation to how individuals (due to, or irrespective of their self-identified race) subjectively experience the lifestyle, how it affects their psychological and social connections to others of their own race and other races and how this may challenge or retain hegemony along traditional, heteronormative and patriarchal lines. An investigation into the age of swingers could also prove a viable topic. This is especially true considering proof of an influx of younger people into the lifestyle. Scholars could investigate the reasons why swinging appeals to them, as well as its implications for establishing and maintaining confluent or more long-term romantic sexual relationships.

Similarly, data from such research could result in comparing the South African swinging lifestyle with that of other countries, such as the US and UK, where much more theorisation and empirical work has been done. Such research, in my opinion, should be interdisciplinary to establish a link between the fields of psychology and social sciences to encourage a nuanced understanding of how CNM is conceptualised and lived by people in their respective contexts. This could expand what has thus far been solely medicalised or moralistic inquiry into CNM to contextualise how various social institutions

(e.g., the family, religion, health and politics, among others) not only socialise people into avoiding/engaging the tenets of CNM, but rather how individual persons self-consciously reflect, negotiate and construct their own subjective experiences in relation to alternative marital relationships.

This could, for example, apply to same-sex couples as a marginalised group in the South African swinging lifestyle. Further sociological research is required on why people leave the swingers' lifestyle. The focus of such studies should include an exploration of the implications for marital satisfaction after leaving the lifestyle. Sub-foci could include how it affects their "personal communities" (i.e., their chosen friends as family), the changes associated with the frequency of their sexual intercourse and whether they now tend to refrain from engaging in sexual variety and agency. An understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of swingers, both practicing and non-practicing, could enhance sexuality studies both in South Africa and abroad, on the broader spectrum of what CNM entails and how it may affect the primary relationship.

Recommendations centring on **practical applications** focus primarily on how marriage therapists, sexologists and counsellors could inform their patients/clients about the potential challenges relating to engaging in a CNM lifestyle in South Africa (see Figure 7.1). This could help these professionals to advise their clients on how to navigate these challenges, particularly during the initial stages after entering the lifestyle (e.g., engaging in honest and sexually candid discussions before entering the play space, setting specific boundaries beforehand and deciding on the playstyles that they will permit one another to engage in). This is important, as there is no formally recognised facility or institution (to my knowledge) in South Africa where persons who are interested in CNM can consult to gain a better understanding of the inherent intricacies of CNM. Furthermore, therapists can also take note of the ethos of CNM with reference to sexual diversity and experimentation (see Figure 7.1) (see Moors *et al.*, 2021). Said ethos centres around the premise of seeking sexual satisfaction without establishing emotional bonds that may be detrimental to the primary relationship.

7.6 PERSONAL POSITIONING AND REFLECTIONS

Personal reflexivity and discussing researcher positionality are encouraged in qualitative research (Turner, 2008). As a self-identified white, cisgender woman who is heterosexual, I was interested in investigating how the issues of bisexuality and sexual agency affect

the dyadic relationships married couples. I entered this study with preconceived ideas and a firm set of gendered, social and sexual boundaries. During the semi-structured interviews, I not only met with interesting people, but following the completion of the fieldwork, they also invited me to various social events to experience first-hand how they attach symbolic meanings to their CNM friendships and their need to belong. I experienced how they established non-judgemental and pleasurable friendships – irrespective of my personal views and predetermined boundaries regarding CNM.

The journey has altered my preconceived perceptions of *who* swingers are and *what* swinging entails. Although I understand why it is not suitable for everyone based on religious, political and relationship reasons, along with having established an open and transparent relationship between the dyad, swinging may contribute to a couple's introduction to and expression of their varied social, sexual and gender wants, needs and expectations. This is a central finding that informed my personal understanding of a very unique subculture. The freedom of expression of sexual orientation and sexual fluidity was most notable in what I encountered of the swinging lifestyle. I have no illusions about the challenges associated with CNM, but I do respect the lifestyle choice and encourage you, as readers, to re-evaluate your own predetermined understandings, prejudices and views about those persons who carefully navigate their CNM lives based on their own predetermined boundaries.

