

WHAT IMPACT DOES HAVING A SWINGING LIFESTYLE HAVE ON MARITAL SATISFACTION?

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ABSTRACT

Swinging, also referred to as partner swapping, is a consensually non-monogamous behavior in which both individuals of a committed relationship engage in sexual activities with other people as a leisure or social activity (Cohen, 2016). Swinging is a form of an open relationship; emotional commitment without sexual monogamy. Individuals choose the lifestyle for a variety of reasons, which include increased quality, quantity and frequency of sex (Vaillancourt, 2014). Others reasons include adding sexual variety, strengthening their relationship, and/or getting out of a marital rut. In an attempt to determine the impact a swinging lifestyle as on a committed relationship, this study examined why individual choose the swinging lifestyle, their level of marital satisfaction, and how they distinguish between infidelity and swinging. A qualitative study was applied and 56 participants completed a questionnaire consisting of 60 questions. The data was gathered using an online format, to ensure anonymity and privacy. The findings support that individuals who engage in the swinger lifestyle are in committed relationships, and remain loyal to their primary partner. Swingers report a high level of relationship quality and entered into the swinging lifestyle by choice. Swingers have conservative political and religious views, yet have open personal and sexual beliefs. Findings also showed swingers are easily able to define and distinguish the difference between infidelity and the lifestyle. Recommendations are made for professionals in mental health to learn more about consensual non-monogamous relationships so as to not apply the same expectations and standards that would apply to those in a monogamous relationship.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Swinging, or wife swapping has been a theme of experiential investigation dating back at least 30 years (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013), and likely the act itself has been around even longer. Based on the increasing quantity of websites and publications, it is apparent that the swinging lifestyle is more common than it is discussed. Even with media attention, there remains an air of privacy concerning its existence (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014). Regardless of the reason for the lifestyle choice, studying it offers a way of understanding the individuals who wish to engage in what some consider a deviant subculture (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013).

Swinging lifestyle goes against traditional marriage, which is defined as the only moral and legal context in which sexual behavior receives acceptance and approval (Hiekel & Castro-Martín, 2014). Religious sectors maintain that only through the marriage of one man and one woman can a relationship achieve its highest form. Legal and moral marriages are described as ordained and accountable to God, with these factors impacting individuals' behavior within their marriage (Chan, Hall, & Anderson, 2014).

The beliefs about purpose and meaning shape the expectations of an ideal relationship. (Ting, 2014). The meaning of marriage, both individually and as a society, is ever-changing, and can vary based on the individuals. It is widely believed that successful sexual functioning in a marriage is directly in correlation to marital fulfillment and is vital to the endurance of the relationship. Sex and intimacy are typically linked to a passionate relationship (Ting, 2014). The simplest definition for swinging was noted by Griffiths and Frobish (2013). They stated swinging is the consensual exchange of marital partners for sexual purposes. Since this

definition does not address a relationship, and merely sexual encounters, its purpose can also provide marital fulfillment, (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013).

Infidelity is defined by the two partners in a relationship and the exact definition and limitations can often vary between couples. Infidelity is typically categorized into emotional and sexual, both of which can cause the relationship to deteriorate. It is defined as the breach of a couple's assumed or affirmed contract concerning emotional and/or sexual exclusivity (Gibson, Thompson, & O'Sullivan, 2016). Because the swinger lifestyle involves consensual non-monogamy, it is not classified as infidelity (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013).

There are a variety of reasons that partners step outside the primary relationship in order to gain something they feel is lacking. The risk of infidelity increases as the quality of the relationship decreases. Often times, individuals are more likely to turn to others to meet their needs for intimacy or connection, while feeling as though their needs are not being met in their current relationship. These unmet needs may be either physical, emotional, or both. As the satisfaction within the relationship increases, it correlates to a higher investment into the relationship. This higher investment into the relationship often results in a higher commitment level overall. Individuals who are unsatisfied, not committed, and not invested are more likely to engage in infidelity (Gibson et al., 2016).

This study will examine current trends in the swinging lifestyle and will determine if and how the lifestyle affects overall marital satisfaction. In addition, this study will explore the impact of non-monogamy a couple may experience, as it relates to the importance of their relationship. The study also seeks to identify resources a couple can and will access in order to successfully navigate such a nontraditional relationship. Finally, the study will identify how

each partner within the relationship will understand and define their experience of success. A qualitative study approach will be used to achieve these objectives.

Background of the Problem

Relationships have been a part of humanity's heritage and culture since the inception of the race. Until the twentieth century, relationships between two people consisted of one man and one woman, with the highest level of commitment including a legal union through marriage (Green, Valleriani, & Adam, 2016). However, relationships may or may not include the component of love. In contemporary western society, marriage saw a significant shift following World War II. A shift in individual satisfaction became more fundamental in a fulfilling partnership. There were also advances in reproductive technologies, so procreation of a child no longer required one man and one woman. The social movement in the political economy and women's mass entry into the labor market also brought changes to the traditional marriage and family. Women entering the work field brought a change in gender roles as the women were not home to handle all domestic responsibilities (Green et al., 2016).

The idea that lifelong monogamy is the only goal for a successful relationship has been so ingrained into society that the majority of people have consistently operated on this belief without question. Sexuality and sexual behavior are essential in order to understand the human experience. Extramarital sex is usually an indication of a marital problem and can bring about the dissolution of the relationship (Easton and Hardy, 2009). Contrary to this research, Kimberly (2016) indicates that the swinger lifestyle realizes purpose or meaning that makes it valuable for certain couples. Despite the lifestyle going against sexual exclusivity within a relationship, outcomes for those in the lifestyle are comparable to those in a traditional marital relationship (Kimberly, 2016).

It is estimated that over 90% of adults expect monogamy from their sexual partners, with the overwhelming majority also believing that infidelity is always wrong (Gibson et al., 2016). When there is an expectation of monogamy and one partner does not conform, it can create considerable distress and is a leading cause of relationship termination with intimate partners. Continued research has expanded the definition of infidelity beyond the act of sex outside the relationship, and can include emotional infidelity on some level. The exact definitions of emotional infidelity have little consensus and greater subjectivity than the act of sexual infidelity (Gibson et al., 2016).

Extramarital affairs are estimated to occur in 20-70% of all marriages and manifest in different ways. An extramarital affair can be seen as a transition of occurrences over time, from the promise of monogamy, progressing through various stages until one or both partners perceive an indiscretion or betrayal. According to Zapien (2016), there is no common agreement of what precisely comprises monogamy, an affair, or an occurrence of unfaithfulness.

Infidelity can lead to broken hearts and relationships abruptly ending. A review of over 160 cultures revealed infidelity was the leading cause of divorce (Frederick & Fales, 2016). Men and women respond differently when learning about a perceived betrayal by their spouse. The type of betrayal can also dictate how one will respond; sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity. Either type can lead to conflict, hurt feelings, abandonment, violence, loss of resources, and the dissolution of the relationship altogether, leading to secondary losses (Frederick & Fales, 2016).

The research conducted by one author shows that there are numerous benefits from being in a relationship (Cohen, 2016). The majority of this research considered the benefits of monogamous marriage, as opposed to nontraditional unions. Monogamous, married individuals have higher self-esteem, leading to a higher overall sense of self, when compared to individuals

who were never married, divorced, separated or widowed. Individuals that are married and monogamous are typically healthier and have lower rates of substance abuse and depression (Cohen, 2016).

Harsh judgments have emerged regarding the way in which people choose to live their lives regarding their sexual preferences. Monogamy is often considered the highest level of success for a relationship. However, many people that the same things that can be obtained within a long-term monogamous relationship can also be achieved in the absence of one. Business partnerships, profound attachments, parenting, companionship in old age, and personal growth are examples of ideals that can be achieved with or without this type of monogamy (Easton and Hardy, 2009).

As clergymen and doctors began discouraging masturbation, desires for sex became shameful (Easton & Hardy, 2009). It is a commonly held belief that dating back to the Garden of Eden, women's sexuality has been considered evil and dangerous, with the only exception being that of a monogamous, married relationship between one man and one woman. Even then, the woman's sexual desires were discredited and the man's sexual desire was forefront. The Victorian era gave us the idea that women are pure, asexual, and withholding, while the men are insatiable and voracious (Easton and Hardy, 2009).

The definition of an open relationship requires more than the lack of monogamy. There are variations, with boundaries that are decided upon by the individuals in the union. *Consensually non-monogamous* is a term coined to define any arrangement in which the individuals engage in extra sexual or romantic relationships. These relationships may have implicit or explicit guidelines to allow permitted sexual activities by one or both partners (Cohen, 2016).

An open relationship can include any number of possibilities, outside of a monogamous agreement. Options include agreed upon non-monogamy, swinging, and/or polyamory. Polyamory can include the individuals having more than one primary relationship. Polyfidelity is three or more people in a committed relationship, in which only one member is monogamous. An individual may be non-monogamous and chooses to not have a primary partner. The three most common types of relationships are swinging, gay open relationships, and polyamory. Despite these various types of open relationships, the defining structure is that the two individuals consider each other to be the primary partners within the relationship, although polyfidelity may offer an exception to this general rule (Cohen, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Between one and eight million individuals engage in the swinging lifestyle in the United States (Kimberly, 2016). As awareness of relationship styles increases, the standard definition of intimacy for some couples no longer readily includes the concept of monogamy. The standard definition of intimacy for some couples does not always include the concept of monogamy as awareness of relationship styles has increased. The research study indicates that over 90% of people agree the definitions of love, intimacy, and sexual pleasure is equal regardless of the relationship definition or label. However, opposition to the swinging lifestyle remains to be a problem (Thompson & O'Sullivan, 2016). A growing number of individuals are engaging in the swinging lifestyle. The fact that swinging continues to be practiced indicates that it fulfills some purpose or function that makes it worthwhile for couples (Viwatpanich, 2010).

Despite strong opposition to the act of infidelity, it continues to be a cause for concern among couples, where monogamy is expected. Infidelity is defined as the violation of a couple's assumed agreement concerning sexual exclusivity (Gibson et al., 2016). Infidelity is divided into

physical and emotional categories. The ever-changing scope of morality lends itself to allowing for relationship dynamics to change over time. Still, religion, social codes, prostitution, sex addiction, and even chronic masturbation have evidenced a strict definition of intimacy within a committed relationship (Reay, 2013; Blum, 2015).

As Americans increase their awareness of the swinging subculture, researchers struggle to define and explain the phenomenon (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014). Concerns such as communication, secrecy, intimacy, and the rules of swinging have been addressed in the existing literature. However, an issue that has not received much attention is how the dynamic of power is experienced between partners in swinging relationships (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014). If the issue of the swinging lifestyle is not addressed, a stigma and lack of understanding will continue.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to define, understand, and analyze the dynamics of swinging relationships. The goal was to gather information about male and female swingers, to determine levels of marital satisfaction, as well as sexual satisfaction. The study also evaluated attitudes towards swinging activities and explored the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. In reviewing the relationship possibilities, special attention was paid to the resources, traits, and skills needed for couples to navigate a non-monogamous lifestyle. Also being considered was the quality of their relationship; and had they achieved longevity, quality, and commitment? Cohen (2016) believed that this population is largely understudied since most of the research in this area focuses on homosexual males.

This study was a logical, explicit research response to the problem of this population being grossly overlooked or ignored (Cohen, 2016). The study was completed by obtaining

questionnaires from 56 individuals who admit to currently engaging or having engaged in swinging lifestyle activities. The researcher created a swinging lifestyle questionnaire which included scales that measured marital and sexual satisfaction. The participants were sought out through various online communities and their participation was voluntary. All confidentiality was preserved, and no identifying information was retained from the participants.

Since monogamy is commonly portrayed and touted as the standard by mainstream media, up to 99% of all adults expect monogamy (Gibson et al., 2016). However, 60% of men and 50% of women have had sex with someone external to the marital relationship (Cohen, 2016). Despite monogamy being deemed the highest measure of a relationship, at least half of relationships experience some type of infidelity (Cohen, 2016).

Methodology

Qualitative research is designed to answer questions about our observations, and giving meaning and understanding with a rich description. Qualitative research's focus is the quality of the experience and its philosophical roots are based in constructivism, interpretation, and are subjective. The goal of the investigation is to understand, describe, and discover meaning about a phenomenon. The design characteristics are flexible, evolving, and emergent. The data collection is specific to the researcher being the primary instrument to obtain data (Creswell, 2014).

The goals of the qualitative research method include exploring, describing, and interpreting. There are multiple ways in which to do this, including case study, grounded theories, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative approaches. Case studies include researchers collecting detailed information over a sustained period of time, using a variety of data collection procedures. Grounded theory is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the

researcher obtains a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants. Ethnography is based in anthropology and sociology and the researcher studies the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a long period of time (Creswell, 2014).

Phenomenological research originates from philosophy and psychology and the researcher describes the experiences of people about something, as described by the participants. Narrative research is designed by the researcher studying the lives of individuals and asks them to provide stories about their lives. The information is retold by the researcher through narrative chronology (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative data are obtained from sources such as interviews, focus groups, observations in real life settings, and existing documents. A qualitative data analysis will follow three steps: prepare and organize the data, reduce data into themes, and present data in narrative or graph form for the reader (Creswell, 2014).

This research study utilized interviews and questionnaires with individuals who are or have willingly participated in a non-monogamous relationship. Multiple partnerships and individuals were included in the data obtained. The instrument used was created by the researcher and included the four sections to ascertain information in these areas: marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, demographic and how an individual was introduced into the swinging lifestyle.

Research Questions

Because exclusive relationships are often considered the highest level of relationship status, this study reviewed alternatives to having an exclusivity agreement, while still keeping the benefits of being in a high-level relationship with a significant other. A more thorough and

better developed understanding of swinging is essential to establish how the behavior affects the personal relationship of the couples involved in this lifestyle. Using case study research, the following research questions were investigated in this study:

- Research Question 1. Why do men and women choose swinger life activities?
- Research Question 2. What is considered a quality relationship by swingers?
- Research Question 3. What is the difference between swinging and infidelity?

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura is known for the expansion of social cognitive theory (SCT), from the original framework based on work by Edwin Holt and Harold Brown in the 1930s. Bandura wanted to ensure that the focus was on the role that cognition plays in encoding and performing behaviors. Bandura hypothesized that human behavior is caused by personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. SCT explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation; referring to the constant interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Bandura, 2001).

Social cognitive theory is based on both psychology and sociology, and suggests that the way an individual thinks and acts is based on value judgments. These value judgments start with an interactional framework that includes moral thought, self-reactions, and environmental factors. This interactional formula is based on an individual's behavior, dependent on their unique characteristics, and relevant factors within their environment (Domino et al., 2015).

Based on this theoretical framework, individuals are in a continual regulation of their behavior, based on self-assessment of their behavior, within their environment. Assuming that their environment is not considered morally culpable, the individual will shape unique motives as needed, to close the gap between their personal behaviors and their environment. Instead of

changing their behavior, the individual may seek different environments in which their behavior fits more closely (Domino et al., 2015).

Significance of the Study

Generally, it is believed that monogamy is the highest ideal for relationship status and quality and is adopted as the legal mating system (Morita, Ohtsuki, & Hiraiwa-Hasegawa, 2016). The general population of those who identify as non-monogamous is mostly understudied, and what research has been conducted, is primarily focused on same sex relationships. In part, because the research on non-monogamous relationships is sparse, there is a stigma attached to those who do not conform to the ideal of monogamy (Cohen, 2016).

This study held the major benefit for those who wish to have the advantage of a primary relationship without the constraints of monogamy. As more individuals and couples recognize that non-monogamy can be a productive way of life and can have many benefits, it is helpful for clinicians to have insight, as well as therapeutic strategies in which to guide their clients (Cohen, 2016). Traditional therapy may not be appropriate for couples that engage in non-monogamy and require unique strategies to understand their distinctive dynamics. This research may be applicable to both a clinical and non-clinical setting, when considering appropriate therapeutic or relationship building techniques.

Interviews and self-report data from individuals and couples engaged in non-monogamous lifestyles confirmed that their relationships are in many ways the same as monogamous relationships, and yet different in other ways. Therefore, the idea that traditional couples counseling could be effective for them as a method of treatment is misleading and possibly detrimental to the longevity of their relationship (Cohen, 2016). As research in this area continues to develop, it becomes more challenging for clinicians to conceptualize and design

reatment plans. Instead, uninformed clinicians may resort to traditional interventions that are irrelevant or lack clinical validity. By understanding this alternative way of engaging in a relationship, clinicians can make more evidence based judgments in their interventions.

Understanding that monogamy does not automatically equate to relationship success, and examining the taboo phenomena that caused monogamy to be considered the ideal goal of a relationship will help to dispel the myths about this alternative lifestyle. This study contributed to the current literature and allows for a more inclusive perspective of swingers in the framework of today's society. This research provided a better foundation used by swingers to validate their lifestyle. The results of this study allow for a more inclusive understanding of swingers in the framework of today' society. It also presented a better understanding of the motivation used by swingers to validate their swinging behavior.

Research on swinging has lagged behind the increasing occurrence of swinging (Serina, Hall, Ciambone, & Phua, 2013). Past research has not evaluated the marital and sexual satisfaction of swingers using well-established research instruments. Thus, this study provided much needed and valuable information by analyzing, and comparing, the marital and sexual satisfaction of couples engaged in the swinging lifestyle.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study does not address any psychopathology or mental illness of the participants. Also, there is no attempt to classify whether swinging can be considered maladaptive or unhealthy behavior, or to evaluate any potential discord experienced by swingers. Furthermore, the study does not deal with components of the individual relationships, such as romantic love or emotional attachment. The unit of measure in this study is individuals, most of who are in a committed relationship. In addition, this study does not identify and evaluate a particular cohort.

It was beyond the scope of this study to identify, and evaluate, individuals who may have discontinued from swinging activities.

Another limitation of this study was that the sample was derived from online swinger's clubs, and did not allow for face to face interviews. While online research allows researchers to gather large quantities of data from many respondents, there are some disadvantages including the lack of control over the sample integrity. In this study, it is possible the sample was not representative of the larger swinger population. Also, the sample may be biased by including only those individuals who employ a positive attitude regarding swinging. This study does not allow for a longitudinal assessment of swinging over time. Participation in the study was voluntary and no compensation was provided to the participants.

Definitions and Key Terms

Compersion describes a feeling of shared delight in the compatibility of one's lover with someone else. According to Roberta, (2016), it is the opposite of jealousy. It is further delineated as a serious experiment in cooperation. Polyamory as a lifestyle requires commitment as well as cooperation.

Consensual Nonmonogamy is when all partners explicitly agree that each partner may have romantic or sexual relationships with others. Three types of consensual non-monogamy exist; swinging, open relationships, and polyamory (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). Swinging refers to a couple practicing extradyadic sex with members of another couple; open relationships are relationships in which partners agree they can have extradyadic sex; and polyamory is the practice and belief in the willingness to engage in consensual non- monogamy, typically in a long-term and loving relationship (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

Cuckold is one the most shameful descriptions that can be applied to a husband according to Reilly, 2013, and refers to a wife's unfaithfulness to her husband, usually with his knowledge, but not his consent. Simply stated, a wife's unfaithfulness imperils her husband's status in the community, as a married man is expected to have control over his wife's sexuality. Interestingly enough, there is no corresponding word to apply when a man is unfaithful, that brings about similar public shame to a woman (Reilly, 2013).

Divorce is the dissolution of marriage, a prerogative that can be exercised by either the husband or the wife, in accordance with legal conditions set for each party, and under judicial supervision, (H M King Mohammed, 2004). Divorce has a long-lasting negative impact on the wellbeing which can persist into later life, in particular, if the individual remains single (Gray, de Vaus, Qu, & Stanton, 2011). It is important to determine a potential mate's expectations as it relates to social relationships, finances, family of origin, communication and marital roles, per Özyigit (2014). These factors can often be the conflicts and disagreements which result in divorce (Özyigit, 2014).

Infidelity is described as breaking the rules that the couple has agreed upon for how sex outside the primary relationship is conducted, if at all (Shernoff, 2006). It is also defined as the violation of a couple's assumed or stated agreement concerning emotional and/or sexual exclusivity (Gibson et al., 2016). Statistics vary regarding the frequency of infidelity, and DePompo, & Butsuharaa, (2016) stated infidelity occurs in up to 40% of all marriages.

Intimacy is an emotional experience, and refers to having contact with one's own interior realm or that of another person (Levy, 2017). Finn et al. (2012) further describes intimacy as the psychology of understanding through an emotional and sexual relationship. Finn et al. also adds in that intimacy typically includes a dyadic union only.

