

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

Three in a bed: The intricacies of multi-sex threesomes

Ryan Scoats

ORCID NUMBER 0000-0001-7594-7096

Doctor of Philosophy

September 2017

This Thesis has been completed as a requirement
for a postgraduate research degree of the University of Winchester.

DECLARATION AND COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the Thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

I confirm that this Thesis is entirely my own work

Copyright

Copyright © Ryan Scoats 2017 Three in a bed: The intricacies of multi-sex threesomes, University of Winchester, PhD Thesis, p. 1-223, ORCID 0000-0001-7594-7096

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement. Copies (by any process) either in full, or of extracts, may be made only in accordance with instructions given by the author. Details may be obtained from the RKE Centre, University of Winchester. This page must form part of any such copies made. Further copies (by any process) of copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the permission (in writing) of the author.

No profit may be made from selling, copying or licensing the author's work without further agreement.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many for their help throughout my PhD. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Eric Anderson. Since meeting him more than a decade ago he has altered my life in many ways. From my bachelors, to my PhD, he has always been there to offer a guiding hand as well as his friendship, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Mark McCormack, for stepping in at late notice to provide an incredible depth and breadth of comment and insight. Undoubtedly, many aspects of this thesis would not be what they are without his help.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all of the other PhD students and academics that I have been put in touch with via Eric and Mark's 'scholastic gang'. Through them, I have really felt like part of something bigger. Conversations and comments from them have surely helped shape this PhD as well as fostered my interest in sociology and scholarship in general.

Although all members of the group deserve some thanks, specifically I would like to highlight: Adam white; Stefan Robinson; Rory Magrath; Rachael Bullingham; Jana-Faye Jakumeit; Liam Wignall; and Florian Zsok.

A huge thanks also goes my mother and father who have supported my desire to study despite the potentially stigmatising nature of the topics I research.

I would also like to thank my friends for their help in finding me research participants, as well as keeping me grounded in worlds that are not purely academic.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Tamryn Renwick, who has always been available for love and support. I feel very lucky to have such an understanding person in my life, and I hope to be able to offer them the same encouragement during their studies.

University of Winchester

Abstract

Three in a Bed: The intricacies of multi-sex threesomes

Ryan Scoats

ORCID 0000-0001-7594-7096

Doctorate of Philosophy

May 2017

In recent years, the topic of threesomes has become more and more visible within the mainstream media. Threesomes now feature in a plethora of media pieces, television shows, films, and there are even mobile applications specifically catering for those looking to have threesomes. Despite this increased interest, however, academic research has somewhat neglected this area. Accordingly, this thesis presents the first qualitative study on both men and women's threesomes for more than 25 years. The research focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of threesomes within a contemporary context, investigating people's motivations for, experiences of, and attitudes to threesomes, from the perspective of those with actual experience.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 individuals (16 women, 12 men) who had ever engaged in a multi-sex threesome. Those having only engaged in all same-sex threesomes were excluded in order to provide a narrower focus for the study. Those heavily involved with sexual minority support groups, as well as swinging, were also excluded in an attempt to limit the particular biases that respondents from these groups can create. The target population were drawn from personal connections as well as via snowball sampling. The sample were mainly white, middle-class, and roughly half of them identified as heterosexual.

The findings suggest that threesomes are multi-faceted experiences with multiple purposes, meanings, and motivations. It is suggested that more inclusive attitudes towards those from sexual minorities, enhanced sexual freedoms for men and women, as well as societal expectations to explore new forms of sex, have diminished many of the stigmas around threesomes, thus enabling more people to be interested in them. It is also suggested that threesomes may simultaneously represent both a bolstering of, and a challenge to, the institution of monogamy.

Keywords: Consensual Non-Monogamy; Group Sex; Sexuality; Sexual Behaviour; Threesome

List of Contents

Declaration & Copyright Statement	1
Acknowledgments	2
Abstract	3
List of Contents	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	5
Chapter 2: Theorising Stigma and Social Change	12
Chapter 3: Monogamism	34
Chapter 4: Threesomes	52
Chapter 5: Methodology & Procedure	65
Chapter 6: Sexual Norms	78
Chapter 7: MMF Threesomes	95
Chapter 8: FFM Threesomes	115
Chapter 9: Jealousy & Communication	138
Chapter 10: Stigma & Changing Attitudes	153
Chapter 11: Discussion	175
List of References	191
Appendices	222

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Growing Visibility of Consensual Non-Monogamy

In recent years, consensual non-monogamy has become more visible to the general population. Consensual non-monogamy is an umbrella-term that encompasses many styles of negotiated, non-monogamous relationships: for example, open relationships, polyamory, and swinging. Although consensual non-monogamy is encapsulated within non-monogamy, it is also distinct from non-monogamy in that the extra-dyadic interactions have been agreed upon consensually, whereas non-monogamy is often used as shorthand for cheating or infidelity (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Increased media visibility (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Wosick-Correa, 2010) and academic research into consensual non-monogamy has steadily grown and expanded to look at a wide range of aspects within the field (Barker & Langdrige, 2010). A 'new burst of commentaries and debates every few months' (Barker & Langdrige, 2010, p. 749) have allowed more people to be exposed to alternative relationship styles.

The general population are now exposed to consensual non-monogamy through a multitude of sources, including popular entertainment, celebrity gossip, and the internet more generally. American television shows such as *Polyamory: Married and Dating* (Garcia, 2012) or *Sister Wives* (Gibbons, 2010) put a human face to unconventional types of relationships and allow viewers the opportunity to observe the ways in which people might organise them. Despite reality television being able to edit footage in order to create a non-existent reality, the shows still humanise the characters as relatively "normal" in most other respects. Elsewhere, in films such as *Short Bus* (Mitchell, 2006), fictional characters explore their sexuality and relationships; bringing others into a dyad or sometimes seeking exploration away from it. Well-known celebrities, such as Tilda Swinton, Will Smith, Ashton Kutcher, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie and many others are alleged to have practiced assorted forms of consensual non-monogamy at various times in their relationships, and to varying degrees of openness. The internet has also been of vital importance in allowing people to connect, engage, and learn about different relationship styles (Barker, 2005). Dating sites like *OK Cupid* now allow for open relationship and polyamorous statuses and *Facebook* allows one to identify as being in an open relationship (although not polyamorous).

Despite this surge in interest and exposure over recent years, consensual non-monogamy is far from a recent phenomenon. An increasing disillusion with traditional

gender roles, increased activity in men and women's social movements, and advancement in birth control technology created a platform from which sexual activity and relationships could be disentangled from procreation (Macklin, 1980). Often referred to as "the sexual revolution", the 1960s and 70s had a particularly profound effect on women's position in western society and acknowledged their capacities for sexual desire (Baumeister, 2004; Wouters, 1998). Rubin (2001) suggests that:

The late 1960s and early 1970s was a period of intense re-examination of interpersonal relationships, marriages, and family life. The social turmoil of the Vietnam war and movements demanding civil rights, Black power, women's liberation, and gay recognition served as catalysts for the public emergence of what popularly became known as *alternative lifestyles*. (p. 711).

These alternative lifestyles—referring to activities such as the communal living, swinging, and group sex—gained greater exposure to the wider western population and were seen as pregnant with possibility for social change. Some even viewed group sex as a political tool, disrupting the relationship status quo and attempting to dismantle what they viewed as the establishment (Frank, 2013).

Before the sexual revolution we can also find examples of consensual non-monogamy spanning different cultures and time periods. According to Zeitzen (2008), a large proportion and variety of religions and cultures at some historical point have endorsed forms of polygamy. As far back as 1929, scholars documented Melanesian and Polynesian indigenous rituals where husbands and wives would engage in group-sex away from their spouse, although perhaps still within audible distance (Malinowski, 1929). Predating western knowledge of these rituals, the mid 1800s in America saw communities such as Brook Farm (Hutchins, 2001) and the Oneida community (Muncy, 1974) adopting a communally polyamorous lifestyle (although not using the term polyamorous). A contemporary of Charles Darwin, Lewis Henry Morgan, additionally hypothesised that prehistoric times were characteristically sexually promiscuous, and both men and women would have had more than one primary sexual partner (Morgan, 1877, as cited in Ryan & Jethá, 2010). The purpose of these limited historical examples is not to suggest that consensual non-monogamy is a natural or a universally normal state for all, but to highlight that it is not necessarily new, and has a history of different appearances. Even if their manifestations may alter across time and culture, and their visibility has not always been apparent, we should accept that consensual non-monogamy is not new.

If we were to broaden our exploration away from the consensual to also include non-consensual non-monogamy in general, then we again see many contemporary instances demonstrating relationships and sex often including more than two people. Perhaps the most recognisable form of non-monogamy would be infidelity, although definitions of infidelity differ. Whilst the stigma attached to infidelity makes actual levels hard to determine (Anderson, 2012), drawing from a number of studies, Shackelford and Buss (1997) estimate levels of marital infidelity amongst American couples to range between 26% to 70% for women, and 33% to 75% for men. Tsapelas, Fisher, and Aron (2010) likewise argue that infidelity is widespread amongst both men and women, although motivations and attitudes towards particular forms of infidelity may differ (see Schmookler & Bursik, 2007).

Given the potentially non-consensual element of non-monogamy, practices may also encapsulate a number of coercive behaviours. In discussing the many forms of group sex, Katherine Frank (2013) highlights its utilisation for a variety of different purposes. She shows that group sex can be used as a form of bonding but also punishment, such as in the case of gang rape –a way for tribes to cement inter-tribal relations –or even a weapon used to psychologically damage others during military conflicts (e.g. the Bosnian war; the Nanjin massacre). Whilst these are extreme examples that may not be as commonplace as infidelity, they again highlight the cross-cultural prevalence of non-monogamy.

People engaging in consensual non-monogamy or non-monogamy may focus on bringing things into their existing relationship(s) or seeking things outside of it. They might be consensually organised or hidden from their partner and wider society in general. Motivations might be focused around sex, love, societal liberation, societal oppression, or anything in-between. Exploring these questions is, however, meaningless unless we accept that people have been engaging in these activities for millennia. It might have only recently entered into the West's collective knowledge, but by no means does this suggest that it will go away just as quickly.

It should now be clear, from looking at examples of consensual non-monogamy or just non-monogamy; many people are exploring things outside of dyadic (2-person) relationships. Much of the academic research in the area of consensual non-monogamy looks at what are often considered the three main forms: Open relationships/marriages; Swinging; and Polyamory. Within an open relationship/marriage, the primary relationship takes precedence, but members of the couple mutually agree upon methods that are acceptable in gaining sex outside of the relationship (Adam, 2006). If extra-relationship sex happens, then it should be enhancing of, rather than a detriment to, the primary

relationship (Rubin, 2001). Swinging is a generic term for those whom exchange sexual partners with other like-minded people; similar to open relationships, sex is the primary motivator, and the dyad remains of the utmost importance (Rubin, 2001). Polyamory, however, has a larger emotional focus and often 'involves having multiple relationships which may be emotionally close and/or sexual in nature' (Barker & Langdrige, 2010, p. 750). Other experiences of non-monogamy are, however, often under-researched, the act of threesomes being one of these.

The Current Study

My academic interest in threesomes started after my first personal experience with one. This experience, with my partner at the time and a comparative stranger, did not, however, develop as we had expected. Rather than the one-time exploration we expected it to be, we continued to meet with this new person over a number of months. Although we continued to have sex with them and our friendship developed further, no romantic attachments seemed to materialise. It was at this point that I turned to the academic literature to try and contextualise our experiences. All the literature on open relationships, swinging, and polyamory, whilst sharing similarities with our experience, did not, however, provide much further insight. Additionally, I found the literature on threesomes, specifically, to be minimal or extremely dated. When I started to speak to people, I was surprised by the amount of them who had actually had threesomes, as well as the rich wealth of differing experiences to our own. It was, consequently, decided that the gap in the literature and the large amounts of rich data seemingly available, warranted further research. This project is the culmination of said research.

The aim of this research was to understand the meanings of threesomes for people who engage in them. The last major study looking at threesomes (see Karlen, 1988) was conducted more than 25 years ago; but recent historical changes in attitudes related to gendered behaviours (Anderson, 2014; Worthen, 2014) and the increasing liberalisation towards sexual behaviours (Attwood, 2005; Bernstein, 2001; Sheff & Hammers, 2011), will have undoubtedly impacted upon contemporary threesome behaviours. This research therefore focused on developing an understanding within a contemporary context, investigating people's motivations for, experiences of, and attitudes to, threesomes.

Chapter two is concerned with the operation of stigma and contemporary social change. The work of Goffman (1963) on stigma and Rubin's (1984) charmed circle of

behaviours are utilised to demonstrate how the application of stigma constrain acceptable displays of behaviour. Stigma is not, however, static, and utilising Anderson's (2009) Inclusive Masculinity Theory, acceptable gender displays and sexual behaviour are demonstrated to be broadening to include many previously stigmatised areas.

Chapter three illuminates how monogamy in Western society maintains power through hegemony, and the application of stigma to other relationship forms. This leads to what Anderson (2012) terms: *The Monogamy Gap*, whereby people feel a gap between their socially constructed desire for monogamy, and their somatic desire for extradyadic sex. This chapter also outlines the stigmas that are common across all forms of consensual non-monogamy, in what I call the *Consensual Non-monogamy Burden*. These include the idea that consensual non-monogamy is a symbol of a failing relationship; that it is only about sex; that it is oppressive to women; and that it is a deficient relationship style when compared to monogamy. This chapter concludes with a comparison of consensual non-monogamy and monogamy.

Chapter four brings together the previous research about threesomes. Here, Karlen's (1988) major study into threesomes is outlined alongside more contemporary research. I also put forward an argument for why threesomes are an important area of growing popularity, and justifiably need more academic attention. Finally, Schipper's (2016) work is utilised to describe the *Threesome Imaginary*: collective cultural fantasies about threesomes that reflect and reproduce existing power relations and social privilege. These collective understandings are not, however, universal, and I theorise that the threesome imaginary may be disrupted by the societal changes discussed in chapter two.

In chapter five, I outline the methodological approach to studying people's attitudes to, and experiences of, threesomes. First of all, an overview of the sample is given before the sampling strategy is discussed alongside the inherent difficulties in gathering participants for research into sexual behaviours. Semi-structured interviews—the chosen method of data collection—are then evaluated for their appropriateness to investigate the topic under study. This chapter then proceeds to give an overview of thematic analysis, and a justification for its selection over another similar tool for analysis: grounded theory. Finally, discussion is given over the limitations to the study, as well as ethical considerations to be made.

Chapter six gives an overview of the participants' attitudes and experiences of casual sex as well as investigating their history of sexual exploration before their first threesome. Although those connected with non-monogamy are often stereotyped as being promiscuous

(Robinson, 1997), I find this to not be the case amongst my sample. Although they all hold liberal attitudes towards casual sex, and have all at some point engaged in casual sex, many are particular about the types of sex that they enjoy, as well as some also suggesting that they will eventually leave casual sex behind. I also find that a number of participants had previously explored less common sexual practices or consensual non-monogamy before their first threesome.

Chapter seven explores participants' experiences of threesomes involving two men and one woman (MMF). Although there have been suggestions that this sort of threesome is often stigmatised, I still find a number of participants who were happy to engage in them. Differences in sex are also highlighted suggesting that men view these sorts of threesomes in a light-hearted manner, whereas many women are much more cautious. Additionally, women's desires for male same-sex sexual behaviour are explored.

Chapter eight brings together participants' experiences of threesomes involving two women and one man (FFM). The results suggest that this was the most popular form of threesome for both men and women, although again, men and women understand this sort of threesome rather differently. Women gave multiple perspectives and reasons for why they might partake in FFM threesomes, whereas most men saw them in a similar light to MMF threesomes.

Chapter nine focuses on participants' experiences of jealousy stemming from their threesome experiences, as well as the role of communication. Instances of jealousy were relatively common amongst those who had a threesome whilst in a relationship, and often related to feelings of exclusion or a desire to protect the dyadic relationship. The long-term impact of jealousy appeared, however, to be minimal and participants' ability to deal with jealousy was aided by communication strategies. Related to communication, this chapter also explores participants' use of contraception and safe sex practices.

In Chapter ten, I look at the impacts participants' threesomes have had in relation to stigma as well as sex and relationship attitudes. Results suggest that participants were subject to relatively little stigma because of their actions, although in part this might be explained by the selective approaches to disclosure that were deployed. Some participants also demonstrate a change in their attitudes towards sex and consensual non-monogamy as an outcome of their threesome; developing a more realistic understanding as well as greater empathy for those engaged in consensual non-monogamy.

Chapter eleven contextualises the findings of this study and relates them to wider societal changes in relation to gender, sexual behaviour, and sexuality. Limitations of the study are also discussed, as are considerations for future research building off of this thesis.

