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Consensual Nonmonogamy: Psychological Well-Being and Relationship Quality Correlates

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Consensually nonmonogamous relationships are those in which all partners explicitly agree that each partner may have romantic or sexual relationships with others (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013). In this article, research examining the associations between consensual nonmonogamy, psychological well-being, and relationship quality is reviewed. Specifically, three types of consensual nonmonogamy are examined: swinging, open relationships (including sexually open marriage and gay open relationships), and polyamory. Swinging refers to when a couple practices extradyadic sex with members of another couple; open relationships are relationships in which partners agree that they can have extradyadic sex; and polyamory is the practice of, belief in, or willingness to engage in consensual nonmonogamy, typically in long-term and/or loving relationships. General trends in the research reviewed suggest that consensual nonmonogamists have similar psychological well-being and relationship quality as monogamists. Methodological challenges in research on consensual nonmonogamy and directions for future research are discussed.

In Western societies, consensually nonmonogamous relationships—those in which all partners agree that each may have romantic or sexual relationships with others—are widely viewed as illegitimate and objectionable (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013). For example, despite their opposing views, both supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage have implied that the legitimacy of a relationship hinges on monogamy. Social conservatives often argue that the legalization of same-sex marriage is wrong because it is a "slippery slope" that would lead to the legalization of other nontraditional marriages, such as those between multiple consenting adults (e.g., Balcerzak, 2013; Foust, 2013; Wildmon, 2013; Wong, 2013). Their use of this argument suggests that it is actually consensual nonmonogamy to which they object. Many social progressives who support and defend the legitimacy of such nontraditional relationships as same-sex marriage do so only because they believe these relationships to be monogamous. For example, in a recent interview on ABC's *Good Morning America*, U.S. president Barack Obama defended his decision to endorse the legalization of same-sex marriage by referring to his belief that same-sex couples could have "incredibly committed monogamous relationships" (Klein, 2013, para. 3). He spoke as though to assure viewers that, as monogamists, same-sex couples could also have healthy, ethical relationships, and on that basis they deserved equal rights.

It appears that, for many, consensual nonmonogamy represents a line that must not be crossed or an impending peril for those who slip too far from traditional sexual practices. For these individuals consensual nonmonogamy might be considered inherently harmful either to society as a whole or, more specifically, to those who practice it (see Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013). However, for social scientists, consensual nonmonogamy raises interesting questions: What is the effect of consensual nonmonogamy on psychological well-being and relationship quality? Is it necessary for someone to have poor psychological well-being or be in a struggling relationship to want to engage in consensual nonmonogamy? Whereas the effect of consensual nonmonogamy on society might be exceedingly difficult to analyze, these questions regarding individual and relational health have the potential to be addressed empirically. As noted by Barker and Langdridge (2009, 2010), research on consensual nonmonogamy is on the rise. However, whether these questions have been answered by the extant literature remains unclear. In the current article, we provide an overview of research

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examining the psychological well-being of consensual nonmonogamists and the quality of their relationships to determine to what extent these questions have been answered and what, if any, conclusions can be drawn.

Implications of Theories of Psychological and Relational Well-Being

Contrary to popular opinion, theoretical work in psychology does not unilaterally suggest that consensual nonmonogamy is pathological. For example, it is common to assert that monogamy is the only natural way to form sexual relationships and thereby imply that consensual nonmonogamy must be some form of aberration (see Barker & Langdridge, 2010). However, evolutionary psychology suggests that individuals engage in multiple mating strategies because different strategies are effective in different situations (Jonason, Valentine, & Li, 2012). Past research has further suggested that individuals engage in a variety of forms of casual relationships because these relationships serve different functions (Jonason, 2013). Varying forms of consensual nonmonogamy might similarly serve different functions and thereby facilitate genetic proliferation. Therefore, from this perspective, consensual nonmonogamy can be viewed as part of the normal range of human sexuality rather than as a symptom of a psychological problem or a problem within an individual's relationship.

The adaptiveness of behaviors could further be related to psychological well-being and relationship quality if humans have evolved to experience distress when their behaviors are not consistent with reproductive goals. Therefore, consensual nonmonogamy, because it is potentially adaptive, need not be expected to cause distress from an evolutionary perspective. It is also important to note, however, that behaviors that are consistent with reproductive goals (i.e., behaviors that are natural) will not necessarily result in individual or relational happiness. Indeed, having secret extradyadic sex (i.e., "cheating") can be an effective strategy from an evolutionary standpoint (Jonason et al., 2012), but few researchers would argue that such a strategy would improve the quality of an individual's monogamous relationship (Amato & Previti, 2003).

Psychological theories concerning more proximate causes and correlates of psychological well-being and relationship quality also do not unilaterally suggest that consensual nonmonogamy is pathological. Popular theories on relationship quality do not typically reference relationship structure itself but instead focus on such topics as the costs and benefits of the relationship, family history, and the partners' ability to cope with crises (see Karney & Bradbury, 1995). To the extent that consensually nonmonogamous relationships might still have more benefits than costs, be practiced by individuals with a history of secure attachment, and allow individuals to cope effectively in times of crisis, we would not expect consensual nonmonogamy to be related to poor relationship quality. Similarly, broad theories of psychological well-being are generally unrelated to relationship structure, beyond suggesting that individuals benefit from relatedness, love, and perhaps marriage,[1] none of which preclude consensual nonmonogamy (e.g., Diener, 1984; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

When we examine factors that might be more directly related to consensual nonmonogamy, the implications are mixed. For example, research suggests that sexual "infidelity" is a common cause of divorce (Amato & Previti, 2003); however, it could be the case that it is the break of trust, not nonmonogamy itself, that makes sexual infidelity so disruptive. Indeed, trust is believed by theorists to be an important component of relationship quality (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) and is believed by many consensual nonmonogamists to be an important component of consensual nonmonogamy (e.g., Easton & Hardy, 2009). Similarly, some might argue that extradyadic sex would cause intolerable levels of jealousy, whereas others might argue that awareness of a partner's extradyadic sex in the appropriate (consensual) context would allow an individual to work through his or her fears in a relationship and reduce or cope effectively with jealousy (see Easton & Hardy, 2009). Thus, while psychological theory does not generally suggest that consensually nonmonogamous relationships are pathological, it is difficult to predict the causes and effects of consensual nonmonogamy based on theory alone. For this reason, it is important that the question of how consensual nonmonogamy relates to psychological well-being and relationship quality be examined empirically. Although methodological issues in past research on this topic prevent us from drawing firm conclusions based on this literature at this time (see Methodological Issues section), it is the purpose of this review to help researchers better understand current trends in the research so that it can be continued and improved upon.

Common Types of Consensual Nonmonogamy

We will follow the example of past researchers by focusing our review on three types of consensual nonmonogamy that are commonly discussed in the literature: swinging, open relationships, and polyamory (see Barker & Langdridge, 2009, 2010; Conley, Moors, et al., 2013). Swinging refers to when a couple practices extradyadic sex with members of another couple, typically at the same time within a shared social setting

[1]The effect of marriage on subjective well-being is found inconsistently (see Diener, 1984), and recent research suggests that it is not marriage per se that best accounts for this effect, as marriage provides few advantages over cohabitation (Musick & Bumpass, 2012).

(Denfeld, 1974; Gilmartin, 1974; Jenks, 1998; Varni, 1974). Open relationships are relationships in which partners explicitly agree that they can have extradyadic sex; studies on open relationships often focus on sexually open marriages among opposite-sex couples (e.g., Buunk, 1980; Knapp, 1976; Rubin & Adams, 1986; Rubin, 1982; Watson, 1981), or gay open relationships (e.g., Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Kurdek, 1988; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986).[2] The definition of polyamory is more contentious (see Klesse, 2006); however, a broad, inclusive definition of polyamory is the practice of, belief in, or willingness to engage in multiple romantic and/or sexual relationships with the consent of everyone involved (Easton & Hardy, 2009; Taormino, 2008). As there has been less research on the psychological well-being and relationship quality of polyamorists than on that of swingers or individuals in open relationships, we will describe fewer studies on polyamory in this review.

It is common for both researchers of consensual nonmonogamy and their participants to try to distinguish different types of nonmonogamy by contrasting them (see Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Klesse, 2006). For example, polyamorists will often assert that polyamory includes only relationships that are loving and long term in nature. By contrast, nonmonogamy in swinging and open relationships is typically more exclusively sexual, with partners often explicitly prohibiting love or romance in their extradyadic relationships (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Denfeld, 1974). Yet some swingers and individuals in open relationships do form emotional attachments to their extradyadic partners (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Palson & Palson, 1972; Varni, 1974). Although there is some overlap between these kinds of consensual nonmonogamy, it is nevertheless important to maintain the distinctions among them. Consensual nonmonogamists themselves often report that the specific parameters of their agreements are what allow their relationships to function successfully (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Denfeld, 1974). Given this observation, and out of respect for the individuals who have chosen to use these terms to describe their identities, we have elected to use the terms *polyamory*, *swinging*, and *open relationships* to describe the relationships in the studies that we review.

In the literature, relationships are often categorized based on behavior, agreements between partners, or the reported identities of participants. However, these three criteria are not always congruent. For example, individuals can see their relationships as open or identify as swingers or as polyamorous without actually engaging in extradyadic sex (e.g., Barker, 2005; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek, 1988). Indeed, what makes an individual take on a sexual identity is more complex than meeting a behavioral definition (Igartua, Thombs, Burgos, & Montoro, 2009; Pathela et al., 2003). For the sake of simplicity in this review, we use terms such as *swinger*, *polyamorous*, or *consensual nonmonogamist* to refer to individuals or relationships based on any of these three criteria.

It is important to note that consensual nonmonogamy is conceptually distinct from both sociosexuality and high-risk sexual behavior, each of which have previously been studied in relation to relationship quality (e.g., Davidovich, de Wit, & Stroebe, 2006; Markey & Markey, 2013; Sanchez, Bocklandt, & Vilain, 2009; Seal, Agostinelli, & Hannett, 1994; Simpson & Gangestad, 1992). Consensual nonmonogamy is distinct from sociosexuality because sociosexuality is a preference for many casual sexual relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), whereas consensually nonmonogamous relationships can involve a high degree of commitment (e.g., Blasband & Peplau, 1985). Moreover, consensual nonmonogamists do not necessarily have sexual relationships with a large number of people but prefer or accept the practice of having multiple simultaneous relationships, which could be limited in number. Conversely, individuals high in sociosexuality do not necessarily engage in multiple simultaneous relationships but could instead have many sexual partners sequentially. Further, those who are high in sociosexuality who do have multiple simultaneous sexual relationships do not necessarily do so with the consent of all partners (see Seal et al., 1994).