Jealousy refers to the complicated feelings, ideas, and behaviors that include threats to one's self-worth or self-relation; typically viewed as having a negative connotation (Kizildag & Yildirim, 2017). Jealousy can also be viewed as a concept related to infidelity, and can fit into individuals' understanding of gender inequality. Boyce et al. (2016) stated women often interpret male jealousy as an expression of love, and often being the only sign their husband truly cared.

Kink behavior refers to an unconventional sensual, erotic, and/or sexual behavior including Bondage and Discipline, Submission and Masochism (BDSM) related behaviors (Rehor, 2015). BDSM related behaviors include physical and psychological stimuli including bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, and masochism. Other kink behaviors also include exhibitionistic actions, voyeuristic behaviors, and fetishes (Rehor, 2015).

Marriage, which includes the union of two people possessing dissimilar interests, desires, and needs, is a unique connection given form by societal rules and laws and considerably affects individuals' growth and self-understanding (Özyigit, 2017). Adams (2017) describes marriage by particular features, including permanent, and unconditional expressions of self. He further stated marriage is exclusive, withholding nothing, and vowing fidelity without mental reservations (Adams, 2017). Adams rounds out his description of marriage as comprehensive of bodily, emotional, and spiritual union; open in life and rooted in sex (Adams, 2017).

Monogamy is defined as a relationship that requires two partners to abstain from sexual and romantic encounters outside of the primary couple (Chatara-Middleton, 2012). An exclusive relationship is the result of commitment through monogamy (Thompson, & O'Sullivan, 2016). The relationship may or may not result or include the legal union of marriage. Many times, individuals cite the lack of monogamy as a reason for divorce (Ozyigit, 2014).

Non-monogamy refers to non-sexual fidelity to one sexual partner, (Visschedijk, 2015). It is also defined as a broad word that includes interpersonal relationship configurations that are illustrated by an individual having one or more simultaneous sexual and/or loving associations that are recognized and communicated, or stay unacknowledged and concealed. Essentially, any type of affiliation that does not fall under the grouping of monogamy (Chatara-Middleton, 2012).

Open relationship implies a non-monogamous sexual agreement which is characterized by implicit or explicit rules that define which extradyadic sexual activities are permitted. This can be considered an umbrella term that includes many relationship structures, such as partnered non-monogamy, swinging, non-monogamy in a social environment only, or any other combination agreed upon by the couple. The defining feature of the open relationship structure is that the two individuals are considered to be the primary components of the relationship (Cohen, 2016).

Polygamy refers to a marital relationship involving multiple spouses and occurs in numerous forms. The most common form is one man having many wives; less frequently, one woman has many husbands (Al-Sharfi, Pfeffer, & Miller, 2016).

Polyamory is understood by reviewing each portion of the word. (*Poly*) means many and (*amor*) means love; when put together, polyamory is principally about love (Visschedijk, 2015). It is based on the belief that it is worthwhile and valid to have more than one loving or erotic relationship (Klesse, 2011).

Swinger is generally defined as a subgroup of non-monogamous couples that jointly share partners for sexual purposes. To further elucidate, couples reserve emotional obligations for their spouse or partner and only engage in physical relations with other individuals or couples (Kimberly, 2016).

Organization

The literature review that follows in Chapter 2 investigates the idea of having an open relationship and if a non-monogamous lifestyle can decrease the rate of divorce. It further explores if having an open relationship or marriage can improve the primary relationship, despite the societal norm that monogamous relationships are the ideal agreed upon ultimate goal.

Chapter 3, Research Methods and Procedures, identifies the underlining grounds considered for a couple to explore an open relationship. The open relationship may include additional sexual partners, regularly or occasionally. A thorough analysis and summary of the key findings in the literature is provided. Assumptions and limitations of the relevant research are addressed, along with an analysis of interviews with both monogamous and non-monogamous couples. Chapter 4 is a compilation of research findings and new insights. Integration of findings is addressed in response to the research questions.

Chapter 5 ends with a summary and conclusion and focuses on what can be inferred from the literature review, interviews, and any related findings along with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an examination of the comprehensive volume of literature relative to the swinging lifestyle. It will expand on the topics introduced in the first chapter, while focusing on key concepts as it relates to marriage and infidelity. A synopsis of sexual morality and how it has evolved through time is also included. Emphasis will be placed on concepts and background of swinging lifestyle. Each topic examined in this chapter will be framed in relation to its importance to the current study. The chapter concludes with a review of the theoretical framework of the study.

Marital Infidelity

Marriage has been traditionally regarded as the only appropriate context for which sex occurs and receives widespread approval (Blum, 2015). Blum, coming from a faith based perspective, believes sex is a sacred union and meant for marriage only. Marriage is defined as the civil status united in law; a social agreement between two individuals that unites their lives legally, economically, and emotionally (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Marriage has important functions in society; to have children, to have an intimate partner for sharing and comfort and to prevent adultery (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Despite the importance of marriage in most societies, individuals get married for different reasons, and have different priorities with these relationships.

Despite strong opposition to the act of adultery, infidelity continues to be a popular topic for couples, and poses a threat for couples (Gibson et al., 2016). Defining and understanding adultery or infidelity is the first step in preventing the act. After understanding what infidelity consists of, it is also helpful to understand the causes of infidelity within a relationship or more

specifically, a marriage. Typically, consequences exist within a marriage when infidelity is present. However, there are also consequences that occur outside of the relationship as well. Finally, infidelity can show how often a breach in the relationship expectations occurs.

Definition of Marital Infidelity

There are many ways to define infidelity, and a most important consideration is how it is defined by each individual within the relationship. Gibson et al. (2016) outlined infidelity as the violation of a couple's assumed or stated agreement concerning emotional and sexual exclusivity. Their working definition expanded beyond sexual behavior to include emotional infidelity. They recognize that there is greater subjectivity regarding the exact definition of emotional infidelity. Authors Frederick and Fales (2016) give a slightly different definition of emotional infidelity as when people develop a profound emotional affection and maybe even fall in love with someone other than their primary partners. This definition does not necessarily include any type of sexual contact with another person, but rather a sharing of ideas, spending time engaged in conversation, and other intimate acts absent sexual contact (Frederick & Fales, 2016).

Moving past the emotional component of the act, Frederick and Fales (2016) defined sexual infidelity as when a person has a sexual experience with someone other than his/her partner, regardless of a contract to remain monogamous. They point out a fact that other authors do not, believing men have a dilemma women do not face. Unless a male is with his partner 100% of the time, there is the possibility that their partner has been unfaithful. Because of this possibility, males often develop a host of physical and behavioral mechanism to enhance the probability they are the fathers of their offspring.

Green, Valleriani, and Adam (2016) defined monogamy simply as an understood supposition that systematizes heterosexual relationships and symbolizes a naturalized constituent

of marriage. They posit monogamy is equated with security in heterosexual relationships, and consider anything less than monogamy as not ideal. Interestingly, they also recognize that infidelity is linked to relationship problems and relationship dissatisfaction among heterosexual couples. They found non-monogamy in homosexual male couples is not necessarily an indicator of relationship failure, whereas it may be within a heterosexual couple. They believe monogamy is a standard for heterosexual couples that homosexual male couples may or may not need to adhere to in order to have an equally satisfying relationship.

With monogamy generally being considered the global norm, Thompson and O'Sullivan (2016), defined infidelity as a secret, sexual, romantic, or emotional involvement that violates the commitment of monogamy to an exclusive relationship. The authors state infidelity as fairly common. They found between 20% and 35% of adults report engaging in some type of infidelity in their lifetime, with the drastic contrast of 90-94% of individuals expect monogamy within their relationships. Thompson and O'Sullivan highlight that there is a paradox between monogamy expectations and experiences with infidelity. They believe behaviors which constitute infidelity vary according to whom is being judged. People tend to judge the behavior of others more harshly than their own.

Sauerheber and Ponton (2017) specified a more distinct definition of infidelity, which was measured by whether the person had sex with someone other than his or her spouse while married. They also specified infidelity as highly dependent upon the perception of the individual within the relationship. Infidelity includes an act of an emotional and/or physical unfaithfulness characterized by behavior that is not authorized by the other partner, and has caused significant, ongoing emotional torment in the non-offending partner. According to Sauerheber and Ponton (2017), understanding marriage and infidelity must also include covenantal forgiveness.

Urooj, Anis-ul-Haque, & Anjum (2015) suggest there are multiple terms which parallel infidelity, such as extramarital sex, extramarital behavior, extradyadic involvement, non-monogamy, extramarital coitus, and polyamory. These terms have been equated with extramarital sex, referring to sex with someone other than the primary partner. They believe the definition has evolved to include emotional components as well, and occur in marital, dating, and cohabitating relationships.

There are numerous operational descriptions of infidelity established in the literature. Infidelity synonyms include terminology such as cheating, having an affair, being unfaithful, stepping out, and extradyadic sexual involvement. These phrases may be used interchangeably throughout this study. Emotional affairs are becoming increasingly common, (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2017). For the purpose of this study, infidelity will refer to romantic emotional involvement or sexual activity with a person other than the primary partner, in which the primary partner is not aware or does not consent to.

Causes of Marital Infidelity

Despite the widespread disapproval of infidelity, individuals continue to engage in extramarital relationships, in which their partner is unaware. There are many factors to deter such behaviors, such as the moral code, religious beliefs, or agreed upon contracts or commitments to a partner (Blum, 2015). However, individuals continue to engage in infidelity, despite statistics that demonstrate infidelity is viewed as a threat to the marital relationship (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2017).

Gibson, Thompson, and O'Sullivan (2016) conducted research regarding the causes of infidelity. They concluded that the risk of infidelity is higher among individuals in relationships who are unsatisfied, not committed, and not invested in their current partner, when compared to

individuals that are highly satisfied, committed, and invested. They suggest these individuals are likely to turn to others to meet their needs for intimacy or connection as opposed to having an open dialogue with their partners. In contrast, Green et al. (2016) believe that the infidelity causes relationships problems and dissatisfaction within the relationship. They indicate infidelity is a result of the breakdown of the relationship, rather than the cause, and is cause for divorce.

Similar to Gibson et al. (2016), Zapien (2016) suggests that infidelity is the result an unsatisfactory marriage that lacks in fundamental strengths. Zapien believes that the marriages that experience infidelity are lacking intimacy, novelty, passion, and sexual satisfaction. Zapien cites several specific reasons that infidelity occurs, starting with dissatisfaction and hopelessness in the marriage. He clarifies that the infidelity is in contrast to the marriage, not in addition to the marriage. Also, this level of hopelessness hinders any effort to improve the marriage, and the individual believes there is a lack of vitality within the relationship. Zapien cites another reason for infidelity being the desire for passion in a relationship. There can be a discrepancy between how an individual feels with his/her spouse, compared to how they feel with a new partner. A partner can feel undesirable, uninspired and unwanted by their spouse and suddenly experiences those feelings with the introduction of a new partner.

Zapien (2016) highlights as the desire for passion increases, so does that sense of deserving sexual satisfaction; these individuals believe that passion is a critical element of romantic love. Because of the hopelessness they feel within the marriage, they seek this passion and desire elsewhere. An added caveat is that sometimes the partner engaging in infidelity sees their spouse as causing them to seek sex outside of the relationship, as they are incapable of changing or meeting the individuals' needs. This causes the individual to lack interest in their spouse.

Zapien (2016) describes the infidelity as an experience of passion overtaking and overriding one's judgment. It may or may not start out as defined as an affair, but as the experiences continue through passion and lack of judgment, it becomes defined as an affair or form of infidelity.

In a more deliberate manner, Sauerheber and Ponton (2017) established two categories that factor into infidelity, including personal and interpersonal/relational factors. They state that personal factors can vary, including sexual attraction, sexual addiction, fulfillment of unmet sexual needs, and liberal sexual values. They go on to state that individuals with impulse control disorders, antisocial and narcissist traits, as well as a strong need for attention are more likely to engage in affairs than those without these traits.

Sauerheber and Ponton (2017) consider that interpersonal/relational factors may also play a role in infidelity choices. Some individuals will choose infidelity as a way to escape an unsatisfying marriage, wherein they feel their needs are not being met by their spouse. Another option is that individuals choose to be unfaithful as a way to maintain the marriage, while still meeting their sexual needs. They suggest most partners do not seek to find another spouse, but rather want to add additional benefits than their current partner provides.

In conclusion, the exact cause of infidelity cannot always be defined, as it varies between individuals. People may provide a variety of reasons for stepping outside of their primary relationship. Despite the reason for infidelity, researchers agree there are consequences to the primary relationship.

Consequences of Marital Infidelity

Consequences of infidelity can vary between couples. Frederick and Fales (2016) argue that sexual and emotional infidelity can lead to disagreements with partners which ultimately end

n the relationship dissolving. Other consequences include disappointed feelings, fears of rejection, or even violence. They establish there can be a loss of resources if the resources are invested into someone unfaithful to them. They highlight when utilizing the social cognitive perspective, both emotional and sexual jealousy is the result of perceptions of threat. They state jealousy is aroused when a general threat to the relationship or to one's self-esteem is detected.

Similarly to Frederick and Fales (2016), Green et al. (2016) state infidelity has been linked to strains on emotional well-being and physical health. They suggest the consequences of infidelity include relationship problems as well as relationship dissatisfaction. They posit heterosexual married couples experience more difficulties due to infidelity than homosexual couples do in similar circumstances.

The consequences of infidelity can vary between couples, and there is often no way to predict that final outcome that infidelity will have on a relationship. There are no research studies found that offer information on the long lasting effects on infidelity and how it affects individuals over the course of time. From the literature that is available, there are long lasting effects caused to a relationship through the act of infidelity.

Rates of Marital Infidelity

The first requirement of knowing how often infidelity occurs is to have a working definition of what it is. Even then, the rates of infidelity often rely on subjective information by individuals, as well as truthful reporting. Because of this, there is no way to have reliable information regarding how often infidelity occurs.

Gibson et al. (2016) presented research on personality traits, relationships quality, and attraction to others as predictors of what causes infidelity among young adults. They define infidelity as the violation of a couple's assumed or stated agreements regarding sexual

exclusivity. Their research compared personality traits with the quality and attraction to others as a way to predict acts of infidelity among individuals between the ages of 18 and 26 years. There were 131 men and 164 women that participated in the study. Gibson et al. showed that 16% of participants reported at least one event of infidelity of a physical, in person nature. The rates increased considerably, to 78%, when asked about online behaviors that included actual sexual, romantic, or infidelity activities (Gibson et al., 2016). Frederick and Fales (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 50 studies and found that 34% of married men and 24% of married women have engaged in extramarital sexual activities, with rates for dating relationships being higher. Frederick and Fales also reviewed 160 ethnographic accounts and concluded the infidelity is the most common reported cause of divorce.

In a separate study, Thompson and O'Sullivan (2016) state that between 20% and 35% of adults report engaging in some type of infidelity in their lifetime, with the drastic contrast that 90-94% of individuals expect monogamy within their relationships. Thompson and O'Sullivan agree there is a paradox between monogamy expectations and experiences with infidelity. They believe the behaviors to constitute infidelity vary according to whom is being judged. People have a tendency to judge the behavior of others more harshly than their own.

When considering the gender differences of infidelity, Urooj et al. (2015) state there is no discrepancy between the rates of men and women who engage in infidelity; however, Sauerheber and Ponton (2017) clarify men have a higher tendency to be unfaithful compared to women. There was no other research noted wherein there are gender differences studied as it relates to infidelity.

Green et al. (2016) report rates of infidelity between 10% and 25%, and believe that monogamy continues to play an essential role in the building of an intimate relationship, both as a principle and as a practice.

Overall, infidelity is subjective and susceptible to the unique factors of the individuals involved. The sexual culture binds individuals in a social and psychological process that regulates sexual conduct and behavior, establishing accepted guidelines for the rules of sexual conduct. A frequently held idea has always been that marital sex is engaged in primarily for procreation purposes and no other reason. This belief could be what has led individuals to believe that sex outside of a marriage is more enticing, more enjoyable, and worth seeking.

Sexual Morality History

According to Freud, humans are driven by basic instincts; one of those being a sexual instinct (Zilbersheid, 2013). The pleasure principle is characterized by the unlimited satisfaction of the drive for pleasure, as well as the denial of any type of limitations in gratification. Over time, sexuality has been modified and changed through a process of de-sexualization and the de-eroticization of humans. Through their own judgments and decisions, individuals collectively change their sexuality, and decide for themselves what is acceptable and what is no longer tolerated (Zilbersheid, 2013).

Religion

Sexuality is instinctual human behavior and yet throughout history, religion has regulated the behavior. Major religions often dictate what is considered acceptable sexual activity for their members. There are established differences in sexual arousal, orgasm, sexual satisfaction, and pain when compared with various religious backgrounds (Woo, Morshedian, Brotto, & Gorzalka,

012). Religion continues to reinforce the suppression of sexual urges and ban the idea of sex solely for pleasure (Murray, 2007).

The relationship between religion and sexuality has been studied since sex research began. With one exception, Buddhism, most organized religions condemn premarital and extramarital sex. Religions, such as Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism are associated with various types of sexual dysfunction, including impotence, anorgasmia, and vaginismus. Individuals who consider themselves non-religious have higher reports of sexual experiences and masturbation levels than those affiliated with Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish religious beliefs (Woo et al., 2012).

Attending religious services also affects sexual behavior. More frequent attendance at services is associated with greater sexual abstinence, less sexual activity, less frequent sexual intercourse, fewer lifetime partners, and older age at first intercourse. As the attendance increases, individuals tend to have more conservative attitudes toward premarital sex, as well as oral and anal sex (Woo et al., 2012).

Blum (2015) highlights in more detail that the spiritual and social consequences of premarital sex are far more reaching for females than males. Consequences of premarital sex for females include unwanted pregnancy, social and family abandonment, diminished ability to marry well, and fear of going to hell as a result of the behaviors. For males, Blum noted that there are often similar consequences for their behaviors, clearly showing a double standard. Blum posits that sexuality is more acceptable for males and yet sexuality for a woman is considered to be a perversion.

Social/Moral Code

As previously seen with regards to sex and religion, women are often considered nonsexual creatures, while men are given permission to be promiscuous, and considered a *stud* or a *ladies' man*. Women's role in sex is often seen only as a way to procreate, and not something to be enjoyed. As previously discussed, some of this is due to religious beliefs handed down over the years (Adams, 2017).

British author E.L. James wrote and published a trilogy of novels that were adapted to movies (Lanciano, Soleti, Guglielmi, Mangiulli, & Curci, 2016). The premise of these books and movies portray an idealistic and erotic BDSM relationship between a billionaire and a young college student. The sexual activities include a range of behaviors characterized by fetishes, role playing, and other nonmainstream behaviors. Despite the social norm that women are not sexual creatures, the book sold over 100 million copies worldwide and the movie saw higher numbers in sales as well. As a result of this phenomenon, feminists decided that women should refrain from moral judgments that stigmatize sexual practices that constrain their sexual expression. Women were encouraged to experience sexual activities that give them pleasure, without concern (Lanciano et al., 2016).

Generally and through time, sexuality involves an assortment of emotions and private values and connotations. For many, sex may include both negative emotions of moral judgments and painful memories of former sexual experiences, as well as affirmative feelings, fantasies, desires, and satisfying memories (Lanciano et al., 2016).

As abstract as it may be, Silver (2017) describes moral judgments as person centered and encompassing of a person's overall character. She goes on to differentiate that from an act based morality, referring to judgments regarding an act or behavior. Silver makes this distinction as reflective upon the structure of punitive attitudes. Individuals may reach a conclusion about a

person as well as what the person does. These judgments are based on the moral foundations' theory that encompasses five broad domains. The domain that encompasses this topic is that of purity/sanctity. This is described as the moralization of disgust, and is associated with the intuition that the definition of integrity and purity are virtuous, and bodily degradation and impurity are moral transgressions. The subjectivity is when the definitions are outlined, as these can vary based on one's culture or religion (Silver, 2017).

Prostitution

Prostitution is another area in which the morality of sexual behavior has been studied and changed over time. Throughout history, prostitution has been considered as a perversion; a sexual practice caused by one or more underlying psychological mental health disorders. To date, prostitution is no longer considered a disease; however, it is still considered to be the result of psychopathology (Goldhill, 2015). Prostitution has often been referred to as "the oldest profession." In 19th century London, prostitution was regarded both as psychological disease and a moral failing. However, in many places, the practice is now legal (Goldhill, 2015). This is another example of how morality changes based on individuals' collective agreement over the course of time.

Although prostitution is no longer considered a psychological disease, the practice of it is still seen as a symptom of underlying psychological and/or sexual problems (Goldhill, 2015). It is also considered to be a contributing factor in the spread of sexual diseases. From the 19th century through modern times, prostitution remains one of the few areas in which sexual disease, perversion and social crisis overlap and impact legal and social policy (Goldhill, 2015).