Drawing upon previous academic research, and the findings presented in this thesis, I argue that contemporary threesome behaviours reflect broader societal changes in attitudes related to sexuality, the acceptability of sexual exploration, and progress for women's sexual agency.

Chapter 2: Theorising Stigma and Social Change

This chapter is concerned with understanding how the application of stigma may be used to constrain individuals, and influence their behaviours. Rubin's (1984) *Charmed Circle of Behaviours* and Goffman's (1963) work on stigma are utilised to help demonstrate how specific sex and relationship norms are established and policed, thus aiding our understanding as to why threesomes are not more common.

A link is also made between gender, sexuality, and the historical stigmatisation of "inappropriate" expressions of gender. Through the stigmatisation of specific gender expressions for men and women, we can further understand why individuals might be more drawn to particular behaviours, or seek to distance themselves from other behaviours. These stigmatisations, however, do not appear to be static, and evidence is put forward suggesting a range of changes in both men and women's behaviours. Knowledge of previously stigmatised behaviours, alongside an awareness of contemporary changes in these stigmatisation can then help us better contextualise why particular threesome related behaviours may be viewed as more/less desirable.

Is Monogamy Natural?

Debates about monogamy and non-monogamy (consensual or otherwise) sometimes look to biology and evolutionary psychology in attempts to determine its naturalness. In reference to sexual desire, Willey (2010) suggests that 'nature is accorded a privileged status in determining what is right' (p. 35). Thus, if particular types of relationships occur in nature they may be seen as morally legitimate. Evidencing this, research suggests that attitudes towards homosexuality improve when people view it as biologically determined (Landén & Innala, 2002), and are more likely to hold negative attitudes when they believe it to be a choice (Blackwell, 2008). Additionally, in *Sex at Dawn*, Ryan and Jethá (2010) argue that many researchers, as well as the public, are guilty of projecting modern day cultural values upon societies in the distant past, something that they call 'Flinstonization' (p. 32) (although historians call this presentism). Accordingly, when looking at past societies, people may look for evidence to justify and defend the current status quo. In doing so, Ryan and Jethá (2010) argue that the standard narrative has looked to reaffirm monogamy as natural. They go on to argue that monogamy is rather a fairly recent historical phenomenon, coinciding with the rise in agrarian society and the advent of property ownership (Ryan & Jethá, 2010). Other

researchers have similarly aimed to highlight the abnormality of monogamy in the animal kingdom (Barash & Lipton, 2001) or how common non-monogamy is amongst human societies (Murdock, 1949, as cited in Rubin, 2001).

Perhaps supporting the argument for monogamy's naturalness, Fisher (1998) contended that attraction can be broken down into three emotion-motivation systems that have evolved to aid mating, reproduction and parenting: sex drive, romantic attraction, and male-female attachment. Sex drive encourages one to copulate; romantic attraction facilitates one's choice of mate; and attachment encourages mammals to stay together long enough for the related child raising duties. This perspective may suggest that humans have evolved to be monogamous, or at least serially monogamous (monogamous for short periods), in order to facilitate the raising of offspring. Others such as Opie, Atkinson, Dunbar and Shultz (2013) suggest that social monogamy (pair bonding) is likely to have resulted from a need to guard against high male infanticide, or in contexts of low female density where males were unable to defend access to multiple females across long distances (Lukas & Clutton-Brock, 2013).

Whether or not monogamy is based in biological foundations is, however, not a focus of my research. What is important, is to understand that proponents who aim to position monogamy as natural often situate the natural as 'ideal or superior' (Barker & Langdrige, 2010, p. 751) to consensual non-monogamy. Worse, they actively look to stigmatise those who "fail" to meet monogamy's hegemonic requirements. Even if monogamy was natural—and the evidence suggests it is not—the state of being natural should not be equated with superior. This is what philosophers call the naturalistic argument: that something is right, or wrong, based on whether it is natural.

The merits of whether something is superior or not should be derived from scientifically rigorous examination; taking into account that cultural context can change findings. Thus, my position with this research is not to suggest that monogamy or non-monogamy is superior by nature. Instead, individuals arrange their relationships and the types of sex they have in a multitude of different ways (Frank, 2013) whether they are seen as natural or not. The effect of these methods can then be empirically examined if one desires to make moral claims about superiority.

Stigma

Society, as a whole, attempts to sustain the status quo of monogamy through the attachment of stigma to other, non-monogamous behaviours and identities. Goffman's (1963, p. 5) discussion of stigma suggests that it can have incredible impact on the lives of those it attaches to:

We believe the person with the stigma is not quite human. On this assumption we exercise varieties of discrimination, through which we effectively, if often unthinkingly, reduce his life chances. We construct a stigma-theory, and ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalising an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class.

The stigmatising affliction is often projected onto other aspects of a person in order to explain other deficiencies or failures. The stigma of consensual non-monogamy is therefore not confined to a specific act or state, but infiltrates all other features of the person. Consequently, engagement in consensual non-monogamy might be used by others to explain that person's failures in other areas of life. Conley, Moors, Matsick and Ziegler (2012a) found participants rated those in consensually non-monogamous relationships lower in characteristics related to relationship quality (such as loving each other or respecting one another) than those in monogamous relationships. They also rated them lower in characteristics completely unrelated to relationship quality such as being law-abiding, reasonable, or being consistent with recycling.

Such assumptions can mean the stigmatised may arrange their lives so to avoid those who would stigmatise them, struggle with anxiety over whether to reveal their stigmatisation to others, or have to meticulously manage their identities to keep their stigma secret (Goffman, 1963). Sheff (2005) has documented polyamorous women fearing they will lose their jobs if they "come out" to their work colleagues. Mint (2004) also stated that, at the time of writing, it was legal to discriminate against sexual and relationship behaviours in most American states. Without legal protection, it could therefore be a risky decision to come out of the consensual non-monogamy closet.

When a stigma is not immediately visible, the stigmatised are sometimes able to engage in a process of 'passing' (Goffman, 1963, p. 73), whereby they pass as normal to those around them, withholding their stigmatising attributes. This echoes Goffman's (1959) previous dramaturgical analogy on the presentation of self. In this, he proposes that an individual has "front stage" performances, in which they aim to control the impression that

others have of them by acting in particular ways. In addition to this, they also have a “back stage” or private area of their life where they are able to be themselves. Through this strategic self-presentation, those engaging in consensual non-monogamy are able to shield themselves or others from the associated stigma. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) suggests that many polyamorous families engage in passing behaviours when interacting with wider society and even their own children, in order to protect them from potential stigma. Examples of these passing behaviours might be adopting normative labels for other partners (such as step mum or uncle), or teaching children how to convincingly mimic the appearance of a monogamous family unit (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010). When passing is not possible (or not desired) then the stigmatised may also engage in a process of ‘covering’ (Goffman, 1963, p. 93). Covering relates to methods by which the known stigmatised may alter their behaviour, so that it does not become the centre of attention and a point of interest to the normal. For example, choosing to not show physical displays of affection when out with multiple partners and friends.

Stigma does not, however, dictate that people will be closeted to everyone. In relation to stigma, Goffman (1963) states that individuals may be part of one of three groups: I) one of the stigmatised; II) the normal (the unstigmatised); or III) the wise (those who understand and accept the stigmatised). When looking at closeting one’s sexual identity, there are a great number of psychological stresses involved (Corrigan & Mathews, 2003), and it is not too far removed to suggest that there may be similarities for those closeting their sex and relationship practices related to consensual non-monogamy. Equally, depending on the individual and how they view coming out to others about their non-monogamy, they may see it as important to be open about their stigmatisation. For example, being out and open about consensual non-monogamy can also be seen as a political act, helpful in generating and establishing a supportive network (Frank, 2013).

The Charmed Circle

In order to determine who and what should be stigmatised, Rubin (1984) suggests that our sexual values system is based on determining good and bad forms of sex and relationship practices. Rubin (1984, p. 152) states that:

According to this system, sexuality that is ‘good’, ‘normal’, and ‘natural’ should ideally be heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial. It should be coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home. It

should not involve pornography, fetish objects, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female. Any sex that violates these rules is 'bad', 'abnormal', or 'unnatural'. Bad sex may be homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, or commercial. It may be masturbatory or take place at orgies, may be casual, may cross-generational lines, and may take place in 'public', or at least in the bushes or the baths. It may involve the use of pornography, fetish objects, sex toys, or unusual roles.

She conceptualises the 'good' behaviours as existing within a 'charmed circle' (p. 153), with their comparative opposites existing in the 'outer limits' (p. 153). Looking at the charmed circle of behaviours, it is clear that consensual non-monogamy has the potential to inhabit many aspects of the outer limits. For example, a threesome is not monogamous by contemporary understandings; it is clearly in a group, may be casual, unlikely to attempt to be procreative, and may include elements of non-heterosexual interaction. That is not to say that the more boundaries one crosses, the more stigma one receives, but there are certainly more opportunities to be stigmatised by others. Rubin (1984, p. 152) suggests that, 'Most systems of sexual judgment – religious, psychological, feminist, or socialist – attempt to determine on which side of the line a particular act falls'.

Being on the outer limits, consensual non-monogamy is stereotyped as not working, creating more jealousy, being inconsistent with true love, or posing a risk to an existing relationship (Anderson, 2012). This stigma aims to position monogamy as more beneficial than consensual non-monogamy (Conley et al., 2012a), thus legitimising any personal choices regarding monogamy. The stigma individuals attach to non-normative styles of relationship affect acceptance of them as a viable personal relationship option, since this stigma creates a "halo effect" around monogamy and positions consensual non-monogamy as an unattractive alternative (Conley et al., 2012a). One of Anderson's (2012) subjects goes as far as suggesting that it was better to fail in monogamy than be honest in an open-relationship.

These boundaries are not fixed, however, and have the potential to change. Attitudes toward sexual minorities are improving at a substantial rate (Clements & Field, 2014; Keleher & Smith, 2012) particularly amongst male youth (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2012). If we look at a number of other behaviours that Rubin classifies as stigmatised, such as homosexuality, premarital sex, or masturbation, then we can see that many of them might no longer be considered stigmatised (at least not to the same extent that they once were). Gabb and Fink (2015) even argue that particular expressions of same-sex desire have moved to the centre of the circle although being uncoupled still remains in the outer limits.

Gender, sexuality, and sexual behaviour, specifically, have in the past been impacted by, and controlled through the attachment of stigma. However, as I will show, diminishing stigma around these areas has expanded the range of acceptable behaviours for men and women, even if, as Moors and Schechinger (2014) argue, many of those practices located in the outer limits of the charmed circle have retained their position.

Stigma and the Social Construction of Gender

Gender is a concept considered by many to be inseparable from, and determined by, an individual's biological sex (Lorber, 1994). Essentialist theories of gender differences tend to ignore socialisation processes, focusing purely upon biological differences to explain gendered behaviour (Coltrane, 1994). It is important, however, to appreciate that sex and gender have separate origins. Sex is assigned at birth and is dependent on possession of a socially agreed set of biological characteristics (Fausto-Sterling, 2000), whereas gender (often referred to in terms of masculine or feminine) arises out of a continual process of construction/reconstruction enacted through 'performance' (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Traditional constructions of gender have, in the past, firmly dictated how men and women should behave, with deviations from these roles leading to stigmatising accusations of homosexuality. As well as being required to adhere to the culturally generated norms of masculinity, men have also needed to establish their own heterosexuality if they are to be esteemed in the eyes of other men. Because markers of sexual identity are mostly invisible, men have done this by policing the behaviours of other men, in a king-of-the-hill style competition, where suspected gay men were relegated down-hill (Anderson, 2005). While this jockeying often included physical domination, homophobic discourse has been the primary weapon to regulate the behaviours of others, question their heterosexuality and steer them away from perceived feminine behaviours (Anderson, 2009; Plummer, 2006). For women, it is the inverse; distancing oneself from masculinity guards against accusations of same-sex desire (Anderson & Bullingham, 2013; Griffin, 1998; Shire, Brackenridge, & Fuller, 2000). The notion that gendered codes of behaviour are a social construction, and therefore changeable, however, suggests that gender norms can be reconstructed to incorporate any variety of behaviours.

Beynon (2002, p. 2) proposes that gender constructions are a 'diverse, mobile, even unstable, construction' that follows cultural and historical changes. Using Anderson's (2009) concept of homophobia and theory of inclusive masculinity we can understand and

contextualise societal changes that have currently broadened the range of acceptable behaviours for both men and women (Worthen, 2014). Homohysteria is a theoretical tool for understanding the zeitgeist regarding homosexuality within a historical framework and is understood as the cultural fear of being homosexualised (McCormack, 2011) for the wrongdoing of one's gender or association with markers of homosexuality.

Inclusive Masculinity Theory outlines three historical stages that a society may move through: erasure, homohysteria and inclusivity (McCormack & Anderson, 2014a). In a culture of same-sex erasure, homophobia is so high that citizens do not accept that homosexuality is pervasive within their society. Anderson (2009) suggests that extremely high levels of homophobia means that people are more likely to stay in the closet; helping to give the perception that homosexuals don't exist within the particular society and helping alleviate suspicions that someone they know could be gay. Establishing a homohysterical society requires three factors to be present: 1) a widespread cultural understanding that homosexuality exists as a legitimate sexual orientation; 2) a zeitgeist of homophobia; 3) the stigmatisation and oppression of those who transcend established gender roles (men who demonstrate femininity or vice-versa). These three elements started to establish themselves in the West during the industrial revolution (McCormack & Anderson 2014a). However, according to Anderson's theory, if there has been a reduction in homophobia, and therefore homohysteria, men do not fear being labelled as homosexual, and they no longer need to defend against accusations of homosexuality, nor police their gender to the same extent as previous generations (Bird, 1996). Consequently, they have greater agency to adopt a range of behaviours and explore identities that have been previously coded as feminine (and therefore homosexual if performed by a male) because they do not fear being stigmatised as gay (Anderson, 2014). This reduction in homohysteria consequently allows more inclusive styles of masculinity to be legitimised. Each of these stages will now be explored in more detail.

Same-Sex Erasure

Demonstrating the erasure of same-sex sexual interactions and desires, much of the Islamic world, as well as parts of Africa, view homosexuality as only a western problem (Frank, Camp, & Boutcher, 2010). Dlamini (2006) suggests that it was colonialists that introduced the denial and intolerance of homosexuality into Africa, and 'Only when native people began to forget that same-sex patterns were ever part of their culture did homosexuality become

truly stigmatised' (p. 135). Using another example, in 2007, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated '...in Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country' (as cited in Anderson, 2009, p. 86). This culture-wide denial that sexual minorities exist in significant numbers, leads to a situation where men have less need to distance themselves from homosexual suspicion, and therefore can engage in physical, same-sex behaviours such as hand-holding or kissing on the cheek.

Similarly, Ibson (2002) shows that within Western culture, before the cultural knowledge of homosexuality was widespread, men were able to engage in behaviours such as tactility. Drawing upon thousands of photographs of men from the 1900s onwards, Ibson (2002) demonstrates that at the beginning of this century, men were happy to engage in homosocial tactility, cross-dressing, mock marriage photos, and nudity, all with other men. Given the lack in technological advances at the time, these positions would have to be held for long periods in order to generate a photograph. Later in the century, however, men's poses changed as male-male tactility and perceived feminine behaviours (such as emotional expressiveness) were homosexualised, and thus stigmatised.

Homohysteria

During the 19th century, western society moved away from agrarian modes of production to more industrial practices, bringing changes in not only production but also society. Technological developments enabled farming to be conducted in a more scientific manner, leading to a decrease in the number of jobs available in this sector. Further technological advances enabled the mass production of products in factories, new medical knowledge, and a development of transport infrastructure; all of which led to increasing urbanisation and a boom in population. The allure of the city as promising a better life and better work prospects, combined with the increasing lack of jobs in the countryside, saw population change from approximately 25% of people living in cities in 1800 to around 75% in 1900 (Cancian, 1987).

Urbanisation additionally brought a separation of the home and work, leading to a separation of gender spheres (Cancian, 1987), which would later become the template for acceptable displays of gender. Prior to these separations it has been suggested that men and women's wages were likely to be have been more egalitarian (Burnette, 2008) and women took an active role in the economic welfare of the household (Wall, 1994). Industrialisation, however, led to a separation of the home and work and a redefinition of the division of

labour; men were constructed as the economic head of household, controlling the family income (Hartmann, 1976), and women were constructed as the primary caregiver (Wall, 1994). That is not to say that no women worked in industrialised society, but when they did, they were constrained in the types of work they could perform (Burnette, 1997), and typically received lower wages than men (Stanfors, Leunig, Eriksson, & Karlsson, 2014). Whether a result of cultural custom, or a need to maximise economic efficiency (Stanfors et al., 2014), women were responsible for the raising and socialisation of children (Hartmann, 1976) whilst the majority of men went to work.