Consensual nonmonogamy is also not necessarily a high-risk sexual behavior. For example, at least one study has suggested that individuals who are polyamorous are no more likely to be diagnosed with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) than others in the general population (Weitzman, 2007). Further, recent studies have found that consensual nonmonogamists, as compared to those who have had extradyadic sex while in ostensibly monogamous relationships, are more likely to engage in safer sex practices and are less likely to use condoms incorrectly (Conley, Moors, Ziegler, Matsick, & Rubin, 2012, as cited in Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Conley, Moors, Ziegler, & Karathanasis, 2012). With these distinctions in mind, we will not include the literature on sociosexuality and high-risk sexuality in this review. Similarly, this review will not include books or articles that use the term *open* to describe aspects of relationships other than nonmonogamy, or nonmonogamy that occurs without the consent of all partners (e.g., Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Hickson et al., 1992; Wachowiak & Bragg, 1980).

[2]At the time that the majority of the studies described in this review were conducted, participants were recruited from locations where same-sex marriage was illegal. Therefore, the literature often treats sexually open marriage and gay open relationships as mutually exclusive categories. As more research is conducted on consensually nonmonogamous same-sex marriage and on the open relationships of unmarried heterosexual individuals, it will be necessary to divide the literature on open relationships into different categories.

To find studies for this review, we searched two databases: Web of Science and PsycINFO. On PsycINFO we searched for the subjects ''open relationship,'' ''open marriage,'' ''swinging,'' and ''swinger.'' We also used the search terms ''polyamory'' and ''consensual nonmonogamy'' without specifying that these terms should be the ''subject'' of the document, because these search terms generate few results. On Web of Science we searched for the topics ''open relationship,'' ''open marriage,'' ''polyamory,'' and ''consensual nonmonogamy.'' We also searched for the topics ''swinger'' and ''swinging.'' However, to reduce the number of irrelevant results, these searches were refined to include only categories relevant to psychology. Our searches were not limited by time period. English-language studies, excluding dissertation abstracts, that included quantitative data on the psychological well-being or relationship quality of consensual nonmonogamists were then reviewed. Additional studies were found by examining the studies cited in these articles and book chapters, and through word of mouth. To limit the length of this review, only research on relationship quality that included the most commonly examined variables (e.g., relationship satisfaction; see the sections that follow) is reported in this review (in addition to research on psychological well-being). Finally, although this review primarily concerns quantitative studies, a few qualitative studies have been included for illustrative purposes.

Throughout this review we will describe general trends in the literature and note occasional qualifications or exceptions to these trends. The specific quantitative findings of each study that we describe in this review, and effect sizes where calculable, are outlined in Table 1. When means and standard deviations, or t values and n, were provided in an article that we reviewed, we calculated Cohen's d as an effect size measure (generally: small $d = 0.2$, medium $d = 0.5$, large $d = 0.8$). When χ^2 and n were provided we calculated either a phi coefficient (φ, for a comparison involving a variable with only two levels or between two groups) or Cramer's V (Φ_c, for a comparison involving variables with at least three levels or groups). Phi is a measure of the association between two variables in which each variable has two levels. It is essentially the Pearson correlation coefficient for these variables. As with r, a phi of less than 0.3 is considered to be a small effect size, and a phi of 0.5 or greater is considered to be a large effect size. When k is two (as when comparing two groups) Cramer's V is equivalent to phi. One of the articles reviewed (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983) provided partial correlations; these were included in Table 1 as a measure of effect size as well. There were several articles for which it was not possible to calculate effect sizes, such as when means but not standard deviations were provided.

Methodological Issues

Research on consensual nonmonogamy faces three major challenges: sampling, measurement, and lack of random assignment. In this section, we describe how each of these challenges has affected the literature. For example, we address how these challenges may limit generalizability and restrict causal interpretations.

First, participant samples are often small and unrepresentative. This is in part because, as with all hidden populations, researchers are limited in their ability to locate and contact consensual nonmonogamists. Table 2 provides a summary of the samples and recruitment strategies used in each of the published studies which we describe in this review and which provide data on the psychological well-being or relationship quality of consensual nonmonogamists. As can be seen from Table 2, researchers often recruit for studies using referrals, snowball sampling, and advertising through social organizations (e.g., swingers clubs). One issue with these recruitment strategies concerns the homogeneity of samples. Individuals recruited from social networks and social organizations are likely to share common values and beliefs, and to have similar demographic characteristics. This can limit the generalizability of findings as samples fail to capture the diversity of consensual nonmonogamists. Another issue concerns the self-selection of participants into the study: Consensual nonmonogamists who agree to participate in these studies could differ in important ways from those who refuse. For example, those who have found consensual nonmonogamy distressing or hurtful to their relationships might be less willing to discuss their experiences with researchers.

Second, much of the data on consensual nonmonogamy is obtained using self-report measures, which often involves consensual nonmonogamists describing the effect of consensual nonmonogamy on their own lives. This is problematic because self-reports of well-being and relationship satisfaction over time are known to be flawed and are often based on beliefs rather than actual experiences (Lachman, Rocke, Rosnick, & Ryff, 2008; Robinson & Clore, 2002). Another issue with self-report is that it can be biased by self-enhancement. It is likely that some consensual nonmonogamists would feel pressure to self-enhance to gain respect for their social identity in the face of stereotype threat (see Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Third, random assignment cannot typically be used in studies on consensual nonmonogamy because of practical and ethical considerations. For example, it would be unethical, if not impossible, to assign individuals a relationship style that might not conform to their moral principles. This makes it difficult to rule out confounding influences and to determine causality. The issue of confounding factors can in part be addressed by using a matched comparison group, but few studies have done

Table 1. *Study Findings*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
Bergstrand & Williams, 2000	Swingers ($N = 1{,}092$) lives more exciting than those in the General Social Survey ($N = 22{,}753$);[a] $\chi^2 = 18.43$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$.	$\varphi = .03$
	Swingers ($N = 1{,}092$) happier than those in the General Social Survey ($N = 35{,}028$); $\chi^2 = 13.28$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$.	$\varphi = .02$
	Swingers ($N = 1{,}092$) have greater marital happiness than those in the General Social Survey ($N = 19{,}165$); $\chi^2 = 4.48$, $df = 1$, $p < .04$.	$\varphi = .01$
Blasband & Peplau, 1985	NSD relationship satisfaction for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD frequency of sex for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD length of relationship for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD willingness to move, or expectation to be together later, for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; no statistics provided.	—
Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983	Among heterosexuals, no significant correlation between frequency of sex with primary partner and having been nonmonogamous in the past year (comparing all nonmonogamous versus monogamous groups).	Husbands $pr = -.016$, Wives $pr = -.031$, Male cohabitators $pr = -.040$, Female cohabitators $pr = -.019$
	Among heterosexuals, no significant correlation between satisfaction with sex with primary partner and having been nonmonogamous in the past year (comparing all nonmonogamous versus monogamous groups).	Husbands $pr = -.086$, Wives $pr = -.047$, Male cohabitators $pr = -.007$, Female cohabitators $pr = -.102$
Buunk, 1980	Couples in sexually open marriage have normal marriage satisfaction, self-esteem and neuroticism; no statistics provided.	—
Conley et al., 2012	Consensually nonmonogamous individuals less likely than nonconsensually nonmonogamous individuals to be under influence of drugs or alcohol during sex; 21% of consensually nonmonogamous, 33% of nonconsensually nonmonogamous, $p < .001$, $N = 793$.	$\varphi = .13$
Denfeld, 1974	Some ex-swingers had rules against emotional attachment to extradyadic partners; no statistics provided.	—
	Rules for swinging thought to protect relationship; reported in introduction; no evidence provided.	—
	109 (23%) of ex-swinger couples stopped swinging because of jealousy.	—
de Visser & McDonald, 2007	Qualitative study.	—
Dixon, 1984	Swingers who were married and living with husbands had sex with husbands more frequently than national average; swinger $M = 4.4$, national average $M = 2.5$ (national average measured in separate study; no statistical analysis performed); 76% of swingers rated sexual satisfaction as excellent or good, 22% as fair.	—
Dixon, 1985	Majority of swingers rated their marital happiness as high, giving it a 6 or 7 out of 7; mean ranks were 41.15 for bisexuals and 59.85 for heterosexuals.	—
	Majority of swingers indicated that if, hypothetically, they had not already married their spouses, they would marry them now; mean ranks were 44.92 for bisexuals and 56.08 for heterosexuals.	—
	Swingers rated sex lives as "usually" (6 out of 7) or "always or almost always" satisfying (7 out of 7); marital sex mean rank was 48.96 for bisexuals and 53.92 for heterosexuals; extramarital heterosexual sex was 49.35 for bisexuals and 51.65 for heterosexuals; swinging sex is 48.19 for bisexuals and 52.81 for heterosexuals; overall sex life is 43.37 for bisexuals and 57.63 for heterosexuals.	—
Duckworth & Levitt, 1985	15 of 30 swingers had MMPI scores outside of normal range on at least one scale; 9 on a single scale, 6 on multiple scales.	—
	Of those 9 with abnormal scores on a single scale, 5 had high scores on hypomania, 2 on depression, 1 on hysteria, 1 on psychopathic deviate.	—
	Of 15 swingers who were normal on the clinical scales, 5 scored high on validity scale; all 5 scored 6 or higher on L scale; 2 also scored high on K scale.	—
	37% of swingers had high scores on the MacAndrew scale measuring current and potential future substance abuse.	—
Gilmartin, 1974	Among husbands, swingers less likely than controls to have too few interesting/meaningful activities compared to controls; 13 swingers said yes, 2 swingers uncertain,	$\Phi_c = .20$