Sex Addiction

Addiction to sexual behaviors is a subjective concept and there is no agreed upon exact definition of what it is, what constitutes an excessive behavior and how to address it. However, there are certifications and training for professionals to assist individuals with what some consider deviant behavior.

The term sexual addiction is relatively new, being coined in the late 1980s (Reay, 2012). Despite the seemingly negative connotation, the concept is a product of medicalization, both as a self-diagnosis, and a growing field of therapists available to assist. The media played a role in creating this new phenomenon; through television, tabloids, and case histories. The impact of the internet also contributed to the idea (Reay, 2012). However, the term sex addiction is just another word that resembles what 19th century sexologists called perversion, out of control sexual behavior.

Recently, there is a new term that incorporates multiple sexual deviations. Sexual addiction, sexual desire dysregulation, sexual impulsivity, and sexual compulsivity have all morphed into the term 'hypersexual disorder' (Reay, 2012). This new terminology has proposed diagnostic for criteria of recurrent and intense sexual fantasies, sexual urges, or sexual behavior, lasting for a period of at least 6 months. In order to officially obtain the diagnosis of hypersexual disorder, one must meet three or more of the following criteria: time lost in pursuit of sexual gratification, repetitive sexual engagement, loss of sexual control, disregard for others, and use of sex for relief from the stresses and anxieties of everyday life. Several behaviors that are perfectly normal are now rendered abnormal, based on intensity and frequency; masturbation, use of pornography, casual sex, cybersex, telephone sex, resort to strip clubs, and the catch all of other (Reay, 2012). The American Psychiatric Association decided against adding this disorder

to the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Critics of the concept of sexual addiction maintain a conservative approach to what is entirely a moral code, based on the collective group of what is considered normal (Reay, 2012). There is a great disparity in the sex positive sexologist clinician, when compared to the sex negative sex addiction movement. A clinical sexologist may diagnose behaviors as non-problematic, as opposed to the sexual addiction model that would label the same behaviors as deviant (Reay, 2012).

Masturbation

The act of masturbation was practiced and recognized before it was given a specific term to define it (Reay, 2013). Masturbation is typically defined as a male's activity (Blum, 2015). Blum highlights that within the Christian doctrine; masturbation was addressed specifically in reference to males. It is discussed as something that is unacceptable, and yet the literature does not include information specific to females.

Rehor (2015) and her team classified masturbation as miscellaneous erotic behaviors. They conducted research with 1,376 participants, all women, and found that over 86% of participants engaged in solo masturbation. While the exact reason the rates were higher than the previous study is unknown, it is suspected that possible reasons the taboo of masturbation is decreased. Another reason for the increased rates of masturbation is that some women are more comfortable with their sexuality, as well as being able to admit this behavior to others (Rehor, 2015).

Sex, Love, and Monogamy

Monogamy is a dominant idea that has been in practice for many years (van Tol, 2017). It typically refers to a marital relationship, but often includes a dating partnership as well. According to van Tol (2017), despite monogamy's long standing practice, it is going by the wayside. He defines it as the practice of being married to one person at a time and having only one sexual partner at a time.

Van Tol (2017) suggests that monogamy feels like a simple idea; two people meet, fall in love, commit to one another, and live together in a sexual and emotionally exclusive relationship. He states while initially monogamy may feel natural, feeling natural does not make monogamy inherently good. His research concludes there is DNA to suggest we are not meant to be monogamous creatures. Van Tol (2017) posits that monogamy feels unchanging, while other aspects of relationships have disappeared. These include arranged marriages, lifelong marriages, only heterosexual marriage, as well as getting married for the betterment of the families involved. He theorizes that while monogamy may feel like the only course to a loving cherished relationship, the divorce rate based on infidelity challenges the idea of monogamy as the most advantageous understanding for relationships.

According to Jones (2016), men are seen to be a more desirable partner, if they have adhered to social norms of being monogamous. On the other hand, women who have also engaged in monogamous relationships are seen as less desirable if they admit to having sexual experiences. The double standard is glaring; it is acceptable for men to have multiple partners as long as they remain monogamous to their current partner. A woman is seen as a desirable partner only if she is monogamous and had a very few number of partners over the course of time.

Green et al. (2016) recognizes in contemporary western society, there are shifting norms as it relates to marital monogamy, especially after World War II. They point out a detraditionalization of marriage that starts with a growing focus on individual satisfaction, as opposed to the marriage as a unit. Green et al. (2016) also note advances in reproductive technologies, and women entering the workforce as reasons that marriage is not as vital as it once was.

Green et al. (2016) state despite a detraditionalization of marriage, monogamy remains a central component in one's intimate life, in both beliefs and practice. However, it is often a naturalized, unspoken assumption that exists and will continue to be a part of the union. They state that anything less than monogamy is linked to relationship problems and overall dissatisfaction within the relationship.

Chatara-Middleton (2012), suggests while monogamy is the framework for relationships in western society, it can be used to understand couples who choose not to engage in monogamy for whatever reason. She points out while monogamy may be the belief, it may not be practiced within a relationship. There are political contexts and religious reasons that cause people to engage in non-monogamy (Chatara-Middleton, 2012). From a feminist perspective, she points out that institutionalized monogamy has not served women's best interests through time.

Morita et al. (2016), points out that in most modern developed societies, including Japan, serial monogamy is adopted as a legal mating system. They believe that men generally want more children than women do. Men would have more reproductive advantage by changing their sexual partner. It is easier and more cost effective for the man's role in reproduction than for the woman.

Van Eeden-Moorefield, Malloy, and Benson, (2016) criticize the double standard of upholding patriarchal and capitalistic power structures which enable hegemonic beliefs about relationships between genders. They state feminists see monogamy as a way to relate to a partner and manage a relationship and not necessarily as a factor to consider a relationship dysfunctional. They suggest western societies typically impost monogamy and find ways to keep nonmonogamy invisible (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2016).

Similar to the rates, causes, and consequences of infidelity, monogamy as an ideal for homosexual relationships varies when compared to heterosexual relationships (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2016). Research by van Eeden-Moorefield et al. (2016) indicates that if non-monogamy is practiced, it can consist of threesomes, including both partners. Other options of non-monogamy for homosexual partners vary in the framework, provided the partners negotiate rules and boundaries. The theoretical structure of homosexual relationships is the physical and emotional are not inextricably linked, as believed to be for heterosexual relationships (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2016).

Zimmerman (2012) reports the two most prevalent concepts in the literature as it relates to open relationships is honesty and boundaries. Block (2008) reported a study conducted by John Gottman, a couples' researcher, who suggested marital relationships employ less honesty than friendship relationships, especially as it relates to the subject of sex. Zimmerman (2012) also suggested many individuals have higher levels of intimacy with their best friends than they do with their spouses, especially for women. Women are often more troubled regarding the deceit about infidelity, as opposed to the infidelity itself.

One British survey reported approximately 68% of men and women agree companionship and affection are more important than sex in marriage or a relationship (Zimmerman, 2012).

Greater importance is given to emotional fidelity rather than to sexual exclusivity when in an open relationship. Rules for disclosure are more common than rules of silence in open relationships, and sharing sexual information is viewed as integral to the open communication that partners in open relationships typically value. Most non-monogamous couples learn to be truthful with discretion for their partners' feelings, and making comparisons is highly discouraged (Zimmerman, 2012).

Block (2008) recalled how her first important relationship ended when she learned of his betrayal with another woman. She admitted she would have rather known about his infidelity and made a decision for herself as to how that relationship would proceed, as opposed to being deceived and having to learn about the indiscretion through another person. At that time, having an open relationship was not an option for her. Block (2008) wrote

We want to be able to seek our other relationships, sexual and otherwise, but we don't want to lose our committed relationships, because we gain enjoyment, security, and privilege from them. And so people cheat and work out their relationships in the aftermath of exposure, or they don't. Either way, they too often avoid, at almost all costs, being honest about their needs and desires. Many people are totally okay with the sex but can't even begin to imagine the honesty part of an open relationship. (Block, 2008, page 62).

Block (2008) maintained honesty is essential to any healthy relationship, and believed that partnerships worked best when individuals are real with themselves and their partners. Block (2008) upheld the belief of establishing boundaries as the second most prevalent key concept in the literature regarding open relationships. As a couple becomes proficient at being honest with themselves and their partner regarding their sexual needs, they can negotiate the type

of relationship they would like to achieve. A therapist can oftentimes work with couples to navigate the murky waters and determine appropriate boundaries and guidelines (Block, 2008). However, it is ultimately up to the individual and/or couple to determine what relationship best suits them; as open relationships can take many forms.

Open relationships can be made of various options, depending on what an individual or couple chooses is best (Zimmerman, 2012). In some instances, only one partner has a secondary partner, which may or may include an emotional connection. Typically, in the case of the swinger lifestyle, there is rarely an emotional connection, and there are only sexual activities. Oftentimes, with homosexual men, secondary partners are strictly for sex only, without any type of emotional involvement (Zimmerman, 2012). It is imperative to negotiate the boundaries of open relationships in advance and therapy can assist with this process.

Concepts and Background of Swinging

According to Vaillancourt (2006) the current literature on swinging described research is predominantly quantitative in nature. Previous literature has focused on attempts to define swinging, while understanding who chooses to swing and why this choice is made. Vaillancourt (2006) identified four major themes within her research, including the construction of sexuality among swingers, roles and rules of swingers, intimacy, and power in swinging relationships. Vaillancourt and Few-Demo (2014) state that swinging has only been occasionally studied, and report finding only 24 articles that span a 40-year time period. The majority of the research is outdated, being written prior to 1980. They state that swinging is considered a family secret, of which everyone is aware, but no one talks about (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014).

According to Wagner (2009), the exact origins of swinging are unknown. Wagner reported swinging in the United States may have begun with couples that grew up during and

after the Second World War. It was not until the 1960s that the first official swinger organization, the Sexual Freedom League, opened (Wagner, 2009).

Overview

Bentzen and Træen (2014) conducted a research study with 12 participants in Norway; six women and six men. The group consisted of five heterosexual couples, one married man, and 1 single woman. Bentzen and Træen used this work to define sexual scripts as group and context specific sets of norms for socially satisfactory roles and actions. These guidelines direct individuals in societal interactions. More specifically, a sexual script outlines the players, plans the actions, and guides what views and feelings are appropriate in a sexual situation. Sexual scripts are cultured and assumed in childhood through a sexual socialization development (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Sexuality is scripted on three separate points; cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Cultural scenarios are instructional guides at the shared level of being; individuals use cultural scenarios to organize and guide their behavior, thoughts, and feelings in specific sexual situations, which lead to the formation of interpersonal sexual scripts (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Kimberly (2016), agreed with Bentzen and Træen, stating that cultural script refers to the views being impacted by community norms.

Intrapsychic scripts are in line with the inner discussion where people establish how they distinguish their social truth (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Kimberly (2016) defined intrapsychic scripts as being how sexuality is subjective based on one's personal values. These scripts are directives on how to stimulate an individual and incite sexual craving. The incentive to partake in sexual behavior originates from the individual's self-perception, desires, needs, and limitations. Intrapsychic scripts are moderately steady as they are not simply available to direct

outward influence, but can shift over time. However, earlier conventional scripts can be renegotiated to make them suitable for changing lifestyles (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

The culture and group specific sexual socialization progression clarifies to individuals what is generally accepted and considered to be valid sexual scripts. However, effective sexual scripts for swinging are not readily available. Consequently, when engaging in a swinger situation, new scripts must be learned through collaboration within the group, as well as other individuals who engage in the swinger lifestyle. This developmental learning of how to engage within the agenda outlined by swinger scripts transpires over contact with more experienced swingers, who have a greater familiarity with the valid scripts. The substance and fundamentals of the swinger scripts are generally shared amongst swingers, but it is also progressively designed to fit individual inclinations associated with what specifically stimulates each individual (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Even though swingers are commonly perceived as sexually open minded, it is clear the lifestyle is structured by a particular set of standards, which varies based on the individuals within the relationship. Outside of the swinger lifestyle, there is a set of guidelines that regulate sexual interaction as well (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Kimberly (2016) notes the uniqueness of those engaged in the swinger lifestyle is they are harmonizing the role of culturally suitable scripts in public, while utilizing altered intrapsychic and interpersonal scripts in private, (Kimberly, 2016).

Kimberly (2016) conducted an ethnographic study at a swinger convention at an undisclosed location, somewhere in the United States. During this time, she observed the event and conducted interviews, noting several themes emerging. Kimberly noted the construction of sexual communication, cultural artifacts, and interviews (Kimberly, 2016).

Bentzen and Træen (2014) concluded that participants in the swinger lifestyle are typically privileged, established, and otherwise ordinary people. These stable individuals are more likely to withstand sexual arrangements that do not adhere to social sexual norms. Due to their stability, they can more easily cope with secrecy as opposed to less stable individuals. Often times, there are higher levels of personality traits, such as having a high level of sensation seeking can predict a larger quantity of sexual companions (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Serina et al. (2013) defines the average swinger as being his/her late thirties, Caucasian, having obtained secondary levels of education and is above average in their socio-economic status. Serina et al. also states swingers are politically conservative individuals employed in white collar and professional roles.

According to Bentzen and Træen (2014), both men and women admitted they felt it was easier to express and expose themselves in a swinger setting, as opposed to another social environment. A traditional belief was that men recruited their female partners to engage in the swinging lifestyle, and yet Bentzen and Træen (2014) discovered this was not the case. They recognized couples often start swinging together or were introduced to the activity by a friend. Vaillancourt and Few-Demo, (2014) also reported the previous swinging literature suggested husbands typically introduced or their wives to participation. Upon further research, they concluded husbands were usually the first to become aware of swinging as a possible activity and initially had more information about it. Wives were less likely to initiate the activity, resulting in 16% of the time; 25% of the time it is a joint decision, and 44% of the time, it was the husband's decision (Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014).

Subgroups within the swinging lifestyle include single men and women. Single men are accepted; however, they do not share an equal status to that of a couple. Single women are welcomed openly. It is common for single men and women to meet and create their own partnership within the community of the swinging lifestyle (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Kimberly (2016) reported that swingers were predominantly Caucasian, at more than 90%. Individuals engaging in this lifestyle had more formal education than non-swingers, and were typically more likely to belong to a religious organization. Kimberly also stated that swingers were no more likely than non-swings to have experienced abuse or family dysfunction. Swingers were also found to place significance on family over other social and individual values.

Definition of Swinging

Bentzen and Træen (2014) defined swinging as the consensual non-monogamous sexual behavior where singles and couples engage in sexual activities with others. Swinging originated in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s; however, there is little practical information of this lifestyle and the sexual behaviors taking place in swinger community, especially as it relates to sexual health and the extent of sexually transmitted infections.

Kimberly (2016) defined swingers as a subgroup of non-monogamous couples that jointly share partners for sexual purposes. She states that there is an additional clarification in that swingers typically reserve emotional commitment for their spouse or significant other. Individuals only participate in physical, sexual exchanges with other individuals or couples. Kimberly goes on to delineate swingers into three categories: (a) established collections of non-monogamous couples who have solidity and very little turnover; (b) somewhat stable groups who know each other, and have fluid participation; (c) unstable groups who come together only for one night (Kimberly 2016).

Serina et al. (2013) defined swingers as partners who agree to engage in sexual interactions with other couples who also engage in swinging. They indicate swinging is a form of consensual or negotiated adultery, through an option to augment their relationship. Swinging was previously seen as wife swapping; however, this term has been abandoned due to its objectification of the female, as opposed to a person (Serina et al., 2013).

Incidence of Swinging

According to Kimberly (2016), swinging, previously referred to as wife swapping, has become more widespread in the last several years; estimates range from 1 to 8 million partakers within the United States. In the last decade, swinger clubs are now legal in Canada, and this raises the need higher for researchers to conduct studies. One reason for learning about the swinging lifestyle is difficult is due to the groups' importance on privacy. Kimberly states there despite a renewal of exploration on swingers, the global practical research has declined since the 1970s.

Literature published up to 35 years ago condemned swingers, maintaining the act of swapping partners was a way to advance with property. Another belief was that the primary motivation to participate was boredom, and despite benefits, the risks outweighed the benefits. Research did indicate that the benefits included an upsurge in couple's fulfillment, relief from sexual boredom, improved sexual performance, and a bigger social system. The risks were primarily noted as burdens and judgments from society, believing that sexual intercourse was to only be among committed couples (Kimberly, 2016).

At the turn of the 21st century, there were over 300 swinger lifestyle clubs with affiliation to the North American Swing Club Association, with an estimated three million swingers with memberships (Kimberly, 2016). Further research by Kimberly states that there is between 1%

and 15% of couples in the United States have shared in the lifestyle at some period in their lives. D'Orlando (2009) reports there are hundreds of thousands of swingers in many countries, including swinger clubs in all major cities. His research indicates a lower statistic of between one and four percent of all couples engaging in swinging activities (D'Orlando, 2009).

Rationale of Swinging

The reasons that individuals and couple choose a swinger lifestyle vary based on personal choices. Rather than being limited to a couple and one sexual partner, the swinging lifestyle allows for multiple partners and a way to address one's own sexual needs (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Often times, sexual fantasies are the primary inspiration for pursuing the swinging lifestyle. Fantasies can be viewed as a form of the intrapsychic sexual script. Initiated in childhood, intrapsychic sexual scripts are not typically reachable to straight exterior impacts, yet can and do modify over time, given the proper encouragement. Formerly established scripts can be renegotiated to mark them fitting for new lifestyle choices (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

In the study conducted by Bentzen and Træen (2014), several individuals reported that the actual act of sex was not the priority of the experience. Moreover, it was the experience of engaging in the activity together. For couples, swinging gave them the opportunity to fantasize prior to the event, and then relive the occasion after that. This was considered the highest reward of that involvement. Therefore, the authentic sexual experience is seen as just a small component of the experience, a couple's commitment to one another was considered more important. More experienced individuals in the lifestyle share an awareness of potential variations in the activity as a result of changes in their spouse's yearning to partake (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

According to Kimberly (2016), the lifestyle of swingers goes against shared philosophies of exclusivity within marriage in the United States. However, inspirations and outcomes of individuals in the lifestyle are similar to those in customary marital unions. Kimberly contends that the swinging lifestyle can result in ongoing sustaining relationships, and the ideas of love, closeness, and erotic desire are oddly like non-swingers (Kimberly 2016).

Viwatpanich (2010) reported on the variety of reasons that individuals choose to engage in swinging. Sexual encounters are an important factor when entering the world of swinging. During the research conducted by Viwatpanich (2010), all of the individuals he interviewed had engaged in multiple sexual experiences, including premarital sex, sexual activities with two or more partners, group sex, sexual exhibitionism, sex with a brother-in-law, and an increased desire for voyeurism. His reported findings also included family structure can also support the decision to enter the lifestyle; childlessness, loneliness, and boredom are often cited as reasons to enter the swinger lifestyle. Women often find themselves repressed sexually, more repressed than their male counterparts and see the lifestyle as a way to assert their equal rights (Viwatpanich, 2010).

Positive Outcomes of Swinging

According to Bentzen and Træen (2014), the men interviewed for their study reported that the swinging lifestyle enhanced their self-image and amplified their confidence as a sexual companion. The interviewed men also quantified that the improved self-esteem carried over to nonsexual conditions, indicating that they were more content with themselves and their lives overall. Sexual satisfaction, friendship, self-confidence, freedom, and experience are often supported as the favorable effects of swinging. Men admitted to having a bigger fulfillment with their own body, when someone other than their spouse felt a sexual desire for them. Pleasure,

exhilaration, and the occasion to observe and be observed by others are also commonly reported benefits. Swinging couples have described feeling that their marriage has been reinforced as a result of their activities (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Sex partners within the swinger lifestyle were not typically identified as a threat to a relationship. As it relates to the club setting, there is no contact information exchanged between members. Swingers clubs offered an opportunity to launch interaction with others without the laborious measures vital to a private situation. Clubs also allowed swingers the potential to meet several people in a short amount of time (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Bentzen and Træen (2014) reported that individuals engaged in the swinger lifestyle notice a similar psychological and physiological triggering to non-swingers when observing their partner with another. However, these responses were not interpreted as jealousy. The results indicate that swingers are adept at regulating their jealousy in a way that lessens the emotional aspect, while sexual jealousy remains and creates added exhilaration (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Viwatpanich (2010) described the benefits of swinging as improving the couple's satisfaction, a reprieve from sexual boredom, enhanced sexual performance, and an increase in the number of friends.