With women providing the bulk of childcare, and most working class men working away at the factories, there emerged a fear that boys being socialised by women were creating feminised men (Anderson, 2009), and that society as a whole was becoming soft (Messner, 1992). Freud (1905) observed an increase in same-sex sexual activity amongst men, and ascribed this to an absence of a father figure during socialisation. He argued that ‘...the presence of both parents plays an important part. The absence of a strong father in childhood not infrequently favours the occurrence of inversion’ (p. 146), *inversion* or *inverts* being the term he used to refer to what we would now understand as gay people or same-sex desire. In reality, this increase was most probably a result of the relative anonymity that living in the city provided compared to agrarian society (Richardson, Smith, & Werndly, 2013) alongside the increased opportunity for men to meet men for sex.

Whereas previously, same-sex sex was considered a temporary aberration, the labelling of the desire/act as a category of personality meant that it could now be medicalised, pathologised, and arranged in a social hierarchy with other sexual perversions in an endeavour to control it (Foucault, 1976). Although anal intercourse was criminalised in the UK in 1533 it was not until the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1885 that sexual relations in general between men were criminalised. Foucault (1976, p. 43) wrote:

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and a possibly mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him: at the root of all his actions because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away

Thus same-sex sexual behaviours were regarded as indicative of a particular type of person, in not only their sex practices, but all aspects of being.

The prosecution of Oscar Wilde (a prominent public figure) for gross indecency, further constructed in society's collective conscious, a tangible archetype of homosexuality. Wilde was a dandy: part of an upper-middle class, male subculture, concerned with aesthetics, fashion and known for their effeminacy. Before his prosecution these characteristics did not, however, suggest homosexuality, but instead, an interest in grandeur, beauty and elegance (Richardson et al., 2013). Sinfield (1994, p. 71) suggests, 'The Wildean Dandy – so far from looking like a queer – was distinctively exonerated from such suspicions. Because of his class identification, or aspiration, he above all need not be read as identified with same-sex practices'.

Conversely, after Wilde's trial, an association was made between his effeminacy, the dandy persona in general, and homosexuality. Therefore to avoid being suspected of homosexuality, men had to distance themselves from the effeminate dandy persona of Oscar Wilde. Men's femininity was now conflated with homosexuality (Kimmel, 1994). Exemplifying this, men's fashion magazines in the years following Wilde's prosecution made particular efforts to condemn the Wildean style, dictate what were considered feminine colours and masculinise particular clothing through associations with patriotism, and even the military (Shannon, 2006). Thus masculinity was constructed in opposition to femininity; or in other words, if it was feminine then it could not be masculine. The increased visibility of homosexuality in general, combined with Freud's assertion that the homosexual was type of person, established homosexuality as a stable orientation, and the prosecution of Oscar Wilde gave male homosexuality an archetype.

Feminine ideals of behaviour during the 19th century were instead based on restraint or calmness (Allan, 2009). The separation of gender spheres additionally fuelled the perception that women were biologically suited to domesticity, reproduction, needing to be protected and provided for (Coltrane & Adams, 2008). During this time period, women (like men) were subject to homophobia and other stigmatising discourses that attempted to influence their behaviours. There were expectations of women to distance themselves from perceived masculine behaviours as well as an expectation of eventually coupling with a man in order to avoid the stigmatising label of a lesbian (Worthen, 2014).

During this period, aspects of sexuality and sexual behaviour also started to be stigmatised, in an attempt to control them (Richardson et al., 2013). The Victorians valued self-control, and too much sex was considered morally careless or even unhealthy

(Steinbach, 2011). This control was evident in both the church and state discourses that pathologised a large variety of sexual acts in terms of both morality and public health (Richardson et al., 2013). Emerging discourses helped to reconceptualise certain behaviours as acceptable (e.g. procreative sex with marriage) and everything else as immoral (Richardson et al., 2013).

Accordingly, the culmination of the aforementioned: the fear that mothers were feminising boys—creating a moral panic around masculinity; the increased public awareness of same-sex sex; understanding of the homosexual as a particular type of person; linking male homosexuality with femininity through the archetype of Oscar Wilde; all led to increasing homophobia.

Homophobia Beyond the Industrial Revolution

The 1980s saw a resurgence of anti-gay sentiment and increasing homophobia. Propelled by the widespread impact of HIV/AIDS during the 1980s, this led to an increasing awareness of homosexuality within society, alongside the stigmatising associations that homosexuals were diseased (Anderson, 2009). Institutions such as sport were used as a means for men to establish and demonstrate their *heteromascularity* (Pronger, 1990) as well as distance themselves from the image of the diseased homosexual. Kimmel (1994) suggests that at this time, masculinity essentially became homophobia and overt displays of acceptable masculinity were used to defend against accusations of homosexuality: 'The fear -sometimes conscious, sometimes not- that others might perceive us as homosexual propels men to enact all manner of exaggerated masculine behaviours and attitudes to make sure that no one could possibly get the wrong idea about us' (Kimmel, 1994, p. 133). Furthermore, these displays of masculinity to affirm sexual orientation needed constant re-establishment, because unlike race or sex, they are not immediately visible (Anderson, 2009), but a performance that is never fully achieved (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus institutions such as sport became the perfect opportunity for men to continually re-establish their masculinity (and therefore supposed heterosexuality) in the eyes of others.

Similarly, women participating in what were perceived to be masculine fields were homosexualised. To again use the example of sport, the supposed masculinising nature of sports created stigma for women who wanted to play. For women in sport, Lenskyj (1986) argued that, 'femininity and heterosexuality [were] seen as incompatible with sporting excellence: either sport made women masculine or sportswomen were masculine from the

outset' (p. 95). Women competing in sport have therefore been assumed lesbian (Cox & Thompson, 2001) especially within male dominated sports (Hargreaves, 1994). To combat these assumptions women have sometimes deliberately promoted heterosexual identities and used homophobia to reassert their heterosexuality (Griffin, 1998; Shire et al., 2002).

During the 1980s, Connell (1995) suggests that there was a dominant style of masculinity, a *Hegemonic Masculinity*; that is, a masculinity that the majority of men aspired to. Connell (1995, p. 77) described a hierarchical framework consisting of multiple constructions of masculinity where 'at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted'. Those who embody the hegemonic masculinity (the culturally exalted or socially endorsed style of masculinity) find themselves at the top of the hierarchy, with other forms of masculine expression being found on the lower levels of the depending on the masculine attributes they embody. Edley and Wetherell (1995) describe hegemonic masculinity as '...the power of certain groups of men to force an interpretation of what masculinity should be, thus, to subordinate or repress other styles of masculine expression...' (p. 129).

Previous research on the gendered nature of men highlights that masculinity is not just a source of social privilege over women and gay men, but also that it has negative impacts on heterosexual men themselves (Burstyn, 1999; Robertson, 2003). A significant attribute of this comes from the notion of obligatory heterosexuality (Anderson, 2005; Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 1995), combined with the perceived need to socialise boys into acceptable (heterosexual) male roles (Burstyn, 1999), and to distance men's behaviours from that which is socially coded as feminine (or what Anderson calls homosexualising behaviours). This enforced heterosexuality has traditionally been regulated through the weapon of homophobic discourse (Anderson, 2005; Plummer, 2006), which endeavours to stigmatise homosexuality and its perceived feminine characteristics. The distancing of oneself from homosexuality/homosexual characteristics through homophobic discourse serves as a self-defence mechanism against accusation of homosexuality. Within this context, the one-time rule of homosexuality means that men are forever homosexualised for even one perceived transgression into feminine modes of behaviour.

The concept of masculine capital (Anderson, 2005) is also important to hegemonic masculinity, because it suggests that masculinity is not something that is permanently achieved, but continually performed (West & Zimmerman, 1987), and therefore something that needs continual re-establishing. De Visser, Smith and McDonnell (2009) identify masculine capital as coming from a variety of sources, including physicality, absence of

vanity, predatory heterosexuality, and excessive consumption of alcohol, resulting in men achieving greater admiration from others and increased social benefits.

In addition, Connell (1987) suggested a femininity comparable to hegemonic masculinity, which she termed: emphasised femininity. Although similar to hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 848) argue a fundamental difference between the two:

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated in tandem with a concept of hegemonic femininity—soon renamed “emphasized femininity” to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order

That is, whilst a hegemonic masculinity is dominant over all, a hegemonic femininity is always subordinate to masculinity (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Emphasised femininity is meant to complement hegemonic masculinity by representing the polar opposite of the gender spectrum, and through its support of the male archetype. If hegemonic masculinity is the pinnacle of masculinity, then it is defined against emphasised femininity. Schippers (2007, p. 95) suggests:

Practices and characteristics that are stigmatized and sanctioned if embodied by women include having sexual desire for other women, being promiscuous, “frigid”, or sexually inaccessible, and being aggressive. These are characteristics that, when embodied by women, constitute a refusal to complement hegemonic masculinity in a relation of subordination and therefore are threatening to male dominance.

Because of the threat they pose to the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity, deviant behaviours must therefore be stigmatised and controlled (Schippers, 2007). For example, Jackson and Tinkler (2007) demonstrate that from the “Modern Girls” of the 1920s, to the “Ladettes” of the 1990s, women have been chastised and stigmatised for transgressing norms of feminine behaviours, through activities such as excessive alcohol consumption, and termed as ‘too masculine’ (p. 262) by the media.

Women have, however, been able to navigate around particular stigmas. The promotion of particularly feminine identities has allowed some women in traditionally male domains, to do so with reduced lesbian suspicion; similar to how men in sport were able to accrue masculine capital in one domain that allowed them to transgress gender expectations in another (Anderson, 2005; De Visser & Smith 2007). Griffin (1998) writes that ‘femininity has become a code word for heterosexuality’ (p. 68), comparable to Kimmel

(1994) describing masculinity as heterosexuality for males. Accordingly, women were forced to adopt hyper-feminine identities in order to gain societal support for their participation in sport (Lenskyj, 2003). This attempted denial and silencing of lesbians in sport permits for discrimination and stereotypes of lesbianism to go unchecked (Krane & Barber, 2003).

This erasure of lesbianism via the promotion of hetero-femininity has been termed the 'apologetic', and it occurs because women are participating in a male domain. The apologetic can take forms such the formation and adherence to a traditionally feminine identity, trying to cultivate a heterosexual image, or even literal apologies for aggressive behaviours (Davis-Delano, Pollock, & Vose, 2009; Ezzell, 2009). Cultivating the apologetic, however, requires walking a fine line between what are perceived as overt displays of masculinity, bringing into question the person's sexuality, and overt displays of femininity, leading to the person being sexualised or trivialised (Krane, 2001).

The One-Time Rule of Homosexuality

During times of high homophobia, for men, even a single same-sex sexual behaviour has been conflated with a total homosexual identity in North American and Western European cultures. Heterosexual boys and men wishing to be perceived as heterosexual must conceal any same-sex sexual practices (Lancaster, 1988). This form of gender policing applies not only to attitudinal dispositions and behavioural patterns, but also extends to the disavowal or avoidance of any feminine activity, organisation or institution (Anderson, 2009). Thus, partaking in the wrong sport, enjoying the wrong type of entertainment, wearing the wrong type of clothing, or entering the wrong occupation, potentially compromises a male's heterosexual capital (Derlega, Lewis, Harrison, Winstead, & Costanza, 1989; Floyd, 2000). It is for these reasons that Kimmel (1994) equated masculinity with homophobia.

The expectation that heterosexual men disassociate themselves from symbols of femininity and homosexuality can be seen in numerous sociological examinations of men and their masculinity. For instance, Eck (2003, p. 700) used analysis of nude images to demonstrate that straight men struggled to comment on male pictures without reasserting their heterosexuality. Similarly, Derlega, Catanzaro and Lewis (2001) showed heterosexual males considered photos of men hugging as significantly more abnormal than photos of men standing beside each other. Even young boys have felt the need to distance themselves from emotional expression, avoiding any demonstrations of fear, pain, or crying in order to avoid feminisation or homosexualisation (Pollack, 1999).

Derived from historically-based theories of racial hypodescent whereby anyone with a single 'drop' of African ancestry was labelled as black (Harris, 1964) in American society, Anderson (2008) conceptualised the *one-time rule of homosexuality* to understand how similar homophobic processes occurred related to sexuality. Here, any same-sex sexual act or desire is perceived to mark that person as gay, regardless of sexual history, sexual identity or sexual desire. And because this cultural notion has been established as a mutually exclusive binary, the rule has traditionally erased bisexuality, heteroflexibility, and such concepts as 'mostly heterosexual' from cultural consideration. When a one-time rule is in operation, one is either 100% straight, or 100% gay.

However, Schwartz and Rutter (1998) suggest that the reverse condition does not hold true for gay men; that 'one drop of heterosexuality in a homosexual life means nothing' (p. 12). Limited exceptions to the one-time rule have come from institutions where heterosexual sex is unobtainable, such as prison or the military (Bérubé, 1991). The one-time rule has also not applied to women (Diamond, 2009, Worthen, 2014). Thus, the sexual lives of self-identifying heterosexual men have, in general, been more tightly policed than men with other sexual orientations or women.

Inclusivity

Given that homophobia cannot exist within a society that is no longer homophobic, statistics on homophobia present a strong argument that we are moving into a post-homophobic/inclusive epoch. In 1987, the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) found that 66% of respondents viewed sexual relations between two same-sex adults to be always wrong. The equivalent survey in the United States, the General Social Survey (GSS), found the response to the same question in the same year to be 75%. Compared with data from 2010, these numbers have now fallen to 20% and 43.5% respectively. This large-scale data, combined with a growing body of research, suggests that both Britain and the United States (and western culture in general), has/is moving towards an era of post-homophobia in many areas of society. Nowhere is this truer than among those born after 1990. Anderson (2009) suggests that, decreasing cultural homophobia is leading to a reduction in homophobia —the fear of being publicly perceived as gay for the wrongdoing of gender. Anderson argues that this contemporary form of heterosexual masculinity (inclusive masculinity) is able to exist alongside the previously hegemonic form of masculinity (orthodox masculinity), without either one maintaining hegemonic status.

While research on masculinities found orthodox behaviours to be prevalent in the 80s and 90s, evidence today suggests that orthodox masculinity is no longer universally valued by all, allowing men to transcend previously narrow definitions of masculinity (Anderson, 2014). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest a rejection of many of the characteristics of traditional orthodox masculinity among young men occurs in a variety of spaces; and with this comes an adoption of new, more inclusive styles of masculinity (Anderson, 2005, 2009, 2014; McCormack 2012, 2014). De Visser (2009, p. 368) revealed men aligning themselves with what they considered more 'feminine' attributes (such as being thoughtful, quiet, or intuitive) with one participant referring to orthodox masculinity as 'ludicrous.' Elsewhere, research has shown men willing to be physically tactile with each other (Baker & Hotek, 2011; McCormack, 2011; McCormack & Anderson, 2010, 2014; Adams, 2011), cuddling (Anderson & McCormack, 2014; Scoats, 2015), kissing each other (Anderson, Adams, & Rivers, 2012; Drummond, Filiault, Anderson, & Jeffries, 2014) dancing with each other (McCormack, 2012; Peterson & Anderson 2012), alongside reducing levels of cultural homophobia across the UK and USA (Clements & Field, 2014; Keleher & Smith, 2012; Twenge, Exline, Grubbs, Sastry, & Campbell, 2015).

The effect of lessening homophobia on women is less clear, with research suggesting differing levels of acceptance for women's transgressions into traditionally male arenas, or behaviours. Women's alcohol consumption is policed by the media in a way that men's has not (Day, Gough, & McFadden, 2007; Jackson & Tinkler, 2007); alcohol consumption being constructed as a masculine activity. Looking at how the apologetic still manifests itself in contemporary female sport suggests that while homophobia has reduced within a number of male domains, the same may not necessarily be true for women (Anderson & Bullingham, 2013). Additionally, Cockburn and Clarke (2002) suggest that amongst adolescent girls, the image of physicality is incompatible with traditional concepts of femininity.

Other research, however, suggests that reductions in homophobia have in fact made a difference to women. Scholars refer to 'new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848), or 'new femininity' (Ticknell, Chambers, Van Loon, & Hudson, 2003, p. 47), where women are embracing traditionally masculine behaviours. For example, women's magazine's discourses on sex have shifted their focus away from purely romance, legitimising women's desire for sexual pleasure (Ticknell et al., 2003; Farvid & Braun 2006). Some women also demonstrate a rejection of their "traditional caring role", through adoption of hedonistic lifestyles,

focused on having fun and partying (Day et al., 2007; Jackson & Tinkler, 2007). Other research shows women embracing sports that deliberately position themselves against the concept of traditional femininity (Kelly, Pomerantz, & Currie, 2006) or that specifically satirise perceived feminine norms, as with the case of roller derby (Carlson, 2010). All of this suggests that decreasing homophobia has allowed women the opportunity to break away from traditional feminine roles, and the expectations that accompany them.