7.7 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A CNM lifestyle may not only offer sexual benefits to its practitioners, e.g., opportunities to enact their sexual agency and explore sexual diversity. It may also contribute to a couple experiencing marital satisfaction as a result of the processes that lead up to and maintain the lifestyle (e.g., honest and open communication and the freedom to be authentic). However, it does not offer a permanent 'fix' for broken marriages. Entry into the lifestyle is replete with potential pitfalls (e.g., the unwillingness to initially enter into the CNM lifestyle, or experiences of jealousy due to a lack of communication and clear rules). Although not everyone will be open to CNM, for those who identify with its ethos, the benefits of CNM may possibly outweigh the challenges and could contribute to them experiencing increased levels of marital satisfaction.

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ADDENDUM A: HSSREC ETHICS APPROVAL



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26 August 2021

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-HSS-REC)** on 26/08/2021, the North-West University Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof J. Rothmann & Prof W. Nell
Student: M. Basson (27998460)

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	2	0	4	2	-	2	0	-	A	7

Institution Study Number Year Status
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date: 26/08/2021

Expiry date: 26/02/2022

Risk Category:

Medium

Approval of the study is initially provided for six months, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of six-monthly (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the NWU-HSS-REC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the NWU-HSS-REC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-HSS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the NWU-HSS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and NWU-HSS-REC reserves the right to:

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-HSS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- NWU-HSS-REC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via 21081719@nwu.ac.za / 13128388@nwu.ac.za.

The NWU-HSS REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU-HSS REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Dr Mariette Fourie
Deputy Chairperson NWU Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 NWU-HSS-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm
5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ADDENDUM B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

ADDENDUM B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: “Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples”

1. BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONS

1.1 As what sex/gender do you identify?

Male	Female	Transgender	Other (shortly elaborate)

1.2 With what racial category do you identify?

White	African	Indian	Coloured	Other (shortly elaborate)

1.3 Are you currently married?

Yes	No	Other (shortly elaborate)

1.4 How long have you been married?

1.5 Did you and your partner co-habit prior to marriage?

Yes	No	Other (shortly elaborate)

1.6 How many times have you been married?

1.7 What is your highest level of education?

Senior certificate	Diploma	Undergraduate degree	Postgraduate degree	Other (shortly elaborate)

1.8 Do you identify with any particular religion or religious affiliation?

Yes	No	Please elaborate shortly.

1.9 How old were you when you entered the practice of swinging?

1.10 How old are you now?

1.11 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

1.12 Do you swing as a single or part of a couple? Please explain.

1.13 How many swinging partners have you engaged with to date?

1.14 How often do you engage in play sessions during a single year?

1.15 Did you meet your current partner within the swinging lifestyle? Please elaborate detailing where you met.

- 1.16** Do you engage in swinging relationships across racial boundaries? Elaborate please.
- 1.17** Who initiated the idea to engage with swinging (i.e. you or your partner)?
- 1.18** How did you or partner react to this recommendation?
- 1.19** Where do you and/or your partner find other like-minded couples/persons who participate in swinging? Could you identify the source?

2. OPINION-RELATED QUESTIONS

2.1 RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

- What role does mutual consent play in your relationship with regard to swinging practices?
- Do you engage in the swingers' activities with full consent from your partner? If no, please elaborate on what made you decide to do so.
- Do you have rules that you and your partner adhere to with regards interaction with other swingers? If so, what are these?
- What is the nature of assigning and keeping to particular rules for both parties before, while and after swinging?

2.2 LIFESTYLE-RELATED QUESTIONS

- What attracted you to the swinging lifestyle? Please elaborate.
- Where do you and/or your partner find other like-minded couples/persons who participate in swinging?
- How did you feel the first time you saw your partner engage sexually with another person?
- Describe your swinging participation style in terms soft-swing/full swap/same room/separate rooms? Why did you make these choices?
- What are the challenges you have encountered in the swinging lifestyle?
- How has being a swinger, influenced your social circle in terms of different friendships styles? (e.g., NSA/long term friendships/friends-with-benefits).
- Describe your ideal playmate in terms of, among others, their age, sexual

orientation, gender identity (e.g., masculinity, femininity), body type and career-type, among others.