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	85 swingers no, 18 controls yes, 11 controls uncertain, 71 controls no, $\chi^2 = 8.29$, $df = 2$, $p < .02$.	
	Among wives, NSD having too few interesting/meaningful activities for swingers versus controls; 15 swingers yes, 1 swinger uncertain, 84 swingers no, 17 controls yes, 1 control uncertain, 82 controls no, $\chi^2 = 0.14$, $df = 2$.	$\Phi_c = .03$
	Among husbands, NSD life is busy enough for swingers versus controls; 45 swingers emphatically yes, 47 swingers mostly yes, 4 swingers uncertain, 4 swingers no, 42 control emphatically yes, 43 control mostly yes, 6 control uncertain, 9 control no, $\chi^2 = 2.60$, $df = 3$.	$\Phi_c = .11$
	Among wives, NSD life is busy enough for swingers versus controls; 47 swingers emphatically yes, 41 swingers mostly yes, 7 swingers uncertain, 5 swingers no, 51 control emphatically yes, 43 control mostly yes, 2 control uncertain, 4 control no, $\chi^2 = 3.10$, $df = 3$.	$\Phi_c = .12$
	Among husbands, swingers less anomie than controls; 9 swingers high anomie (score 6–9), 30 swingers medium anomie (score 3–5), 61 swingers low anomie (score 0–2), 10 controls high anomie, 49 controls medium anomie, 41 controls low anomie, $\chi^2 = 8.54$, $df = 2$, $p < .02$.	$\Phi_c = .21$
	Among wives, NSD anomie for swingers versus controls; 13 swingers high, 31 swingers medium, 56 swingers low, 20 control high, 41 control medium, 39 control low, $\chi^2 = 5.92$, $df = 2$, $p < .06$, but NSD.	$\Phi_c = .17$
	Among husbands, swingers interact more frequently with friends than controls; 74% swingers versus 33% of controls visited friends once or more per week, $\chi^2 = 33.79$,[b] $df = 1$, $p < .001$.	$\varphi = .41$
	Among wives, swingers interact more frequently with friends than controls; 74% swingers versus 46% of controls visited friends once or more per week, $\chi^2 = 16.33$,[b] $df = 1$, $p < .001$.	$\varphi = .29$
	Among husbands, swingers visit with relatives less than controls; 7 swingers visit once per week or more, 10 swingers a few times per month, 18 swingers once per month, 18 swingers once every 2–3 months, 47 swingers less often, 13 controls 1 visit per week or more, 24 controls a few times per month, 20 controls once per month, 8 controls once every 2–3 months, 35 controls less often, $\chi^2 = 13.27$, $df = 4$, $p < .02$.	$\Phi_c = .26$
	Among wives, swingers visit with relatives less than controls; 10 swingers once per week or more, 11 swingers a few times per month, 9 swingers once per month, 18 swingers once every 2–3 months, 52 swingers less often, 23 controls once per week or more, 23 controls a few times per month, 14 controls once per month, 15 controls once every 2–3 months, 25 less often, $\chi^2 = 20.18$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$.	$\Phi_c = .32$
	Among husbands, relatives less important to swingers than controls; 1 swinger versus 4 controls "one of the most important aspects of my life," 15 swingers versus 32 controls "generally important in my overall scheme of things," 38 swingers versus 36 controls "somewhat important in overall scheme of things," 46 swingers versus 28 controls "unimportant in overall scheme of things," $\chi^2 = 12.38$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$.	$\Phi_c = .25$
	Among wives, relatives less important to swingers than controls; 4 swingers versus 10 controls "one of the most important aspects of my life," 17 swingers versus 38 controls "generally important in my overall scheme of things," 52 swingers versus 40 controls "somewhat important in overall scheme of things," 27 swingers versus 12 controls "unimportant in overall scheme of things," $\chi^2 = 38.51$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$.	$\Phi_c = .44$
	Among husbands, swingers felt less respected by and like they could talk to their parents in childhood than controls; 40 swingers true, 60 swingers false, 68 controls true, 32 swingers false, $\chi^2 = 15.73$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$.	$\Phi_c = .28$
	Among wives, swingers felt less respected by and like they could talk to their parents in childhood than controls; 42 swingers true, 58 swingers false, 65 controls true, 35 controls false, $\chi^2 = 10.63$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$.	$\Phi_c = .23$
	Among husbands, NSD frequency of enjoying informal conversations with parents in childhood for swingers versus controls; 23 swingers frequently, 24 swingers moderately frequently, 53 swingers infrequently, 36 controls frequently, 22 controls moderately frequently, 42 controls infrequently, $\chi^2 = 4.22$, $df = 2$.	$\Phi_c = .14$
	Among wives, swingers enjoyed fewer informal conversations with parents in childhood than controls; 32 swingers frequently, 27 swingers moderately frequently, 41 swingers infrequently, 48 controls frequently, 26 controls moderately frequently, 26 controls infrequently, $\chi^2 = 6.58$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$.	$\Phi_c = .18$
	Among husbands, swingers less happy in adolescence; 33 swingers happy, 42 swingers fairly happy, 25 swingers unhappy, 55 controls happy, 25 controls fairly happy, 20 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = 10.37$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$.	$\Phi_c = .23$

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	Among wives, swingers less happy than controls in adolescence; 39 swingers happy, 38 swingers fairly happy, 23 swingers unhappy, 56 controls happy, 25 controls fairly happy, 19 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = 6.11$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$.	$\Phi_c = .17$
	Among husbands, NSD personal happiness for swingers versus controls; 28 swingers versus 30 controls very happy, 49 swingers versus 43 controls happy, 20 swingers versus 23 controls fairly happy, 3 swingers versus 4 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = .81$, $df = 3$.	$\Phi_c = .06$
	Among wives, NSD personal happiness for swingers vs controls; 41 swingers versus 42 controls very happy, 39 swingers versus 37 controls happy, 17 swingers versus 18 controls fairly happy, 3 swingers versus 3 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = .09$, $df = 3$.	$\Phi_c = .02$
	Among husbands, swingers more likely to have a history of counseling; 36 swingers yes, 64 swingers no, 18 controls yes, 82 controls no, $\chi^2 = 8.2192$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$.	$\Phi_c = .20$
	Among wives, NSD history of counseling for swingers vs controls; 35 swingers yes, 65 swingers no, 24 controls yes, 76 controls no, $\chi^2 = 2.91$, $df = 1$.	$\Phi_c = .12$
	Among husbands, 37% of swingers versus 18% controls have 1 or fewer drinks at a typical social gathering, $\chi^2 = 9.05$[b], $p = .003$.	$\Phi = .21$
	Among wives, 48% of swingers versus 31% of controls have 1 or fewer drinks at a typical social gathering, $\chi^2 = 6.05$[b], $p = .014$.	$\Phi = .17$
	No difference for swingers versus controls in refusing drinks once they had enough, significance not specified; no statistics provided.	—
	Among husbands, NSD marital happiness swingers versus controls, 56 swingers very happy, 29 swingers happy, 13 swingers fairly happy, 2 swingers unhappy, 43 controls very happy, 33 controls happy, 20 controls fairly happy, 4 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = 4.11$, $df = 3$.	$\Phi_c = .14$
	Among wives, NSD marital happiness swingers versus controls, 58 swingers very happy, 23 swingers happy, 15 swingers fairly happy, 4 swingers unhappy, 49 controls very happy, 31 controls happy, 18 controls fairly happy, 2 controls unhappy, $\chi^2 = 2.88$.	$\Phi_c = .12$
	Among husbands, swingers more likely to have divorced; 49% of swingers previously divorced, 15% controls previously divorced, $\chi^2 = 26.56$,[b] $p < .001$.	$\Phi = .36$
	Among wives, swingers more likely to have divorced; 34% of swingers previously divorced, 14% of controls previously divorced, $\chi^2 = 10.96$,[b] $p < .001$.	$\Phi = .23$
	No divorce occurred after swinging.	—
Hoff et al., 2010	NSD dyadic satisfaction for open relationship vs monogamous relationship; open, $M = 38.14$; monogamous, $M = 39.39$.	—
	Open relationship less commitment than monogamous relationship; open, $M = 60.86$; monogamous, $M = 64.37$.	—
Hosking, 2013	NSD satisfaction with relationship agreement for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open relationship, $M = 4.26$ (1); monogamish,[c] $M = 4.05$ (0.93); monogamous, $M = 4.40$ (0.77); $F(2,226) - 2.57$, $p > .05$.	Monogamish versus monogamous $d = .41$; open versus monogamous $d = .16$
	Open relationship longer than monogamous relationship but not monogamish; open, $M = 8.59$ (6.74); monogamish, $M = 7.14$ (6.55); monogamous, $M = 5.31$ (6.00); $F(2,226) = 5.81$, $p = .003$. Open relationship lower in commitment than monogamous relationship; open, $M = 60.86$; monogamous, $M = 64.37$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .51$
Jenks, 1985	Swingers less jealous than nonswingers; swingers, $M = 2.64$; nonswingers, $M = 3.23$; $t(122) = 2.08$, $p < 0.05$.	$d = 0.38$[d]
Knapp, 1976	Marital satisfaction reported to increase after engaging in sexually open marriage for 22; no change for 4; 1 decreased; 1 no response; 6 N/A (never monogamous marriage).	—
Kurdek, 1988	NSD total DAS scale for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; no statistics provided.	—
	Open relationship couples lived together longer than monogamous relationship couples; open, $M = 117.26$; monogamous, $M = 52.90$ months; $F(1, 36) = 10.97$, $p < .001$.	—
Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986	Dyadic satisfaction lower in open relationship than monogamous relationship; monogamous, $M = 40.27$; open, $M = 38.29$.	—
	Marital satisfaction lower in open relationship than monogamous relationship; monogamous, $M = 205.17$; open, $M = 198.17$.	—
	Dyadic consensus, affectional expression, and dyadic cohesion also measured, no differences open relationship versus monogamous relationship reported; no statistics provided.	—
	Open relationship longer than monogamous relationship; open, $M = 79.12$; monogamous, $M = 42.24$ months; $F(1,130) = 14.49$, $p < .0001$.	—
LaSala, 2004	NSD total DAS for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, $M = 119.55$ (9.98); monogamous, $M = 117.30$ (12.33); $t(119) = -1.06$, $p = .294$.	$d = .20$
	NSD affectional expression for open relationship versus monogamous; open, $M = 9.07$ (1.53); monogamous, $M = 9.21$ (1.69); $t(119) = 0.47$, $p = .642$.	$d = .09$