Negative Outcomes of Swinging

According to Bentzen and Træen (2014), the biggest concern of those participating in the swinging lifestyle was that others in their social setting or family would learn of their behaviors behind closed doors. The individuals interviewed were admittedly private about their participation, due to the fear of being exposed, judged, or criticized. More experienced members of the lifestyle disclose they had become comfortable with keeping these two portions of their lives distinct and discrete (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

The individuals interviewed in the study conducted by Bentzen and Træen (2014) worried about the potential penalties that would occur if their activities were known. There is a fear of being treated in a negative and judgmental way if this lifestyle choice was exposed. Most individuals have a clear and yet undesirable awareness of the significance of being known as a swinger. Previous studies have shown that secrecy is vital to those who participate in the lifestyle (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Swingers have the anxiety that their participation in the swinging lifestyle would cause embarrassment and shame, if it were to become open knowledge (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). In the Norwegian study conducted by Bentzen and Træen (2014), the most noteworthy threat of freely revealing a swinger lifestyle was the loss of standing within the family, which would likely have a negative impact on the quality of life an individual (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Viwatpanich (2010) outlined some negative impacts to swinging as well. He suggested that jealousy and possessiveness may become an issue. He also stated that a lack of lack of commitment and involvement may present itself. Other negative aspects can include boredom, loss of interest, disappointment, guilty conscience, fear of discovery and fear of sexually transmitted diseases. These negative influences were important factors for some couples to disengage in future swinging activities (Viwatpanich 2010).

Scenes and Arenas, Public Location

At the time of the study conducted by Bentzen and Træen (2014) Norway had only two operating swinger clubs; both requiring memberships. The rules of the clubs were similar in that couples and single women had unlimited access to the clubs, whereas single men were limited and had to pay higher club dues and fees. Each club provided written guidelines that were

strictly enforced. Failing to adhere to the rules resulted in ejection from the club. The rules covered matters such as alcohol use, condoms, and hygiene.

Per the guidelines of the swinger script, instigating an interaction with someone currently interacting in a sexual act is to be done with a cautious touch. The first bodily contact is to be on a non-intimate body part, such as an arm or the back. Removal or ignoring of the hand was a sign of dismissal and/or noninterest. The absence of a rebuff gesture was assumed to be consent to linger and may include a gradual increase of intimacy. The nonverbal physical method using the reading of gestures was the governing method of communication for initiating sexual interaction in swingers' clubs, and it inferred no previous discussion about safe sex, favorites, or limitations (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

The ease of club meetings was identified as a significant benefit, and many interviewees stated they liked seeing their partner relish sex with someone else. Oftentimes, their regular partner was close enough to engage in physical contact together while engaged in activities with other individuals. Despite being engaged in sexual contact with others, couples were able to confirm their partnership. Even in the club setting, making eye contact and touching one another was seen as an expression of affection. Thus, the swinger script does not call for the manifestation of feelings or desires other than those purely erotic to anyone other than the regular partner. Interaction with others was also restricted by time, and binding simply for sexual situations (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Scenes and Arenas, Private Location

As opposed to the public setting, there are individuals who prefer to meet in a more private setting (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Individuals typically meet through the internet; email or chat programs, or swinger specific websites (Serina et al., 2013). Prior to meeting in person,

individuals can discuss various limits on safe sex, sexual preferences, and/or unwanted behaviors (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). In a private setting, limitations are often less definite, allowing more participation from the couples. Restrictions and opportunities can also fluctuate to a much larger degree than in a public setting. This broader scope can produce additional conflict within or between the couples.

Typically, condom use is less utilized in a private setting, when compared to a public setting (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). This is due, in part, to the perception that risk of infection is lower in a private setting. Many swingers engage in activities in both private and public settings, and therefore the belief may be biased. Nevertheless, there appears to be a conflict between partners regarding clear rules for activities in a private setting. Also relevant in a private setting, swingers are typically more individually involved with new partners. This setting lends itself to being similar to casual sexual relationships, whereas condom use is interpreted as a sign of distrust (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Guidelines for Swinging

The research conducted by Bentzen and Træen (2014) indicated that in Norway, participants in the swinger club were careful to engage in only certain types of activity with others. The activity is dependent on each couple as a unit. For example, perhaps they only had unprotected sex with their spouses, as this was perceived as personal. Kissing on the mouth was something most individuals reserve only for their partner, and was prohibited as an activity with others (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Swinging couples typically identify and implement rules to safeguard the relationship and avoid jealousy (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). These guidelines often include boundaries as to what activities are set aside for the primary couple and which activities are allowed with other

partners. Emotional allegiance is highly respected, and there are limits to how close personal relationships with other partners can become. The couples interviewed by Bentzen and Træen specified that honesty and candidness about what happens in sexual situations is significant to the process. The interviewees share that this honesty and openness is what made swinging a shared experience.

Secrets within a primary partner are considered a sign of cheating; although the actual act of sex is not necessary to be considered an indication of unfaithfulness (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). As couples define and establish rules that indicate a difference between sex and feelings, this limits the perceived threat to the relationship. As indicated by the interviewees in this study, one of the principal incentives for swinging was the likelihood to see one's regular spouse having sex with another (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Individuals decide for themselves their own personal guidelines as it related to activities, including the use of condoms (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). They state having attributed optimism to lack of problematic personal experience; the problem has not happened before, and therefore, it will not happen in the future. As a culture, individuals and couples may use condoms in certain situations and not in others. All interviewees reported using condoms when swinging in southern Europe, where infection such as HIV was more prevalent (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Kimberly (2016) reported on an experiential study conducted with those in the swinger lifestyle. She found four universal guidelines among swingers: (a) allegiance to the principal relationship, (b) limitation on physical rendezvous with extra-dyadic companions, (c) no emotional association with extra-dyadic partners, and (d) honesty and openness about participation with others (Kimberly, 2016). Despite this information, discrepancies remain regarding how and when rules in the lifestyle are formed (Kimberly, 2016). It varies based on

each individual and each couple as a whole. Some studies indicate that men implement the rules and initiate sex and in other instances, there is a lack of communication with their primary partner regarding behaviors outside the marriage (Kimberly, 2016).

Kimberly (2016) argued that there are two ways to determine the guidelines and protocols for each individual and/or couple. One option is to form firm boundaries and rules prior to engaging in any type of sexual activities with other partners. A second option is to start with the sexual activities, continuing with open communication and creating and forming guidelines based on wishes, needs, desires, and fears (Kimberly, 2016).

Viwatpanich (2010) conducted research in Thai; interviewing three couples who were middle class, worked in the government or business sector with reliable sources of income, and followed Buddhism. Their ages ranged from 33 to 49 and they were described as well educated, with three bachelor and two master degrees within the group (Viwatpanich, 2010). From his research, he concluded two distinct categories of swinging activities. The first classification is touching without the intercourse and is typically performed by beginners. It consists of touching, kissing, and sharing oral sex, while penetration is only performed with the primary partner. The sexual activity can take place in the same bed, with all participants together at the same time. The second classification is complete sexual interaction. This is the “ultimate” act of swinging and is performed three ways: unlimited sexual intercourse in the same bed, sexual intercourse performed in separate beds, or sexual intercourse in separate rooms. According to Viwatpanich (2010), the last act is the least popular, as it can be considered as infidelity.

Even though swinging is established in Thai society as a sub-culture, some rules are established and strongly practiced by its members (Viwatpanich, 2010)

1. Meeting or contact must be arranged by the husband only.

2. Do not ask for personal information when the relationship is not well developed.
3. Do not take any advantage of other couples; all expenditures must be shared.
4. Be polite to and respectful with each couple.
5. Do not drink alcohol before a meeting
6. Ask “May I ...” every time before touching, kissing or penetrating.
7. Do not hurry sexual activities or only think of another round.
8. Do not take photographs or any kind of recordings.
9. Do not pass on names and addresses of swinger partners to anyone, without permission.
10. Avoid jealousy, adultery and emotional attachments with other couples.
11. Keep it secret as much as possible.

(Vivatpanich, 2010)

(not sure how to properly cite this, other than regular citation)

Sexual Health Issues

Contrary to some beliefs, individuals engaging in the swinger lifestyle have a healthy fear of contracting a sexually transmitted infection or disease (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). The interviewees over the age of 45 years old indicated they were open to the practice of swinging without the use of a condom. Younger interviewees were less concerned about potential infections or diseases and more concerned about wanted pregnancies (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

When interviewing men older than 45, the anxiety of erectile problems was prominent (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). These men had more concern about maintaining an erection, and much less fear regarding a sexually transmitted infection or disease. Therefore the reason to abstain from condom use was not about the fear of disease. This fear caused the safety factor to

be diminished (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Interpersonal swinger scripts do not contain emotional or supportive elements, as romance-based scripts do, and are built mainly on sexual presentation. When men are incapable to contribute in the sexual performance, they lose their part in it. From this viewpoint, it is reasonable that many chose to engage in unsafe sex (Bentzen & Træen, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura is known for the expansion of social cognitive theory from the original framework based on work by Edwin Holt and Harold Brown in the 1930s. Bandura wanted to ensure that the focus was on the role that cognition plays in encoding and performing behaviors. Bandura hypothesized that human behavior is caused by personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. SCT explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation; referring to the constant interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Domino, Wingreen, & Blanton, 2015).

When considering the swinging lifestyle, it can be viewed as originating from cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Blum, 2015). In recent years, researchers have begun to notice the influence of cognitive perceptions on one's sexual identity, specifically how it relates to a female's sexuality. Blum's research indicated that females often carry a negative self-image, as it relates to their sexuality, which is often deeply ingrained into their cognition. Twine (2015) agrees that cognitive patterns develop during childhood, as individuals develop heavily charged core beliefs about oneself. As these cognitive patterns develop, as well as customary rules and obligations regarding sexual activity, the swinging lifestyle allows individuals to challenge long held beliefs (Viwatpanich, 2010).

Social cognitive theory is based on both psychology and sociology, and suggests that the way an individual thinks and acts is based on value judgments. These value judgments start with an interactional framework that includes moral thought, self-reactions, and environmental factors. This interactional formula is based on an individuals' behavior, dependent on their unique characteristics and relevant factors within their environment (Domino et al., 2015).

Based on this theoretical framework, individuals are engaged in a continual regulation of their behavior, based on self-assessment of their behavior, within their environment. As sexual norms evolve, individuals are more comfortable to engage in additional activities that test the new norms (Blum, 2015). The act of sex itself is behavioral, and includes exhibiting behaviors, and desires to perform sexual behaviors. According to van Anders (2015), sociosexuality is the act of unrestricted partnered sexuality, focusing on behavior, attitude, and desire. At the behavioral level, sociosexuality focuses exclusively on sexual intercourse (van Anders, 2015). Walters (2013) also stated that sexual behaviors can include the intent to engage in sexual activity.

Assuming that their environment is not considered morally culpable, the individual will shape unique motives as needed, to close the gap between their personal behaviors and their environment. Instead of changing their behavior, the individual may seek different environments in which their behavior fits more closely (Domino et al., 2015). Blum (2015) argued that a woman's experience of her own sexuality consists of a multifaceted relationship between herself and the environment that is interplay of biological and sociocultural factors.

Summary

The subject of the swinging lifestyle has limited research, despite the act is believed to be wider spread than reported. The researched is restricted due to individuals wishing to maintain their anonymity and privacy, as well as keeping their private lives private. The broad objective of this study was to examine the impact of swinging activities on committed relationships and to determine why someone would choose consensual non-monogamy as a way of life. More specifically, this study hoped to ascertain how swingers distinguish the difference between infidelity and swinging, since both activities include sex with individuals outside the primary relationship.

This literature review has provided considerable relevant information both to the general objective of this study, as well as more specific objectives. It is important to understand how society and individuals define infidelity and what impact that has on a committed relationship. Also, it is helpful to outline how the social and moral code has evolved over time in our culture, as well as what impacts our sexual beliefs. Finally, it is necessary to become aware of the history of swinging throughout time in order to understand the changing dynamics of swingers. While the overall satisfaction of swingers continues to rise within their primary relationships, swingers are becoming less afraid of being found out, as they recognize this part of their lifestyle benefits them greatly.

Notwithstanding there are areas of concern for swingers that cannot be overlooked. Some individuals are adamantly opposed to their friends and family learning about their choices. Individuals are fear being treated negatively and being judged by others. There are risks to engaging in sex with multiple partners, if condoms are not used. Others recognize having open

communication with their partner is a must to ensure jealousy and possessiveness do not interfere with the benefits of the swinging activities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to define, understand, and analyze the dynamics of swinging relationships. Between 1 and 8 million individuals engage in this type of sexual experience. The researcher sought to add to existing literature by exploring current demographics and gathering information of individuals and couples regarding their marital and sexual satisfaction, as well as their attitudes toward the swinging experience. The specific research questions that were designed to address the research problem were

Question 1: Why do men and women choose swinger life activities?

Question 2: What is considered a quality relationship by swingers?

Question 3: What is the difference between swinging and infidelity?

Research Method

Qualitative research is designed to answer questions about our observation, and to give meaning and understanding with a rich description. Qualitative research's focus is the quality of the experience and its philosophical roots are based in constructivism, interpretation, and are subjective. The goal of the investigation is to understand, describe, and discover meaning about a phenomenon. The design characteristics are flexible, evolving, and emergent. The data collection is specific to the researcher being the primary instrument to obtain data (Creswell, 2014).

The goals of the qualitative research method include exploring, describing, and interpreting. There are multiple ways in which to do this, including case study, grounded theories, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative approaches. Case Studies include

researchers collecting detailed information over a sustained period of time, using a variety of data collection procedures (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

Participants for this study were self-selected through advertisements on swingers' dating websites. Swingers' dating websites were contacted throughout the North American Swing Club Association. This online community included 13 national swinger clubs and hundreds of state clubs through the United States and Canada.

The researcher contacted the North American Swing Club Association, an International organization. Through this organization, there were 13 swinger dating websites:

- North American Swing Club Association Connect
- Swingers Date Club
- Swing Towns Club
- Quiver
- Swing Life Style
- Kasidie
- The Swing Site
- Club Eros Amor
- National Association of Black Swingers
- Swinger Zone Central

- Home Town Swingers
- Swinging Playdates
- Swinger World

These 13 clubs were contacted via email and asked to participate in the study by posting a link to the questionnaire on their websites. To maintain a consistent protocol, a template was used to contact the webmasters of the dating sites and social clubs when requesting their participation (Appendix 1). Of those contacted, the dating sites and social clubs were asked to post a link to the questionnaire on their web page or electronic newsletter. The names and web addresses of the participating sites remained anonymous as part of an agreement between the researcher and those sites for confidentiality. To maintain consistency, an additional template was posted with the link to the questionnaire on the participating websites inviting members to participate in the study (Appendix 2).

This allowed for a high number of individuals to participate in the research. The goal of the research study was to include the responses of a minimum of 50 individuals. Each participant was asked to complete an informed consent (Appendix 3).

The unit of analysis for the sample population was for individual men and women swingers to complete the questionnaires independently of their partners. No attempt was specifically made to acquire data from couples; however, it is possible couples completed the questionnaires separately. The criteria for participants were: (a) being in a committed relationship or legally married; (b) having participated together as a couple in the swinging

lifestyle for at least six months; (c) 21 years of age or older; (d) being a member of an online swinger community. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent, and then complete the questionnaire, providing no identifying information, to protect their identity. All responses are kept confidential and a summary of the final written report is available to participants upon request.

Upon recruitment, participants were given access to a link to a website containing the questionnaire. Upon accessing the link at the website, the participants were presented with an informed consent form. Participants were required to agree to the consent form to be in compliance with the IRB. After signing the consent form, participants were directed to continue and complete the questionnaire. Participants were informed they can stop participation at any time, and none of their responses would be submitted.

The subjects were not financially rewarded for their participation. Participants were not asked for any personally identifiable information, and the researcher did not possess the technical capability to trace individual questionnaires to particular participants. The options allowing for tracing of IPs and e-mail addresses was deactivated on the questionnaire website.

The proposed population for this research study was individuals currently in the swinger lifestyle; therefore, the nature of the research justifies this population. There were no special considerations as it relates to social, physiological, or psychological characteristics of special risks. The participants were adults over the age of 21 years, engaging in a voluntary sex act.

Data was collected and maintained in an online data bank at the questionnaire website until the end of the data collection. The responses were encrypted for security. Considering the sensitive nature of some of the questions in this study, and the stigma attached to this special

population, it is believed that participants were more willing to answer questions openly and honestly than in a traditional laboratory, face to face setting.

Instrumentation

The testing instrument for this study was developed by the researcher (Appendix 4). The data was collected using a self-report questionnaire instrument, designed specifically for the swinger population. The instrument was divided into four sections. The first section included demographic questions. The second section included questions designed to ascertain introduction and participation into the swinger lifestyle, and the third section contained questions to determine relationship satisfaction. The final section of the questionnaire established sexual satisfaction within the relationship, if applicable.

The researcher developed the questionnaire, after reviewing other similar questionnaires on the same topic. Kourtney Ty Vaillancourt (2006) conducted case study research and interviewed seven couples regarding their swinger lifestyle (Vaillancourt, 2006). Edward Fernandes (2009) conducted an extensive research with online questionnaires and obtained information from over 1,000 participants (Fernades, 2009). Each of these perspective research studies contained similar components simply due to studying the same topic. However, Vaillancourt's (2006) research asked in-depth questions, requiring lengthy face to face interviews that were not conducive to obtaining sufficient information across a broad spectrum of individuals. The research conducted by Fernandes focused on overall satisfaction in both the relationship and the bedroom.

While researching the same overall topic, this research attempted to explain why men and women choose the swinger lifestyle, and if in doing so, they consider themselves to be in a

quality relationship with a primary partner? This research is also focused on explaining the difference between swinging and infidelity.

Upon completion of the questionnaire, the participants were directed to submit their questionnaire to the researcher. The raw data was downloaded into an excel spreadsheet, converted to SPSS format, and analyzed. As per the IRB requirements, the data will be kept by the researcher for the next five years.

Data Collection

The internet is increasingly becoming a valuable tool for qualitative researchers (Savina, Mills, Atwood, & Cha, 2017). Mann and Stewart (2003) discuss the use of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) for conducting interview research. They write that the anonymity of this technology has allowed researchers to gain access to individuals and information not previously accessible, due to the sensitive nature of some issues in a face to face setting (Mann & Stewart, 2003).

Anonymity and the safety of physical distance provide additional benefits to both the researcher and the participants in computer mediated research. Especially when considering the sensitive and personal nature of the current research study, using an online format allows individuals to maintain their privacy (Mann & Stewart, 2003).

The benefits of utilizing an online questionnaire product are numerous. The flexibility for scheduling adds to the benefit, as participants could complete the questionnaire at a time convenient for them, in the privacy of their home or office (Savina et al., 2017). Also, participants can maintain complete anonymity, and do not need to share any personal identifying information and given the sensitivity of the topic, this is helpful to participants.

The data for this study was collected using a self-report questionnaire instrument designed by the researcher and posted on swingers' dating websites and swingers' online social clubs. The questionnaire method was chosen in order to gather exploratory and descriptive information from a selected sample of swingers. The questionnaire method traditionally allows for the collection of large quantities of data from specialized populations (Savina et al., 2017). Digital media has become a permeating part of our culture, and it is estimated that individuals engage with digital media on average of seven hours per day, (Savina et al., 2017).

In this case, the online questionnaire method was chosen because of its capacity to contact a large sample of swingers in a short period. As well, the use of an online questionnaire facilitated the researcher's ability to gather response from a large, anonymous, sample of a population that would otherwise not be available through face to face interviews or direct mailing. Many times, swingers prefer to keep their anonymity and are not willing to be identified (Fernandes, 2009). Prior research on swinging has successfully utilized an online format to collect data (Fernandes, 2009).

Data was collected for a period of two weeks, starting on May 13, 2018, and ending on May 27, 2018, upon review of the IRB. At the completion of the collection period, the data was downloaded from the hosting site and analyzed.

Bearing in mind the delicate nature of this study, and the necessity for discretion, the researcher assumed many participants would be more agreeable to answer the questions openly in an online setup rather than in a customary, face to face format. However, the online format is susceptible to self-selection bias.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data are characterized by subjectivity, richness, and comprehensive text based information. The goal of analyzing qualitative data is to determine relationships between categories and themes of data seeking to increase the understanding between the phenomena (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Qualitative research is widely used across a wide range of education science, attributed to the advantage of this type of research. Qualitative research seeks to define phenomena based on the point of view of the participants and it is considered to discover the human side of the issue (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the analytic process, this research study utilized computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, or CAQDAS, as opposed to manual analysis. This type of analytical platform is increasingly being used as it offers the storing, indexing, sorting, and coding from multiple researchers across time (Mina, Anderson & Chen, 2017). Among the many available software programs, NVivo is one of the most widely used in educational research (Mina et al., 2017).