Social Change and Expanding Sex and Relationship Opportunities

Alongside decreasing homophobia, previously-stigmatised sexual and relationship practices are becoming more commonplace, and some may be moving closer to being part of the charmed circle (Rubin, 1984). Non-normative relationship styles such as consensual non-monogamy are becoming more noticeable to the general population (Wosick-Correa, 2010) and historical comparisons suggest a convincing liberalisation of attitudes in this regard. Sexual behaviours that were once reserved for only the most brazen and adventurous of practitioners, are becoming commonplace and even expected (Attwood, 2005; Bernstein, 2001; Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

During the industrial revolution, sexual practices started to become controlled in specifically gendered manners. The link between women, and discoveries about the transmission of infection, gave a specific impetus to control women's sexual practices. Practices were separated out into "good" (maritally bound, procreative sex) versus "bad" (casual sex) practices and terms such as "loose woman" emerged; referring to the way in which a woman's clothes were laced—loose meaning that she was quickly ready for sexual activity (Richardson, et al., 2013). For men, the "underworld primitive" was contrasted with the "Christian gentleman", upstanding in character and able to control his sexual urges (White, 1993). Respectable women were portrayed as devoid of sexual desire, and were more sexually restrained than men by the end of the 19th century (Steinbach, 2011). Men were perceived as having stronger sexual drives, justifying female prostitution as a necessary evil (Steinbach, 2011) to accommodate their natural lusts, although never being viewed as a respectable practice (White, 1993). Conversely, women were seen being far less concerned with carnal desire, but instead, motivated by maternal instincts and desires for love (Seidman, 1990). Women's sexual desire was, therefore, assumed to naturally reside within the charmed circle of sexual behaviours (Rubin, 1984).

More recent historical comparisons, however, suggest a convincing liberalisation of attitudes. For example, in 1969 in America more than 75% viewed premarital sex as wrong compared to 33-37% in the 80s (Harding & Jencks, 2003). Compare this to Owen, Rhoades, Stanley and Fincham's (2010) research that found 52% of a sample of 825 university students had engaged in "hooking up" behaviour (defined as a physical encounter with no future plans for it to continue) within the last 12 months. England, Shafer and Fogarty (2008) even go as far as suggesting that casual sex is now hegemonic compared to the pursuit of romance or a relationship among young adults.

Further evidencing this liberalisation, within a university setting, hook-up culture is now a widespread phenomenon (Bogle, 2008). Engaging in hooking up behaviour appears to be a significant feature of university culture and (potentially) emerging adulthood in general (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). Although questioning how one might define a "culture", Heldman and Wade (2010, p. 327) suggest that, 'it is arguable that hook-up culture started in the 1990s'. They, additionally, suggest a number of factors that may have influenced the advent of hook-up cultures prevalent at universities, including: institutional policies allowing for mixed-sex dorms and a greater number of women at university; increased alcohol use and access to pornography; lower perceived risk of engaging in sexual behaviours; and even narcissism (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Furthermore, the facilitating factors of university (Bogle, 2008), combined with the age of the participants, may heighten the likelihood of university students engaging in hooking up behaviours. Being that a large proportion of university students enter university in their late teens, this aligns with a particular developmental stage: emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood roughly encompasses the ages of 18-25, and is a time of exploration, delayed responsibilities, autonomy, and having few obligations (Arnett, 2004; Arnett, Ramos, & Jensen, 2001), all of which may contribute to the likelihood of engaging in hooking up behaviours.

However, as the vast majority of research into hooking up is on university students, and based on university campuses (Heldman & Wade, 2010; Garcia et al. 2012), it is unclear how widespread hook-up culture is outside of a university setting. Bogle (2008) highlights that after university, many students revert back to a norm of dating, rather than carrying on with hook-ups, suggesting that the university setting may be more conducive than regular society, to facilitating a hook-up culture.

Both inside, and outside the university setting, hooking up and the pursuit of romantic relationships, casual relationships and sex, have been further facilitated through technological advances (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008; Daneback, Månsson, & Ross, 2007).

People now use a multitude of online methods to seek out connections they desire to make. For example, online message boards, such as Craigslist, can be used to post and look for requests of love, dating, and casual sex (Rosenbaum, Daunt, & Jiang, 2013). The advent of mobile internet, smartphone technology, and location based dating apps additionally make finding connections others close by to have recreational sex with even easier (Weiss & Samenow, 2010). PEW Research also shows that:

One in ten Americans have used an online dating site or mobile dating app; 66% of these online daters have gone on a date with someone they met through a dating site or app, and 23% have met a spouse or long term partner through these sites (Smith & Duggan, 2013, p. 1)

These numbers are also likely to increase, as Stephure, Boon, MacKinnon and Deveau (2009) suggest that use of online dating may actually increase with age, as fewer avenues of establishing romantic relationships become available. Adams, Oye and Parker (2003) outline that the internet has become a place for older adults (roughly over the age of 65) to challenge the societal assumption of their asexuality, and explore their sexuality.

The pursuit of sex, and acquisition of sexual knowledge has now become a common feature of society. Brents and Sanders (2010) argue that late-capitalist economies normalise and encourage the growth of the sex business. The mainstreaming of the sex industry attempts to sell sex as a form of leisure pursuit; marketing to new demographics help dispense with stereotypes about who buys these sexual products and services. Depictions of women, no longer passive and objectified, now demonstrate an active sexuality and endorse the pursuit of pleasure (Harvey & Gill, 2011). Sex has now become a central site of leisure and consumption (Attwood, 2006, 2011). Seeking sexual pleasure can now be a way of further developing one's friendships; an opportunity for new experiences; viewing sex as a harmless and healthy leisure activity (Frank, 2008; Joseph & Black, 2012).

Expanded Sexual Opportunities for Women

Baumeister (2004) contends that the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s heavily influenced sexual culture, influencing behaviours, attitudes and desires. Baumesiter (2004, p. 133) adds that these changes were much greater for women than men:

Many researchers concluded that men did not change all that much in their desires and attitudes, and their behaviour only changed because they got more

opportunities to do what men had always wanted to do. In contrast, women changed in much more fundamental ways.

This change, he suggests, is in regard to the influence the sexual revolution had on women's erotic plasticity. The term erotic plasticity refers to the degree by which an individual's sex drive may be impacted by societal, cultural, and situational features. In Baumeister's (2004, p. 133) words, 'Female sexuality is inherently more amenable than male sexuality to influence by cultural events, historical circumstances, socialisation, peer influence, and other social variables'. The sexual revolution, bringing with it the advent of birth control, started to shift dating and marital expectations away from the sexual scripts endorsed by the previous generation, and allowed a greater level of sexual liberation for young people (Garcia et al., 2012). This liberalisation of attitudes towards sex, thus afforded women a greater freedom to explore previously stigmatised behaviours and desires.

Diamond (2009) has suggested a similar hypothesis, although using different terms. Diamond's (2009) theory of female sexual fluidity is made up of four assumptions: 1) women have a general sexual orientation; 2) women also have a capacity for fluidity, thought of as 'sensitivity to situations and relationships that might facilitate erotic feelings' (p. 84); 3) sexual attractions elicited from this fluidity may be transitory or enduring; 4) Women are different in their sensitivity to fluidity and not all women are equally fluid. Accordingly, an increasing range of social situations, and a broadening of what are deemed as acceptable behaviours give women potentially greater opportunity for exploration.

One example of this is women kissing other women. Fahs (2009) found that there was an expectation felt among women to perform in bisexual acts for the viewing pleasure of men, with younger women experiencing it mostly in the context of public, social settings and older women experiencing it in the context of relationships and requests for group sex. Other research suggests that whilst this type of kissing may initially start as a way to garner attention from males (Hamilton, 2007), it is also used by some as a form of socially accepted experimentation, and may trigger women's fluidity, resulting in either questioning or a confirmation of new sexual identities (Rupp & Taylor, 2010; Rupp, Taylor, Regev-Messalem, Fogarty, & England, 2014). Worthen (2014) refers to this type of scenario as the *party-time rule of sexuality* and argues that, 'In a climate of decreasing homophobia, same-sex sexual behaviours among women are neither stigmatised nor hidden' (p. 144); instead, they are socially celebrated, at least by heterosexual men.

Expanded Opportunities for Male Intimacy and Sexual Exploration

A result of reducing homophobia and increasing inclusivity is that it has impacted heavily on men's friendships. The term 'bromance' has become popular among younger adults to describe an intimate, maybe even romantic, but not sexual relationship between two men (Chen, 2012). The prevalence of the term, and the relationships it reflects, further demonstrates contemporary shifts in norms regarding male intimacy (Anderson, 2014).

Previous research has suggested that men's friendships have, in the last several generations of Western culture, been based on shared activities (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982) and their interactions follow particular patterns (such as joking or teasing) in order to generate intimacy (Kaplan, 2006). Within this social context, shared sexual activity or sexual storytelling may act to boost one's masculine standing as well as create a bond with other men (Flood, 2008). This has, however, led to the assumption that men's friendships fundamentally differ from women's, in particular that they are much less likely to include emotional intimacy (Komarovsky, 1974) or homosocial tactility (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978). Whilst this assumption might be valid during times of high homophobia, current research, conducted during a period of low homophobia, is showing that men today are able to build friendships with their male counterparts that have emotional closeness and homosocial tactility (Anderson, 2014; Blanchard, McCormack, & Peterson 2015; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; McCormack 2011; 2014; Scoats, 2015).

These contemporary male friendships, fondly referred to as bromances, are not necessarily based upon competitiveness and a perpetual jockeying for a position within a hierarchy (as male friendships have been previously depicted), but instead allow men the opportunity to develop intimacy with each other. Within these types of friendships men have been seen to demonstrate their affection for each other, not only through verbal means but also through physical means such as cuddling (Anderson & McCormack, 2014a, b; McCormack, 2012, 2014). These constructions of physically and emotionally intimate male, homosocial friendships may, in fact, mirror the images of men found in earlier historical periods in Western culture prior to homophobia (e.g. Ibson, 2002).

Additionally, the one time rule of homosexuality has lessening power in a culture of diminished homophobia. In recent years, mounting evidence suggests an erosion of the one-time rule of homosexuality with regards to both symbols of femininity/homosexuality and same-sex sexual behaviours. Anderson (2014) documented the prevalence of hugging and gentle tactility among American high school students, while Barrett (2015) found

significant levels of bodily touch in friendships between gay and straight men. Other research shows men willing to engage in emotional support (Baker & Hotek, 2011; McCormack 2011), cuddling (Anderson & McCormack, 2014a, b; Scoats, 2015), kissing (Anderson et al., 2012; Drummond et al., 2014) and dancing together (Peterson & Anderson, 2012), all while maintaining a social identity as straight. In one study, Anderson (2008) found 40% of the athletes in his study had some form of same-sex sexual experience yet none were perceived as gay because of it.

When men are not automatically marked as gay for displaying behaviours traditionally associated with femininity, such as affection or emotional support, and when men are able to identify as 'mostly straight' because they only engage in same-sex practices occasionally (Savin-Williams & Vrangalova, 2013), we have arrived at a point where the one-time rule of homosexuality no longer carries social significance, and young straight men are redefining heterosexuality as they reconfigure masculinity (McCormack, 2012).

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has explored the operation of stigma and how the attachment of stigma can influence behaviours. This exploration specifically looked at the stigmatisation of particular expressions of gender and sexual behaviours. Namely, men have been seen as naturally sexual in nature, and have been encouraged to distance themselves from femininity and symbols of homosexuality. In contrast, women have been seen as naturally uninterested in sex, and have been encouraged to distance themselves from masculinity.

Contemporary research, however, suggests that these gendered norms of behaviour have become less pervasive for both men and women. The loosening of these constraints may consequently allow men and women to expand their behaviours to include previously stigmatised actions. This is of particular importance in regards to threesomes, as it may be what is helping threesomes to be viewed as more acceptable for both men and women.

The next chapter will outline the explicit stigmas attached to consensual non-monogamy in an attempt to dissuade people from engaging in it, thus helping to establish monogamy as the norm.

Chapter 3: Monogamism

The following chapter explores why it is that monogamy is the dominant way that people in Western societies structure their relationships. It is suggested that rather than being a choice, monogamy is socially constructed as the optimal relationship form. Building off of Chapter 2's discussion of stigma, there are presumptions regarding consensually non-monogamous arrangements (including threesomes), which carry with them stigma. These stigmatisations do not, however, necessarily have a basis in facts. Thus, this chapter explores the evidence related to these stigmatisations in order to assess the validity of the claims made about consensual non-monogamy. As this chapter will show, many of the assumptions around consensual non-monogamy have a poor evidence base, thus making it easier for us to dismiss suggestions that monogamy is automatically superior. Through the identification and deconstruction of myths around consensual non-monogamy, we are thus able to make more analytical interpretations of people's relationship and sexual behaviours, instead of relying upon stereotypes and "common sense" understandings.

The Hegemony of Monogamy

It is suggested that there is a cultural hegemony around the institution of monogamy, something referred to as monogamism (Anderson, 2012) or what others have called mononormativity (Pieper & Bauer, 2005). In this research, I have elected to use the term monogamism because it implies the operation of power through the concept of hegemony.

Hegemony refers to the application of power by the ruling classes to determine the endorsed value systems within society. Conceived by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971), hegemony is a subtle concept in its theorizing of power, in that those being influenced do not recognise the control being exerted upon them. The dominant cultural values are interwoven within the structural make-up of society, as well as socialised at an individual level. Consequently, the value we place on monogamy can be clearly seen in the legal and cultural benefits it maintains (Mint, 2004) as well as the limited vocabulary available to talk about consensual non-monogamy (Ritchie & Barker, 2006).

The dominant media discourse presented to people is also one of coupledness, where any relationship outside of the dyad is constructed as infidelity, and demands breaking up (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). When learning about relationships, one is rarely taught how to enter into a consensually non-monogamous relationship, nor encouraged to do so, with

some niche exceptions (e.g. columnist Dan Savage). Furthermore, when public examples showing consensually non-monogamous relationships are given, such as those celebrities or TV shows mentioned previously, these are far from contextualised as normative. They are instead positioned as interesting precisely because of their non-normative nature.

The hegemony of monogamy also manages to influence dominant practices in non-monogamous relationships. Practice is influenced by the fact that even though people might be having consensually non-monogamous relationships, they are still within a monogamist culture. Additionally, there is a fragmented meaning of monogamy. Anderson (2012) argues that monogamy has two meanings: 'a marital/partnered system of coupling' and a 'sexual restriction to a single partner' (p. 73). He explains that whilst these two meanings may overlap, they are also defined against two very different concepts; one concerned with emotional monogamy and another concerned with physical/sexual monogamy. Thus, someone in an open relationship may have no concerns about the sexual monogamy of their partner, allowing them to have sex with new people on a regular basis. But if their partner starts to see the same person on a regular basis, then they might decide to limit this behaviour for fear of the emotional or romantic bonds that could form. This restriction of emotional contact and the primacy given to the pre-existing relationship has been found in both swingers and open marriages (Bringle & Buunk, 1991; De Visser & McDonald, 2007). Looking at bisexual relationships, McLean (2004) suggested:

...more often than not participants formed intimate relationships with one person as their primary partner but often made the decision to be non-monogamous within this relationship. They described this primary relationship in terms of being 'open' to a variety of non-monogamous arrangements (p. 88)

Similarly, Weinberg, Williams and Prior's (1994) study on bisexuals found 90% of them stating that they were in open relationships; (although this is not to suggest that bisexuals necessarily have higher rates of non-monogamy or consensual non-monogamy than other groups). What an open relationship constituted was, however, open to interpretation and sometimes still prioritised the primary couple:

One type of relationship was very open, permitting emotional as well as sexual involvement. The person was free to fall in love with others and be open to the affectional feelings of others. A second type of relationship was narrower, permitting only sexual relationships with others. A third type was similar to the second in that sex with others was allowed, but there were specific ground rules that defined who were acceptable partners, how much time could be spent with them, etc. (p. 108)

The cultural hegemony of monogamy means that other relationship options are culturally stigmatised. Robinson (1997) suggests that monogamy is associated with moral and spiritual superiority compared to non-monogamy, which itself is perceived as emotionally shallow, with strong connections to promiscuity.

The Monogamy Gap

Monogamism leads to a situation—for men at least—that Anderson (2012) calls the monogamy gap. Here, men enter into dyadic relationships—relationships based on only two people—believing that they do not desire non-monogamy, assuming their relationships will be sexually fulfilling. However, they later develop extra-dyadic desires but assume that they will be unable to fulfil them consensually because of cultural pressure. Thus, they feel a gap between their socially constructed desire for monogamy, and their somatic desire for extradyadic sex; consequently, putting them in a state of cognitive dissonance. This gap is what Anderson (2012) terms: the monogamy gap. It is argued that ease of access to pornography and increasing liberalisation towards premarital sex and sexual acts in general, means that these men soon become habituated to the sex that they are having and start to want greater variation (Anderson, 2012). Anderson uses several large-scale sociological studies of sexual frequency in relationships to show that, as our society becomes more permissive of earlier, and more varied types of sex in a relationship; and as boys grow up consuming porn from age 11, they more quickly satiate to sex with the same individual. Hence, comparison of these studies show that couples are having less sex in contemporary times than previous decades.