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	NSD dyadic consensus for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, $M = 50.91$ (4.54); monogamous, $M = 50.02$ (5.26); $t(119) = -0.96$, $p = .337$.	$d = .18$
	NSD dyadic cohesion for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, $M = 17.59$ (3.32); monogamous, $M = 17.51$ (3.35); $t(119) = -0.13$, $p = .898$.	$d = .02$
	Higher dyadic satisfaction in open relationship than monogamous relationship; monogamous open, $M = 42.01$ (3.20); $M = 40.59$ (4.10); $t(115.49) = -2.136$, $p = .035$.	$d = .43$
	Broken monogamous relationship agreement as compared to open relationship and agreement abiding monogamists combined.	
	Open relationship and monogamous relationship combined higher total DAS than nonconsensually nonmonogamous; open and monogamous $M = 119.29$ (11.76), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 115.27$ (10.26); $t(119) = 1.73$, $p = .043$ (one-tailed).	$d = .36$
	Open relationship and monogamous relationship combined higher affectional expression than nonconsensually nonmonogamous; open and monogamous $M = 50.83$ (5.17), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 49.15$ (4.31); $t(119) = 1.66$, $p = .050$ (one-tailed).	$d = .35$
	Open relationship and monogamous relationship combined higher dyadic satisfaction than nonconsensually nonmonogamous; open and monogamous $M = 41.51$ (3.84), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 40.21$ (3.66); $t(119) = 1.67$, $p = .048$ (one tailed).	$d = .35$
Levitt, 1988	97.5% of swingers reported swinging made lives more exciting.	—
	12.5% of swingers reported swinging caused anxiety or depression.	—
	12 (26.7%) swingers reported swinging led to separation or divorce.	—
	10 (23.8%) swingers reported swinging kept marriage together.	—
Murstein, Case, & Gunn, 1985	NSD for perceiving self as well-liked ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD for perceiving self as warm and affectionate ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD happiness in childhood ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD personal fulfillment ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD stability of mood ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD difficulty refusing drinks ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	NSD difficulty finding meaningful activities ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	Ex-swinging wives more likely to say life is busy enough than wives who never swung, $p = .03$ (control, $N = 50$; ex-swinger, $N = 15$).	—
	Ex-swinging husbands more likely to have been in counseling than husbands who never swung, $p = .05$.	—
	Ex-swinging husbands greater happiness than husbands who never swung, $p = .05$.	—
	NSD marital happiness ex-swingers versus controls; no statistics provided.	—
	25% of ex-swingers very jealous.	—
	50% of ex-swingers report jealousy diminishes.	—
	History of divorce more common for ex-swingers; husbands, $p = .002$; wives, $p = .02$.	—
Palson & Palson, 1972	Qualitative.	—
Parsons et al., 2013	NSD depression for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, $M = 1.61$ ($SE = .08$); monogamous, $M = 1.57$ ($SE = .05$).	—
	NSD life satisfaction for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, $M = 4.93$ ($SE = .15$); monogamous, $M = 4.82$ ($SE = .09$).	—
	NSD depression for monogamish versus monogamous; monogamish, $M = 5.20$ ($SE = .15$); monogamous, $M = 1.57$ ($SE = .05$).	—
	Monogamish higher life satisfaction than monogamous relationship; monogamish, $M = 5.20$ ($SE = .15$); monogamous, $M = 4.82$ ($SE = .09$).	—
	Difference in life satisfaction across four groups: monogamous relationship, open relationship, monogamish, and single; $F(3, 797) = 5.70$, $p < .01$.	—
	Difference in depression across four groups: monogamous relationship, open relationship, monogamish, and single; $F(3, 796) = 3.58$, $p = .01$.	—
	Open relationship, monogamish, and single each more likely than monogamous relationship to use drugs in past 3 months; open adj odds[e] = .14 ($SE = .04$), monogamish adj odds = .15 ($SE = .05$), single adj odds = .12 ($SE = .02$), monogamous adj odds = .05 ($SE = .02$), Wald chi-squared (3) = 16.39, $p < .01$.	—
	Open relationship, monogamish, and single each more likely to use drugs in past 3 months than monogamous relationship; open adj odds = .14 ($SE = .04$), monogamish	—

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	adj odds = .15 (SE = .05), single adj odds = .12 (SE = .02), monogamous adj odds = .05 (SE = .02), Wald chi-squared (3) = 16.39, $p < .01$.	
	Open relationship and single each more likely to have used drugs during sex than monogamous relationship; open adj odds = .27 (SE = .06), monogamish adj odds = .19 (SE = .05), single adj odds = .19 (SE = .02), monogamous adj odds = .12 (SE = .03), Wald chi-squared (3) = 8.80, $p = .03$.	—
	NSD alcohol use during sex open relationship, monogamish versus monogamous relationship; open adj odds = .56 (SE = .06), monogamish adj odds = .62 (SE = .07), single adj odds = .48 (SE = .02), monogamous adj odds = .46 (SE = .04), Wald chi-squared (3) = 5.65.	—
	NSD length of relationship for open relationship, monogamish versus monogamous; open M = 100.38 (79.60), monogamish M = 75.28 (87.15), monogamous M = 72.51 (87.11), $F(2, 313) = 2.74$.	Open versus monogamous, d = .33; monogamish versus monogamous, d = .03
Ramey, 1975	75% of participants in open intimate friendships and 91% of those in closed intimate friendships were somewhat or very satisfied with their primary relationship.	—
	44% of participants experienced less jealousy when their partners began intimate friendships, 4% increased jealousy, 32% stayed the same, 20% never jealous.	—
	Reactions to partner's extradyadic sex in intimate friendship: 2% very negative, 13% somewhat negative, 19% equally positive and negative, 30% somewhat positive, 30% very positive, 6% N/A.	—
	Quality of sex with primary partner after beginning intimate friendship: increased for 55%, remained the same for 44%, decreased for 1%.	—
	Frequency of sex with primary partner after beginning intimate friendship: increased for 16%, stayed same for 64%, decreased for 19%.	—
	In response to intimate friendship primary relationship was never threatened for 41%, strengthened more than threatened for 33%, not now threatened for 18%.	—
Ramirez & Brown, 2010	NSD dyadic consensus for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, M = 2.48; monogamous, M = 2.53.	—
	NSD affectional expression for open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, M = 2.1; monogamous, M = 2.1.	—
	NSD dyadic cohesion open relationship versus monogamous; open relationship, M = 3.03; monogamous, M = 3.04.	—
	NSD dyadic satisfaction open relationship versus monogamous relationship; open, M = 3.56; monogamous, M = 3.50.	—
	Open relationship longer than monogamous relationship; open, M = 6.59 years; monogamous, M = 3.15 years, $p < .01$.	—
	Open relationship couples older than monogamous relationship couples; open, M = 39.96; monogamous, M = 34.57, $p < .01$.	—
Ritchie & Barker, 2006	Qualitative.	—
Rubin, 1982	NSD on the DAS for sexually open marriage versus monogamous marriage; open, M = 108; monogamous, M = 118; 0 in open had low score (40–70), 15 in open had medium score (71–100), 64 in open had high score (above 101), 3 in open N/A, 0 in monogamous had low score (40–70), 15 in monogamous had medium score (71–100), 65 in monogamous had high score (above 101), 2 in monogamous N/A, $\chi^2 = 0.21$, $df = 2$, $p = .901$.	$\Phi_c = .04$
	NSD marital happiness for sexually open marriage versus monogamous marriage; 3 in open extremely to fairly unhappy, 10 in open little unhappy, 8 in open happy, 24 in open very happy, 36 in open extremely to perfectly happy, 0 in monogamous extremely to fairly happy, 6 in monogamous little unhappy, 12 in monogamous happy, 16 in monogamous very happy, 45 in monogamous extremely happy to perfectly happy;[f] $\chi^2 = 7.38$,[b] $df = 4$, $p = .117$.	$\Phi_c = .21$
Rubin & Adams, 1986	NSD marital happiness for sexually open marriage versus monogamous marriage; 9 in open unhappy (20%), 37 in open happy (80%), 9 in monogamous unhappy (14%), 55 in monogamous happy (86%); $\chi^2 = .59$, $N = 110$, $p > .05$.	$\Phi = .07$
	NSD jealousy for participants who were sexually open marriage but who subsequently split up versus participants who were in monogamous marriage but subsequently split up; 15 in open never concerned, 9 in open mildly to strongly concerned, 8 monogamous never concerned, 6 mildly concerned; $\chi^2 = 0.10$, $N = 38$, $p > .10$.	$\Phi = .05$
	NSD marital stability sexually open marriage versus monogamous marriage; 68% of open couples and 82% of monogamous couples still together after 5 years; $\chi^2 = 2.03$, $N = 73$, $p > .05$.	$\Phi = .17$

