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SOCL 326: Sexuality and Society

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**Introduction**

In this annotated bibliography you will find information on nonmonogamous relationships and swinging. I will discuss how they develop and affect individuals involved, and how nonmonogamous relationships are affecting society. In my Sociology 326 course, Sex in Society, I have learned many new concepts throughout the semester. One thing that interested me and I wanted to learn more about is nonmonogamous relationships and swinging within society. This topic specifically interests me since it is something I don't have previous knowledge of. I am interested to know more about how nonmonogamous relationships work in society, how they affect society positively and negatively, and the stereotypes society places on this relationship style. The majority of my sources are scholarly and were found through the Greenwood Library.

**Definitions, Effects on Relationships, and Nonmonogamous vs Monogamous**

To learn about nonmonogamous relationships we must know the basic knowledge and definitions of consensual nonmonogamy and swinging. Consensual nonmonogamy is defined as having more than one partner. It is a relationship style where both individuals in the relationship decide to not be monogamous. Consensual nonmonogamy is considered an umbrella term and includes polyamory, swinging, and open relationships. Conley, et al. (2017) explain that swinging is when two individuals are exclusively romantically committed to each other but seek out other sexual relationships together. This can include switching partners with another couple or group sex. Couples that engage in swinging generally have agreements that it is just an open sexual relationship and not an emotional or romantic relationship. Couples that engage in swinging often attend social events such as swingers clubs or conventions. Couples that engage in swinging may pursue a sexual relationship with the other partner present or on their own.

“What do we know about consensual non-monogamy” posted by Science Direct provides insight into non-monogamous couples in our society. The article stated that “at least 5% of the North American population is currently in a consensually non-monogamous relationship of some form, and there is little difference in measures of relationship quality compared to monogamous relationships.” Swingers are characterized as attending organized events where they have sex with people other than their original partner. In open relationships, participants have permission to have sex with partners outside of the relationship. Polyamory involves having multiple emotional and/or sexual relationships. The article mentions that men's higher interest and engagement may be a result of sexual double standards and the social stigma women risk by engaging.

“A Therapist's Guide to Consensual Nonmonogamy: Polyamory, Swinging, and Open Marriage” from the Greenwood Library discusses what consensual Nonmonogamy is and looks like in society today. This book was written by a therapist and is broken down into chapters each focusing on different categories. “Consensual nonmonogamy is a term that has developed to describe an emerging model responding to human and cultural change. To understand nonmonogamy, we must understand monogamy and what has happened culturally to bring about its opposite.” (Orion, 2018). This book discusses the ways that society has changed and is not solely monogamous relationships. Those who choose to be in a nonmonogamous relationship often receive professional help while struggling with jealousy, communication skills, and creating healthy boundaries. This book helps individuals understand how to navigate a nonconsensual relationship together and in society. Both Orion, R. (2018) and Conley et al. (2017) define consensual nonmonogamous relationships and swinging in the same context. Orion, R. (2018) discusses the negatives that can come along with being in a nonmonogamous relationship while Conley et al. (2017) did not.

**Research About Consensual Nonmonogamous Relationships**

Research conducted by Girard & Brownlee (2015) shows that the psychological well-being and personality characteristics of consensual nonmonogamists do not differ from monogamists. Girard & Brownlee mention clients should not engage in open relationships if they have ever experienced unhappy childhoods, attachment issues, and abandonment issues.

Research from Rubel & Bogaert (2015), looks at connections between consensual nonmonogamy, psychological well-being, and relationship quality. This article also discusses three types of consensual non-monogamy. Those include swinging, open relationships, and polyamory. Both Rubel & Bogaert (2015) and Girard & Brownlee (2015) found that nonmonogy couples have the same psychological well-being and relationships as monogamous couples. The article discusses that individuals who engage in swinging and nonmonogamous relationships do so for self-pleasure, satisfying their partner, and for the fun and enjoyment of sex.

“A Mixed-Methods Analysis” from Sizemore & Olmstead (2018) found that there has been an increase in research conducted on nonmonogamous relationships over the past decade, but that willingness to complete surveys was low. Through their responses, they were able to conclude that men were more willing to engage in nonmonogamy than women.

Research from “Considering diversity among consensually non-monogamous relationships” suggests that there are visible patterns in nonmonogamous relationships. They found that those that engage in nonmonogamous relationships are predominantly white, middle-class, college-educated individuals between the ages of 30-50.

A study completed by Rubin & Adams (1986), followed 82 couples to find out if there were differences in marital stability between the nonmonogamous relationships and the monogamous ones. Following the same people from 1978, 32 of the 39 sexually exclusive couples were still together. Of the 23 couples who were sexually open in 1978, two couples had changed from sexual openness to sexual exclusivity. The 32 couples were originally exclusive, and one couple changed to a sexually open marriage. In addition, data on marital happiness, extramarital sex, jealousy, changeableness, job change, and additional education are reported, and a comparison between the two groups is made. Both higher education for women and outside work for women were associated with marital instability.

People engaged in nonmonogamy and monogamy report equal levels of relationship satisfaction, trust, commitment, and psychological health. They also experience unique relationship benefits, such as getting a wider variety of needs met and promoting personal growth. Research from Rubin & Adams (1986) found that there are many reasons people engage in open relationships. Those reasons include sexual exploration, separating love and sex, variety, and fantasy fulfillment.

**Attitudes and How Nonmonogamy Relationships Are Viewed and Affect Society**

Ka et al. (2020) found that conceptual nonmonogamy relationships have increased due to sociosexual behaviors. Their research was conducted through 140 participants in society through social media. It was found that sociosexual behavior affects attitudes toward nonmonogamous relationships. It was shown that when individuals have low levels of avoidant attachment the relationship between sociosexual behavior and attitudes toward nonmonogamy is higher.

*A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues* was published in 2020 and surveyed 140 general population adults who were recruited through social media. Coles (2022) believes that consensual nonmonogamy relationships have increased over recent years and could be linked to sociosexual behavior and attachment issues. The research showed that when individuals have low or moderate levels of avoidant attachment then the relationship between sociosexual behavior and attitudes toward consensual nonmonogamy is strengthened and higher. Sociosexual behavior also shows higher engagement in non-monogamous relationships. Couples that have highly secure attachments allow engagement in nonmonogamous relationships.

Dr. Viviana Coles & Associates discusses the assumptions made by society about couples that engage in swinging. According to *A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues,* assumptions about couples that swing are that they are not happy in their current relationship, swinging will lead to divorce, couples that swing don't have sex with their original partner, couples that swing are sex addicts, and couples that swing think that cheating is ok. All of these assumptions are stated by individuals who engage in swinging and have a nonmonogamous relationship. The therapist who wrote this article states that swinging is not for everyone and should not be used as a method to save a relationship.

People engaged in nonmonogamous relationships report stigmatizing experiences based on their relationship styles, such as rejection from family members and criticisms. Due to the fears concerning disclosure, many people hide their relationship style from close friends and family out of fear of judgment.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, consensual nonmonogamy and swinging are relationship styles that any gender and sexuality can engage in. People engage in nonmonogamous relationships for various reasons, and motivation for this lifestyle can vary. It's important to remember that nonmonogamy is a broad term that encompasses different relationship structures, including polyamory, open relationships, and swinging.

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