Those in relationships that have passed what Anderson (2012) terms the ‘romance phase’ (typically 6-24 months), are more likely to engage in non-monogamy (whether it is consensual or otherwise), as this is when sexual frequency within the coupling starts to diminish (Schwartz & Young, 2009). Evidencing the importance of duration of relationships, men inexperienced in long-term relationships struggled to understand the cognitive dissonance brought about by the monogamy gap (Anderson, 2012). Where once they felt that their desire for their partner would never wane, or if they truly loved them then they would never want anyone else, these men were now confused about the “love” they felt for their partner versus their desire for sex with others. Looking at those engaging in consensual non-monogamy, De Visser and McDonald’s (2007) study on swingers found that all the

couples opened up their relationship after two to four years of monogamy. Similarly, Adam (2006) found with gay male couplings, sexual exclusivity was most commonly found amongst those still in the first 2 years of their relationship.

Upon entering the monogamy gap, many men in Anderson's (2012) study resolved their problem using a method that gained them the extradyadic sex they desired, without disrupting the image of monogamy: cheating. Despite the psychological (Allen et al., 2005) and physical risks such as STIs (Choi, Catania, & Dolcini, 1994; Conley, Moors, Ziegler, & Karathanasis, 2012b) associated with infidelity, it was seen as a method for both men and women to keep their relationship (and stay true to monogamous ideals) as well as gain things outside of it (such as sex or intimacy). Anderson's (2012) study showed that approximately 35% suggested that they would consider opening up their relationship to consensual non-monogamy, but did not pursue this out of fear of their partner's reaction as well as desiring non-monogamy for themselves but not their partner.

Gender and Non-monogamy

These attitudes reflect the widespread cultural assumption that women are less interested in consensual non-monogamy than men. If this assumption is to be believed, then attempting to engage in consensual non-monogamy is a pointless endeavour, as women will rarely agree to it, and the risk is not worth taking. It might be that these men are projecting perceived gender roles on to their partner and themselves (Alexander & Fisher, 2003). In other words, it is traditionally more appropriate for men to be more sexually active whilst women should be more sexually restrained (Schmookler & Bursik, 2007; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). Alternatively, Barker (2005) suggests that stereotypes about consensual non-monogamy make it seem as more beneficial for men, and an unattractive prospect to women, as well as not aligning socially acceptable constructs of gender (see also Aguilar, 2013).

The conflation of consensual non-monogamy with being purely about gaining extradyadic sex, combined with the cultural knowledge of men's higher sex drive, means that men may view a lower sex drive in their partner as a disinterest in consensual non-monogamy. Lippa (2009) shows across a sample of 53 countries, that men show a consistently higher sex drive than women; suggesting a biological element to men's heightened sexual desire over women. Similarly, Baumeister, Catonese, and Vohs' (2001) review of related research finds no contrary evidence to suggest that women have a higher

sex drive than men. Lippa (2009) does, however, suggest that an individual's willingness to engage in sex outside of a relationship is, conversely, influenced by both biological and social factors. Reflecting this, research shows that men and women's sexual attitudes and behaviours are starting to align more closely (Pettijohn & Dunlap, 2010), especially when the effects of gender stereotypes are controlled for (Alexander & Fisher, 2003), and within younger cohorts (Allen et al., 2005).

So not only does society endorse monogamy, but it also puts high expectations upon it. Monogamy is expected to provide everything a person could need with regards to emotional support, stability, security, comfort, friendship, sex, and there is a definite pressure for people to find their one true love (Barker & Langdrige, 2010). Anderson (2012, p. 115) questions:

Why do we think that we can find all of our needs in just one person? Just because we eventually grow a sense of togetherness with our partners, it does not mean that all of our emotional needs are met by this one person.

These understandings and expectations of romantic relationships develop from an early age, and even young adolescents, lacking in experience of romantic relationships, are aware of the core features of a romantic relationship (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 1999), such as passion, commitment and intimacy (although their focus shifted with age). Cultural representations of relationships are, however, often quite unrealistic. For example, Johnson and Holmes (2009) analysed 40 romantic comedy movies and found their portrayals of romantic relationships to be novel/exciting, whilst at the same time being emotionally significant/meaningful, combining aspects of both new and long-term relationships. Segrin and Nabi (2002) also found that consuming television shows focusing on marriage and romantic relationships were associated with idealistic expectations of marriage. Although it may be argued that those with idealistic notions of marriage self select to watch programs with that focus, thus reinforcing their attitudes, it is still important to acknowledge that they have developed idealistic expectations from somewhere.

Fundamental in legitimising the dominance of monogamy is something Easton and Hardy (2009) refer to as the 'starvation economy of love' (p. 25). Within this starvation economy, resources ("love" or demonstrations of "love") are finite and allocating them to more than one person will result in a diminished share for each person. This concept is, however, only usually applied to romantic/sexual relationships. This principle suggests that consensual non-monogamy or particular practices within it (such as romantic attachments

with more than one) would threaten the primary relationship because of the limited resource of love. Thus, loving two people means that each person will receive one half of the senders' love. It is from this perspective that the victim of infidelity questions whether their partner still loves them. Interestingly, though, this way of thinking about love is only ever applied to romantic relationships. Nobody ever suggests that a parent loves their first child less because they have a second, or that they love one parent more, precisely because the other one has died.

The Consensual Non-Monogamy Burden

As stigma around one aspect of a person can permeate their entire being, it is important to look at the kinds of stereotypes, and accompanying stigma that consensually non-monogamous behaviours and relationships are subject to. For example, the unfavourable portrayal of swingers in the media often attaches a subtle stigma through a focus on appearances and consumption choices, rather than their sexual practices (Frank, 2013). As Frank (2013) states, 'Swingers are overwhelmingly portrayed as ugly—unattractive, overweight, aging—and as tasteless—gluttonous, working class, or hopelessly out of date' (p. 116). The culture of monogamism means that we do not necessarily question the validity of negative claims made of consensual non-monogamy. Although the above example might only be of relevance to swingers, I argue that there are a number of stigmas that are common across all forms of consensual non-monogamy. These stigmas fall into four broad categories that I collectively term, the consensual non-monogamy burden.

1) Consensual Non-Monogamy is Symbol of a Failing Relationship

Linking with Easton and Hardy's (2009) starvation economy of love, when engaging in consensual non-monogamy, society suggests that you do not love your current partner enough, or you do not value the relationship. According to the starvation economy of love, as there is only a finite amount of love to go around, engaging in multiple relationships consequently suggests that you do not value the initial relationship enough for it to be the focus of your resources (time, effort, etc.). Thus there is an assumption amongst monogamous people, that entering into a consensually non-monogamous relationship indicates you are dissatisfied with your primary partner (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013). Monogamy, and staying monogamous, therefore acts as a method of

symbolically indicating the quality of the relationship. A lesbian participant from Wosick's (2012, p. 53) study suggested:

I'm completely, totally, 100% monogamous. If I'm gonna be with someone, I'm gonna love her. I'm gonna have sex with only her. Why would I give all of myself to Dawn and then take it back to give to someone else? It's not fair to her.

Additionally, desire for extradyadic sex is seen as a gauge for whether or not partners love each other enough to be happy with only one person. Speaking with bisexual men about their relationships, Anderson, Scoats and McCormack (2015, p. 33) found the majority of the sample valued monogamy. Some of these participants questioned the value of consensually non-monogamous relationships:

Ricardo, age 38 and Hispanic, said that monogamy was a character test of love, "I'm not opposed to people doing what they want, but for me, monogamy is a character test of love. If I don't love him or her enough I will want sex with someone else." When asked if he thought those in open relationships did not love their partners as much as those in monogamous relationships he answered, "I think that's probably true. Yes."

Similarly, in Anderson's (2012) study, he found comparable arguments coming from his gay and straight male participants. Many of them stated that they felt true love was incompatible with extradyadic relations. Many also felt that if they found the right person, a person they loved strongly enough, then they would not want to sleep with anyone else. This, however, appeared to be a presenting script, as many of the men that said this, claimed to love their partner, but still continued to cheat on them. Anderson therefore contended that these men were stuck in the monogamy gap (Anderson, 2012); cognitively expressing a desire for monogamy, but somatically desiring extradyadic sex.

2) *Consensual Non-Monogamy is Purely About Sex.*

Consensual non-monogamy also carries the assumption that it is purely about sex. For example, Karen Ruskin (2011) suggests that:

Upon researching polyamory among many ridiculous points that are made in favour of polyamory, one of them is that it is not just about the sexual relationship. Come on now, who are we kidding here? Ok, agreed, yes, it is not just about the sexual relationship, indeed a poly person gets more than just sex from the relationship, but, yes, but, without the sex it would not be polyamory it would be just friendship!

Although some forms of consensual non-monogamy, such as swinging, may have more sexual focus than other types (Sheff, 2005) (e.g. polyamory), Ruskin's perspective ignores the romantic element present in many polyamorous relationships (Klesse, 2006) or people's capacities for non-sexual romantic relationships (Carrigan, 2011). Klesse (2006, p. 569) suggests that for those practicing polyamory, friendships may require as much 'affection, attention and consideration as sexual relationships'.

One reason consensual non-monogamy is stigmatised is because there is a perceived (or real) higher probability that people who are consensually non-monogamous will engage in sex with someone already in a monogamous relationship (Schmitt, 2004), or that they will be sexually unfaithful to their own partner (Bailey, Kirk, Zhu, Dunne, & Martin, 2000). People thus stigmatise consensual non-monogamy as being only about gaining sex, and publically adopt sexually conservative attitudes as a way of protecting their social identities.

One of the dominant discourses around sex in society suggests that it should incorporate an emotional element and not only be about pleasure seeking. Thus, casual sex is on the outer limits of Rubin's (1984) charmed circle with the opposite state being sex within a relationship. Evidencing this, Matsick, Conley, Zeigler, Moors and Rubin (2013) found that polyamorous relationships were perceived as the most acceptable form of consensual non-monogamy, then open relationships, and swinging was seen as least favourable. Grunt-Mejer and Campbell (2016) also found similar results, although they did not find swinging to be more stigmatised than open relationships. Matsick et al. (2013, p. 346) go on to suggest that amongst their relatively young (mean age= 25) sample, participants they:

Seem to hold the belief that love and sex should go together more strongly than the belief that a person can love only one person at a time. Likewise, participants appear to disapprove of the idea that sex can or should occur in the absence of any emotional attachment.

This is also a viewpoint that is sometimes taken by polyamorists, some of whom view sex for purely pleasure as a more clinical, shallow, less meaningful endeavour and consequently attempt to distance themselves from the permissive label (Klesse, 2006). So, even though those engaging in consensual non-monogamy are more stigmatised than those who are monogamous (Conley et al., 2012a), there still seems to be a hierarchy within consensual

non-monogamy, whereby love and emotional connection coupled with sexual behaviours are ranked higher than sexual behaviour on its own (Matsick et al., 2013).

3) It is Oppressive to Women

Barker (2005) suggests that the stereotypes about consensual non-monogamy also make it appear oppressive, more beneficial for men, and unattractive to women. One way in which this stereotype is promulgated is through a media conflation of consensual non-monogamy with polygamy. Polygamy is a system of marriage often associated with non-western societies (e.g. Khasawneh, Hijazi, & Salman, 2011) or the Mormon religion (Ivins, 1953), whereby a person is able to have multiple spouses, although more often it is men taking multiple wives. Consequently, polygamy has long been criticised as patriarchal in its structure and constructed as a system utilised by less civilised non-white cultures (Willey, 2006). Thus, conservative opinion pieces (Dreher, 2014) portray consensual non-monogamy as the same as polygamy, attempting to associate it with stigmas of oppression and being uncivilised. Despite the fact that the article explicitly draws upon information about polyamory (a system that may include the negotiation of multiple romantic partners for all involved), the article makes no attempt to highlight any differences between practices. It instead chooses to suggest that polyamory equals polygamy, it's bad, and it's coming. Writing for the Huffington Post, Lehrer (2013) also uses the terms polyamory and polygamy almost interchangeably, failing to recognise any major differences between the two, or understanding that polyamorous relationships may not always operate in a closed group manner:

Long social experience with polyamory indicates that the social results are awful. If they're patriarchal and primarily polygamous and limit the economic roles that women can take (as almost all known polygamous societies do) they will doom a lot of people to living in poverty...Polyamorous societies will, by definition, never have enough mates to go around. Always and everywhere, this has resulted in significant numbers of disaffected heterosexual males who have no hope of finding a mate.

Contrary to this kind of opinion, some of those who engage in consensual non-monogamy view it as a progressive political act because it has the potential to resist the patriarchal nature of monogamous relationships and redress the gender hierarchy. Participants are able to question the institution of monogamy and decide whether it really has women's best interests at heart (Robinson, 1997). With women able to form the hub of consensually non-

monogamous arrangements (Ritchie & Barker, 2007), having more power than in monogamous relationships, it can easily be recognised by many as dispensing with much male privilege and being a more equal arrangement (Aguilar, 2013).

Criticisms of swinging have also been made by polyamorists for being less progressive. For example, Klesse (2006) found that some of his sample felt that swinging was heavily heteronormative and focused around men. Despite the notion of being focused around men, bisexual women enjoy the highest social capital in such situations through their perceived scarcity and fetishisation (Sheff, 2006). Whereas female bisexuality and sexual interaction is highly encouraged at swinging events, male bisexuality is more stigmatised (Frank, 2008; Lind, 2005). This is something that is also built into the institutional structure of swinging. Although swinging clubs often place the female participants firmly in charge, they are somewhat less progressive in terms of accepting male-male sexual behaviours, and may even demonstrate outright homophobia. Exemplifying this stance, Swinging club, Ourplace4fun state on their website that:

Our Swingers Parties are for straight and bisexual female activity and straight male activity. This formula is the standard swinging convention across the world and reflects the consensus of opinion among both male and female swingers of all countries. This does not mean that Bisexual men are unwelcome. It means that when they apply / attend, they explicitly agree that the male partner will be straight at the Party or Event (The rules, n.d.).

This type of oppression is not, however, universal across all swinging clubs, nor is it indicative of consensual non-monogamy more broadly.

4) It Doesn't Work

Consensual non-monogamy is stigmatised as a deficient relationship style that does not work, i.e. it is a deficient relationship style when compared to monogamy. Monogamism means that the majority of society is socialised into the assumption that monogamy is the ideal relationship without exploring the potential of other relationship styles. Confirmation bias—interpreting evidence to support one's pre-existing beliefs—means that failed consensually non-monogamous relationships are often seen as evidence for their deficiency, whereas failed monogamous relationships are not viewed as demonstrating problems with monogamy. Additionally, those who seek help to understand their non-hegemonic relationships may actually face stigma from the professionals supposed to support them.

The myth of consensual non-monogamy relationship deficiency is often perpetuated by relationship counsellors/therapists and those desiring/practicing it are pathologically labelled (see Shernoff, 2006; Weitzman, 2006). Weitzman (2006, p. 142) suggests that, 'the mental health field has come to value diversity in recent years, in such areas as culture, religion and sexual orientation. This standard has not yet encompassed polyamory'. These professionals are imbued with symbolic capital around relationship knowledge, meaning that they are perceived as relationship experts; thus endorsements for monogamy or consensual non-monogamy may be viewed as more legitimate than other viewpoints. It is therefore important, as Zimmerman (2012) argues, that therapists address their own biases regarding consensual non-monogamy and recognise that monogamy is socially constructed as superior to other forms of relationship.

Outside of a therapy setting, these messages about monogamy also remain unquestioned. Some of the biggest selling self-help books dealing with relationships still suggest life-long, monogamous coupledness as the optimal relationship format that everyone should aspire to (Barker & Langdridge, 2010). So strong are these beliefs in the value of monogamy, Anderson (2012) suggests that, 'there are some who are so emotionally invested in the romantic myths of monogamy that no reasoned argument will help them to critically evaluate their belief system' (p. 17)

Despite the idea that consensual non-monogamy does not work as effectively as other relationship systems, the men in Anderson's (2010, 2012) research suggest that it is monogamy that they struggled with. Many of the men interviewed acknowledged their desire for sex outside of a dyad and had covertly engaged in such acts: 'It's not that I don't love her. I totally love her. I just need sex with others. You know what I mean?' (Anderson, 2010, p. 863). In one of the studies, 78% of men had engaged in cheating behaviours (Anderson, 2012) and stated that they preferred this approach to pursuing consensual non-monogamy (Anderson, 2010). Anderson defined cheating as engaging in physical behaviours that their partner would consider cheating. Had he allowed participants to include sexual behaviours on the internet, such as masturbating to porn or having sex over webcams, then the number of men who had cheated would be closer to 100%.