Many researchers who use qualitative data analyses software typically use the software to conduct some form of constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The software NVivo can be utilized to provide seven types of analysis including constant comparison analysis, keywords-in-context, word count, classical content analysis, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, and componential analysis.

Analysis of qualitative data has become easier and yields more professional results (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The software reduces a great number of manual tasks and gives the researcher more time to discover tendencies, recognize themes, and derive conclusions. There are five important tasks in which NVivo eases the analysis of qualitative data. These tasks include

managing data, managing ideas, query data, modeling visually, and reporting, (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The researcher obtained information from all questionnaires completed, and recorded the questionnaire digitally to capture all the details revealed by the interviewee. The questionnaires were recorded; however, no identifying information was obtained or maintained. The collection method for the questionnaires, Survey Monkey, allowed import directly into the NVivo software. NVivo automatically imported the files into the application (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). NVivo uses nodes, tree nodes, and free nodes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Nodes are similar to codes, and are what the researcher uses to place meaning on different parts of the text. These contain all known information about a particular concept or category (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). Tree nodes are the grouping of nodes. As more nodes are created, the researcher can organize the nodes into tree nodes. Free nodes are those nodes that have not been added to a tree node (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011).

One of the questions that arises about qualitative research relates to the reliability of the interpretation and representation of the participants' answers. There are no statistical tests that can be used to check reliability and validity as there are in quantitative research (Sutton & Austin, 2015). However, there are ways to establish confidence in the truth of the findings, referring to the confidence as "trustworthiness" and suggest there are four criteria of trustworthiness. The first being credibility, confidence in the truth findings. The second is transferability, showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts. There is also dependability, showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Finally, there is

confirmability, the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation or interest (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Because the tool of qualitative research is essentially the researcher, this type of study requires reflection on the part of researchers, both before and during the research process, as a way of providing context and understanding for readers. It may likely be impossible to avoid all researcher bias, instead, reflexivity requires researchers to reflect upon and clearly articulate their position and subjectivities. This can include worldview, perspectives, and biases, just to name a

few. This allows the reader to better understand the filters through which questions were asked, data were gathered and analyzed, and findings were reported (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Most studies conducted on the swinging lifestyle date back to the 19070s and 1980s, with relatively little research being conducted in the last 10 years (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013). Despite the moral compass of society ever changing, participants in the swinger lifestyle continue to be referred to as deviants. Griffiths and Frobish (2013) stated the internet allows participants to be recruited into the deviant subculture, once again, indicating a negative connotation to a non-monogamous lifestyle. The idea that sexual non-monogamy can co-exist within a strong emotional/love monogamous relationship seems at the outset to be nonstandard conduct (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013). Moreover, the suggestion that consensual, extra-dyadic sex should become part of an accepted sexual paradigm challenges the accepted societal norms that attempt to either marginalize or banish altogether perceived deviant sexual behaviors (Fernandes, 2009).

Literature published 35 years ago discredited swinger activities stating the act of exchanging partners was simply a way to gain economic property (Kimberly, 2015). A second motivation to engage in the swinging lifestyle included boredom. Previous research revealed the benefits of swinging did not outweigh the risks. Benefits included potential increase in couple's satisfaction, relief from sexual monotony, improved sexual performance, and increased number of friends, as the risks included the burden from challenging society's recognized behaviors of sexual intercourse among loyal couples (Kimberly, 2015).

The chosen lifestyle of swingers appear to go against common notions about sexual exclusivity within marriage in the United States, yet motivations and outcomes of those in the

lifestyle are comparable to those in traditional marital relationships. Some argue that the practice of swinging can result in long-lasting, satisfying relationships (Griffiths and Frobish 2013) and that swingers' notions of love, intimacy, and sexual pleasure are remarkably similar to those of mainstream Americans (Kimberly, 2015).

Griffiths and Frobish (2013) identify a sequence of preconditions for emergence of a deviant subculture. It begins with (a) experience of a problem, (b) sharing the problem with others, (c), interaction evolving into a collective solution, and (d) creating a tradition following joint action. Furthermore, these authors stated entry and involvement into a deviant subculture relieves the anxiety of not fitting in elsewhere and ultimately weakens involvement in a more conventional group (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013).

The researcher investigated the dynamics of the swinger lifestyle, as well as what motivates participants to engage in a non-monogamous lifestyle. The aim of this study was to determine what motivates an individual to partake in this activity as well as what benefits are derived. The study was predicated on three hypotheses: (1) men and women voluntarily choose to engage in the swinger lifestyle and are not pushed, coerced or forced into it, (2) individuals participating in non-monogamous lifestyles have the same or higher levels of marital satisfaction and (3) non-monogamy does not equate to infidelity and should not be considered a deviant behavior.

The purpose of this study was also to contribute to the current literature by collecting new information regarding the swinger lifestyle, and its relation to marital and sexual satisfaction. In

the results section, the demographic characteristics of the participants are also examined. As well, the attitudes and behaviors of the sample within the swinging context were reviewed. The demographic and swinging experience data were analyzed using NVIVO.

To accomplish this objective, three research questions were explored with the participants. The first was, why do men and women choose swinger life activities? This question addresses a common misconception women are forced into the lifestyle by their significant others (Kimberly, 2015). To obtain this, participants were asked a series of questions regarding their introduction and engagement into the swinger lifestyle.

The second question was designed to ascertain what type of quality is maintained in a relationship between swingers, what is considered a quality relationship by swingers? To achieve this, participants were asked a series of questions regarding their overall relationship quality, based on sexual expectations.

With the swinger lifestyle often being referred to as deviant, the third question sought to examine the swinger definition of infidelity as opposed to non-monogamy, what is the difference between swinging and infidelity? This research question was explored through both a multiple choice and fill in the blank option.

Participants

The criteria for participants were (a) be 21 years of age or older; (b) currently in a committed relationship; and (c) involved in the swinger lifestyle in some capacity. Participants were initially sought out through 13 online communities affiliated with North American Swing Club Association. Emails were sent to the clubs upon the approval of the IRB. The responses

were as follows:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| ▪ North American Swing Club Association Connect | Emailed Returned |
| ▪ Swingers Date Club | Email Returned |
| ▪ Swing Towns Club | No Response |
| ▪ Swing Life Style | No Response |
| ▪ Kasidie | Follow up with Questions |
| ▪ The Swing Site | No Response |
| ▪ National Association of Black Swingers | Email Returned |
| ▪ Swinger Zone Central | Refused to Participate |
| ▪ Home Town Swingers | No Response |
| ▪ Swinging Playdates | No Response |

Three clubs did not have email addresses accessible via their website. However, there was a contact option through the website. These websites were contacted via their website:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| ▪ Club Eros Amor | No Response |
| ▪ Swinger World | No Response |
| ▪ Quiver | No Response |

The Swinger Zone Central club responded to the inquiry with the following response:

“Sorry but our site does not and will not participate in any social research projects. We have a strict policy regarding this as our members demand total privacy. I am sure you can understand.”

As a result of the lack of response by the swinger clubs, other clubs were contacted that was not necessarily a part of the North American Swing Club Association. These clubs included

various resorts for swingers, including Caliente, Rooftop, Sea Mountain, Riverside Ranch, Copacabana Desire, and Live Oak. One club, Caliente responded with interest. However, it is unknown if the survey was distributed to its members. No other resorts or clubs responded to the email request.

As another effort to reach the swinger population, clubs were assessed via their Facebook pages. These clubs included Swing Lifestyle, Swinger's Lounge, Black Chicago Swingers, Spicy Match Club, Best Tested Swinger Site, and Swinger Couples Personals/Personal Ads for Wife Swapping. As a result, none of these clubs responded to the proposal, so it is unknown if the survey was distributed to the membership.

Challenges in Recruitment

The original swinger clubs were not contacted prior to the start of the data collection period. Once approval of the IRB was obtained and these clubs were contacted, it was then determined some of the links to contact the clubs were no longer working. Contacting the clubs in advance would have ensured having up to date contact information. Another challenge was the clubs were contacted at the start of the data collection period and by the time some of the clubs responded, or obtained the appropriate permission to disperse the email, the data collection time was well into its limited time span.

Ultimately, a local club in Jacksonville, Florida was contacted, Club Kink. This club is self-proclaimed as Northeast Florida's premier fetish club. While this club caters more to the BDSM community, it does have online swinger groups who agreed to post the survey and it is where a majority of the responses originated.

A member of the Club Kink was reached, also a personal acquaintance and local mental health professional. He offered to assist and posted the survey in groups in which he was a

member. He posted the survey link to three groups. The first one was Masters and Slaves Together International (MAST), a member's only platform website. This group describes itself as a pansexual support and discussion group for those interested in the master-mistress/slave or dominant/submissive relationship. Persons of any gender and sexual orientation are welcome. Approximately 30 members belong to this group in the local area.

The second group was called Power eXchange, a private Facebook group, in which 100+ members belong. This group deals with the issues of using power in relationship through positive ways. It is described as an exchange of power; whereas the amount of power remains the same. One person gives up the power and the other person takes the power.

The final group is made up of personal friends of the mental health clinician who belongs to Club Kink in the Jacksonville, Florida area. He describes himself as a dominant in the BDSM community and has a number of submissive individuals, as well as "bottoms" in his cohort. He distributed the survey to each of them, approximately 6.

Participant Demographics

At the conclusion of the data collection, 56 participants had navigated through the questionnaire. Upon further review, it was noted that some participants did not answer any questions, after agreeing to the informed consent. Several participants answered only some of the questions, and not all of them.

As stated above, challenges in participant recruitment prevented the survey sample from being broad, geographically speaking. Of the 52 respondents who answered the question of what state they reside in, 39 lived in Florida; and one person lived in both Florida and Georgia. Two participants resided in each Indiana and Arizona. One participant from each of the following locations completed the survey: Europe, Texas, Nevada, Missouri, Ohio, Georgia, and Singapore.

One final participant stated he lives in the state of “bliss”. Four participants did not answer the question.

Among the 56 participants, 23 were female and 29 were male. Four participants did not answer the question. Of those, 36 identified themselves as exclusively heterosexual and 16 identified as bisexual. There were no respondents that identified as strictly homosexual, and four participants did not answer the question.

Among the 56 participants, three reported their occupation as a blue collar worker, and nine reported more of a white collar position. Also, nine reported their occupation as professional, such as a doctor or attorney, and three stated they are in the education field. Nine reported working in a business or managerial setting and five reported working in a nursing industry. Two participants reported working in retail sales and information systems, respectively. One participant reported working in each of the following: public safety industry, military, and technology field. Seven participants stated “other” for their field and four did not answer.

Levels of education were reported as high school graduate, 11; associate’s degree, 1; bachelor’s degree, 22; master’s degree, 12; doctoral degree, 2. Four participants marked “other” and four participants did not respond to the question.

The racial profile for this sample was predominately Caucasian; 44 participants. One participant was black, four were Latino, one was Asian, and two marked “other”. Four did not respond to the question.

The age range for the participants varied; three were between 21 and 30 and 16 were between 31 and 40. Twenty participants reported their age as between 41 and 50 and 12 participants reported being between 51 and 60. One participant was over 60 and four participants did not respond.

Of the participants, 30 reported being married; seven were single and 5 are cohabitating. Five participants are divorced and five marked “other”. Four participants did not answer the question. Of the participants reported being married, 19 reported this is their first marriage and 12 reported this is their second marriage. Three participants reported this is their third marriage; 13 reported they are not married and one person marked “other”. Seven participants did not answer the question.

Of the participants, three stated their relationship is less than one year in length and 10 stated their current relationship is between one and four years. Eight participants reported their current relationship is between five and nine years and seven reported between 10 and 15 years. Eighteen participants reported their current relationship is over 15 years and ten participants did not answer the question.

The yearly household income was reported as over \$120,000 by 13 respondents and between \$90,000 and \$120,000 was reported by 21 respondents. The yearly household income was reported between \$60,000 and \$90,000 by 6 respondents and eight respondents reported earning between \$30,000 and \$60,000 annually. Three respondents reported less than \$30,000 of annual household income and five participants did not answer the question.

Regarding spiritual or religious beliefs, five of the respondents described themselves as very religious/spiritual, 11 described themselves as moderately religious/spiritual, and 17 described themselves as somewhat religious/spiritual. Nineteen identified as not religious or spiritual at all and four did not answer the question.

Regarding political affiliation, 19 identified as Republican; 12 as Libertarian, seven as Moderate and five as Democrat. In the categories of social conservative, social liberal, and

socialist, one participant identified in each group. Six participants stated they were not interested in politics and four did not answer the question.

Introduction and Participation in the Swinger Lifestyle

The questions in this section were to ascertain how an individual became introduced into the lifestyle as well as how he/she participates in the activities of the lifestyle. Individual variables reflected the respondents' own individual experience within the swinging context.

When asked how an individual first learned of the lifestyle and its components, 12 respondents stated it was from their partner. Eleven stated it was from the media, and 13 reported they learned about swinging from a friend. One person reported it was from a family member, four people stated it was from a previous partner and seven people selected "other". Eight participants did not answer the question.

The introduction of swinging as an option in the current relationship was suggested by the respondent for 18 participants, and by their partner for 19 participants. Two participants stated a friend suggested it and four participants selected "other". Five participants stated they do not swing and eight participants did not answer the question.

Ten respondents reported being in the lifestyle less than one year and 12 reported between one and four years. Twelve participants reported being in the lifestyle between five and nine years and eight reported between 10 and 15 years. Three participants stated they had been in the lifestyle over 15 years and 11 participants did not answer the question.

Respondents were asked how often they frequent swinger clubs or private homes specifically for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. Thirteen reported they attend monthly, three reported as attending weekly, and two attend yearly. Ten participants attend two

or three times a year and nine participants attend four or five times a year. Eleven participants stated they do not attend swingers club and eight participants did not answer the question.

Respondents were asked how they were able to connect with other swings for the purposes of engaging in sexual activity. Participants were offered six choices and were allowed to choose more than one option. Thirty five reported they utilize swinger websites through the internet, and 25 reported they meet other swingers at private parties. Eighteen reported utilizing swinger social clubs, and 16 reported meeting swingers through other swingers. Six participants selected “other” and 10 participants did not answer the question at all.

Participants were asked why they engage in swinging sexual activities and were offered six options and were allowed to choose more than one option. Thirty six stated they chose the swinging lifestyle for pure sexual pleasure and variety, 21 stated it was to meet other people socially, and 24 stated it was for personal fantasy. Eight participants stated they were looking to obtain emotional connection and four stated it was because their partner wanted them to. Three participants chose “other” and 10 did not answer the question at all.

When asked to describe their swinging experience, 28 participants stated they enjoy swinging; and two stated they do not enjoy swinging. Two participants stated swinging is just okay and they do it appease their partner; 12 participants stated swinging is fun but only occasionally. Four participants marked “other” and eight did not answer the question.

Respondents were asked what types of sexual activities they engage in when participating in the lifestyle. Twenty-one stated they both exchange partners with another couple, as compared to three who state only one person exchanges partners with another couple and four who engage in mostly group sex activities and four who never exchange partners. Five participants stated they soft swing only and seven stated they engage in sexual activity with two

males and one female and two respondents stated they engage in sexual activity with two females and one male. Ten respondents did not answer the question.

When asked how often individuals engage in swinging activities, 25 participants stated it was more than they could count and 17 stated it was a few times. Four participants stated they have not engaged in swinging as of yet, but are willing to at some point. Ten people did not answer the question.

When asked about the frequency of their swinging activities, 16 replied yearly, 24 stated monthly, four stated weekly and one participant stated daily. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

An overwhelming 38 participants reported feeling closer and more connected to their partners as a result of their swinging activities and four reported they did not feel closer to the significant other. Five participants were unsure and nine did not answer the question. Thirty seven participants plan to continue swinging; four do not and six were unsure. Nine participants did not answer the question.

Thirty three participants believed their partner wants to continue to swinging and five believe their partner wishes to stop swinging. Nine participants were unsure and nine did not answer the question.

When asked about the difference between swinging and infidelity, respondents were given six options and were allowed to choose more than one answer. Thirty six reported because swinging is an agreed upon activity, it is not considered cheating. Twenty two of respondents stated swinging enhances the relationship, and again it is not cheating. Seven respondents stated swinging is infidelity; however it is agreed upon, two participants were unsure and six stated they

don't care about the difference, they enjoy the activity. Three participants believed there is no difference between swinging and cheating and eight participants did not answer the question.

Participants were asked if they reach orgasm during their swinging sexual interactions. Fourteen always reach orgasm, 18 often do so and 11 seldom climax. One participant stated he never reaches orgasm and 12 participants did not answer the question.

Marital Satisfaction

An important aspect of this research study was to ascertain the overall marital satisfaction level of individuals who engage in the swinger lifestyle. One section of the questionnaire contained 20 questions and was specific to whether or not swingers identified with having a satisfying relationship. A Likert scale was used with all questions, with a typical five level format of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The first question posed was regarding how well the respondent gets along with his/her partner; my partner and I get along well together. Thirty six respondents strongly agreed and seven agreed with this statement. Two participants neither agreed nor disagreed. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

The next statement posed to the respondents was "our relationship is stable". Thirty four of respondents strongly agreed and nine agreed. One participant neither agreed nor disagreed and one participant disagreed. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

The next statement posed to respondents was “my partner treats me well”. Thirty two respondents strongly agreed and 13 agreed. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “our relationship is happy”, 30 respondents strongly agreed, and 12 agreed. Three neither agreed nor disagreed. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “my partner shows affection”, 31 respondents strongly agreed and 12 agreed. One participant selected neither agree nor disagree and one disagreed. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

The statement was posed to respondents “our life together is overall fun”. Thirty one respondents strongly agreed and 11 agreed. Three selected neither agree nor disagree. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

The statement was posed to respondents “my partner understands me”. Twenty nine strongly agreed and 11 agreed. One participant selected neither agree nor disagree; three participants disagreed. One participant strongly disagreed and eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “our relationship is fulfilling”, 30 strongly agreed and 10 agreed. Four participants selected neither agree nor disagree. One participant disagreed and no respondents strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

The statement was posed to respondents “my partner is interested in my well-being”, 32 respondents strongly agreed and 13 agreed. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I can rely on my partner”, 33 respondents strongly agreed and 10 agreed. One participant selected neither agree nor disagree and one participant strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I am comfortable with my choice in partner”, 33 respondents strongly agreed and 11 agree. One participant disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I would choose my partner again”, 31 respondents strongly agreed and 9 agreed. Four participants selected neither agree nor disagree and one disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement, “my partner and I are a team”, 32 respondents strongly agreed and 8 agreed. Three participants selected neither agree nor disagree; and two disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “My partner and I communicate effectively”, 29 respondents strongly agreed and 11 agreed. Three participants selected neither agree nor disagree and one disagreed. One participant strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I trust my partner”, nearly 33 respondents strongly agreed and 9 agreed. Two participants selected neither agree nor disagree and one participant disagreed. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I consider ending my current relationship”, 28 respondents strongly disagreed and 9 disagreed. Seven respondents selected neither agree nor disagree and one participant strongly agreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I worry that my partner considers ending this relationship”, 28 strongly disagree and 11 disagree. Five selected neither agree nor disagree and one participant strongly agreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “My partner and I look forward to our future together”, 28 strongly agree and 14 agree. Three participants selected neither agree nor disagree. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “the quality of my relationship is high”, 28 respondents strongly agreed and 12 agreed. Four respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. One participant disagreed and no one strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “the quality of my relationship increased with swinging activities, 16 respondents strongly agreed and 12 agreed. Thirteen respondents selected neither agree nor disagree and two disagreed. One participant strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

Sexual Satisfaction

There were eight questions of the questionnaire used to establish the sexual satisfaction of the respondents, with both sexual activity with their partner as well as sexual activities that included other partners. The same Likert scale was used with all questions, with a typical five level format of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

When posed the statement “I am satisfied engaging in sex with my partner only”, 20 strongly agreed, eight agreed, seven selected neither agree nor disagree. Eight participants disagreed and two participants strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed the statement “I am satisfied engaging in swinger sex only”, three respondents strongly agreed and no one agreed. Seven selected neither agree nor disagree, and 16 disagreed, and 20 strongly disagreed. Ten participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I feel fulfilled with my current sex regimen, which includes a combination of sex with my partner and swinging activities”, 20 respondents strongly agreed and 14 agreed. Five selected neither agree nor disagree and five disagreed. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed. One person strongly disagreed and eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I would like to increase sex with my partner only”, six respondents strongly agreed and 12 agreed. Fifteen selected neither agree nor disagree. Nine respondents disagreed and three strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I would like to increase swinger sex only”, two respondents strongly agreed and 12 agreed. Twelve respondents agreed and neither agreed nor disagreed. Ten disagreed and ten strongly disagreed. Ten participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I would like to increase all sexual activities”, 18 respondents strongly agreed and 16 agreed. Eleven selected neither agree nor disagree. One participant strongly disagreed. Ten participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “I am sexually attracted to my spouse or significant other”, 33 respondents strongly agreed and 11 agreed. One participant selected neither agree nor disagree. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

When posed with the statement “my partner makes me feel sexually desirable”, 27 respondents strongly agree and 9 agree. Six respondents selected neither agree nor disagree. Three participants disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer the question.