- How would you describe changes (if any) in the way you perceive your body image since you started to engage in swinging practices?
- How do you feel about swing players private messaging your partner without including you?
- How do you feel about your partner receiving nude or raunchy pictures from other life-stylers?

ADDENDUM C: GATEKEEPER APPROVAL

ADDENDUM D LETTER OF CLUB MANAGER

Marina Basson
Cellular phone number: 076 836 4065
PhD student in Sociology
North West University – Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom Campuses
Student Number: 27998460
E-mail: marina@sentekfencing.co.za

20 January 2020

The Manager

...

PRETORIA

RE: Permission to conduct semi-structured face-to-face interviews at Club Privilege for the study entitled, "Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples"

Dear Sir

I am currently registered for my PhD in Sociology through the North West. The objective of this research is to better understand the influence of consensual non-monogamy (swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples. More specifically, the study aims to explore why South African couples select swinging as a lifestyle and how this influences their marital sexual well-being. I herewith request your assistance in identifying potential participants who are members of the club's database. The title of the study reads as follows:

"Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples".

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may opt out at any point without any repercussions. All participant identifications will be confidential



1

and only known to me, the independent recruiter and my supervisors at North West University. I intend to perform recorded (for transcription purposes) telephonic and face-to-face interviews, and as such, I will be available to participants who choose to meet at your club which they may consider as safe space. Face-to-face interviews will also be recorded with the permission of the participants for transcription purposes. One of my supervisors may also be present during some of the interviews, which will be dependent on the approval of the interviewee. This permission will be obtained in advance of the interview.

The process will involve me sending you a formal letter of invitation in which I request you to distribute the information on the noted study to members of your club or network via email or for placement on your electronic platforms (e.g. official website, Facebook page, etc.). Those members who are interested to participate, may then contact the independent recruiter to obtain more information on the study and potentially schedule an interview date and time.

The invitation and introductory letter will contain the following information:

- Introduce me, as researcher, to the potential participants.
- Introduce the research institution (North-West University).
- Introduce the topic under investigation.
- Detail the nature of the research (a qualitative research design using telephonic and face-to-face semi-structured interviews).
- Detail the process that the research will follow (i.e. the participants contacting the participant recruiter, scheduling an appointment for the interview, the choice of the type of interview, the use of a recorder during the interview which is dependent on their consent, the length of the interview, and the publication of results, among others).
- Detail potential stressors the participants may experience and the processes in place to address these (e.g. experience of emotional discomfort, and references to a certified psychologist for a consultation).
- Detail how their personal details will be kept confidential and the persons who will have access to such information.



- Detail on what the data will be used for (e.g. results will be used for the purpose of writing-up a PhD thesis and publication of academic articles on the findings).
- Request informed consent from the participant to participate in the research (the participant will be requested to sign an informed consent statement to indicate their willingness to voluntarily participate in the study. This document will also be signed by the researcher and the two supervisors of the study).

All correspondence preceding the actual interview will be directly between the potential participant and my independent participant recruiter. The latter is a person appointed to liaise with the participant to schedule a date and time for the interview.

I acknowledge that neither you, on your personal and professional capacity, nor the club will be identified in the research. Your participation is limited to (a) agreeing to place a short summary of the proposed study on the club's electronic platforms for club members to peruse and (b) that I am acting as an independent researcher using the club's premises to conduct the face-to-face interviews.

In order to secure the documentation required for the ethics committee, I request that you sign below as an indication that you are in agreement with my request to place information related to the study on your club's database and that you have no objection to send out the invitation to those members and patrons listed on the database.

Should you have any queries in this regard, please contact me on 076 836 4065 or email me at marina@sentekfencing.co.za.

I, [CLUB MANAGER] hereby (a) agree to place a short summary of the proposed study on the club's electronic platforms for club members to peruse and (b) grant permission to Mrs. Marina Basson to use the club's premises to conduct the face-to-face interviews.

Signed at Centurion on 4/3/2020 (date).