Inability to discuss non-monogamy

Contributing to the assumption that consensual non-monogamy is compelled to fail is the stigma around it that reduces people's opportunities to talk about it, and to try it. From

Anderson's (2012) study, those men potentially open to consensual non-monogamy (approximately 35%), they commonly rejected it based on the perceived risk that their partner would terminate the relationship if it were suggested. Furthermore, many of these men desired non-monogamy for themselves, but not their partners. This implies that for these men, the idea of consensual non-monogamy is a taboo subject that would generate negative consequences for a relationship (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985). It also reveals a double standard in that these men expect monogamy of their partners, despite the fact that they themselves struggle with it. Thus, in part 'cheating is a safer strategy for acquiring recreational sex than requesting permission from their partners' (Anderson, 2010, p. 866).

Further facilitating the potential for infidelities, the cultural grip of monogamism means that heterosexual couples are unlikely to discuss what monogamy and fidelity actually mean to them. There will be an assumption of monogamy but without questioning what this means in practice (Wosick, 2012). For example, Knox, Zusman, and McNeely (2008) found male college students less likely than females to consider oral sex as sex, or cybersex as cheating. Differing concepts of fidelity mean there may be an emphasis on sexual restriction, or being in love with only one other, or a combination of the two (dual fidelity) (Wosick, 2012).

Engaging in infidelities may, however, be more risky to one's health than consensual non-monogamy. Sometimes affecting the perpetrator and/or spouse, there are a host of socially constructed responses to infidelity such as guilt, depression, emotional distance, anxiety, and shame (see Allen et al., 2005) that can impact on one's mental health. Conley et al. (2012b) found those engaging in cheating behaviours (compared to consensually non-monogamous individuals) were also less likely to participate in protective sexual measures (e.g. condom use) with both their primary partner and extradyadic encounters; less likely to engage in frequent sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing; and less likely to discuss safer sex concerns with a new partner. As Anderson (2012) suggests, this might be because those involved in cheating behaviours are in cognitive dissonance about their desire to do so. Carrying around condoms or talking about safer sex with a new partner may multiply their feelings of dissonance and make them consciously admit their intention to cheat. It might therefore be argued that a more emotionally and physically healthy means of gaining extradyadic sex or intimacy may come from engaging in consensual non-monogamy rather than a system of covert non-monogamy.

In contrast to heterosexual relationships, belonging to a sexual minority group seems to increase the likelihood of an explicit discussion regarding monogamy. Wosick

(2012) suggests that sexual minorities are more likely to have these conversations because of the increased likelihood that they had at some point engaged in consensually non-monogamous relationships. This is perhaps unsurprising given that levels of participation seems to be more common in those groups (e.g. gay, lesbian, or bisexual) that have already challenged heteronormativity (McLean, 2004; Shernoff, 2006). Already breaking the taboo of not aligning with heterosexuality seems to have influenced these groups, and given the opportunity to explore different relationship formats (Coelho, 2011; Martin, 1999) because they are already outside of societal norms, and the charmed circle of relationship behaviours (Rubin, 1984). Consequently, they not subject to the same assumptions of monogamy as heterosexuals are.

Jealousy

Heavily tied in with the cultural stereotype of the failure of consensual non-monogamy is the issue of (romantic) jealousy; the notion that people in consensually non-monogamy relationships would be particularly jealous. While there is evidence to suggest that jealousy is a naturally hardwired emotion (Hart, Carrington, Tronick, & Carroll, 2004), jealousy of one's partner having sex with another is unlikely to be hardwired (Anderson, 2012). Evolutionary biologists in the past suggested that there is a biological basis for the difference in men and women's jealousy, whereby men are more jealous of sexual infidelities, and women more jealous of emotional infidelities (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buunk, Angleitner, Oubaid, & Buss, 1996; Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982). From a Darwinian perspective, men's desire for their partner to not copulate with anyone else attempts to ensure the paternity of the offspring, and guard against potentially wasted resources, in the form of raising another's child. Women, on the other hand, want to limit the risk of their partner diverting their resources to the raising of another's offspring.

However, others have questioned the validity of these claims (DeSteno, Bartlett, Braverman, & Salovey, 2002; Harris, 2002, 2003). Harris' (2002) research found the difference between men and women's jealousy to be evident when participants were asked about hypothetical situations, but these disappeared when participants were asked to remember a partner's actual infidelity. This suggests that what we become jealous about is, at least in part, socially constructed.

Monogamism will shape and influence what we attach jealousy to. Harris (2003) suggests that there are both individual, as well as cultural factors that influence when

expressions of jealousy are acceptable, expected, or endorsed. With regards to jealousy in monogamous relationships, Aguilar (2013, p. 107) suggests that:

The emotion of jealousy, which many people experience at the thought that their lover might stray, reinforces the idea that monogamy is “biological,” making jealousy appear to be an innate proof of love and commitment.

Thus, people experience jealousy and interpret it as a warning that they need to protect their relationship from the threat of others (Parrott & Smith, 1993). If jealousy is a reaction to a perceived threat to a relationship, then not experiencing jealousy, or not addressing one’s jealousy may, consequently, be seen to represent of a lack of love for one’s partner, or ambivalence to the relationship.

Furthermore, to consider entering into a consensually non-monogamous relationship, with the presumed higher levels of jealousy (Conley et al., 2012a), may suggest to one’s partner a lack of jealousy, and therefore love. Equally, the opposite may be true; Robinson (1997) suggests that for those who are dissatisfied with monogamy, their inability to face the spectre of jealousy effectively prevents them from exploring consensual non-monogamy. For this reason, people may elect to follow a life of monogamy because see themselves as unable to cope with the perceived jealousy brought about by alternatives (Aguilar, 2013; LaSala, 2004).

Monogamism also means there is an assumption that monogamous relationships intrinsically result in less jealousy than consensually non-monogamous ones (Conley et al., 2012a). A life of monogamy does not, however, protect against instances of jealousy (LaSala, 2004).

A key difference is that those in consensually non-monogamous relationships often acknowledge jealousy and take active steps to address it (De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Robinson, 1997). De Visser and McDonald (2007) describe swinging couples as acknowledging the presence of jealousy at times, but through communication were able to alleviate these feelings and even manipulate it to foster sexual arousal or excitement.

Feelings of jealousy can be re-contextualised through the creation of new terms such as ‘compersion’—whereby someone derives pleasure from seeing (or knowing of) their partner enjoying themselves with another (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). The assumption that monogamous relationships guard against instances of jealousy, however, means that jealousy management strategies may be neglected compared to consensually non-monogamous relationships (Conley et al., 2013). De Visser and McDonald (2007) suggest

that monogamous couples, to increase relationship satisfaction, could adapt similar strategies.

Fundamental to all types of consensual non-monogamy is a focus on communication within the relationship, which may impact on how jealousy is experienced. Wosick-Correa (2010, p. 147) writes, ‘...almost all respondents, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, have some kind of agreement about being in a poly relationship, whether it be verbal (65%), case by case (15%), written (8%) or ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ (1%)’. Thus, rather than the sexual free-for-all that consensual non-monogamy is sometimes portrayed as, rules and boundaries are established and renegotiated to include a myriad of arrangements.

One of the key ground rules or focuses for consensually non-monogamous relationships is an emphasis on honesty and communication (McLean, 2004; Shernoff, 2006). Arrangements may be made in order to minimise the effects of what the initial dyad view as potentially harmful to the relationship (McLean, 2004). For example, Coelho (2011) study on gay-male open relationships found some were happy for their partner to bring others to their shared home, whereas others were not. By creating a set of rules that all participants are comfortable with, perceived threats to the relationship may be minimised.

Comparing Consensual Non-Monogamy to Monogamy

Despite estimates of those engaging in consensual non-monogamy being estimated at around 4% of the population (Conley et al., 2012a), the stigma of the consensual non-monogamy burden creates the assumption that monogamy is better. This is not however supported by the research (see Conley et al., 2013). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that many forms of consensual non-monogamy are at least comparable to monogamy, and in some cases, healthier.

Demonstrating that consensual non-monogamy is not automatically more damaging than monogamy, Moors, Conley, Edelstein and Chopik (2014) show that sexual exclusivity is not a necessary precursor for a relationship to have secure attachments. Whilst Conley et al. (2013) suggest that, ‘Attachment insecurity (avoidance and anxiety) is linked with low levels of trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships and is often seen as an indicator of poorer psychological adjustment’ (p. 134), Moors et al. (2014), however, found that whilst anxiety levels did not differ between groups, those in consensually non-monogamous relationships reported lower levels of attachment avoidance—a propensity to distance themselves from their romantic partner—in comparison to those in monogamous relationships. Thus, it

would appear that there is a correlation between romantic relationship satisfaction and those engaging in consensual non-monogamy. Additionally, although those with high levels of avoidance demonstrated positive attitudes towards consensual non-monogamy, and a greater willingness to engage in it, this did not translate into actual engagement. Thus, it may be possible that those with lower level of attachment insecurity around avoidance may be more likely to explore consensually non-monogamous relationships (although other factors will probably influence this).

Other studies have also demonstrated comparable psychological health between those engaging in consensual non-monogamy, and those engaging in monogamy. For example, Morrison, Beaulieu, Brockman and Beaglaioich (2013) compared attachment patterns between polyamorists and monogamous individuals. They found the majority of participants to exhibit patterns of being securely attached (being comfortable with intimacy and not fearing being alone), although more polyamorists exhibited this attachment style; 52.9% compared to 44.7%. Similarly, Bricker and Horne's (2007) study comparing a gay consensually non-monogamous and gay monogamous sample found both groups to overwhelmingly exhibit secure attachments. Rubel and Bogaert's (2014, p. 19) review of literature concludes 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.

Looking at other indicators of relationship quality, we see similar results. Bricker and Horne (2007) found there to be little difference between the relationship satisfaction of gay men engaging in consensual non-monogamy and monogamy. Likewise, Hosking (2013) found gay men in open relationships, monogamous relationships, and threesome only arrangements to be comparably intimate, committed, and satisfying. Looking at gay and bisexual men in monogamous, open, and monogamish relationships (monogamish being defined here as relationships whereby any extradyadic sex must include both members of the dyad), Parsons, Starks, DuBois, Grov and Golub (2013) found that gay and bisexual men in monogamish relationships were associated with significant positive benefits over both single men (such as lower rates of depression and higher life satisfaction) and those in open relationships (such as lower rates of unprotected sex), as well as closely resembling monogamous relationships in terms of psychological and sexual health benefits.

Comparing older adults (over 55) in relationally or sexually non-exclusive relationships to an exclusive sample, Fleckenstein and Cox (2014) found the former to have significantly higher levels of happiness and health. Although, it should be noted that this data is correlational, and does not suggest that being in a non-exclusive relationship has led to this increase. Although a large proportion of these examples come from a gay, male perspective, it should be highlighted that other sexual minorities also demonstrate a similar level of desire to engage in consensual non-monogamy (Moors, Rubin, Matsick, & Conley, 2014).

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that consensual non-monogamy is a safer option than monogamy, with regards to sexual health. Choi et al. (1994) suggest that the majority of those engaging in infidelities do not use a condom with primary, or secondary partners. As mentioned previously, Conley et al. (2012b) also found that those in monogamous relationships who engaged in infidelities were less likely to use protection during sex than those engaging in consensual non-monogamy. The authors suggest that this may be because having the forethought to purchase condoms, or other precautions, suggests an element of premeditation to the infidelity; thus making it impossible to argue that it was caused by a momentary lapse of uncontrollable passion.

Anderson (2012, p. 172) calls this type of situation as the 'oh shit, oh shit, ooooooh shit orgasm'. In this scenario, people's rational thought processes are dimmed by sexual desire, and they engage in sexual acts despite the socially constructed stigma around it. Once this somatic desire has been fulfilled, however, they are only left with the socially constructed guilt over what they have done. Given that Shackelford and Buss (1997) estimate levels of marital infidelity amongst American couples to range between 26% to 70% for women, and 33% to 75% for men, this creates a potentially huge opportunity for the spread of STIs amongst monogamous couples.

Chapter Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, monogamy is rarely something that is chosen; instead, it is seen as a default setting. Through the attachment of stigma, alternatives to monogamy are constructed as inherently problematic. Monogamy, however, is rarely put under the same scrutiny. In addition, stereotypes about consensual non-monogamy—many of which I highlighted in my discussion of the consensual non-monogamy burden— often remain unchallenged; consequently being viewed as accurate. Based upon the research evidence,

however, it would seem that consensual non-monogamy receives a number of unwarranted criticisms. Oftentimes it is as healthy as other relationship arrangements, and in some cases, perhaps more so.

In chapter 4, I will discuss the current research on threesomes; highlighting how different types of threesomes harbour differing stigmatisations dependant on the circumstances under which they occur. Related to this previous chapter, threesomes are also discussed as paradoxical in nature: having the potential to be both consensually non-monogamous, whilst also supporting monogamism.

Chapter 4: Threesomes

Building off of the discussion of consensual non-monogamy in the previous chapter, the following chapter now focuses on the state of contemporary academic knowledge with regards to threesomes. I discuss the breadth and depth of previous studies into threesomes as well as their growing popularity amongst the general population. Whilst this chapter does highlight a wealth of academic knowledge around threesomes, it also underlines some of areas that are under-researched; namely, the details of people's threesome. This sort of qualitative data helps us to understand the realities of threesomes for individuals that engage in them. Thus, this chapter presents an overview of current knowledge around threesomes whilst also demonstrating the need for more research in this area.

What Are Threesomes and Why Look at Them?

Before looking at threesomes in greater depth, it is first important to clarify the terms used. De Visser and McDonald (2007) define a threesome as a 'sexual encounter involving three people, for example, a couple and a third person' (p. 463). Similarly, Hudson (2013) describes it as 'a group of three people having sex together' (p. 601). Both of these definitions are, however, open to interpretation. What does a sexual encounter or having sex comprise of? Do two women exposing their breasts to another man at a music festival amount to a sexual encounter? Does a man watching his wife have sex with another man count as three people having sex together? Ultimately, those engaging in the acts will interpret this for themselves and people will define threesomes differently.

Rather than adopt one of these previous definitions, I propose that sexual threesomes are commonly understood as: sexual interaction between three people whereby at least one member engages in physical sexual behaviour with both the other members.

I also propose that it might be useful to consider threesomes on a scale, thus acknowledging the variability in threesomes for the different people involved. Accordingly, a threesome where all members participate with all others in physical sexual behaviours is higher in sexual interaction. Compare this to a threesome where two men might have sex with the same woman successively, or at the same time, without any physical contact between them. This would be a threesome of lower sexual interaction. Conceptualising these behaviours on a scale is not, however, intended to privilege physical interaction over psychological arousal. Nor is it meant to suggest that one type of interaction is more

enjoyable or erotic for everyone. It does, however, highlight one way that threesome experiences may differ.

Whilst my definition of a threesome is still open to differing interpretations, it has the benefit of aligning more closely with the common cultural understanding and use of the term threesome. It additionally excludes those who might engage in voyeurism or cuckoldry (a practice whereby one member of a dyad has sex with others for the sexual/erotic excitement of their partner). Although cuckoldry has the potential to become a threesome, and undoubtedly includes at least three people, often the male partner does not take part or is sometimes not even present (Lewis, 2010). It is also for this reason that I reject using the term triolism: a term that encompasses both threesomes as well as cuckoldry (Wernik, 1990).

Additionally, threesomes should be looked at as a distinct from other forms of group sex. Participants from Karlen's (1988) study suggest threesomes are quite distinct. One participant said that threesomes are 'more exciting than two. Over three is a crowd' (p. 346). Other participants also shared this emphasis on numbers. A married man of 48 suggested, 'Threesomes are probably the best! When you break into pairs, jealousy sometimes occurs, and also one of the partners might not be as excited about their [swinging] partner as the other' (p. 348). Similarly, a 44-year-old male professional stated that:

...with two women, the physical differences and sensations heighten my sexual enjoyment. With a woman and a man, the two of us pleasuring her and vice versa is a turn-on. Foursomes and groups tend to end up as coupling or a loss of individuality (p. 347).

Nor was it only men that highlighted the differences between threesomes and other forms of group sex. A female office worker stated that, 'They are special, wonderful, and much more stimulating sexually than any other pairing' (p. 346). A married woman in her early 30s also suggested that, 'threesomes are warm and sensual with the right person. Hard to get four people on the same sexual wavelength. Easier with three—more loving with two women and one man—everyone usually leaves warm and happy and satisfied' (p. 346). Clearly for some, threesomes have a different dynamic to them when compared with other sexual combinations.