Results Research Question One

RQ1- Why do men and women choose swinger life activities?

The goal of this question was to ascertain why men and women would choose to enter into a swinger lifestyle. Individuals form their own definition of normative sexuality by developing sexual scripts (Kimberly, 2015). Three variations of the scripts exist; intrapsychic, interpersonal, and cultural. Intrapsychic refers to how sexuality is influenced by one’s personal values, while the opinions being impacted by societal norms are considered cultural. As one’s personal sexual scripts interact with cultural norms, it creates the interpersonal scripts. As swingers engage in the lifestyle, they balance behaviors considered appropriate for public discussion with different behaviors in their private lives (Kimberly, 2015).

Theme #1: Sexual Deviance:

It is common to affirm monogamy is the only natural way to form a sexual relationship which suggests consensual non-monogamy must be some practice of aberration (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). While there are several types of consensual non-monogamy relationships discussed, the research is limited. Open relationships and polyamory are other types of consensual non-monogamous relationships. Research on consensual non-monogamous

relationships faces three challenges; sampling, measurement, and lack of random assignment (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

When presented with the question, “I engage in swinging sexual activities to/for”, six possible options were available and the participants could choose more than one option. Thirty six of the 56 participants stated they engage in swinging for pure sexual pleasure and variety. Twenty participants chose swinging to meet other people socially. Nine participants selected it allowed them to live out a personal fantasy of some sort. Seven participants suggested swinging allows them to have an emotional connection, although the question does not distinguish if the emotional connection is with their partner or with another sexual partner outside the relationship. Four participants indicated they choose swinging because their partners wanted them to do so. Three participants selected the “other” option, and it is unknown what other would represent to each of those participants.

Sexual deviance, and/or the desire to resist monogamy, was suggested by five of participants in the study. In addition to the closed ended question, there was also an open-ended question posed: “I chose to enter into the swinging lifestyle because _____”. These participants clarified their decision with the responses shown below.

Participant 1, a 40 something, heterosexual, divorced male described his decision to enter the swinging lifestyle as: “It is how I am supposed to be. Mammals overall are not designed to be monogamous, and monogamy is in the scheme of human existence new and unnatural”.

Participant 14, a 40 something, married, bisexual female stated her reason for entering the swinging lifestyle was: “It started as a dare and we both enjoyed it”.

Participant 33, a bisexual female, cohabitating with her partner stated: “I suck at monogamy, I like variety, and I like to share adventures with my partners”.

Participant 36, a bisexual female, in an “other” relationship stated this about swinging: “I believe love increases and we are the only ones who limit ourselves”.

Participant 45, a heterosexual male, in an “other” relationship stated: “I prefer to try things I don’t like, rather than always regret that I never tried”.

Theme #2: Excitement and Enjoyment:

Nineteen participants stated they entered into the swinging lifestyle due to wanting more excitement in their lives. Some participants varied the statement by saying they were in a marital rut, or were bored with their current situation and wanted to spice things up a bit. Consensual non-monogamy has been classified as superfluous, risky, and exciting (Finn, 2012). These participants clarified their decisions with the responses below.

Participant 3, a 40 something, bisexual female, living with her partner shared this about choosing the swinger lifestyle: “I enjoy varied experiences”.

Participant 7, a 50 something, heterosexual, divorced male, stated this about his choice for swinging: “It’s just sex! Fun and exciting! Variety!”

Participant 10, a 40 something, married, heterosexual female shared her reason for swinging is: “Fun and variety.”

Participant 11, a 30 something bisexual female, in an “other” relationship stated her reason for choosing the swinging lifestyle as this: “I enjoy sex with both men and women. Swinging is the best of both worlds”.

Participant 14, a 40 something bisexual, married female shared this about choosing the swinging lifestyle: “Started as a dare and we both enjoyed it”.

Participant 16, a 50 something, heterosexual, married male chose swinging because it’s: “Fun! Exciting! Adventurous”!

Participant 17, a 40 something, bisexual, married female said this about her choice for swinging: “It’s fun and exciting for me to watch my spouse and vice-versa”.

Participant 23, a 30 something, bisexual married female shared this about engaging in the swinger lifestyle: “I get bored”.

Participant 19, a 50 something, heterosexual married man stated this about why he chose the swinging lifestyle: “I enjoy it”

Participant 20, a 50 something, bisexual married female reported this about her choice to engage in the swinger lifestyle: “We enjoy different experiences”

Participant 30, a 40 something, heterosexual married male stated he and his partner engage in the swinging lifestyle because: “We enjoy seeing each other being pleased”.

Participant 42, a 50 something, heterosexual married male stated his reason for joining the swinger lifestyle: “Excitement and variety”.

Participant 43, a 30 something, bisexual married female shared her reason for choosing the swinger lifestyle as: “It’s fun”

Participant 47, a 40 something, heterosexual married female stated this about her choice of the swinger lifestyle: “We were in a marital rut”.

Participant 48, a 40 something, heterosexual married male, stated: “It is consent for fun together because we both have our fantasy”

Participant 49, a 30 something, heterosexual married male said this about his desire for the swinger lifestyle: “Spice things up”.

Participant 50, a 50 something, heterosexual married male stated his choice for engaging in the swinging lifestyle: “It is exciting”

Participant 52, a 50 something, heterosexual married male shared his reason for the lifestyle: “We both enjoy it”.

Participant 54, a 40 something, bisexual, married male shared his reason for the swinger lifestyle: “We tried it and enjoyed it”.

Theme #3 Social Connection to Others:

Understanding the connection between relationship choice and how it relates to identity of one’s self when choosing a non-monogamous lifestyle is vital (Chatara Middleton, 2012). Individuals will use the fear of loneliness and find themselves desperately searching for connection. These themes supersede any potential risk associated with non-monogamy. Four participants stated they entered into the lifestyle in order to increase their social connection to others.

Participant 4, a 30 something, single male, living with a partner shared his feeling on the choice to enter the swinging lifestyle: “Love is meant to be shared”.

Participant 15, a 30 something, heterosexual, married female shared her reason for swinging: “I want to explore my sexuality with others”.

Participant 40, a 30 something, single, heterosexual female shared she saw the lifestyle as a way to have connection to others. Her reason for engaging in the lifestyle was: “Needing affection”.

Participant 39, a 40 something, heterosexual male, in an “other” relationship stated: “I like to be around like minded people”.

Theme #4 Closer Connection to Significant Other:

Females specifically pursue connection and pleasure during sex, more so than reaching orgasm (Katehakis, 2017). Both genders are motivated by interest and dopamine; as it relates to

sex, the creative connections of emotions to the frontal cortex allow individuals to catapult themselves into sexual fantasies to increase connection to their partner (Katchakis, 2017).

A close connection exists between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, indicating good sex is a dominant tool for cultivating a relationship (Muise, 2017). Individuals with partners who share equally high sex drives report their partners are more responsive to their needs during sex. As a result, they feel more fulfilled and devoted to the relationship (Muise, 2017). Also, individuals with partners who report making more sexual changes to accommodate their sexual desires, such as trying specific sexual activities report greater relationship quality (Muise 2017).

Eight participants stated they engage in the lifestyle as a way to closer to their partner. Their responses are as follows.

Participant 8, a married male, over the age of 60, shared this about being closer to his spouse through swinging: “In our case, it has drawn us together because the level of trust is much higher. Limitations are set and respecting those limits is a function of trust and integrity and love in many ways”.

Participant 29, a forty something, married, heterosexual male stated his reason for being in the lifestyle as “I have a partner I can trust. Can’t imagine the lifestyle solo”.

Participant 36, a 40 something, bisexual, in an “other” relationship, shared her belief: “I believe love increases and we are the only ones who limit ourselves”.

Participant 37, a 30 something, married, heterosexual female shared this about her choice to enter the swinging lifestyle: “My husband and I both wanted to enhance our relationship.”

Participant 40, a 30 something, single, heterosexual female shared she entered into the lifestyle due to “Needing affection”.

Participant 48, a 40 something, married, heterosexual male stated he entered into the swinging lifestyle due to “It’s consent for fun together because we both have our fantasy”.

Participant 51, a 30 something, married heterosexual male stated for him, swinging “It increases depth of friendship”.

Participant 53, a 50 something, married bisexual female shared this about the swinging lifestyle for her and her husband: “Have a high sex drive and my spouse does too. Would rather do it openly than to wonder about an affair behind my back”.

Results Research Question Two

RQ2-What is considered a quality relationship by swingers?

The goal of this question was to ascertain the quality of swinger relationships. A clear definition of marital satisfaction was provided by Amato, Lundberg, Ward, Schaalje, & Zabriskie (2016) an individual’s emotional state of being content with the interactions, experiences and expectations of his or her married life. Having positive elements within a relationship does not necessarily equate to being content with a relationship. Likewise, having negative elements within a relationship does not equate to dissatisfaction within the union (Amato, et al, 2016).

Existing literature indicates relationship quality and expectations of the relationship are components of relationship outcomes. Oftentimes, these two elements are common ways in which a couple considers how their relationship is measured. Relationship satisfaction is correlated to relationship stability (Bouchard & Lachance-Grzela, 2016).

In the questionnaire provided to 56 participants, 20 questions were related to relationship satisfaction. A Likert scale was used with all questions, with a typical five level format of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Existing literature does not define how to determine quality in a relationship.

As a result, the survey sought to ascertain elements of a relationship that, when met, would conclude a high level of quality in the union. Table 1 shows the statements posed for relationship quality, as well as the answer choices.

My partner and I get along well together.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
36	7	2	0	0

Our relationship is stable.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
34	9	1	1	0

My partner treats me well.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
32	13	0	0	0

Our relationship is happy.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
32	12	3	0	0

My partner shows affection.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
31	12	1	1	0

Our life together is overall fun.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
31	11	3	0	0

My partner understands me.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
29	11	1	3	0

Our relationship is fulfilling.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
30	10	4	1	0

My partner is interested in my well being.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
32	13	0	0	0

I can rely on my partner.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
33	10	1	0	1

I am comfortable with my choice in my partner.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
33	11	0	1	0

I would choose my partner again.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
31	9	4	1	0

My partner and I are a team.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
32	8	3	2	0

My partner and I communicate effectively.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
29	11	3	1	1

I trust my partner.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
33	9	2	1	0

I consider ending my current relationship.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
1	0	7	9	28

I worry that my partner considers ending this relationship.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
1	0	5	11	28

My partner and I look forward to our future together.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
28	14	3	0	0

The quality of my relationship is high.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
28	12	4	1	0

The quality of my relationship increased with swinging activities.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
16	12	13	2	1

Table 1 Statements Posed for Relationship Quality

Researchers have outlined five components connected with quality of marital relationships. Personal traits such as depression and aggressiveness tend to negatively impact the quality of a marriage. The second factor is life stressors, such as economic difficulties and employment issues are also adversely related with the quality of a relationship. Thirdly, communication between a couple and how they handle conflicts can also predict marital satisfaction. The fourth component is the existence of children in the home (Amato, Lundberg, Ward, Schaalje, Zabriskie, 2016).

The fifth element is that of time spent together between the two married partners. Research has demonstrated the amount of time devoted to couple leisure and the contentment level of leisure events is a prevailing forecaster of marriage quality (Amato, et al, 2016). The exact correlation is not known; however, research indicates the simple tasks of daily life add higher quality to a relationship, when compared to the novel, less frequent activities, such as traveling, attending fancy shows, or dinner at extravagant restaurants (Amato, et al, 2016). Couples being

able to spend time together, with no expectation of an obligation or task to complete provided a higher level of marital satisfaction when reported by the couple.

Demanding lives have been identified as a contributor to unsatisfactory marital relationships. Simple activities couples once previously enjoyed, such as walking in the park or engaging in conversation have diminished. Financial struggles, challenges with child-rearing and managing family life also contribute to the downfall in maintaining quality relationships (Amato, et al 2016).

Increasingly, there is a need to strengthen individuals, in order to reinforce their relationships. A clear definition of marital satisfaction is “an individual’s emotional state of being content with the interactions, experiences, and expectations of his or her married life” (Amato, et al, 2016). Other definitions of marital satisfaction may be simplified in that the positive elements of the relationship outweigh the negative elements.

When asked to agree or disagree about the quality of their relationship, 28 participants responded with strongly agree and 12 responded with agree. Four responded with neither agree nor disagree and only one participant disagree. No one strongly disagreed. Eleven participants did not answer this question. This correlates to 88% reporting a quality relationship.

Theme #1 Trust:

Few, if anyone, would argue trust is a vital part of any relationship (Fatima, 2012). On the other hand, a lack of trust can contribute to the deterioration of a relationship. Recent literature suggests it would be beneficial for additional research to examine the relationship between partner meddling and couple relationship processes, such as trust and satisfaction (Norton, Baptist, & Hogan, 2017). When posed the question of I trust my partner, 33 out of 45 participants responded with strongly agree, while 9 agree. Two participants neither agreed nor

disagreed and one participant disagreed. This correlates to 93% of participants reporting trust in their relationship.

Individuals who decide to join in a legal union get married. The union is also based on economics, emotions, social lives, and living arrangements (Fatima and Ajmal, 2012).

Individuals may marry for other reasons to include spiritual or religious reasons, or simply because they want to become a family or expand their union to include children. Marriage is believed to offer a sense of safety in the world; it ensures having an intimate partner in which to share life and its goals.

Certain characteristics contribute to a successful marriage, some of which include love, understanding, respect, commitment, and trust (Fatima and Adjmal, 2012). Couples must determine for themselves what ingredients make up their married life, and what components are required to make it a happy one. When a relationship lacks certain components, the bond between the two individuals will deteriorate. Lack of trust, mutual respect, communication, love and understanding contribute to the decline of the connection (Fatima and Adjmal, 2012).

Infidelity is defined in a literal sense as whether or not someone has sex with someone other than his/her spouse, while married. However, it can also be as abstract as a breaking of trust (Sauerheber & Ponton 2017). This violation of trust is any action, emotional and/or physical unfaithfulness categorized by conduct that is not allowed by the other partner; and has added to extensive, ongoing emotional suffering in the non-offending partner (Sauerheber & Ponton, 2017).

Participant 8, a married male, over the age of 60, shared this about trust with the swinging lifestyle: "In our case, it has drawn us together because the level of trust is much

higher. Limitations are set and respecting those limits is a function of trust and integrity and love in many ways”.

Participant 53, a heterosexual married female, admitted that part of her justification for engaging in the swinging lifestyle was it is easier than wondering if her significant other was having an affair.

I trust my partner.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
33	9	2	1	0
Table 2 “I Trust My Partner”				

Table 2 shows the results from the closed ended statement “I trust my partner”. This statement was addressed by 45 survey respondents. Thirty three participants strongly agreed and 9 participants agreed with this statement. Two participants neither agreed nor disagreed and only one participant disagreed. No one strongly disagreed with this statement. This reflects 93.3% of respondents indicating they trust their significant others.

Theme #2 Stability in Relationship:

Another element to outline relationship quality is that of stability. When posed with the specific question of “our relationship is stable”, the participants responded as follows: 34 participants strongly agreed and 9 agreed. One participant neither agreed nor disagreed and one participant disagreed. No one strongly disagreed and eleven participants did not answer the question. This correlates to 95% of participants reporting a stable relationship.

Our relationship is stable.				
SA	A	NAND	D	SD
34	9	1	1	0
Table 2				

Research conducted by Twine, (2015) postulated watching pornography could cause a lack of stability in their relationship or marriage. This study concluded pornography users cause the viewer to turn inward, away from their spouse or significant other. Over time, this causes a lessening in intimacy and can threaten the solidity of the relationship connection (Twine, 2015). The distinction between watching porn and engaging in sex with others has not previously been shown to cause a decline in relationships.

The study conducted by Twine indicated the pornography was watched by only one member of the couple. This resulted in higher levels of dysfunction, fear of intimacy, anxiety, lower self-esteem levels, isolation and loneliness. Other unhealthy outcomes of engaging in watching pornography without a partner included sexual dysfunction, infidelity, and the desire for increasingly unusual sex acts (Twine, 2015).

The connection between sexuality and relationship outcomes has often been studied by psychologists and researchers (Willoughby, Farero, & Busby, 2014). These studies suggested as the frequency of the sexual activities increases, so does the relationship quality. Other components also increase in association with sexual activities, including commitment levels and overall stability (Willoughby, Farero, & Busby, 2014).

Results Research Question Three

RQ3-What is the difference between swinging and infidelity?

The goal of this question was to ascertain how swingers differentiate between cheating on their spouses and engaging in the swinger lifestyle. Infidelity has long been associated with deception and devastation of a relationship (Urooj, Anis-ul-Haque, & Anjum, 2015). Ultimately, infidelity has to be outlined by individuals and respective couples as to what boundaries exist.

What is the difference between swinging and infidelity? This research question was presented in both a closed ended question, as well as an open ended question.

Theme #1 Mutual Consent:

In the open ended section of the questionnaire, participants could contribute whatever information they chose to provide. The prevailing theme for the difference between swinging and infidelity is mutual consent. The responses to support mutual consent were provided by 24 participants.

Participant 1, a 40 something, heterosexual, divorced male believes the difference between infidelity and swinging is that swinging is: "Agreed upon."

Participant 3, a 40 something, bisexual female, living with her partner shared this about the difference between swinging and cheating: "Consent and open communication"

Participant 4, a 30 something, single male, living with a partner shared his opinion on the difference between swinging and infidelity: "It is an agreed upon arrangement"

Participant 9, a 30 something, heterosexual, single female shared her definition between swinging and infidelity: "Dishonesty. In swinging you discuss what you are both comfortable with and carry through. There is no agreement or knowledge in what the partner is doing with infidelity."

Participant 10, a 40 something, married, heterosexual female shared her distinction between swinging and infidelity: "It is agreed upon".

Participant 11, a 30 something bisexual female, in an "other" relationship stated she believes the difference between swinging and infidelity is that: "Infidelity implies dishonesty."

Participant 14, a 40 something bisexual, married female shared her distinction between swinging and cheating as: "Swinging is informed consent to be with other partners".

Participant 15, a 30 something, heterosexual, married female shared her definition of the difference between swinging and cheating: “Swinging is agreed upon and infidelity is kept secret from the other person”

Participant 17, a 40 something, bisexual, married female said this about the difference of swinging and cheating: “Swinging is WITH my partner”

Participant 19, a 50 something, heterosexual married man stated this about the difference between swinging and infidelity: “Mutual consent and participation”.

Participant 20, a 50 something, bisexual married female shared her difference for swinging and infidelity as: “Swinging is done with your partner and under agreed terms”.

Participant 21, a 40 something, heterosexual, married male, shared his opinion of the difference of swinging and infidelity as: “Swinging is being done together”.

Participant 23, a 30 something, bisexual married female shared her differences between swinging and infidelity: “Swinging, when both parties are in agreement, and both parties have fun, is just a way to enhance pleasure and enjoy some variety”.

Participant 27, a 40 something, heterosexual, married female stated the different between swinging and infidelity as: “Swinging is consensual between adults and infidelity is done without the others knowledge”.

Participant 28, a 30 something, heterosexual, divorced male differentiated between swinging and infidelity as: “Knowledge and acceptance”

Participant 30, a 40 something, heterosexual married male stated his distinction between swinging and infidelity is: “Swinging is an activity that is agreed upon and enhances our relationship. Infidelity is the exact opposite”.

Participant 31, a 40 something, bisexual, married male, distinguished between swinging and infidelity as: “Knowledge of the others activities”.

Participant 33, a bisexual female, cohabitating with her partner stated the difference between cheating and swinging is that: “Cheating means breaking the rules and if the rules allow swinging, it’s not cheating”

Participant 37, a 30 something, married, heterosexual female shared this clarification between swinging and infidelity: “Honesty and communication and submission of your desires to fit an agreeable medium”.