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	2 sexually open marriage couples switched to monogamous marriage over 5 years; 1 monogamous marriage couple switched to sexually open marriage.	—
Smith & Smith, 1970	40% of members of sexual freedom group had received some counseling.	—
	Most members of sexual freedom group who received counseling did so before joining sexual freedom group; no statistics provided.	—
	1 of 503 members of sexual freedom group received counseling as a result of sexual activities.	—
	Most members of sexual freedom group felt jealousy initially but it diminished with continued participation; no statistics provided.	—
Twichell, 1974	All comparisons used alpha of .01.	—
	NSD satisfaction with present life situation for members of sexual freedom group versus students; no statistics provided.	—
	Sexual freedom group members less close with parents than students; sexual freedom group mean indicated neutral relationships with parents $M = 2.90$, the control groups mean indicated close and warm relationships with parents $M = 2.03$.	—
	Sexual freedom group members had normal scores on MMPI (30–70 t scores) on all scales but Mf scale for men.	—
Varni, 1974	N/A; used for defining swinging.	—
Viwatpanich, 2010	Qualitative.	—
Wagner, Remien, & Carballo-Diéguez, 2000	NSD depression for open relationship, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex, versus monogamous relationship; open $M = 1.86$ (.75), partial $M = 2.08$ (.83), secretive $M = 2.07$ (.91), monogamous $M = 1.90$ (.67), $F(3, 122) = 0.7$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .06$
	NSD anxiety for open relationship, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex, versus monogamous relationship; open $M = 1.95$ (.69), partial $M = 2.17$ (.74), secretive $M = 2.11$ (.92), monogamous $M = 1.93$ (.65), $F(3, 122) = 0.8$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .03$
	NSD hostility for open relationship, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex, versus monogamous relationship; open $M = 1.78$ (.64), partial $M = 1.95$ (.70), secretive $M = 2.00$ (.93), monogamous $M = 1.79$ (.53), $F(3, 122) = 0.8$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .02$
	NSD hopelessness for open relationship, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex versus monogamous relationship; open $M = 5.2$ (4.5), partial $M = 4.2$ (3.4), secretive $M = 6.1$ (5.8), monogamous $M = 3.8$ (4.0), $F(3,122) = 1.6$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .33$
	NSD subscales of DAS for monogamous relationship versus open relationship, though open, monogamous, partially known extradyadic sex, versus secret extradyadic sex differed on some scales.	—
	Dyadic consensus higher for monogamous relationship than partially known extradyadic sex, NSD for other comparisons: open $M = 50.4$ (6.4), partial $M = 45.0$ (9.0), secretive $M = 48.8$ (4.9), monogamous $M = 52.3$ (6.6), $F(3, 59) = 2.9$, $p = .041$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .29$
	Affectional expression; open $M = 8.3$ (1.2), partial $M = 7.0$ (1.8), secretive $M = 7.8$ (2.0), monogamous $M = 8.0$ (1.3), $F(3, 59) = 2.0$, NSD.	Open versus monogamous $d = .24$
	Dyadic satisfaction; open 38.9 (4.9), partial 32.0 (6.8), secretive 35.3 (8.8), monogamous $M = 36.8$ (6.7), $F(3, 59) = 2.6$ $p = .060$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .36$
	Dyadic cohesion; open $M = 17.8$ (3.1), partial $M = 15.1$ (2.9), secretive $M = 17.3$ (2.9), monogamous $M = 15.9$ (3.8), $F(3,59) = 2.2$, $p = .096$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .55$
	NSD sexual satisfaction for open relationship, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex versus monogamous relationship; open $M = 16.6$ (3.3), partial $M = 13.0$ (5.4), secretive $M = 13.8$ (4.0), monogamous $M = 15.1$ (4.9), $F(3, 59) = 1.8$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .36$
	NSD frequency of sex in primary relationship (occasions per week) for open relationships, partially known extradyadic sex, secret extradyadic sex versus monogamous relationships; open $M = 2.3$ (2.1), partial $M = 2.2$ (2.3), secretive $M = 1.8$ (1.1), monogamous $M = 2.3$ (3.4), $F(3, 59) = 0.2$.	Open versus monogamous $d = .00$
	Open and monogamous relationships higher than nonconsensually nonmonogamous on dyadic consensus; open and monogamous $M = 50.8$ (6.7), nonmonogamous $M = 46.8$ (7.4), $F(1, 62) = 4.8$, $p = .032$.	$d = .57$
	Open and monogamous relationships higher than nonconsensually nonmonogamous on affectional expression; open and monogamous $M = 8.2$ (1.3), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 7.4$ (1.9), $F(1, 62) = 4.4$, $p = .041$.	$d = .55$
	Open and monogamous relationships higher than nonconsensually nonmonogamous on dyadic satisfaction; open and monogamous $M = 37.5$ (5.8), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 33.7$ (7.9), $F(1, 62) = 5.3$, $p = .025$.	$d = .55$
	Open and monogamous relationships higher than nonconsensually nonmonogamous on sexual satisfaction; open and monogamous $M = 15.9$ (4.1), nonconsensually nonmonogamous $M = 13.4$ (4.7), $F(1, 62) = 4.9$, $p = .031$.	$d = .57$

(*Continued*)

Table 1. *Continued*

Study	Findings	Effect Size
	NSD dyadic cohesion for open and monogamous relationships versus nonconsensually nonmonogamous; open and monogamous $M = 16.6$ (3.5), partial and secretive $M = 16.2$ (3.0), $F(1, 62) = 0.3$.	$d = .12$
	NSD frequency of sex for open and monogamous relationships versus nonconsensually nonmonogamous; open and monogamous $M = 2.3$ (2.6), partial and secretive $M = 2.0$ (1.8), $F(1, 62) = 0.4$.	$d = .13$
Watson, 1981	NSD 18 scales of CPI for participants in sexually open marriage versus norms (i.e., in normal range).	—
	All participants in sexually open marriage reported experiencing jealousy in some relationships.	—
	All 38 couples in sexually open marriage still together after 2 years.	—
	37 of 38 couples in sexually open marriage switched to monogamous marriage within 2 years.	—

Note. Unpublished studies have been excluded from table. Effect sizes, except for partial correlations, were calculated by the authors of this review where possible based on the information provided by the authors of each article. Effect sizes calculated for this table include Cohen's d (where means and standard deviations were provided), phi coefficient φ (where frequencies or chi-square tests were provided and $df = 1$), and Cramer's V Φ_c (where frequencies or chi-square tests were provided and $df > 1$). For Cohen's d, 0.2 is small, 0.5 is medium, and 0.8 is large. For φ or Φ_c, < 0.3 is small and > 0.5 is large; NSD = no significant difference.

[a] A nationally representative sample who took part in the University of Michigan General Social Survey (1983–1991).

[b] Test statistic calculated by the authors of this review.

[c] A *monogamish* relationship is one in which a couple agrees that extradyadic sex is acceptable if both partners take part in that sexual interaction (e.g., in "threesomes" or group sex).

[d] Calculated based on the assumption that n was equal for both groups.

[e] Adjusted odds ratios are not reported in the effect size column because it is not a measure of the size of the difference between groups and therefore cannot be directly compared to the other effect sizes in this table.

[f] The authors of the original article provided percentages for each group; however, they divided the scale differently when providing these percentages than when they performed the test. Therefore, the figures displayed in our table were calculated by the authors of this review to match the breakdown used for the test performed in the article.

this (see Table 2); those that did cannot account for all potential confounds. One approach that researchers can use to better understand (though not prove) causality is to conduct longitudinal studies. In two studies researchers have examined the stability of consensually nonmonogamous relationships a few years after first contact (Rubin & Adams, 1986; Watson, 1981). Unfortunately, these studies did not examine the association between consensual nonmonogamy at Time 1 and other indicators of relationship quality or psychological well-being at Time 2, nor did they examine changes in psychological well-being or relationship quality across time.

Overall, these methodological issues limit the types of conclusions that can be drawn from extant research on consensual nonmonogamy. In this review, we attempt to identify associations between consensual nonmonogamy, psychological well-being, and relationship quality. However, we will not be able to draw conclusions about causality.

Psychological Well-Being

Do consensual nonmonogamists differ from the general population in terms of their psychological well-being? It is commonly believed that individuals who practice consensual nonmonogamy must be neurotic, unsatisfied, or otherwise mentally ill (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Hymer & Rubin, 1982; Knapp, 1975; Page, 2004; Twichell, 1974). Such beliefs are widespread even among psychological experts (Hymer & Rubin, 1982; Knapp, 1975; Page, 2004; Twichell, 1974). When Twichell (1974) consulted with several experts on the use of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) with alternative sexual groups, there was a consensus that members of the Sexual Freedom League, who were known to engage in consensually nonmonogamous relationships, would have abnormal scores. In contrast, consensually nonmonogamous individuals tend to view themselves and their lives positively (e.g., Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Gilmartin, 1974; Murstein, Case, & Gunn, 1985; Twichell, 1974) and often report that nonmonogamy has improved their well-being (e.g., Levitt, 1988).

The relationship between consensual nonmonogamy and psychological well-being is complex. In one study, 97.5% of swingers reported that swinging had made their lives more exciting, but 12.5% reported swinging had caused them anxiety or depression (Levitt, 1988). The well-being of consensual nonmonogamists can also be attributed to more than just their relationships. Social pressure or stigma can negatively affect consensual nonmonogamists' well-being. For example, in a study of swinging couples in Thailand, some participants reported fears that they would be stigmatized or

Table 2. *Participant Samples and Recruitment Strategies*

Study	Nonmonogamous Sample	Comparison Group	Recruitment
Bergstrand & Williams, 2000	1,092 swingers (326 women, 766 men; sexual orientation not specified)	Nationally representative sample who took the University of Michigan General Social Survey (1983–1991)	Links on websites of swingers clubs/swingers electronic mailing lists
Blasband & Peplau, 1985	23 gay male couples in open relationships	17 gay male couples in monogamous relationships	Referrals Gay organizations Snowball sampling
Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983	2,509 individuals who had extradyadic sex in the past year: 658 (393 consensually nonmonogamous) married 248 (158 consensually nonmonogamous) heterosexual cohabiting 1,368 (1,147 consensually nonmonogamous) gay male 235 (140 consensually nonmonogamous) lesbian 1,562 couples who agreed that extradyadic sex was acceptable: 536 married 180 heterosexual cohabiting 622 gay male 224 lesbian	9,125 individuals who did not have extradyadic sex in the past year: 6,360 (1,311 consensually nonmonogamous) married 1,002 (306 consensually nonmonogamous) heterosexual cohabiting 512 (218 consensually nonmonogamous) gay male 1,251 (418 consensually nonmonogamous) lesbian 1,562 couples who agreed to monogamy: 3,038 married 462 heterosexual cohabiting 335 gay male 548 lesbian couples	Political and community groups Fliers Interviews in television programs/radio shows/newspapers/magazines
Buunk, 1980	50 (opposite-sex) couples in sexually open marriage (sexual orientation not specified)	None	Unknown
Conley et al., 2012	493 consensually nonmonogamous individuals (of the entire sample, including comparison group, 52% were women, 49% were heterosexual, 12% homosexual, 39% bisexual)	308 nonconsensually nonmonogamous individuals	Ads on general and nonmonogamy-related websites and electronic mailing lists
Denfeld, 1974	473 marriage counselors who had counseled ex-swingers	None	Two family and marriage counselor directories
de Visser & McDonald, 2007	4 opposite-sex swinging couples (sexual orientation not specified)[a]	None	Ads on swingers websites Ad in newsletter for a swingers club Snowball sampling
Dixon, 1984	50 bisexual female swingers	None	Referrals Responded to ads in swingers publications Alternative lifestyle conventions
Dixon, 1985	50 bisexual male swingers 50 heterosexual male swingers	None	Referrals Ads in swingers publications Swingers social and education events
Duckworth & Levitt, 1985	30 swingers (16 women, 14 men; sexual orientation not specified)	None	One swingers club
Gilmartin, 1974	100 swinging (opposite-sex) couples (sexual orientation not specified)	100 (opposite-sex) couples (sexual orientation not specified)	Referrals from sexual freedom groups and swinging couples
Hoff et al., 2010	262 gay male couples in open relationships[b]	255 gay male couples in monogamous relationships[b]	Fliers placed in gay social venues/health organizations/HIV organizations Ads in gay publications Ads on gay websites Ads on gay electronic mailing lists
Hosking, 2013	61 gay men in open relationships 40 gay men in monogamish relationships	128 gay men in monogamous relationships	Ads in gay newspaper and its website
Jenks, 1985	114 swingers (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	114 nonswingers, matched for age, income, and education (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	Swingers convention Subscribers to a swingers magazines Computer-generated phone numbers

(*Continued*)