This distinction has also been demonstrated in more recent research with gay couples which discussed 'threesome-only couples' (Adam 2006; LaSala 2004, p. 14). These men only engaged in extradyadic sex in the form of threesomes, and only when both

partners were present. These couples were therefore able to “spice up” their sex lives whilst maintaining a broader conceptualization of monogamy within the dyad. These couples also appeared to suffer from less jealousy, or at least reported lower levels of jealousy, than couples with a higher degree of sexual freedom, such as those in open relationships. ‘For the most part, couples who limited themselves to threeways seemed to be the most able to engage in outside sex without ambivalence or jealousy’ (LaSala, 2004, p. 16). Despite the apparent difference of threesomes compared with other arrangements, research into threesomes is sparse in comparison to other areas of sexuality and sexual behaviour (Karlen, 1988).

Karlen’s Study of Threesomes

The first major study in threesomes was by Arno Karlen (1988), titled: *Threesomes: Studies in Sex, Power, and Intimacy*. In this study, over a course of 20 years Karlen interviewed 50 people (22 males, 28 females) he met, as well as collecting 150 surveys from attendees at a swinging convention he attended, about their threesome experiences. Karlen (1988, p. 71) suggested:

There is a common tendency to think of people who have been in threesomes as alien beings. Like swingers, homosexuals and others who deviate from basic sexual norms, they seem to many to have entered another social, psychological, and moral sphere.

As this quote highlights, threesomes were highly stigmatised at the time of Karlen’s research thus likely contributing to the length of the study as well as the difficulty in finding participants. Despite Karlen’s relatively small sample across a large number of years, he suggests a number of reoccurring themes in threesomes.

First, Karlen found that threesomes were a means for some of his female participants to explore their own same sex desires. Many women entered into threesomes specifically for this reason. He wrote: ‘A number of women said outright that a triad was a “safe” way to experiment with a woman; they didn’t know how else to go about it except the more threatening way of sex with an experienced lesbian’ (p. 206). There was, however, little evidence suggesting that the same was true for men. Reflecting these results, participants’ threesomes containing two women and a man (FFM) were more common than two men and a woman (MMF) with 42 subjects having experienced the former, but only 28 experiencing the latter (22 had experienced both). When MMF threesomes did happen, it

was usually a result of the female's desire for one, rather than the males. Reflecting this, same-sex sexual behaviour was much more common in the FFM threesomes where it was reported by 33 participants, compared to only 8 participants in MMF threesomes.

Similar results in regards to same-sex interaction were also found from the questionnaires gathered from swingers. From this data set, results showed 137 of the 150 swingers had engaged in a threesome. Same-sex sexual behaviour was, however, much lower amongst men, only being witnessed by 37 of the participants compared to 88 of the participants witnessing female same-sex behaviour. The composition of these threesomes was also more evenly spread, with 26 having been in only an FFM threesome, 24 only having been in an MMF threesome, and 82 having been in both. It therefore appears that whilst MMF threesomes were more common amongst the swingers group, male-male same-sex behaviour was still much less common than female-female interactions.

Karlen also suggests that a threesome is usually comprised of a couple joined by a third person. The third person is not, however, usually valued in the same way as each member of the couple. He wrote: 'In this trio, as in many others, there were not three equals, but a couple and an "appendage"' (Karlen, 1988, p. 70). Couples would often treat the third as purely sexual object as exemplified through the act of gift giving:

Accounts of threesomes as sexual gifts popped up regularly throughout this study. Usually it was a woman bringing another woman or women to a man she liked; a few times it was a man adding a second man for the woman's pleasure, without homosexual involvement. In most cases, the "gifts" were not prostitutes or people who would blindly have sex with anyone; they were friends or acquaintances who understood and appreciated the spirit of the gift—and obviously didn't mind a little play with a recommended stranger. (Karlen, 1988, p. 180)

Sometimes these gifts were a way to show affection towards a partner and may be interpreted as an altruistic act toward one's partner. Karlen (1988) does, however, later talk about gift giving in less selfless terms: 'The gift of a third partner is often a gesture of primacy and power' (p. 203) of the giver. Through the act of giving, the giver thus demonstrates their power as a sexual gatekeeper (assuming the gift is a welcome one) whilst simultaneously displaying a lack of jealousy and establishing themselves as a desirable partner.

Despite undoubtedly ground-breaking work, the study is not without its limitations. First, Karlen (1988) does not give a convincing argument in explaining the difference in the occurrences of threesome type (Schippers, 2016). FFM threesomes are said to be a source of positive experiences for both men and women. MMF threesomes are, however, seen as

unnatural for men from both a biological and psychoanalytic stance (Schippers, 2016). Men are supposedly less inclined towards MMF threesomes because of ‘...the existence of a biological underpinning, stronger in males than females, for assertion, dominance, and rank-seeking’ (Karlen, 1988, p. 240), which would become problematic when having sex in the presence of other males. Karlen also adopts a psychoanalytic perspective to argue that men will also inevitably reject MMF threesomes because their masculinity is dependent upon its distance from femininity. Both of these arguments are, however, essentialist in nature and do not consider the socially constructed nature of masculinity (Kimmel, 1994) nor its capacity to change (Anderson, 2014). For women, a female desire for MMF threesomes is hinted at being indicative of some unresolved psychological conflict/damage, further perpetuating the myth that women who desire these types of threesomes are either sluts or victims (Schippers, 2016).

Another criticism stems from the large proportion of participants who were from swinging backgrounds. As previously mentioned, swinging is a practice heavily invested in the primacy of the couple as well as imbued with stigma towards male bisexuality (Frank, 2008; Lind, 2005; Sheff, 2006). Being that a large proportion of the sample were already engaged in swinging (13 of the interviewees and presumably all of the 150 survey respondents) it is maybe unsurprising that an emphasis on the dyad and a greater reluctance for male-male sexual interaction was found.

Finally, the manner in which the study was written brings up questions of reflexivity. Many descriptions decidedly suggest a layer of bias towards both topics and his participants. For example, despite others adopting the term, and some participants’ talking about their bisexuality, it is a term Karlen is reluctant to acknowledge or use (Garber, 2000). Even though he talks to a number of men who engage in sex with both men and women he argues that, ‘If there is, as a few people claim, increasing male bisexuality in threes and groups, the people I talked to haven’t been part of it or seen it’ (Karlen, 1988, p. 237). When describing his participants he also describes them in emotive ways that reflect personal opinions rather than fact. Two examples are given below:

Tanya is tall, lush, with long brown hair, black eyes, and a full lower lip. Her sultry, exotic beauty makes even women look twice. To her it has always been an alarming power...she provokes lust and infatuation without trying.... (p. 33).

When I interviewed Lyla, she is 34. She is slender, on the tall side of average, with cool eyes, regular and undistinguished features, and mousy colouring. Usually, plain-Jane clothes conceal her rather pretty figure, and her manner is muted (p. 51).

Deciding whether these personal contemplations infiltrate other aspects of the study is impeded by Karlen's unsystematic presentation of data and a reliance on large interview transcript excerpts, from a small number of participants, to illustrate various points.

The Growing Popularity of Threesomes

Whether or not threesomes are becoming more common is difficult to gauge because of a lack of historical data to compare with. For example, Wilson's (1987) study asked participants to respond to a sex survey issued within a popular British newspaper and found that 34% of 1862 men, and 15% of 2905 women had experience of a threesome. Whilst these percentages will have been influenced by responder bias, they are still comparable to contemporary estimates of the prevalence of threesomes (Morris, Chang, & Knox, 2016; Scoats, Joseph, & Anderson, 2017; Thompson & Byers, 2017).

Threesomes are, however, clearly developing a perceived normality and growing presence in popular culture (e.g. Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014). Highlighting this, Leitch's (2006) article for *Men's Health* suggest that one is supposed to have had a threesome by age 30; it has become a risqué but socially-accepted, perhaps even expected, part of a contemporary person's sexual repertoire of experiences.

As threesomes' taboo status starts to diminish, they have become a popular topic within the mainstream media, commonly featuring in a wide array of media publications and websites. To highlight just a few, there is advice on how to have a threesome (Buxton, 2015; Griffin, 2014), what women think about threesomes (Moore, 2014a), the suggestion that they might be a gateway to open relationships (Parker, 2014), advice on finding the right partner (Gonzalez, 2014), and the argument that threesomes are so common they are now mundane (Moore, 2014b). They also appear in popular entertainment, including in movies such as *Zoolander* (Stiller, 2001), *Vicky Christina Barcelona* (Allen, 2008), and *On The Road* (Salles, 2012) as well as TV shows such as *Gossip Girl* (Schwartz & Savage, 2007), *Sex and the City* (Star, 1998), and *True Blood* (Ball, 2008).

Threesomes are, furthermore, a popular category on porn sites. Analytics of the porn streaming site 'Pornhub' shows that 'threesome' was the second most commonly searched category of pornography by women in 2014 (What women want, 2014), the second most searched term in 2015 (Pornhub's 2015 year in review), and the third most searched term and viewed category in 2016 (Pornhub's 2016 year in review). One can even

simulate a threesome experience through the use of virtual reality equipment such as Oculus Rift or Samsung Gear VR (Knight, 2015).

Easy access to pornography has been theorised as part of a progression toward a more liberal, recreational culture of sexuality that encourages play and experimentation in lieu of procreative sexuality (McNair, 2013). Different types of pornography are now easily accessible to a broad range of audiences, compared to previous avenues of pornographic consumption that required more deliberate commitment (Attwood, 2010). Ease of pornographic access has been significant in creating opportunity for heterosexual men to be exposed to a diverse range of sexual acts including male-male sexual interaction (Ross, 2005). Anderson (2014) argues that the 'commoditization of extreme pornography makes yesterday's stigmatised bedroom activities normal, perhaps mundane' (p. 196) and that this has allowed for the desensitisation and normalisation of same-sex sexual acts, too.

The aforementioned changes are happening alongside a broader trend toward viewing pornography or sexuality itself as a consumer experience, one that people seek out as part of a desire to have different, varied and unique experiences. This 'consumer sexuality' perspective, or what McNair (2002) calls the pornographification of society, involves seeking pleasure as a way of bonding with one's friends; of experiencing something different and new; and viewing sex as a harmless, healthy, consensual experience to be consumed as a leisure activity, only sometimes with one's romantic partner (Attwood & Smith, 2013; Frank, 2008; Joseph & Black, 2012).

Facilitating real-life threesomes has also become easier with the advent of location based smartphone apps such as Tinder, Grindr, and one dedicated to finding threesomes, 3nder (now rebranded as Feeld). Location-based apps allow users to find others looking for the same thing (be this dating, casual sex etc.), sorted by geographical proximity (Weiss & Samenow, 2010). These apps allow users to upload pictures, provide personal information or what they are looking for, and chat with other users.

Specifically catering for threesomes, 3nder connects people looking for threesomes with each other based upon preferences for gender and sexuality. Users determine "yes or no" to the possible matches, the chat feature only being enabled if both users select the yes option. Utilising users' Facebook connections as a reference, users also have the ability to make themselves invisible to friends and family using the app. Discussing one of the goals of 3nder, founder, Dimo Trifonov states:

We have to be open. Why do you have to keep your desires a secret and be ashamed that you want to try something new and exciting? We've been

brainwashed by society that threesomes are something dark and ugly and only weirdos do them. That's why I see that great opportunity to change something... Change people's perspective about open relationships and sexually active people. Hopefully 3nder will create this new face of being open with yourself and everyone will start to accept this idea of openness (Meet the man behind the app, 2014).

Clearly, others agree with this sentiment, and the 3nder twitter account claimed 140,000 3nder users as of August 2014, mainly based in the UK and the US.

The Threesome Imaginary

In many respects, the types of threesomes that Karlen (1988) discussed, and infers as having the most positive outcomes are akin to what Schippers (2016) calls the *Threesome Imaginary*. Schippers describes the threesome imaginary as collective cultural fantasies about threesomes that reflect and reproduce existing power relations and social privilege. These fantasies are the dominant, maybe even hegemonic understandings of what a threesome is, and what it should be.

Acceptable threesomes for heterosexuals are thus primarily constructed as a monogamous couple temporarily inviting (or imagining) a third to join them (Schippers, 2016). Engaging in, or fantasising about, a threesome is an acceptable way for a couple to add energy to their sex life, as long as it stays as a temporary occurrence, and does not constitute a regular sexual practice or structural aspect of the relationship. Perhaps because of the perceived novelty of threesomes (Jonason & Marks, 2008), hypothetical threesomes or recollecting previous threesomes can be effective in fuelling fantasy or eroticism within the dyad (Kolod, 2009). These impermanent forays outside of the tedium of monogamy help ease some of the pressures of monogamy without threatening the monogamous couple. This function is similar to the way that Anderson (2012) suggested cheating may also serve to preserve monogamy. Threesomes may therefore actually serve monogamism by creating an acceptable outlet for temporary extra-dyadic practices whilst still reifying the monogamous couple as the core relationship type (Schippers, 2016), in a similar way to monogamish relationships (Parsons et al., 2013).

To fill this desire for sexual exploration and energy, sexual minorities are sometimes targeted by couples purely because of their perceived utility in being open to threesomes (Sheff, 2006). There is, in particular, a fetishisation of bisexual women whom are assumed to be the perfect participant for couples to bring in as a third (Ritchie & Barker, 2007). Bisexual women are sometimes referred to as 'hot bi babes' (Sheff, 2006, p. 271),

endowed with the ability to bestow new levels of eroticism upon the relationship. This term is, however, rarely a term applied to males. The availability (or willingness) of a hot bi babe to join a dyad is reality in, perhaps, rare, as evidenced by an alternative name given to them in the polyamorous community: Unicorns. Sheff (2013) suggests:

It is so common that it is cliché for a female-male couple to approach their local or virtual polyamorous community searching for a female bisexual to add to their relationship and form a “FMF triad” with both women relating sexually to the man and each other. These free-floating bisexual women waiting to be snagged into an existing relationship are rare enough to be called “unicorns” or “hot bi babes,” and the couples that seek her are termed “unicorn hunters”

Schippers (2016) also argues that the threesome imaginary is unambiguously gendered in favour of threesomes with two women and one man. For both men and women, this type of threesome is seen as harmless fun whereas a threesome with two men and one woman is unthinkable; the reasons for this are, however, different for men and women. Schippers (2016) suggests that an FFM threesome makes up part of the accepted erotic habitus (the expected erotic desires or values for a particular group) for women and they are not thought lesbian for engaging in them. An MMF threesome does not, however, make up part of this habitus and a woman having/desiring a threesome with more than one man is likely to be labelled as a victim/slut.

For men, engaging in an FFM threesome confers sexual mastery/virility (Karlen, 1988; Sheff, 2006), whereas an MMF threesome may bring up questions about the males' sexuality (Frank, 2008). Anderson (2008) found that his male college sample initially suggested they would only engage in an MMF threesome for a 'good cause scenario' (p. 109)—meaning that they would only engage in it if there was what they considered a valuable enough payoff (e.g. both achieving sex with an attractive woman). This was, however, later found to not be entirely accurate. One participant admitted to inviting a male friend to make-up a threesome when he had already secured the promise of heterosexual sex. Another stated that it was fun to have a (male) friend present during a threesome. Anderson (2008) argues that these men used the excuse of a good cause scenario to enable them to interact sexually with another man; participants suggested that if it was what the woman requested, then it was worth it because it allowed them both to pursue heterosexual sex. Thus, it was the subjective desire for sexual behaviour with a man that was stigmatised, rather than actual behaviours. Despite the ways that the men in Anderson's (2008) study attempted to negate stigma around MMF threesomes, they are still

broadly stigmatised. Evidencing this stigma, men are rated more favourably when their threesome consists of two women, rather than a man and a women, reflecting either an eroticisation of lesbianism or the stigmatisation of perceived bisexuality/homosexuality accompanying an MMF threesome (Jonason & Marks, 2008).

This greater acceptance of particular types of threesomes is also reflected in other research. Armstrong and Reissing's (2014) study on 720 male and female undergraduates suggest that women may be less likely than men to participate in or find the idea of a threesome with two members of the opposite sex as arousing. Using Likert-scale questions rated from 0 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree) they found:

Female participants also indicated that they would not be likely to participate in a threesome with two men if given the opportunity to do so ($M = 1.45/6$) and that they did not find the idea or fantasy of having a threesome with two men arousing ($M = 1.62/6$). Eight female participants (2%) indicated that they had participated in a threesome with two men in the past at one occasion (p. 14).

...Men indicated that they would be likely to participate in a threesome with two women if given the opportunity to do so ($M = 4.32/6$) and that they find the idea or fantasy of having a threesome with two women arousing ($M = 4.48/6$). Thirty-five male participants (10.1%) indicated that they had participated in a threesome with two women in the past; most (54%) indicated that this had occurred once although reported frequency ranged from 1-20 (p. 16).