Participant 42, a 50 something, heterosexual married male shared his distinction between swinging and infidelity: “Mutual consent”.

Participant 44, a 40 something, bisexual female, currently living with her partner gave her reason for entering the swinger lifestyle: “Swinging is mutually agreed upon to enhance our relationship”.

Participant 47, a 40 something, heterosexual married female stated this about the difference between swinging and cheating: “If both parties agree, it’s not infidelity”.

Participant 50, a 50 something, heterosexual married male stated his definition of swinging and infidelity is: “Swinging is agreed upon, infidelity is where one partner does not know or does not approve”.

Participant 54, a 40 something, bisexual, married male shared his opinion between swinging and infidelity: “Swinging in a marriage is known by both parties and is not hidden”.

Cohen (2016) found similar results. She cited the definition of “monogamish” relationships included the component of extra-dyadic sex, occurring in the presence of partners, and is agreed upon by all parties. This mutual agreement allows the acceptable sexual activities to occur. Furthermore, she notes research on swinger relationships shows they are just as satisfying as monogamous relationships. Individuals in these relationships are not any different

in terms of mental health, attachment style, or personality, when compared to their monogamous counterparts (Cohen, 2016).

Infidelity on the other hand, involves a secret relationship and hidden information regarding sexual activities (DePompo, & Butsuharaa, 2016). Infidelity occurring in a committed relationship indicates a lack of attachment between the couple, and directly contradicts swinging. The positive comments related by the swingers indicated they enjoyed their partners being fully aware and present of the activities.

Theme #2 Communication:

Another theme that prevailed on the difference between swinging and infidelity is communication. Twelve participants made reference to swinging including open communication and the lack of dishonesty. Their responses are as follows:

Participant 8, a married male, over the age of 60, shared this about communication in the lifestyle: "Swinging would, to me, include open communication and respecting the attributes, backgrounds, characteristics and experiences that each brings to the relationship. Wanting your partner to meet their needs and be more "complete" as a person, whether it is swinging or other activity that perhaps only one party enjoys. Infidelity is in many ways just a selfish act that, in my view, is a disrespect for a person that you made a commitment of a certain kind behavior. Swinging has, oh, more "integrity", than infidelity. Assuming, of course, that I understand that swinging implies knowledge, as much as either wants, about what goes on".

Participant 9, a 30 something, heterosexual, single female shared her definition between swinging and infidelity: "Dishonesty. In swinging you discuss what you are both comfortable with and carry through. There is no agreement or knowledge in what the partner is doing with infidelity."

Participant 11, a 30 something bisexual female, in an “other” relationship stated this about communication as it relates to swinging: “Swinging foster open and honest communication with my partner”.

Participant 14, a 40 something, married, bisexual female stated her opinion on communication within the swinger lifestyle: “There is open and transparent communication”.

Participant 18, a 20 something, heterosexual, cohabitating male believes this about the communication in the lifestyle: “Lying is being unfaithful to your partner. This can happen to swingers or married couples.”

Participant 21, a 40 something, heterosexual, married male shared this about communication in the lifestyle: “Swinging is honest and open”.

Participant 34, a 40 something, heterosexual male, in an “other” relationship gave his input on communication within the swinger lifestyle: “Partner knowledge of your life style. They don't have to agree or give consent.... But I'm honest about what I'm doing.”

Participant 37, a 30 something, married, heterosexual female shared this clarification between swinging and infidelity: “Honesty and communication and submission of your desires to fit an agreeable medium.”

Participant 40, a 30 something, single, heterosexual female stated this about communication: “Swinging is talked about beforehand”.

Participant 45, a heterosexual male, in an “other” relationship had this to say about communication in the swinging lifestyle: “Infidelity involves secrets and lies. Swinging is open and honest. Traditional folks say “I’m going to lunch with friends”. Swingers say “I’m going to fuck my friends at lunch”

Participant 49, a 30 something, heterosexual married male believes communication about the swinging lifestyle is best described as: “The ability to talk about it after or see it”.

Participant 51, a 30 something, married heterosexual male shared this about communication: “Swinging seems to be more communication, Infidelity is secret”.

Chatara-Middleton (2012) also found communication is essential to having a successful agreement when engaging in a swinger lifestyle. Establishing necessary agreements is an important theme to navigate the potential issues that could emerge. Assumptions and insecurities can be avoided through having open dialogue, ongoing open communication, and secure agreements (Chatara-Middleton, 2012).

Theme #3 Sex Only

One participant, number 29, believes sexual activities involved with swinging is purely for sexual pleasure, with no type of emotional connection to others. He wrote: “Infidelity is betrayal of emotional commitment. Swinging is remaining deeply connected whilst enjoying the pleasures of the flesh”. Participant 29, is a forty something, married, heterosexual male.

Chatara-Middleton (2012) found similar results when she conducted research with participants in the swinging lifestyle. One participant discussed how they work through and process factors within their relationship, such as how to raise a family, manage finances, and deal with legal issues. Swinging is just about sex with another person, as the connection remains with the partner in which there is a relationship (Chatara-Middleton, 2012).

Summary

The aim of this study was to determine the impact the swinging lifestyle has on a committed relationship. As such, the research questions were strategically designed to explore why individuals engage in the lifestyle, how they define a quality relationship and how they explain the difference between infidelity and swinging. The answers to these questions revealed

swingers and their lifestyles are grossly misunderstood by society as a whole; as some of the norms are ill defined and looked down upon; yet are widely accepted and embraced by the swinger community as a defining part of their overall lives.

The themes emerged from these answers suggest that swingers, while previously thought to be considered sexually deviant, do not consider themselves to be aberrant. Consequently, the participants were able to articulate why they entered into the swinging lifestyle and whether or not they intend to remain in the practice. The majority of participants are easily able to distinguish between infidelity and swinging practices and describe their current relationships as having high quality.

Other themes included swingers engage in the swinger lifestyle for reasons of excitement and enjoyment and find a sense of connection to others as a result. Many times, they also find a closer connection to their partner as a result of their swinging activities, which can reduce the boredom in long-term relationships. Swingers self-report they have a high quality relationship, as well as high sexual satisfaction within their relationship.

The overall study showed the swinging lifestyle brings higher marital and sexual satisfaction to couples. Couples engaged in the swinger lifestyle are not sexually deviant, social outcasts, or doing it for some type of financial benefit. Findings generated from the literature review determined to answer the research questions and draw a conclusion of the study. In the next chapter, a full discussion of this research will be conducted including but not limited to, the summary of findings, implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Humans are designed for companionship and interaction with others. The makeup and design of each relationship may differ, with each union having its own set of norms, rules, and allowables. While some commitments are formalized in a legally binding contract referred to as marriage, others adopt a less formal and more flexible arrangement such as cohabitation. Relationships establish their own rules as it relates to sexual activities, both in and out of the relationship with one another.

Despite there being relatively little research regarding the swinger lifestyle, it remains consistent. Individuals who engage in the lifestyle are stable and otherwise ordinary citizen (Bentzen & Træen, 2014). Due to their overall stability, they are more likely to handle a non-normative sexual arrangement. Oftentimes, a particular personality structure is common among swingers; such as having a higher level of seeking sensations, and/or wanting a wider range of sexual activities.

This study was predicated on three hypotheses. Firstly, the women voluntarily chose to enter into the swinger lifestyle of their own accord and were not coerced into it by their male counterparts. Secondly, those swingers engage in the lifestyle to further enhance their relationship, which is already considered to be of high quality, or may be high quality due to the swinging lifestyle. The third hypothesis suggests that swingers have distinctions between infidelity and the swinger lifestyle and can easily identify the differences, despite the act of having sex with partners outside the relationship remains the same. To examine the impact that swinging has a relationship, three research questions were posed as a part of this study. These were:

1. Why do men and women choose swinger life activities?
2. What is considered a quality relationship by swingers?
3. What is the difference between swinging and infidelity?

To ascertain the experience of the participants, a qualitative study with questionnaires was chosen for this study. Data was collected over a two week period, with 60 questions. These questions were divided into four sections; demographics, introduction to swinger lifestyle, marital satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction. The questionnaire was conducted through a website; survey monkey, with participants choosing to complete the study. Most questions were closed ended, with only 4 open ended questions. No identifying data was obtained or maintained; only the raw data from the website was kept.

The themes emerged from these answers suggest that some participants engage in the swinger lifestyle to avoid a boring sex life. Individuals suggested monogamy is synonymous with monotonous. Participants gave no thought or caring as to whether or not they were labeled as sexual deviant. Another recurring trend was swinging is exciting and enjoyable. Swingers enjoy a variety of sexual partners and experiences, and it's a way to have multiple needs met. Swinging is often seen by mainstream culture as a deviant activity is thus stigmatized (Serina, et al 2012).

Findings

The results of this study have confirmed a number of previous findings as well as extended the boundary of knowledge in the area of shifting needs in the swinger community. The results have also confirmed the three hypotheses on which the study was predicated. Although there were limitations to the study, the findings are likely to be generally applicable and useful to the field of relationship psychology.

The first hypothesis in this study was that women voluntarily choose to enter into the swinger lifestyle of their own accord and are not coerced into it by their male counterparts. Some literature and previous research has suggested that women are often pressured into the swinger lifestyle by their partners. Gender inequality can present itself in any type of relationship, causing women to experience social isolation, coerced sex, and limited ability to negotiate safer sex (Boyce, et al, 2016). Other women believe if they do not participate in what their husbands requested in the bedroom, their husbands would engage in infidelity, therefore, they oftentimes feel obligated to comply with their requests.

Early research indicated that men initiated swinging (Griffiths & Frobish, 2013; Serina et al 2012). However, with men being the primary initiator, it eliminated all possibility of there being gender equality in relationships, particular as it relates to sexual activity. Whereas males would coerce their female counterparts into swinging, females would become more and more frustrated and disgruntled, ultimately withdrawing from the activity altogether. As additional research was conducted, it was determined women are more equal in initiating the idea of swinging into the relationship. Griffiths (2013) reported one small study where the female was the primary initiator of the activity.

Another variation discovered is the men will start the initial search for another couple for an exchange of partners and the female is absent during this time. After the male makes the preliminary round of screening and finds a couple that meets his approval, he makes introductions to his partner. His partner then makes the final decision as to whether or not to proceed forward with any sexual arrangement (Kimberly, 2016). In some instances, a single male, unattached to a female partner attends swinger events. He is referred to a jimmie. Single men are often known to be more aggressive when pursuing women. Many times, it is reported

They cause others to be uncomfortable and often have to be reminded that no means no (Kimberly, 2016).

A rarer occurrence is when an unattached female attends an event or seeks to engage in a swinger activity. An individual, unattached female is referred to as a unicorn, denoting the rarity of such an occurrence (Kimberly, 2015). Observed unicorns are often the center of attention, partially due to their rarity, and partially due to lack of having a male to compete with (Kimberly, 2015).

Studies and research suggests that women enjoy swinging at the same or even a higher rate than men (Serina, et al, 2012). Men were previously considered to be the initiator of the swinging lifestyle; however, research continues to indicate otherwise. Forty eight participants answered the question of who initiated the swinger lifestyle, 19 of respondents stated their partner initiated the choice to engage in the swinger lifestyle, and 18 took responsibility for initiating the lifestyle. More specifically, 9 females admitted to initiating the lifestyle choice, and 12 men stated their partners initiated choice, totaling 21 females who initiated swinging with their partners.

The results of this study have confirmed the first hypothesis that women voluntarily choose to enter into the swinger lifestyle of their own accord and are not coerced into it by their male counterparts. Oftentimes, women are equal in choosing the lifestyle, and enjoy their sexual activity, just as much, if not more than men do.

Out of 40 respondents who provided answers to the open-ended question of “Why I chose the swinger lifestyle”, 23 were females. One female suggested she was coerced into an exchange of sexual partners, only after she agreed to a girl on girl sexual experience. The other 22 females

gave no indication they felt coerced or pressured in any way to participate in the swinger lifestyle.

Regarding the closed ended questions, one of the statements posed was “I engage in swinging activities to/for”. There were six possible choices and the respondents could choose all that apply. One option was “my partner wants me to”. Four respondents chose that option, indicating they are in the swinger lifestyle, due to their partner’s request. Only two of the four respondents were female. Participant 37 is a 30 something, married heterosexual female. Participant 47 is a heterosexual married female.

Feminist researchers have suggested the study of women’s sexuality necessitates the presence of both biological and sociocultural origins of sexual expansion (Blum, 2015). The same exploration indicates that a female’s experience of her own sexuality is made up of a complex relationship between herself and her environment. Her environment is an exchange of biological and socio-cultural factors. It is believed that women must adopt a sexual version of themselves that isn’t their own choosing, but rather some version of their preference, in order to maintain an appropriate cultural structure (Blum, 2015).

Researchers have attempted to determine what mental reasoning affects sexual identity (Blum, 2015). Specifically, various cognitive theories are emerging to determine how a woman decides who she is sexually and she exhibits herself sexually. Cultural messages may become the internal voice in which a woman views her sexuality (Blum, 2015).

Ironically, the sexual scheme is not reciprocal for men, as it is for women (Blum, 2015). Religious studies indicate a distinct sexual script for women, complete with moralized messages of instruction and judgment, and rules. Women’s sexuality comes under scrutiny and is regulated

between law, medicine and religion and men do not have similar expectations placed on their sexual desires (Blum, 2015).

Engaging in sex more frequently tends to be associated with feeling happier in a romantic relationship (Muisse, 2017). The reasons why people participate in sex with their partner have profound implications for the quality of their sexual experience and overall feelings of relationship satisfaction. For example, if individuals engage in sex for self-determined reasons, such as “I enjoy being sexual”, or “for personal pleasure”, compared to feeling bad for their partner, if they withhold sex, or for feeling pressured by their partner to have sex, the research shows the quality of their relationship is higher and their satisfaction is greater (Muisse, 2017). Furthermore, sexual interactions characterized by higher levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are also associated with more positive sexual experiences (Muisse, 2017).

Research conducted by Muise (2017), does not specifically address sex as it relates to the swinging lifestyle. However, this study indicates the positive effects of approach motivation and sexual collective strength should only be seen in the framework of sexual encounters that do not involve coercion or obvious partner pressure. Therefore, it is that much more important to understand the swinging lifestyle cannot be forced or pushed upon unwilling participants by their partners. When the motivation to meet a partner’s sexual needs, involves self-neglect, no one benefits and the sex life and relationship deteriorate (Muisse, 2017).

The second hypothesis of this research study is swingers who engage in the lifestyle do so to further enhance their relationship, which is already a high quality relationship and/or may be a high quality relationship due to the swinging lifestyle. As stated, engaging in the swinging lifestyle requires extreme amounts of mutual consent, trust, and communication. These components work together to ensure a high quality relationship. This finding is rather

interesting, as swinging as a negative connotation and is considered sexually deviant. Yet, in reality, swingers report their relationships are stronger, have a higher quality, and the swinging lifestyle adds to their quality level.

According to a research study conducted by Cohen (2016), open relationships are more about the freedom to get to know others, and less about a sexual arrangement. Directly in line with this research, this confronts the stereotype that people engage in the swinger lifestyle due to having a problem within their relationship or to avoid a problem within their primary relationship (Cohen, 2016).

Self-determination theory suggests motivational levels can vary within an individual to govern their relationship satisfaction (Amato et al, 2016). Two types of motivation exist; extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsically inspired actions include activities for the purpose of internal enjoyment and personal satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsically inspired actions have the goal of explicit outcomes, such as obtaining rewards and avoiding punishments. Self-determination concept postulates intrinsic motivation is supported and maintained through the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Amato, et al, 2016).

Each of the three psychological needs is vital to maintaining individuality as the intrinsic motivation develops (Amato, et al, 2016). Autonomy encompasses exercising the right to choose; to be in control of his/her own behavior. Competence has to do with the ability to perform a task effectively. Oftentimes, individuals will choose a task that matches their abilities, or they may enhance their skills for a more challenging task. Relatedness can be described as the need to feel close and connected to a significant other. As these psychological needs are met, intrinsic motivation increases, which correlates to personal growth, integrity, well-being, and ultimately marital satisfaction (Amato, et al, 2016).

An important part of committed relationship satisfaction is that of sexual satisfaction. Couples personalize and adopt dyadic sexual scripts (Fallis, Rehman, & Purdon, 2014). Communication is viewed as a key component by which couples establish their dyadic sexual script. Communication allows the couple to engage in self-disclosure, which contributes to increased sexual satisfaction. Sexual self-disclosure provides information to increase each person's understanding of his or her partner's needs, desires, likes, and dislikes. As the communication increases, this correlates to a higher level of sexual satisfaction. As the self-disclosure continues; so does the partners' closeness, intimacy, and overall satisfaction with the relationship (Fallis, Rehman, & Purdon, 2014).

Sex is not the only factor that contributes to satisfaction in a relationship. Religion and religious practices may also be a contributing factor to a happy marriage (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012). Husbands tend to have more satisfaction based on rituals and wives report more satisfaction based on routines and structure. Children can also play a role in marital satisfaction; a couple who is unable to have biological children may remain dissatisfied with their marital life (Fatima & Ajmal, 2012).

Commonly, the world of sex and sexuality involves an immense assortment of reactions, morals, and implications (Lanciano, et al, 2016). Negative emotions, moral judgments and painful memories may emerge for some individuals. Positive feelings, fantasies, illicit desires, and satisfying recollections may also surface. Sexual scripts are often instilled early in our lives; based on any number of factors. Being open with one's partner and expressing one's needs is vital to enjoying sexual satisfaction and overall marital or relationship satisfaction.

The third hypothesis suggests that swingers have distinctions between infidelity and the swinger lifestyle and can easily identify the differences, despite the act of having sex with

partners outside the relationship remains the same. As permissive attitudes exist regarding sexual activities with other partners, interactions are not considered cheating by swingers (Cohen, 2016). The focus remains on rules, and they are required to be adhered to. The primary relationship is the emphasis for couples and the sexual activities with others, while enjoyable, does not take precedence (Cohen, 2016).

Cheating can alter and forever destroy a relationship. Research on cheating is inconclusive; some research indicates that once infidelity has occurred, it will continue to be a part of a relationship. Other research shows relationships can be stronger after a breach of trust (Cohen, 2016).

Individuals involved in a monogamous relationship agree sexual activities with another person constitute cheating; however, the lack of sexual activities can also constitute cheating (Cohen, 2016). Research is sparse as it relates to individuals in a consensual non-monogamous relationship (Zimmerman, 2012). Couples in a consensual non-monogamous relationship must lay their own foundation and set the rules for their expectations and definitions.

In a swinging relationship, having sex with another person is not considered to be cheating or infidelity (Cohen, 2016). The same behavior in a monogamous relationship would be considered cheating, and could ultimately end the relationship. Research by Cohen also indicated the main behavior discouraged by individuals in an open relationship was seeing an individual only once. It was preferred for partners to interact with someone else on a consistent basis, rather than move from person to person. This allows consistency, and a relationship formation to build (Cohen, 2016).

Open relationships differ from monogamous relationships as it relates to cheating or infidelity. In an open relationship, partners engage in communication regarding sexual

boundaries, which results in no deception regarding sex (Zimmerman, 2012). These types of relationships highlight the authenticity of the relationship.

Implications for Professional Practice

Alternative relationship arrangements have received less attention in social science research and has been challenging for society to understand (Cohen, 2016). Monogamy is often engrained into individuals and anything less than may be seen as sexual deviance. It would be useful for clinicians to understand the subset of relationships and individuals and couples become more open with their preferences and less concerned about stigma and hiding.

Clinicians have a duty to embrace and understand consensual non-monogamy in order to appropriately address concerns these individuals may present with (Cohen, 2016). It is helpful for clinicians to consider any possible personal biases of the unconventional lifestyle. Accepting the idea of monogamy being the only acceptable relationship standard perpetuates a myth and may be detrimental to clinicians, as well as the individuals they treat within a private practice (Cohen, 2016). Clinicians who adopt the mindset of monogamy being the only way to maintain a healthy relationship may place an unfair amount of pressure on individuals and couples.

For those who chose to work with individuals and/or couples, it is important for clinicians to use nondiscriminatory phrases such as relationship counseling, as opposed to couples counseling or marriage counseling (vantol, 2017). Most individuals searching for counseling often use the terms couples or marriage counseling, so it is safe to use those terms in order to be accessible. Clinicians need to educate others to use the broader terms to encompass all types of lifestyles (vantol, 2017).

Clinicians, counselors, and therapists can work together to raise awareness regarding consensual non-monogamous relationships (vantol, 2017). As awareness is improved, clinicians

can ensure they do not show bias against an individual's choice. It is helpful if clinicians do not assume the relationship choice is automatically the source of his/her problems. Individuals are intuitive and may hide his/her behavior from the clinician, especially if they suspect judgment or being challenged by the therapist.