Table 2. *Continued*

Study	Nonmonogamous Sample	Comparison Group	Recruitment
Knapp, 1976	17 couples in sexually open marriage (opposite-sex couples; sexual orientation not specified)	None	Referrals Snowball sampling
Kurdek, 1988	34 gay male couples in open relationships[b]	31 gay male couples in monogamous relationships[b]	Referrals Ads in gay/lesbian periodicals/ newsletters
Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986	17 gay male couples in open relationships[b]	49 gay male couples in monogamous relationships[b]	Referrals Ads in 3 gay periodicals
LaSala, 2004	48 gay male couples in open relationships[b]	73 gay male couples in monogamous relationships (33 nonconsensually nonmonogamous)[b]	Mailing lists of gay organizations Ads in gay magazines Fliers in restaurants, coffee shops, and gay organizations
Levitt, 1988	84 swingers (51 men, 33 women; sexual orientation not specified)	None	Swingers convention
Murstein, Case, & Gunn, 1985	30 ex-swinger (opposite-sex) couples (sexual orientation not specified)	Gilmartin's (1974) control group	Referrals Ads in an alternative newspaper, a pornographic magazine, and a magazine containing book reviews
Palson & Palson, 1972	136 swingers (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	None	Referrals Ads in swingers magazines
Parsons et al., 2013	67 gay and 4 bisexual men in open relationships 58 gay and 5 bisexual men in monogamish relationships	170 gay and 12 bisexual men in monogamous relationships	Gay community events
Ramey, 1975	334 individuals in open intimate friendships (polyamory; 179 women, 155 men; sexual orientation not specified) 46 individuals in closed intimate friendships (sexually exclusive to the group; polyfidelity; 24 women, 22 men; sexual orientation not specified)	None	Referrals Ads in an alternative newspaper, a liberal magazine, and a magazine containing book reviews Snowball sampling
Ramirez & Brown, 2010	89 gay men in open relationships[b]	81 gay men in monogamous relationships	Referrals Ads in gay newspapers Links on websites including that of a gay counseling service Gay social venues Gay organizations
Ritchie & Barker, 2006	N/A	None	Text taken from polyamory websites, online discussion groups, message boards, and e-mail lists
Rubin, 1982	41 (opposite-sex) couples in sexually open marriage (sexual orientation not specified) 24 separated/divorced (opposite-sex) couples previously in sexually open marriage (sexual orientation not specified)	41 (opposite-sex) couples in monogamous marriage (sexual orientation not specified) 24 separated/divorced (opposite-sex) couples previously in monogamous marriage (sexual orientation not specified) Matched on stage in family life cycle, education, occupation, income, marital status	Referrals Ads in psychology newsletters Psychology conventions Snowball sampling
Rubin & Adams, 1986	34 (opposite-sex) couples in sexually open marriage (sexual orientation not specified)	39 (opposite-sex) couples in monogamous marriage (sexual orientation not specified) Matched in Rubin, 1982	Participants from Rubin, 1982
Smith & Smith, 1970	503 members of sexual freedom groups and attendees at related gatherings (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	None	100 to 125 private parties associated with 16 sexual freedom groups

(*Continued*)

Table 2. *Continued*

Study	Nonmonogamous Sample	Comparison Group	Recruitment
Twichell, 1974	41 members of sexual freedom groups (22 men and 19 women; sexual orientation not specified)	31 college students (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	Sexual party/encounter/discussion groups
Varni, 1974	16 swinging (opposite-sex) couples (sexual orientation not specified)	None	Ads in an underground newspaper indicating an interest in swinging
Viwatpanich, 2010	3 (opposite-sex) swinging couples (sexual orientation not specified)	None	Contact list on a website
Wagner, Remien, & Carballo-Diéguez, 2000	18 same-sex male couples in open relationships of mixed-HIV status (sexual orientation not specified)	19 same-sex male couples in monogamous relationships of mixed-HIV status (sexual orientation not specified) 26 same-sex male nonconsensually nonmonogamous couples (sexual orientation not specified)	Referrals Ads in AIDS-related newsletters Fliers at gay/AIDS organizations
Watson, 1981	19 (opposite-sex) couples in sexually open marriage (sexual orientation not specified) 20 secondary partners (8 men, 12 women; sexual orientation not specified) 13 divorced/separated individuals previously in sexually open marriage (sex and sexual orientation not specified)	None	Snowball sampling

Note. Participant samples are categorized as nonmonogamous samples and comparison groups as relevant to this review rather than by the authors' designations (e.g., studies comparing two types of consensual nonmonogamy are recorded as having no control group). Sex and sexual orientation not placed in brackets when sample was recruited specifically for these characteristics or was grouped this way for analyses. Unpublished studies have been excluded from the table.

[a]The authors of this study describe their sample as including four heterosexual couples; however, they later specify that at least three of the participants identified as bisexual, invalidating this earlier classification.

[b]The authors of these studies describe their participants as gay; however, they do not specify what criteria were used to categorize them as gay (e.g., identification, a cutoff on the Kinsey scale).

blackmailed (Viwatpanich, 2010). Thus, the relation between consensual nonmonogamy and psychological well-being merits careful review.

We begin this review by describing indicators that the psychological well-being of consensual nonmonogamists is similar to that of monogamists. We then discuss a small number of ways research has suggested that consensual nonmonogamists might fare better than monogamists, before discussing a few ways research has suggested that consensual nonmonogamists fare worse. Finally, we discuss some research on the psychological well-being of consensual nonmonogamists that has produced conflicting results.

Similarities Between Consensual Nonmonogamists and Monogamists

Research on the psychological well-being and personality characteristics of consensual nonmonogamists frequently finds that consensual nonmonogamists do not differ from monogamists or that their scores on standardized tests fall within the normal range. Studies comparing individuals who practice or who have practiced a variety of forms of consensual nonmonogamy to monogamists or other comparison groups (e.g., college students) have found that these groups do not differ on a large number of important psychological characteristics. These characteristics include work satisfaction, authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, philosophy of nature, internal–external control of reinforcement, alienation, life satisfaction, depression, personal fulfillment, stability of mood, ability to refuse unwanted drinks, somatization, obsession–compulsion, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, anxiety, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, psychoticism, hopelessness, and the perception that one is well-liked, warm, and affectionate (Jenks, 1986, as cited in Jenks, 1998; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Murstein et al., 1985; Parsons, Starks, DuBois, Grov, & Golub, 2013; Twichell, 1974; Wagner, Remien, & Carballo-Diéguez, 2000). Similarly, individuals in sexually open marriages have scores in the normal range for self-esteem, neuroticism, and each of the 18 scales of the California Personality Inventory (Buunk, 1980; Gough, 1957; Watson, 1981).

Indicators of Greater Psychological Well-Being

There is some indication that swinging is associated with greater psychological well-being in some domains, including the excitement that they experience in their lives, and the extent to which they feel connected to society and close to their friends. A small number

of studies have found evidence that swinging is associated with increased levels of excitement and decreased levels of boredom (φs = 0.03 to 0.20;[3] Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Gilmartin, 1974; Levitt, 1988; Murstein et al., 1985). It is perhaps unsurprising that swinging would be a source of excitement, as it is a culturally "deviant" activity. However, given the deviant nature of swinging, one might also expect that swingers would feel alienated from society and therefore lack social norms. This does not appear to be the case. Instead, swinging husbands have reported lower levels of anomie than husbands in a comparison group ($\Phi_c = 0.21$; Gilmartin, 1974). Indeed, swinging appears to provide some individuals with a close social network; swingers in the same study reported closer relationships with their friends than did members of the comparison group (φs = 0.29 to 0.41). However, it should be noted that swingers in this study also reported less close relationships with their relatives. Therefore, it may be the case that swingers seek more social interactions from their friends because they are less able to receive this support from their families. Nonetheless, these studies raise the possibility that consensual nonmonogamy might provide some individuals with both excitement and community.

Indicators of Poorer Psychological Well-Being

A few studies have found that consensual nonmonogamy is associated with three indicators of poorer psychological well-being. Specifically, some research has found that consensual nonmonogamists had less happy childhoods (Φ_cs = 0.17 to 0.23; Gilmartin, 1974), more distant relationships with their parents (Φ_cs = 0.18 to 0.44; Gilmartin, 1974; Twichell, 1974), and a greater history of counseling (e.g., $\Phi_c = 0.20$; Gilmartin, 1974; Murstein et al., 1985; Smith & Smith, 1970). Each of these findings suggests that past psychological distress is associated with consensual nonmonogamy. Some qualifications of these findings should be noted, however, including some exceptions to these findings, some alternative explanations, and the implications of the timing of when participants appeared to have experienced distress.

First, in the study where swingers reported less happiness in childhood than the comparison group, it was also the case that swingers reported equal happiness in adulthood as those in the comparison group (Gilmartin, 1974). Second, as suggested by the author of this study, individuals who had distant parent–child relationships might have been more likely to swing because their distant parent–child relationships had reduced the likelihood that they had internalized their parents' traditional values as children, not because swinging is an indicator of some underlying psychopathology (Gilmartin, 1974).

Third, there were no differences in history of counseling for women in the two studies that analyzed the results of women separately (e.g., $\Phi_c = 0.12$). In addition, the author of one of these studies noted that none of the swinging men were in counseling at the time of the study. Similarly, researchers classified participants in the third study as consensual nonmonogamists because of their membership in sexual freedom groups; however, the majority of these participants who had received counseling had done so prior to their involvement in sexual freedom groups. This suggests that consensually nonmonogamous behavior did not directly cause these individuals to need counseling. There are a number of alternative explanations for why consensual nonmonogamists might have a greater history of counseling. For example, consensual nonmonogamists might be more willing to discuss personal problems with counselors because they have a higher degree of openness. Researchers have not yet studied the reasons that consensual nonmonogamists have sought counseling; this area should be investigated in future research.

Overall, it seems that indicators of poorer psychological well-being predate individuals' participation in consensual nonmonogamy. No research has consistently found that consensual nonmonogamists have poorer psychological well-being while engaging in consensual nonmonogamy. Therefore, while it is possible that psychological distress increases the chances that an individual will engage in consensual nonmonogamy, this distress is limited in duration and there is no evidence that engaging in consensual nonmonogamy causes such distress.

Areas of Conflict

Two of the most interesting indicators of psychological well-being that have been examined in studies on consensual nonmonogamists—self-reported happiness and scores on the MMPI (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940)—have produced conflicting results. Moreover, the results of research on drug use among consensual nonmonogamists vary depending on the type of drug use, type of consensual nonmonogamy, and comparison group examined. In this section, we review these results and discuss possible sources of inconsistency.