ADDENDUM D: INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa, 1900

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

DATE 30 June 2020

Human Social Sciences Research Ethics
Committee
HSSREC

01-07-2020

C. van Eeden

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

“Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy
on the marital satisfaction of South African couples”

REFERENCE NUMBERS:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Marina Basson

ADDRESS: 36 Lapwing Street, 3 Rivers East, Vereeniging, GAUTENG

CONTACT NUMBER: 076 836 4065

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my PhD. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Prior to publication of the study's results (or the point that publication is in process), you may also withdraw the data you generate.

This study has been approved by the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU Vaal Campus) and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- The objectives of this research are to better understand the *influence of consensual non-monogamy (swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples*. More specifically, the study aims to explore *why South African couples select swinging as a lifestyle and how this influences their marital sexual well-being*.
- This study will be conducted in South Africa and will involve *telephonic or face-to-face interviews*, depending on the preference of each participant. Face-to-face interviews are subject to COVID-19 restrictions. The researcher has been trained to use the methods mentioned in the previous sentence.
- Approximately 20 participants will be included in this study.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because you:*
 - Responded to an invitation sent out via a swingers' online platform.
- *You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria:*
 - You are a South African who actively engages in swinging.
 - You have been in the lifestyle for at least one year or longer.
 - You are older than 18 years.
 - You are part of a couple (married or otherwise cohabiting) or single (i.e. not part of a couple) that engages exclusively with other couples for the purpose of 'swinging' experiences.
 - You participate in 'swinging' consensually.
- *You will be excluded if:*
 - You are taking part in swinging as a sex worker (being paid for sex).
 - You are a single person seeking romantic relationships by scouting swingers' clubs and platforms as if it were a dating platform. The focus of the study is on couples and on singles engaged in consensual non-monogamy.
 - You are younger than the age of consent in South Africa – 18 years old.

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be expected to*
 - Answer 24 open-ended questions regarding your experience of the swingers' lifestyle during a telephonic and/or face-to-face interview.
 - Avail yourself for the interview for approximately 45 minutes- 1 hour.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *The direct benefits for you as a participant will probably be:*
 - Whilst the experience of reflecting on the value that consensual non-monogamy (swinging) has for you might possibly be of value to you, your participation will hold minimal direct benefits for you.
 - A summarized version of the findings of the study will be made available to you by the researcher through a personal email once the study is finalised.
- *The indirect benefit will probably be:*

- A better understanding of the influence of consensual non-monogamy (swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples, which may be used by therapists, the general public and prospective couples who are considering entering the swingers' lifestyle wanting a better understanding of the dynamics.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

- *The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:*

<i>Probable/possible risks/discomforts</i>	<i>Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort</i>
Due to you having to spend approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour completing the interview telephonically or face-to-face (subject to COVID-19 restrictions), it is possible that you may become bored or experience minor inconvenience to your daily routine.	The interviewer will ask every 20 minutes if the participant is still fine and if they require a break in which case the interviewer will phone back after an agreed time or resume the interview after a break in the instance of a face-to-face interview. The participant may at any time request a break or call back in order to deal with possible unforeseen distractions.
The sexual and personal nature of the questions may induce discomfort or stress.	Possible questions will be provided to the participants before the interview so that they are familiar with the line of questioning prior to them giving consent. The questions are attached to this invitation as an addendum. The participant will also be informed that they may leave the interview or decline to answer the questions at any point during the interview with no repercussions. A registered clinical psychologist will be available to engage with the participants should they require intervention as a result of the interview process.
Possibility of exposure	All participants will have the option of responding by using a pseudonym. Also, the use of an independent recruiter has been omitted to further protect the participants (i.e. participants will only liaise with the researcher). Individual telephonic interviews at a time and place of the participants' choosing will be determined, thereby minimising the possibility of exposure. Face-to-face individual interviews will be conducted at the club to which the participants belong, which also minimises the risk of exposure. This is subject to COVID-19 restriction lifting. The researcher will assign numbers to each interview and a pseudonym of the participant's choosing as well as personally transcribe the interactions – minimizing the risk of any personal details being exposed to any unauthorized party.

- *However, we do believe that the benefits to you and to science (as noted in the previous section) outweigh the risks we have listed. If you disagree, then please feel free not to participate in this study. We will respect your decision.*
- *Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm.*

Who will have access to the data?