With any type of non-normative sexual deviation or relationship abnormality, society can be judgmental and hypercritical (vantol, 2017). Treatment protocols can ensure this is conveyed to the individual or couple as society's problem and not that of the individual seeking treatment. It is important for a clinician's countertransference, if present, to be kept in check. A desire to save the individual from such an arrangement must be avoided, as well as wishing to punish an individual for stepping outside a social norm (vantol, 2017).

Guidelines exist for therapists working with individuals who are in a swinging or open relationship, or who perhaps are considering such a relationship (Zimmerman, 2012). Therapists can recognize monogamy as a socially based heterosexual "normal" concept, in which all other types of relationships are measured against. However, as therapists increase their experience, education, and training in working with individuals in more diverse relationships, they can also recognize that monogamy is not the only legitimate type of intimate relationship (Zimmerman, 2012).

Monogamy is often considered the only acceptable way to be in a committed relationship (Zimmerman, 2012). Individuals who experience attraction for anyone other than a primary partner are often criticized, judged, and made to feel guilt, shame, and deceit. Society is often invested in the idea of monogamy so as the only way to accommodate our non-monogamous

biology is to cheat, and become even more deceitful. This makes it easy to understand why individuals choose to have a secret sex life and have affairs, rather than openly discuss and resolve conflicts regarding open sexual activities (Zimmerman, 2012). Such social limitations can negatively affect individuals who want to be open and honest about their sexual preferences and ideas.

It is helpful for therapists to find themselves relaxed and comfortable when discussing alternatives to monogamy with individuals. In order to do so, it is helpful if a therapist is comfortable with his/her own sexuality. Therapists can enable open forums for individuals to discuss alternative arrangements to monogamy. Therapists can be objective, knowledgeable, and nonjudgmental, so as to not reinforce social biases (Zimmerman, 2012). When therapists make assumptions about an individual's sexual practices, it can be assumed the therapist is passing judgment, perhaps thinking the individual is promiscuous. Being open sexually does not equal being promiscuous (Zimmerman, 2012).

Another essential area to study would be to increase the understanding of swingers who seek therapy, yet remain in the lifestyle. Therapists may be faced with the dilemma of giving guidance on open relationships, yet have little to no information on how this behavior can and does work for a committed primary relationship. Interactions with consensual non-monogamy may be so rare; it would be beneficial to provide case studies showing insight into the therapist-client relationship (Kimberly, 2015). Allowing therapists to understand and accept non-traditional sexual behaviors, such as bi-sexuality or BDSM, could allow therapists to see how these groups influence and change the understandings of sexual behaviors in general (Kimberly, 2015).

Therapists can provide supportive listening, encouragement, and appropriate feedback, regardless of what sexual lifestyle an individual chooses (Zimmerman, 2012). Therapists have an obligation to respect their clients' preferences and be willing to assist them in whatever relationship works best for them. Therapists have a responsibility to encourage each partner to be genuine and realistic regarding their goals, abilities, wants, and desires (Zimmerman, 2012).

A therapist may not necessarily discuss non-monogamy with all individuals in treatment, it is appropriate to discuss the option at times (Zimmerman, 2012). It is useful to consider it with couples seeking pre-marital counseling, who have never considered an open marriage as an option. This is not to encourage anyone to choose the lifestyle, but rather to discuss it as a prevention to infidelity; the reality of infidelity as a widespread phenomenon. This allows couples to consider how they would respond to extramarital sex in a monogamous relationship versus open relationship (Zimmerman, 2012).

Another group for whom an open relationship may be a possible alternative to monogamy is mixed orientation couples, such as different sex couples in which one or both partners identify as bisexual (Zimmerman, 2012). Maintaining a monogamous relationship when one or both partners is bisexual makes monogamy more challenging and one or both partners may feel as though his/her needs are not being fully met. Another group to consider the conversation about an open relationship is one in which an extradyadic sexual activity has already occurred and it has been revealed to the other party. These couples may wish to reaffirm their commitment to monogamy or possibly reconsider the nature of their relationship (Zimmerman, 2012).

Therapists may also consider discussing open relationships when working with individuals and not just as it relates to couple's work (Zimmerman, 2012). An individual who

does not seek to engage in a monogamous relationship or partnership may wish to seek the counsel of a therapist. An individual may be in multiple relationships; however, he/she may not have a primary partner who also wishes or is invited to participate in counseling.

It is imperative to negotiate the boundaries of open relationships in advance and therapy can assist with this process (Zimmerman, 2012). Individuals in long-term open relationships, including swinging, can achieve mutual agreement about the boundaries of the relationship through negotiations. Couples beginning a non-monogamous relationship often enter a process of negotiation; however, it is not a one-time process. It takes place over time; ever changing and morphing into an agreed upon contract both parties can adhere to (Zimmerman, 2012, Cohen, 2016).

Specific questions to be discussed both inside and outside of therapy can include:

Full swap to include penetration or soft swap only?

Same room sex or separate room?

Do we play separately?

Do we notify the other partner before or after?

Is kissing allowed?

Are condoms required?

Are any activities forbidden?

Is there an age requirement, or age limit?

Successful navigation of an open relationship is through honest, open communication, and setting boundaries. This communication begins with the individuals and if needed, can progress to a trained therapist. Therapists can assist with negotiations in order to ensure

successful processing of how to navigate an open relationship (Zimmerman, 2012, Kimberly, 2015).

Recommendations for Research

The ultimate challenge for future researchers is to understand how this hidden subculture is being formed, as well as how is it impacting the views of society. Because of the privacy surrounding this group, it is imperative to establish trust and rapport with individuals in this lifestyle prior to engaging in research to understand the basic relational scripts. If the researcher is not active in the lifestyle, it is recommended to have a trusted mediator to navigate between individuals in the lifestyle and the researcher.

No research has found that consensual non-monogamy relationships cause poor psychological well-being. Additional research is needed to show specifically how a swinging relationship enhances a couple, not just that it does enhance the relationship (Rubel-Bogaert, 2015). A need exists for additional research with the swinging population in order to conclude the sustainability of this lifestyle, as well as the capacity to strengthen or weaken a relationship. It would be helpful to conduct an all-inclusive, longitudinal research to produce evidence on the long-term effects of swinging on a relationship.

Presently, it is very challenging to establish a sustainable estimation of how common swinging is in the general population. Many individuals prefer privacy and do not discuss their sexual activities openly with others. Those who do share information, do so only under anonymous circumstances. More in-depth research is needed, including case studies and face to face interviews with focus groups to consider the motivation that individuals use to begin and continue the swinging lifestyle. Also, research with previous swingers, those who previously participated but no longer partake would be of interest. An understanding of their reason for engaging in swinging and then refraining would be of interest to assess.

Additional diversity of open relationships is needed, as well as cross cultural participants.

Some specific groups are studied more frequently than others, such as gay men (Rubel-Bogaert, 2015). Other subgroups, such as lesbian open relationships are largely disregarded. More research is needed on particular types of consensual non-monogamy, such as polyamory, which includes emotional connection, and may or may not include sexual activities.

Future research would also be beneficial by considering certain characteristics of consensual non-monogamous relationships. It would be helpful to review types of agreements, such as the various policies or rules couples adhere to. Longitudinal research allows researchers to determine how individuals adjust to consensual non-monogamy in the long-term.

Obtaining participants from a larger sample would increase the legitimacy of self-report. Finding access to a large population of swingers could enable random sampling to be used. It might also be useful to conduct research on other types of sexual activities that are considered sexually deviant, and not focus only on swinging or open relationships.

Conclusions

The goal of the study was to gain a better understanding of the psychological impact the swinging lifestyle has on a committed relationship. The results demonstrate individuals who engage in the lifestyle report overall relationship quality, as well as higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Individuals choose the lifestyle for a variety of reasons, all of which are because they want to enhance their lives, relationships, and sexual experiences. Those who enter into the swinging lifestyle clearly distinguish between infidelity and swinging, despite both actions including sexual activities.

Individuals who choose the swinger lifestyle do so voluntarily and to enhance their current relationship in a way they would not otherwise be able to do. No participant reported

they felt forced or coerced into beginning or remaining in the lifestyle, with only one female reporting she felt somewhat pressured by her husband to have sex with another couple, but only after engaging in sex with another female.

Swingers are easily able to distinguish the difference between cheating and engaging in the swinging lifestyle. Both activities involve sexual activities, and there may be times when an individual has sex with someone else without their partner present; a true, yet partial definition of infidelity and cheating. However, with swinging, the partner who is absent, is fully aware and approves of the sexual activity in his/her absence. The swinging lifestyle includes having sex openly with others, without fear of repercussions or misappropriation of trust or loyalties from a primary relationship.

Individuals who engage in the swinging lifestyle decide for themselves what type of activities they will engage in with and without their partner present. While some couples decide to only have their partners present for all sexual activities, some couples prefer to engage in sexual activities without their partners present. The rules can vary from anything to no kissing, condoms are a must, foreplay only but no penetration, to any number of restrictions or variations, based on an individual's comfort level. Based on the research by Vaillancourt (2014), swingers often start out with one set of expectations and guidelines and change their preferences over time; both as their relationship progresses, as well as their comfort level for the lifestyle morphs.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on swinging which also suggested swingers have high relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. A strong societal disapproval of swinging remains, as well as a belief of swingers being unhappy in their relationships. However, there is no evidence to support those claims.

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Appendix 1: Email to send to Webmasters

Dear Webmaster:

My name is Tracy Riley, and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, in Jacksonville Florida. I am also enrolled in a doctoral degree program at California Southern University in Irvine, California, USA. As a part of my program, I am conducting my doctoral project on the Swinging Lifestyle. I am asking you to post a link on your website which will lead to an online questionnaire. This will allow individuals to participate in the data collection of the research project. Results from this study will be published in my doctoral project, in a future journal article, or may be used in a professional presentation. It is imperative to note that while results will be reported in the aggregate; no personally identifiable information about participants will be obtained or reported.

Research on the swinger lifestyle has been limited and the most recent study was published in 2009. The objectives of this research are to evaluate the level of marital and sexual satisfaction of swingers, to determine their attitudes towards their swinging activities, and to identify the current demographic characteristics of swingers.

The goal of this study is to ascertain the attitudes of both male and female swingers towards their sexual swinging activities. Furthermore, this research intends to evaluate if there are gender differences in attitudes and behaviors. Criteria for participation in the questionnaire are that participants must be: (a) over the age of 21, and (b) currently in a committed relationship and (c) involved in the swinger lifestyle in some capacity.

Your site would be requested to publish only the link to the questionnaire with a basic explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire, which I have provided. Preferably, the link will be viewable only to the paying members of your site. I prefer that only paying members have access to the questionnaire, as paying members are most likely more informed and will be more vested in the lifestyle. Alternatively, you could send a bulk message to all members on the site inviting them to participate in the questionnaire.

Names of participants or their membership status are not needed. Their identity will be confidential, although they will be required to sign an informed consent document. The questionnaire collecting software will not record the IPs of your site, or of participants' originating computers. I understand and appreciate that the identities of your membership must be protected.

Participation in this study will not compromise or reveal the identity of the participants. I would never ask you to put anyone at risk of identification. Any member of the site willing to participate can do so by clicking on the following link to the questionnaire.

I would welcome the participation of your site on this project. This type of research is needed to validate the role of swinging in today's society. Please, allow only registered, paying members of the site to access the link. I have included an introduction/explanation letter as well as the link to the questionnaire. Here is the link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TracyRiley>

Thank you so much for your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact me at tracymw@gmail.com or call me directly at (904) 704-2527. If you have questions about the study or about the rights as a research subject, you may also contact the chairperson of the California Southern University Institutional Review Board, c/o Dr. Linda Fischer at California Southern University at linda.fischer@my.calsouthern.edu.

I have attached a word document to be distributed and/or posted on your website, as well as copied and pasted the text directly below.

Warm Regards,

Tracy Riley

Appendix 2: Prospective Participants

Dear Prospective Research Volunteer,

An online, academic, research study about various aspects of swinging is currently under way. The objectives of this research are to evaluate the level of marital and sexual satisfaction of swingers, to determine their attitudes towards their swinging activities, and to identify the current demographic characteristics of swingers. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree program at California Southern University in Irvine, California, USA.

You are invited to participate in an online questionnaire that will require about 20 minutes of your time. Results from the questionnaire will be published in my doctoral project, in future journal articles, and may be used in future professional presentations. There will be no personally identifying information about individual participants will be reported.

I am interested in evaluating the attitudes of both male and female swingers towards their sexual swinging activities and to explore possible gender differences in attitudes and/or behaviors. Criteria for participation are that participants must be: (a) over the age of 21, (b) currently married, and (c) engaged in the swinger lifestyle in some capacity. If you meet these criteria, please take a few minutes to respond to this questionnaire.

Your participation is voluntary. You may exit the questionnaire at any time, and you may decline to answer any question. You will be required to agree to an informed consent. However, this in no way breaches your confidentiality and you maintain your anonymity at all times.

Please consider participating in the questionnaire. This allows the stigma of this lifestyle to lessen. While there may not be a benefit directly for you by completing this questionnaire, your responses will be valuable contributions to this research project. Results of the study may

be published on the website where you accessed the questionnaire. Contact your web master regarding this matter.

The link to directly access the questionnaire is:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TracyRiley>

Thank you,

Tracy Riley

Appendix 3: Informed Consent

I have been informed that this research project is being conducted by Tracy Riley, from California Southern University.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time. I also have the right to decline to answer any question(s) that I do not want to answer. I understand that I have been invited to participate in this study to provide information regarding the swinging lifestyle.

I agree to complete a 60 item questionnaire, in which I will be asked specific questions as it relates to my swinging lifestyle. I understand that the questions will focus on sexual activities. I understand that I will be taking this questionnaire in an anonymous format, and no identifying information will be obtained. The options allowing for tracing of IPs and e-mail addresses will be deactivated on the questionnaire website.

I understand that no information gathered from my participation in the study will be released to others without my written permission or as required by law. I understand that if the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. The data will be stored in a secure and locked location for five years after which the data will be destroyed.

I understand that the researcher will answer questions I have at any time about the project or about my participation. I may contact her at (904) 704-2527.

If I have questions about the study or about my rights as a research subject, I may contact the chairperson of the California Southern University Institutional Review Board, c/o Dr. Linda Fischer at California Southern University at linda.fischer@my.calsouthern.edu.

I understand to my satisfaction the information in the consent form regarding my participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described.

Subject's Signature

Date

Witness
Appendix 4

Date

Swinger Questionnaire*Section I: Demographics*

1. Age
2. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Race/Ethnicity
 - a. White
 - b. Black
 - c. Latino
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other _____
4. Occupation
 - a. Blue collar work (factory/industry work)
 - b. White collar work (office/clerical, management)
 - c. Professional (doctors, lawyers, professors, etc.)
 - d. Education (teaching, administration, and other support staff)
 - e. Business (managerial)
 - f. Public safety/protection (police/firefighter)
 - g. Military
 - h. Retail (sales)
 - i. Technical (technology)
 - j. Information systems (computing)
 - k. Health Care (nurses or other tech/support staff)
 - l. Other _____
5. Highest Level of Education
 - a. Some Schooling
 - b. High School Graduate (or equivalent)
 - c. Associate Degree
 - d. Bachelor's Degree
 - e. Master's Degree
 - f. Doctoral Degree
 - g. Other _____
6. What would you consider as your Sexual Orientation?
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual

7. What is your current relationship status?
 - a. Married
 - b. Single
 - c. Cohabiting
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Divorced
 - f. Other _____

8. Do you have children living in your home?
 - a. How many?
 - b. Ages?

9. Length of time in current relationship, if applicable?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1 -4 years
 - c. 5 - 9 years
 - d. 10 – 15 years
 - e. Over 15 years

10. If married, this is my...
 - a. 1st marriage
 - b. 2nd marriage
 - c. 3rd marriage
 - d. Not married
 - e. Other _____

11. Yearly Household Income (U.S. dollars estimate)
 - a. Under 30,000
 - b. 30,000 – 60,000
 - c. 60,000 – 90,000
 - d. 90,000 – 120,000
 - e. Over 120,000

12. I live in the state of:

13. I would consider my spiritual/religion beliefs to be:
 - a. Very religious
 - b. Moderately religious
 - c. Somewhat religious
 - d. Not religious at all

14. I would consider my political affiliation to be:
 - a. Social conservative
 - b. Social liberal
 - c. Democrat
 - d. Republican
 - e. Libertarian
 - f. Socialist
 - g. Moderate
 - h. Communist
 - i. I am not interested in politics

Section II: Introduction and Participation in the Swinger Lifestyle

15. How did you first hear about the swinging lifestyle?
- Partner
 - Friends
 - Media
 - Family Member
 - Previous Partner
 - Other: _____
16. Who introduced the idea of swinging into your current relationship?
- I did
 - My partner did
 - A friend
 - Other
 - I do not swing
17. How long have you and your partner been engaging in swinging activities?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1 -4 years
 - 5 - 9 years
 - 10 – 15 years
 - Over 15 years
18. How often do you and your partner frequent swing clubs or private homes specifically for the purpose of sexual activity?
- Once a year
 - 2 – 3 times a year
 - 4 - 5 times a year
 - 6 – 8 times a year
 - Monthly
 - Weekly
 - We do NOT frequent swingers' clubs or private homes for sex.
19. How do you (and/or your partner) find other swingers to interact with sexually?
(Choose all that apply)
- Internet swinger sites
 - Swinger social clubs
 - Swinger newspapers or magazines
 - Private parties
 - Other swingers
 - Other _____
20. I engage in swinging sexual activities to/for:
- Pure sexual pleasure and variety
 - To meet other people socially
 - Personal fantasy
 - Looking for emotional connection
 - My partner wants me to
 - Other _____

21. Which of the following best describes your swinging sexual experience?
- I enjoy swinging
 - I do NOT enjoy swinging
 - Swinging is just OK—I do it for my partner.
 - Swinging is fun but only occasionally
 - Other _____
22. During my swinging sexual interactions
- I often reach orgasm
 - I seldom reach orgasm
 - I never reach orgasm
23. When we swing we usually... (Choose all that apply)
- We both exchange partners with another couple
 - One of us exchanges partners with another couple
 - Mostly group sex activities
 - Never exchange partners
 - We “soft swing” only
 - Engage in woman on woman sex only
 - MFM activity
 - FFM activity
24. My partner and I engage in swinging activities:
- Have not engaged as of yet, willing to at some point
 - Once
 - A few times
 - More than I can count
25. The frequency of our swinging activities is:
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Yearly
26. I feel closer and more connected to my partner because of our swinging activities:
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
27. I plan to continue swinging activities:
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
28. My partner wants to continue swinging activities:
- Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

29. The difference between swinging and infidelity is (Check all that apply)
- a. There isn't a difference—swinging is cheating
 - b. Swinging is agreed upon, therefore it is not cheating
 - c. Swinging enhances the relationship, therefore is not cheating
 - d. It is agreed upon infidelity
 - e. Unsure
 - f. Don't care—I enjoy it

Section III: Current Relationship Satisfaction Levels

Using the following scale, please rate your answers:

1. Strongly agree
 2. Agree
 3. Neither agree nor disagree
 4. Disagree
 5. Strongly disagree
-
30. My partner and I get along well together.
 31. Our relationship is stable.
 32. My partner treats me well.
 33. Our relationship is happy.
 34. My partner shows affection.
 35. Our life together is overall fun.
 36. My partner understands me.
 37. Our relationship is fulfilling.
 38. My partner is interested in my wellbeing.
 39. I can rely on my partner.
 40. I am comfortable with my choice in my partner.
 41. I would choose my partner again.
 42. My partner and I are a team.
 43. My partner and I communicate effectively.
 44. I trust my partner.
 45. I consider ending my current relationship.
 46. I worry that my partner considers ending this relationship.
 47. My partner and I look forward to our future together.
 48. The quality of my relationship is high.
 49. The quality of my relationship increased with swinging activities.

Section IV: Sexual Satisfaction

Using the following scale, please rate your answers:

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

50. I am satisfied engaging in sex with my partner only.
51. I am satisfied engaging in swinger sex only.
52. I feel fulfilled with my current sex regimen, which includes a combination of sex with my partner and swinging activities.
53. I would like to increase sex with my partner only.
54. I would like to increase swinger sex only.
55. I would like to increase all sexual activities.
56. I am sexually attracted to my spouse.
57. My partner makes me feel sexually desirable.
58. I believe the difference between swinging and infidelity is: _____
59. I chose to enter into the swinging lifestyle because: _____