A simple measure of an individual's psychological well-being is his or her happiness. As noted earlier, swingers in at least one study did not differ from individuals in a comparison group in terms of happiness (Φ_cs = 0.02 to 0.06; Gilmartin, 1974); however, swingers in a more recent study reported significantly more happiness than did individuals in a nationally representative sample ($\varphi = 0.02$; Bergstrand & Williams, 2000). This discrepancy could be attributed to the possibility

[3]Where reported in text, ranges of effect sizes reflect only the effect sizes that we could calculate for this review and therefore may not reflect the sizes of all effects found in the studies we reviewed.

that a nationally representative sample is an inappropriate comparison group, given that the swingers in this study were likely to differ on several demographic variables. For example, the sample of swingers was more highly educated than the comparison group (see National Opinion Research Center, 1983–1991). Moreover, the effect size for this finding was small, $\varphi = 0.02$, but this difference was significant because of the study's large sample size (1,092 swingers and 35,028 participants in the comparison group). However, in a third study, husbands who had previously swung also reported a greater sense of personal happiness than did husbands who had never swung (Murstein et al., 1985). Despite some inconsistency in these findings, each of these studies suggests that consensual nonmonogamists are at least as happy as monogamists.

Two studies examining the MMPI scores of consensual nonmonogamists have found conflicting results (Duckworth & Levitt, 1985; Twichell, 1974). Whereas the consensual nonmonogamists in Twichell's (1974) study scored within the normal range for all but one of the scales (the masculinity–femininity scale for men), half of the swingers in Duckworth and Levitt's (1985) study had elevated scores on at least one clinical scale and another five had elevated scores on at least one validity scale. It has been suggested that Duckworth and Levitt's findings should be regarded with some skepticism given that their sample was small and homogenous (Jenks, 1998); however, Twichell's (1974) participant sample was only slightly larger and more diverse. Unfortunately, neither of these studies can be seen as highly representative, and thus the inconsistency in their findings is not easily resolved.

Some have suggested that swinging individuals would more likely be problem drinkers (e.g., Duckworth & Levitt, 1985). However, it appears that the opposite might be true. Swingers have reported drinking less at social gatherings than a comparison group (Φs = 0.17 to 0.21; Gilmartin, 1974). It is possible, however, that this question did not adequately assess participants' drinking habits, as it was restricted to drinking at social gatherings. There is presently a lack of research on the nonsocial drinking behavior of swingers.

More recent research has provided some support for the proposition that consensual nonmonogamists use drugs more often than monogamists; however, the research suggests they are no more likely to use alcohol and are equally or less likely to use drugs as compared to single men or nonconsensually nonmonogamous individuals, respectively (e.g., $\varphi = 0.13$, where consensually nonmonogamous individuals are less likely to use drugs; Conley et al., 2012; Parsons et al., 2013). Unfortunately, in these studies the authors assessed only whether participants had used drugs during a specified time (during the past three months or during a sexual encounter) and did not distinguish between level of substance use and addiction. Although those who use substances more frequently are more likely to have substance use problems, without measures of impaired control over substance use, social impairment due to substance use, or risky substance use, we cannot conclude that any participant's drug or alcohol use was pathological (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Relationship Quality

Just as consensual nonmonogamists are seen as having poor psychological well-being (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Hymer & Rubin, 1982; Knapp, 1975; Page, 2004; Twichell, 1974), consensual nonmonogamy is itself widely believed to be an indicator of poor relationship adjustment (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Hymer & Rubin, 1982). In this section we review studies on the quality of consensually nonmonogamous relationships to determine whether empirical research supports this view. We begin by discussing a measure of overall relationship adjustment, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). We then discuss several specific indicators of relationship quality, including relationship satisfaction and happiness, jealousy, sex, and relationship longevity.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale

One of the most common ways that researchers have evaluated relationship quality among consensual nonmonogamists is by administering the DAS. The DAS provides a general score for relationship adjustment as well as scores for four subscales: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. *Dyadic satisfaction* assesses general satisfaction with relationships and, as suggested by Kurdek and Schmitt's (1986) description of the scale, indicates the degree of tension in relationships. For example, items include "How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?" and "How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?" *Dyadic cohesion* assesses how often couples engage in activities together; *dyadic consensus* assesses the extent to which couples agree on important issues; and *affectional expression* assesses the extent to which partners are in agreement concerning demonstrations of affection and sex.

The most common finding is that consensually nonmonogamous and monogamous couples do not differ on the DAS. In two studies of gay men and in one study of married opposite-sex couples, those in open relationships did not significantly differ from those in monogamous relationships on the total DAS score (e.g., $d = 0.20$, $\Phi_c = 0.04$; Kurdek, 1988; LaSala, 2004; Rubin, 1982). In general, studies have also found that gay men in open relationships and gay men in monogamous relationships do not significantly differ in their scores

on the four subscales (ds = 0.02 to 0.55; Hoff, Beougher, Chakravarty, Darbes, & Neilands, 2010; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Kurdek, 1988; LaSala, 2004; Ramirez & Brown, 2010; Wagner et al., 2000). The exception to this pattern is that two studies have produced conflicting findings on the dyadic satisfaction subscale: in one study, couples in open relationships scored higher (d = 0.43; but this difference was nonsignificant when couples who engaged in extradyadic sex were excluded from the monogamous group; LaSala, 2004), whereas in the other study monogamous couples scored higher (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986).

Adherence to the social contract of a relationship appears to be an important determinant of dyadic adjustment. In two studies researchers found that gay male couples who were in open relationships or who adhered to their monogamous relationship agreement had higher dyadic adjustment, as measured by the DAS, as compared to gay male couples in which at least one partner had broken the agreement to be monogamous (ds = 0.35 to 0.57; LaSala, 2004; Wagner et al., 2000). This finding held for all utilized subscales of the DAS except for the dyadic cohesion subscale (d = 0.12). Thus, it would appear that, at least for gay men, it is not whether a couple has extradyadic relationships that matters but whether they abide by their relationship agreement (see also Hosking, 2013).

In general, studies using the DAS suggest that consensual nonmonogamists experience equal levels of relationship adjustment as compared to monogamists. There are, however, some discrepancies in the findings of the studies using the dyadic satisfaction subscale. Relationship satisfaction is explored in more depth in the next section.

Relationship Satisfaction and Happiness

Generally, consensual nonmonogamists report high levels of relationship satisfaction and happiness, or levels that are at least on par with those reported by monogamists (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Buunk, 1980; Dixon, 1985; Gilmartin, 1974; Hosking, 2013; Murstein et al., 1985; Ramey, 1975; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Adams, 1986). For example, in a study of male swingers, the majority of participants rated their marital happiness as high, giving it a 6 or 7 out of 7 (Dixon, 1985). Further, these participants indicated that if, hypothetically, they had not already married their spouses, they would marry them now.

When compared to monogamists and general samples, six studies found that consensual nonmonogamists had equal levels of relationship satisfaction or happiness (φ and Φ_cs = 0.07 to 0.14, ds = 0.16 to 0.41; Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Gilmartin, 1974; Hosking, 2013; Murstein et al., 1985; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Adams, 1986), one study found that consensual nonmonogamists had slightly (but significantly) higher relationship happiness (φ = 0.01; Bergstrand & Williams, 2000), and one study found that they had lower relationship satisfaction (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986). Moreover, in two studies, the majority of consensually nonmonogamous participants reported that adopting a consensually nonmonogamous relationship style had improved their marital happiness or satisfaction (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Knapp, 1976). Taken together, studies on marital satisfaction and happiness suggest that the quality of consensually nonmonogamous relationships is neither better nor worse than that of monogamous ones.

Jealousy

Jealousy is common in consensually nonmonogamous relationships (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Buunk, 1980; Smith & Smith, 1970; Watson, 1981). Estimates of the proportion of consensual nonmonogamists who experience jealousy have ranged from just under one-third of the consensually nonmonogamous participants in one study to all consensually nonmonogamous participants in another (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Watson, 1981). Jealousy is also the most commonly reported reason given for why swingers stop swinging (Denfeld, 1974). Importantly, however, studies have suggested that consensual nonmonogamists do not experience any more jealousy in their relationships than do monogamists (Φ = 0.05; Rubin & Adams, 1986) or that they perceive themselves as less jealous than others (d = 0.38; Jenks, 1985). Consensual nonmonogamists also commonly report that jealousy diminishes with time (de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Murstein et al., 1985; Smith & Smith, 1970) and in response to opening the relationship (Ramey, 1975). As previously noted, however, participants' self-reports of how feelings have changed over time should be treated with some skepticism.

There is reason to believe that consensual nonmonogamists differ from monogamists in terms of their perspective on jealousy. Many consensual nonmonogamists do not see jealousy as an inevitable response to a partner's extradyadic relationships but instead report positive reactions to such relationships (de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Easton & Hardy, 2009; Ramey, 1975; Taormino, 2008). In a study on intimate friendship (which could be described as polyamory, although the study predates this term), 60% of participants reported having had positive reactions in response to their partner's extradyadic sex, and only 15% reported a somewhat or very negative response (Ramey, 1975). Polyamorists have termed such feelings of empathetic joy for their partners "compersion" or "frubbly" (Easton & Hardy, 2009; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Taormino, 2008). Consensual nonmonogamists also commonly see jealousy as something that is manageable rather than intolerable (de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Easton & Hardy, 2009), and many consensual nonmonogamists see jealousy as a healthy experience that can

contribute to personal development and bring a couple closer together (Anapol, 1992; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Easton & Hardy, 2009).

Sexual Satisfaction and Frequency

Given that most forms of consensual nonmonogamy have a sexual component, it is important to ask whether extradyadic relationships affect sex within primary or preexisting relationships. The majority of studies suggest that there is no negative effect. In five studies, four of which compared gay men in open relationships to gay men in monogamous relationships and one of which compared opposite-sex monogamous and nonmonogamous couples of all kinds (including nonconsensually nonmonogamous couples), no significant differences in sexual satisfaction were found ($prs = -0.01$ to -0.10, $ds = 0.09$ to 0.36; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; LaSala, 2004; Ramirez & Brown, 2010; Wagner et al., 2000). Three studies have also found that there is no difference in the frequency of sex within the primary relationship when comparing these consensually nonmonogamous and monogamous groups ($prs = -0.02$ to -0.04, $d = 0.00$; Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Wagner et al., 2000). One study found that female bisexual swingers had sex with their husbands more frequently than the national average and that they generally reported high sexual satisfaction in their marriages (Dixon, 1984). Similarly, male swingers reported a high level of satisfaction with sex, both in and outside of their marriages (Dixon, 1985).