- *Anonymity (that is, in no way will your results be linked to your identity) will be maintained through the allocation of pseudonyms or other non-identifying labels (e.g. 'Participant 1') to refer to what participants said in any research reports.*
- *Confidentiality (that is, I/we assure you that we will protect the information we have about you) will be ensured by assigning unique numbers to each participant in order to ensure that their personal information is not accidentally divulged to third parties.*
- *The researcher will personally transcribe each interview.*
- *Reporting of findings will be anonymous by reporting as group findings and not as individual findings.*
- *Only the researchers and her supervisors will have access to the personal data of the participants if they make such available to us.*
- *Data will be kept safe and secure by storing it on the researcher's password protected laptop.*
- *Audio-recorded data will be transcribed by the researcher personally. As soon as the data has been transcribed and checked against the recording, the recording will be deleted. The transcripts will be stored on a password-protected computer.*
- *Data will be stored in the safe of the researcher.*

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways:

- *It will be written-up in the form of a PhD thesis for examination purposes in fulfilment of the researcher's PhD.*
- *It will be written up as research articles for submission to peer-reviewed national and international scholarly journals.*
- *In all of this reporting, participants will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include the name or any other identifiable details that will enable others to know that a particular person participated (e.g. your address, occupation, etc.).*
- *The data will be reused for secondary research involving the same general topic (centring on various aspects of South African couples' experience of consensual non-monogamy). This will be undertaken by the researcher at a later stage.*

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study. However, the researcher will email a summarised copy of the findings to each participant once the research has been finalised.

How will you know about the findings?

Should you so wish, the general findings of the research will be shared with you by means of a summary of the findings via email.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You may contact Marina Basson via email at marina@sentekfencing.co.za if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You may contact the chair of the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof C van Eeden) at 016 910 3441 or chrizanne.vaneden@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. You can also contact the co-chair, Dr Marita Heyns (016 910 3515) or marita.heyns@nwu.ac.za. You can leave a message for either Chrizanne or Marita with Ms Daleen Claasens (016 910 30441).
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to the participant.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I **Marina Basson**, declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to the participant
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.
-

Signed at (*place*) VEREENIGING on (*date*) 30 JUNE 2020.

Signature of researcher 

Signature of witness 

ADDENDUM E: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Dr. Saneth Dreyer

Geregistreeerde Sielkundige: Voorligting
Registered Psychologist Counselling

MSc (Counselling Psyc)
PhD (Industrial Psyc)
Practice no: 0448419
PS: 0018031

Spreekkamers - Consulting Rooms
128 Rossini Blvd, Vanderbijlpark
P O Box 4795, Vanderbijlpark 1911
Tel no: (016) 110 0001 / Cell: 061 771 4192
E-mail: drsdreyer@vaalpsycho.co.za

3 March 2020

TO : MARINA BASSON

Dear Marina,

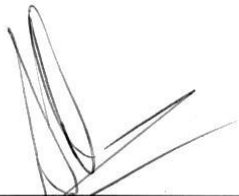
I hereby agree to your request.

Hourly rate for counselling/Therapy - 1 hour R1000.00 (one person)

Hourly rate for Counselling/Therapy - 1 ½ hour R1650.00 Couple's Therapy

Should you require any further information kindly contact our office.

Regards



DR S DREYER
PSYCHOLOGIST

ADDENDUM E

SIGNED LETTER OF CONFIRMATION BY COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

Marina Basson
Cellular phone number: 076 836 4065
PhD student in Sociology
North West University – Vaal Triangle and Potchefstroom Campuses
Student Number: 27998460
E-mail: marina@sentekfencing.co.za

20 January 2020

Dr Saneth Dreyer
Counselling Psychologist (PS0018031)
Vaal Triangle

RE: Agreement to provide counselling services to participants during or following semi-structured face-to-face and/or telephonic interviews for the study entitled, “Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples”

Dear Dr Dreyer

I am currently registered for my PhD in Sociology through the North West. The objective of this research is to better understand the influence of consensual non-monogamy (swinging) on the marital satisfaction of South African couples. More specifically, the study aims to explore why South African couples select swinging as a lifestyle and how this influences their marital sexual well-being. I herewith request your assistance in identifying potential participants who are members of the club's database. The title of the study reads as follows:

“Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples”.

Participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may opt out at any point without any repercussions. All participant identifications will be confidential

1

and only known to me and my supervisors at North West University. Although I intend to perform recorded (for transcription purposes) telephonic interviews, I will be available to participants who choose to meet at the swingers' club in a neutral and safe territory. Face to face interviews will also be recorded for transcription purposes as well as have one of my supervisors' present during the interviews. All participants will be required to sign an informed consent letter prior to being admitted into the research which will detail the potential stressors they may experience.

However, in the event that any participant requires psychological intervention resulting from any process pertaining to the research interviews, I would require the services of a registered and practicing psychologist whom I could refer them to and who would be in a position to deal with the matter from the perspective of the participants' non-monogamous relationship lifestyle.

I herewith request your permission to refer any participants to you, who may require psychological intervention resulting from any activities resulting from the interviews. The first screening consultation being without cost to determine the extent of the psychological intervention required and if indeed it resulted from the interview process. As the club that I have approached is in Pretoria, the session would need to be via Telephone or Skype for easy access by the participants. I will require your hourly rate with a maximum of 3 hours being paid by my third-party insurance in the event that the interview process has caused liability.

I acknowledge that you are not involved in the research and that I am acting as an independent researcher using your professional skill for the purpose of the research participants' psychological well-being. To that effect, I request formal documentation with your registration details as a psychologist which will form part of my ethics application documents.

In order to secure the documentation required for the ethics committee, I request that you sign below as an indication that you agree with my request to use your services.

Should you however have any queries in this regard, please contact me on: 076 836 4065 or email: marina@sentekfencing.co.za.

I, **S.E. DREYER**, hereby (a) agree to provide the researcher with the requested details of my research practice and costs, (b) to provide the first psychological evaluation to participants who require assistance following an interview without costs and (c) liaise with the researcher regarding additional sessions requested by the participants before commencing with it.

Signed at **Vanderbijlpark** on **03 March 2020** (date).

Signature:  _____

Surname and initials: **DREYER, S.E.** _____

ADDENDUM F: TITLE REGISTRATION



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Higher Degree Administration

Tel: 0722152076
Email: 24620645@nwu.ac.za
Enquiries: MR CG FREEMAN

18 February 2022

Dear MRS BASSON
University number: 27998460

REGISTRATION OF TITLE

At the recent meeting of a relevant committee meeting of the NWU Faculty of Humanities your title was approved as follows:

Swinging: A Sociological conceptual framework of the influence of consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South African couples

The above-mentioned title may under **no circumstances** be changed without consulting your supervisor and obtaining the approval from the relevant committee in the mentioned faculty, in regard of which this office must be furnished with the latest approved title.

In the instance that you wish to submit for examination, please inform your supervisor/promoter accordingly. *Also ensure absolute adherence to the prescripts of A Rule 4.10 for the submission of a Master's study and of A Rule 5.10 for the submission of Doctoral thesis.*

Upon approval of your supervisor/promoter, please ensure that the Notice of Submission form is submitted THREE months in advance to this office.

Note that the Notice of Submission form is available on the [NWU DIY portal](#).

For ease of reference, herewith a reference to the following useful resources:

- [General Academic Rules \(A-reels\)](#);
- [Manual for Higher Degree Studies](#);
- [Policy on academic integrity](#);

We wish you a pleasant and successful period of study.

Kind regards

Registrar



Reference number: 7.1.11.1.2



DECLARATION

I, Christina M.E. Terblanche, hereby declare that I edited the research study
titled:

**Swinging: A sociological conceptual framework of the influence of
consensual non-monogamy on the marital satisfaction of South
African couples**

for **M Basson** for submission as a research study for examination. Changes
were indicated in track changes and implementation was left up to the
author. The editor did not view the final document.

Regards,

CME Terblanche

Cum Laude Language Practitioners (CC)

South African Translators Institute accr nr: 1001066

Full member of the Professional Editors Guild