Some consensual nonmonogamists have even reported that having extradyadic relationships has improved sex within a primary relationship (Palson & Palson, 1972; Ramey, 1975; Viwatpanich, 2010). For example, 55% of participants in one study reported that the quality of sex with their primary partner had improved since they began practicing intimate friendship, whereas only 1% reported that it diminished (Ramey, 1975). Overall, it appears that for most couples, consensual nonmonogamy does not negatively affect sex within a primary or preexisting relationship.

Relationship Longevity and Divorce

If consensual nonmonogamy had a strongly negative effect on relationships, then one might expect that consensual nonmonogamists would experience elevated rates of separation and divorce. Indeed, some consensual nonmonogamists have reported that consensual nonmonogamy could or has threatened their relationship, or that it had actually led to separation or divorce (Levitt, 1988; Viwatpanich, 2010). Further, in one study, more swingers reported a history of divorce than did those in a comparison group (Gilmartin, 1974), and significantly more ex-swingers in a second study had a history of divorce when compared to the same group ($\Phi s = 0.23$ to 0.36; Murstein et al., 1985). However, the implications of these findings are unclear. For example, none of the divorces in the first study took place *after* a participant had begun swinging (Gilmartin, 1974). Therefore, swinging itself did not cause divorce in this sample; however, some of the participants in this study might have divorced because their desire to swing was incompatible with their previous spouse's desire not to. That is to say, discussing the possibility of engaging in swinging and disagreement on this subject could have led to divorce for some of these participants. Moreover, consensual nonmonogamists also frequently report that consensual nonmonogamy has strengthened their relationships or has kept their marriages together (Levitt, 1988; Ramey, 1975).

Research on past divorce and separation among consensual nonmonogamists can be supplemented by research on the extent to which consensually nonmonogamous relationships last over time. Two studies have taken a longitudinal approach to examining the relationship stability of those in sexually open marriages. In one of these studies, participants in sexually open marriages were no more likely than those in monogamous marriages to have separated after five years ($\Phi = 0.17$), and in the other study all 38 couples in sexually open marriages were still together after two years (Rubin & Adams, 1986; Watson, 1981). However, it is possible that five years is not enough time to evaluate such major changes in the lives of participants. Similarly, studies that have reported how long gay men had been in consensually nonmonogamous or monogamous relationships have found no difference between these groups ($ds = 0.03$ to 0.33; Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Parsons et al., 2013), or found that open relationships had lasted longer (e.g., $d = 0.51$; Hosking, 2013; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Ramirez & Brown, 2010). However, in at least one of these studies, the men in open relationships were also significantly older than those in monogamous relationships (Ramirez & Brown, 2010). Moreover, open relationships amongst gay men might appear to last longer because it is only later in a relationship that some men might negotiate nonmonogamy (however, see Blasband & Peplau, 1985).

Relationship stability might also be evaluated based on the intentions of those in the relationship. Three studies have examined relationship commitment, each specifically pertaining to that of consensually nonmonogamous gay men. Of these three studies, two found that gay men in consensually nonmonogamous relationships were equally committed to their partners, and one found that they were less committed when compared to gay men in monogamous relationships (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Hoff et al., 2010; Hosking, 2013).

Overall, these studies provide little evidence that consensual nonmonogamy leads to higher rates of separation or divorce than monogamy. Self-report data

suggest that the effects of consensual nonmonogamy on relationship stability are diverse. However, to provide a more objective examination of these effects, more extensive longitudinal research must be conducted.

Conclusions and Discussion

Given the methodological issues discussed, we think it is important to use caution when drawing conclusions about how consensual nonmonogamy relates to psychological well-being and relationship quality. In some ways, the literature does not paint a clear picture of the well-being and relationship quality of consensual nonmonogamists. For example, although studies have suggested that swingers have less happy childhoods and a greater history of counseling than monogamists (Gilmartin, 1974; Murstein et al., 1985; Smith & Smith, 1970), they appear to be equally as or more happy as adults (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Gilmartin, 1974; Murstein et al., 1985). Similar discrepancies are found in research using the MMPI, and on the relationship satisfaction of gay men in open relationships (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Duckworth & Levitt, 1985; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; LaSala, 2004; Twichell, 1974). Nonetheless, the majority of research suggests that the psychological well-being and the quality of the relationships of consensual nonmonogamists is not significantly different from that of monogamists. This is evident in terms of psychological well-being, overall relationship adjustment, jealousy, sexual satisfaction, and relationship stability. Thus, we can conclude that the view that consensual nonmonogamy is harmful to psychological well-being or to relationship adjustment is not supported by the extant literature.

To be clear, given the nature of null hypothesis testing and the methodological issues that we have discussed, we can only conclude that there is an absence of evidence that consensual nonmonogamists differ from monogamists in these domains. We cannot conclude that there is strong evidence that there are no differences between these groups. Indeed, some of the effect sizes for null findings in the research are moderate in size (e.g., those in open relationships in Wagner and colleagues' 2000 study were nonsignificantly higher in dyadic cohesion with an effect size of $d = 0.55$). This suggests that some null findings might have occurred simply because of inadequate power. As the quality and quantity of research in this field improves, researchers can look for evidence that these groups do not differ in the form of small average effect sizes across multiple studies and null findings with large p values across diverse samples and measures. However, only when appropriate comparison groups and methodologies are used would such conclusions be appropriate.

Regardless of whether differences between consensual nonmonogamists and monogamists are completely absent, it is clear that many consensual nonmonogamists are likely happy with their lives and satisfied with their relationships. Given that many monogamists are also likely satisfied with their lives and relationships, this suggests, from a theoretical perspective, that relationship structure is not a particularly powerful predictor of psychological and relational well-being. In support of this suggestion, the significant differences that were described in this review were generally small in size. Indeed, the largest effect sizes reported in this review were not found when comparing different relationship structures, but when comparing individuals who adhered to their relationship agreements to those who had not. Thus, the most important causes and consequences of individual and relational well-being are likely variables that are unrelated to consensual nonmonogamy. This is consistent with established theoretical work on individual and relational well-being, which generally examines variables that are unrelated to relationship structure (e.g., Diener, 1984; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore researchers who wish to predict psychological well-being and relationship quality, and counselors who wish to understand these topics, would benefit most from examining the variables outlined in these theories rather than attempting to predict these variables based on relationship structure.

The inconsistency of some findings can itself be considered an insight into consensual nonmonogamy. Using similar samples and identical measures, researchers were able to reach different conclusions about the well-being of consensual nonmonogamists (e.g., Duckworth & Levitt, 1985; Twichell, 1974). This suggests that consensual nonmonogamists are not all alike, and consensual nonmonogamy, in each of its many forms, has differential effects that depend on who is participating in it. As research on consensual nonmonogamy continues, researchers might consider examining the social factors that influence how individuals react to consensual nonmonogamy. Indeed, as social norms and perceptions change, the effects of consensual nonmonogamy might also be expected to change.

Future research should also increase the diversity of participant samples. More research is needed cross-culturally; all but one (Viwatpanich, 2010) of the studies reviewed here were conducted in Western industrialized countries. More diversity is needed in intersectional research; although there continues to be a growing body of literature on the open relationships of gay men (e.g., Blasband & Peplau, 1985; Hoff et al., 2010; Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Kurdek, 1988; LaSala, 2004; Ramirez & Brown, 2010; Wagner et al., 2000), lesbian open relationships have largely been ignored (for exceptions, see Munson & Stelboum, 1999; West, 1996). Future research should pay particular attention to how individuals of different genders and sexual orientations, especially women with differing sexual

orientations, experience consensual nonmonogamy. More research is needed on certain kinds of consensual nonmonogamy as well; despite great popular interest in polyamory (see http://polyinthemedia.blogspot.ca/ for a record of the coverage of polyamory in the media since 2005), there is a dearth of research on polyamorists' psychological well-being and relationship quality. As noted earlier, swingers and men in gay open relationships often argue that emotional involvement in extradyadic relationships would be detrimental to their relationships with their primary partners (Blasband & Peplau, 1985; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Denfeld, 1974). It is therefore particularly important for researchers to conduct research that specifically examines consensually nonmonogamous relationships that are loving in nature even outside of a dyad. Moreover, future research should take into account more specific aspects of consensually nonmonogamous relationship styles. For example, researchers might examine the effects of particular agreements (such as "don't ask don't tell" policies) or of partners having an unequal number of other partners.

Overcoming the challenges of research on consensual nonmonogamy will require much effort and innovation on the part of researchers. The challenge of establishing causal relationships can in part be addressed by conducting longitudinal research and by having closely matched comparison groups. Longitudinal research would also allow researchers to examine how individuals adjust to consensual nonmonogamy in the long term. Researchers who wish to recruit participants before they begin engaging in consensual nonmonogamy can locate participants through websites, organizations, classes, and forums that provide support for individuals interested in trying consensual nonmonogamy (e.g., http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LovingMore_lovelist; http://www.polyamory.com; http://www.polyamory.org; http://www.polyamoryonline.org/smf; http://www.polygroups.com; http://www.lifestyleweekends.com/). Closely matched individuals for comparison groups could also be recruited from the waiting lists for these types of classes (e.g., http://www.askingforwhatyouwant.com; http://www.lovewithoutlimits.com/coaching; http://www.spyceyspyce.com/school/classes/nonmonogamy-classes.html). To gain more representative participant samples, researchers could recruit large samples of participants from the general population, which would incidentally include consensual nonmonogamists (e.g., Conley, Moors, et al., 2013), rather than specifically target consensual nonmonogamists through organizations, ads, or snowball sampling. This type of recruitment strategy could also increase the validity of self-report data by de-emphasizing participants' sexual identities and thereby reducing stereotype threat (see McGlone & Aronson, 2006; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Social media or online recruitment services such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (http://www.mturk.com) could assist researchers in this process.

With the exception of research on the open relationships of gay men, researchers have conducted few studies on the psychological well-being and relationship quality of consensual nonmonogamists since the 1980s. As revealed by Barker and Langdridge's (2010) review, recent research has instead focused on topics such as defining and distinguishing consensual nonmonogamies, the ethics of consensual nonmonogamy, relationship structures (e.g., triads, networks, hierarchies within relationships) and rules and boundaries within relationships. Such topics are of great interest to anyone wishing to understand the dynamics of consensual nonmonogamy. However, as made clear by the current review, past research on the psychological well-being and relationship quality correlates of consensual nonmonogamy has not provided conclusive results. Therefore, it is important that this research continue.

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