Similarly, Joyal, Cossette and Lapierre's (2014) work on fantasy shows that threesomes appear as a fantasy for both men and women. For men, 84.5% of the 717 participants had fantasised about a threesome with two women suggesting it to be a typical fantasy. For women, 56.5% had fantasised about having a threesome with two men suggesting it to be a common fantasy. Given that these studies only asked participants about threesomes with members of the opposite sex, it is perhaps unsurprising that the female participants stated a lower likelihood than men of engaging in, or being aroused by this type of threesome. For the men in this study, the threesome they are asked about aligns with the more socially acceptable threesome imaginary, for women it does not. Furthermore, stigma may influence women's desire to engage in threesomes as Jonason and Marks (2008) found there to be a sexual double standard with regards to the make up of a threesome: 'A woman who had a threesome with a member of each gender was derogated more than the man who engaged in identical activity' (p. 363).

Owing in part to the reduced stigma for men who engage in threesomes, men may report a higher rate of participation in or arousal to threesomes, as it appears to be a more

dominant fantasy. Looking at participants' favourite fantasies, Joyal et al. (2014) found threesomes (with 2 women; 1 man, 1 woman; 2 men) come up as the 13th favourite fantasy for women, with 3.2% of the sample suggesting it. For men it ranked as the third favourite fantasy (12.6%), although men were much more specific in detailing the types of threesomes they were interested in. These fantasies, in contrast to the women, were purely concerned with threesomes involving two women or a man and a woman. Men were also more specific in stating whom they would want their threesome to include, with 5.6% suggesting they would want it to be with a spouse and 7% wanting it to be with strangers or acquaintances. This preference for threesomes with specific people has also been found elsewhere (Scoats et al., 2017; Thompson & Byers, 2017).

Zsok, Scoats and Anderson's (2017) quantitative study on threesomes utilised a multinational sample (although predominantly the UK, USA and Europe) to investigate the threesome attitudes of 621 people, 372 (245 men; 127 women) of who had experienced a threesome. Our findings suggest that their participants preferred FFM threesomes to MMF threesomes. We also suggest that men demonstrate a significantly greater interest and engagement in threesomes than women, despite FFM threesomes being more common. This reflects Thompson and Byers' (2017) findings and presents a similar contradiction: Though men report more threesome experiences than women, the number of women reporting threesomes does not align with the higher frequency of FFM threesomes. Put another way, where are all of the women that these men say they are having FFM threesomes with? Zsok et al. (2017) suggest that this disparity might demonstrate a sampling and reporting bias in relation to dominant sexual scripts. Sexual roles for women still dictate the expectation that women are less interested in pursuing sexual novelty and consequently might be less likely to participate in research of this nature (Zsok et al., 2017).

Thompson and Byers' (2017) study on multi-gender threesomes (MGT), however, offers mixed support for the threesome imaginary. Looking at 274 heterosexual university students (202 women, 74 men), 13% had at some point engaged in a threesome (24% of the men, 8% of the women). They did not, however, find that both men and women showed a preference for FFM threesomes. Whilst men demonstrated a significantly higher interest in FFM threesomes, women demonstrated similarly low preferences for both FFM and MMF threesomes.

Hughes, Harrison and Gallup (2004) offer similar results regarding women's preferences for threesomes. Whilst women were less interested in threesomes than men—78% of men compared to 32% of women said they would engage in a threesome—women

did not reject MMF threesomes as the threesome imaginary might suggest. Looking at female participants' preferences for the make up of the threesome, Hughes et al. (2004) found: '53% preferred two males; 4% preferred two females; 27% preferred a male and a female; and 16% indicated that the sex of the other participants did not matter' (p. 9).

As much of the above data suggests, although the threesome imaginary may represent a dominant cultural fantasy of threesomes it does not preclude threesomes happening in different combinations. Scoats et al.'s (2017) research explored the threesome experiences and desires of 30 heterosexually identifying, male university students. This research, comparable to Thompson and Byers' (2017) findings, found that a third of the men had engaged in a threesome (ten out of 30). Although these instances were more heavily weighted towards FFM threesomes in both experience (Five had FFM experiences; three had MMF experiences; two had both), and desire (all would engage in future FFM threesomes), these men still showed a willingness to engage in MMF threesomes: '20 of the 25 men with no experience of MMF threesomes responded that they would be interested in having one' (Scoats et al., 2017, p. 9). Of these 20 men who would engage in an MMF threesome, 16 of them wanted the other male to be a close friend. Scoats et al. (2017) go on to suggest that these men felt that an MMF threesome with a friend would help facilitate bonding between them as well as being a good experience/story to tell.

Zsok et al. (2017) complements previous research findings (O'Neil & O'Neil, 1970), demonstrating a link between engaging in threesomes as well as group sex/swinging. The media often suggests that it is threesomes that lead to other sexual behaviours (Gladwell, 2017; Parker 2014; Sciortino, 2015), but the research is not clear whether these group sex/swinging experiences lead to an interest in threesomes or vice versa. Zsok et al.'s (2017) research does, however, support Morris et al.'s (2016) suggestion that those with prior threesome experience are more likely to be interested in future threesomes.

Rupp et al. (2014) found FFM threesomes arising from the college-party hook-up scene were often a way for women to explore their sexuality, act on their same-sex desires, or confirm a non-heterosexual identity:

Threesomes provide opportunities for women to experiment with or verify fluid and bisexual identities in a variety of ways. Although threesomes may begin with male desires, they introduce women to new sexual pleasures or allow them to act on same-sex or bisexual desires. For some women, these heterosexual practices that are available in the hook-up party scene serve as opportunity structures that allow them to explore sex and romance with women and to shift their identities (Rupp et al., 2014, p. 14).

As these studies hint at, by moving away from the cultural constraints of the threesome imaginary, the threesome has the potential to expand opportunities for exploration in sexuality, sexual behaviour, and relationships. Threesomes might therefore serve as a stepping-stone into new sexual identities (Rupp et al., 2014), sexual experimentation (Adam, 2006), other types of consensual non-monogamy (De Visser & McDonald, 2007), or stronger friendships (Scoats et al., 2017). Schippers (2016) additionally argues that allowing women to be interested in MMF threesomes could help bridge the gap between heteronormative culture and queer culture, facilitating an opportunity for men to engage in queer culture and possibly behaviours. The erosion of the one time rule of homosexuality (Anderson, 2008) may serve as a gateway to facilitate this development (Scoats et al., 2017).

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter outlined what we know from contemporary research into threesomes. The pioneering nature of Karlen's (1988) study was discussed, as was the relative weaknesses of his work. Through a focus on contemporary attitudes and media coverage of threesomes, they were also shown as clearly more popular, and less stigmatised, than at the time of Karlen's (1988) research. I also drew upon the work of Schippers (2016), and her concept of the threesome imaginary, in order to provide some context for more recent studies into threesomes. Much of this research highlights how MMF threesomes are much less desirable, and much more highly stigmatised than FFM threesomes. There are, however, some studies that challenge Schippers' (2016) ideas, and perhaps suggest that contemporary ideals of gender and sexuality may have started to challenge notions of what makes an acceptable threesome. The next chapter provides the details of how I have conducted my research in order to fill some of the gaps in contemporary knowledge about threesomes.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Procedure

This research aimed to look at people's attitudes to their experience(s) of threesomes. Specifically it looked to determine what meanings are given to threesomes, why people are motivated to have them, how they impact upon their understanding of consensual non-monogamy in general, and whether men and women experience threesomes differently. It was hoped that by analysing data from these men and women, we could further understand threesomes within a contemporary climate of reducing homophobia, and a societal shift to a more recreational attitude towards sex. Semi-structured interviews with 28 men and women who have had at least one threesome experience were conducted in order to explore these questions. It was hoped that through this interviewing, general trends in the data to be established.

This methodology chapter will begin with an explanation of the research philosophy that underpins my project. Next, an overview of the participants is given before outlining the recruitment strategy used to gather them. It will then move on to a discussion of the method of data collection: semi-structured interviews. An overview of thematic analysis is then given, and a justification of its selection is made. Finally, limitations to the study, and ethical considerations are made.

Research Philosophy

Braun and Clarke (2006) have suggested that a good thematic analysis includes the explicit acknowledgement of one's theoretical standpoint with regards to ontology. Bryman (2012) describes ontology as how we understand the nature of reality; what can we consider to be "true" in the world around us? The main focus is whether we believe that there is an objective reality that can be known, or whether reality is simply a construction determined by the actions and perceptions of social agents. These two oppositional standpoints are frequently referred to as objectivism (reality is concrete, and measurable) and constructionism (reality is constructed and open to interpretation). Constructionism can additionally be broken down further, in order to differentiate the focus on which the construction lies.

In this research, I broadly position myself within a social constructionist paradigm which 'emphasises that the social and psychological worlds are made real (constructed) through social processes and interaction' (Young & Collin, 2004, p. 375), additionally placing

emphasis on the historical and cultural aspects of the construction. I do not, however, entirely reject objectivism, but because this research is looking at people's experiences, from which there is no objective truth to be found, only interpretations, it is more appropriate to adopt an interpretivist paradigm.

Participants

In attempting to investigate threesomes thoroughly, and generate an accurate depiction of threesome experiences, I endeavoured to target a varied range of people for data collection (full details regarding participant demographics can be found in appendix.1). A broad sample, consisting of a diverse group of informants helps to ensure greater validity in the findings (Mays & Pope, 1995). Accordingly, I desired to gain participants from a range of different social backgrounds.

My sample was limited to mainly British, American, and Western European respondents, as these were who were available to interview. Given that these cultures share many similar cultural customs, norms, and values, it thus seems acceptable to look at them in combination, as other research has done (e.g. Anderson, 2014). It is, however, important to retain instances of cultural difference, as well as acknowledge that between the UK and the USA specifically, there may be a cultural lag (Ogburn, 1966), as other research has suggested (see Anderson, 2014; Scoats, 2015).

The sample consisted of 12 men and 16 women whom had ever engaged in a threesome. Interviews were conducted until the point of data saturation (Hallberg, 2006), where no significantly new themes were forthcoming from interviewees. In this research, data saturation was concerned with gaining a general understanding of threesome behaviours, rather than aiming to find multiple participants who had experienced each possible configuration of experiences (e.g. a woman who had a spontaneous FFM threesome with a male partner; a woman who had a spontaneous FFM threesome with a female partner etc.), as it was deemed that this latter approach would be outside of the practicalities of the research. McCracken (1988) suggests that data saturation typically occurs between 8-24 interviews, although this range is only a guide.

To take part in the research, participants had to be willing to talk about their experience(s) regarding relationships, sex, and threesomes. The sample were selected purposefully, and to fulfil the three criteria of: being knowledgeable of the cultural arena being studied, being willing to talk, and representing a range of different cultural

backgrounds (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Below I will outline some of the key demographic variables of the population sampled.

Participants' ages ranged between the ages of 19 and 57 with the mean age of the male and female participants being 26.2 years and 31.2 years respectively. Participants were asked to self-identify their social class, and 18 identified themselves as middle class (including the categories of upper and lower middle class). Four participants identified themselves as working class, two as upper class, and four suggested that they did not know. The sample was predominantly made up of those identifying as white, the largest category being White British (13 participants), followed by White American (four participants). Only two participants classified themselves as having non-white racial identities (one mixed-race, one black).

Looking at levels of education, 17 of the sample had at least a Bachelors degree, and nine of those 17 at the time of interview, were in postgraduate education pursuing masters degrees, PhDs or medical degrees. With regards to occupation, 17 participants identified that they were currently students.

Participants' sexual identities were varied, particularly amongst the women. The majority of the men identified as heterosexual, whereas as the majority of the women took non-heterosexual identities, or no sexual identities at all. From the male participants, ten identified as heterosexual (three definitely heterosexual; six heterosexual; one mostly heterosexual), one identified as queer, and one struggled to put a label on his sexuality. Looking at the female participants, only two identified as heterosexual, whereas four women identified as heterosexual with some qualifying statements. Regarding non-heterosexual identities, three women identified as bisexual, one as bisexual/pansexual, one as pansexual, and two as queer. Three remaining participants were unsure of the label they would ascribe themselves.

Looking briefly at the four women who described themselves as heterosexual but with qualifiers, they all acknowledged a certain amount of sexual fluidity (Diamond, 2009) and that they could still find women attractive, although they did not feel strongly enough to adopt a non-heterosexual identity. These participants' discussions of their sexuality share similarities with mostly straight women in other research; uncertain how to assign meaning to their same-sex attractions/sexual behaviours (Thompson & Morgan, 2008). For example, Philippa suggested:

I think I'm heterosexual. I would say I'm heterosexual, but I do find women attractive but I don't necessarily find them sexually attractive. If I am in a situation

where I feel sexually aroused and there is women there that's attractive that's fine, but I wouldn't want to be in a situation where I was regular having sex with them. Because I think I would just get a bit bored and it wouldn't be satisfying for me.

Kirsty also suggested: 'I'd probably say straight, I mean I've never had a relationship with a woman. I'd say straight, but I think that I can appreciate that women are attractive'.

For the three women who were not sure they knew how they identified, they conveyed a sense that it was not important for them to adopt any particular label. For example, Eva rejected defining labels:

I'm just attracted to people. Probably on the spectrum of sexuality I am more towards the straight side. I fancy men more often than women, but I definitely fancy women as well. I've decided that I don't really need to define myself in any particular way.

In addition, two of these women also felt that a bisexual label did not adequately fit for them. Rachel said:

I don't like the term bisexual at all, so at the moment I just don't really say anything regarding my own sexuality. I don't think that I like men but it's really difficult. I think I have a vulnerable side and I kind of find myself drawn towards guys who will show interest. Maybe there is some kind of innate attraction, even though I don't actually like the sex. It's more an emotional connection maybe. But I have been with women and I would say I prefer women, at least for sex. I don't know about the relationship side of things because I've never been in one.

Similarly, Joanna acknowledged that whilst she recognised how her behaviours or emotional attachments could be understood as bisexual, she did not feel that having a particular label for her sexual identity was important:

I find it hard to identify with a label because, for example, when I fill in job applications, I'm in a relationship with a man and always have been, and can't see myself being in a relationship with a women, but I do have sex with women, and have long lasting connections, so I tend to tick bisexual. But I don't necessarily feel like I completely identify with that label. But then I don't feel it's really important for me to have that label. It's not really part of my identity.

Participant Recruitment Strategy

Participants were gathered through personal connections, in addition to snowball sampling. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) argue that snowball sampling, often involving a chain of

referrals from those whom either possess or know those whom possess the characteristic under research, is particularly suited to research into sensitive topics or private matters—which sexual practices are usually considered to be (Browne, 2005). This process, typically, first involves sourcing respondents that serve as the starting point of referral chains, with each subsequent participant hopefully providing more potential participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Denscombe (1998) suggests that snowball sampling is effective in gaining participants quickly, as well as the recommendations from previous participants acting as a personal reference and increasing one’s credibility. Following the example of Browne (2005), initial respondents comprised of friends whom had either engaged in, or knew people whom had engaged in a threesome. Although few referral chains were actually established using this method, these initial connections have served as *de facto* research assistants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), sourcing and connecting me with new possible research participants as and when they were found. Because of the effectiveness of this method, and the motivation to gain a diverse and varied sample, my network of “research assistants” expanded to include friends, suitable family members, work colleagues, students, and acquaintances. The use of personal acquaintances has the additional benefit of being able to access those who would not answer advertisements for research, but would perhaps respond to a personal request (Browne, 2005).

The snowball sampling utilised has resulted in a convenience sample; sampling those most easily accessible to the researcher (Bryman, 2012), but it additionally shares features with theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is not concerned with being representative of particular groups of individuals but instead selects its sample via the adequate representation of that which is to be researched (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Whilst it might not be considered a generalisable sample to the wider population, this is not the aim, as this research is instead focused on collecting rich, meaningful data that represents a snap-shot of particular behaviours, in a certain culture, at a certain point in time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Furthermore, I wished to capture a range of different threesome experiences, from differing perspectives of the people involved. Features such as the people involved, whether it was prearranged or spontaneous, whether it was three single people or a third joining a couple, whether same-sex sexual behaviour occurred, will all potentially impact upon how the threesome was experienced by each of the three people involved.

Use of this particular sampling strategy will have, of course, led to bias in the population that is forthcoming. Wiederman (1999) found that college students willing to

volunteer for studies about sex were typically more sexually experienced, held less traditional values around sex, and were more likely to score highly on measures of sensation seeking and sexual self-esteem. It is however, not possible, in the context of the research, to interview people whom are not willing to come forward as a volunteer. Although snowball sampling leads to a bias when enlisting participants, it is still the most effective means by which to investigate those from hidden populations (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Wiebel (1990, p. 4) describes a hidden population as, 'a subset of the general population whose membership is not readily distinguished or enumerated based on existing knowledge and/or sampling capabilities'. The majority of people are, generally, not immediately forthcoming with information on their sexual experiences, and so people with experience(s) of threesomes fall into this category of a hidden population.

Additionally, I decided to exclude some specific, pre-established groups including swingers and regular members of LGBT groups to gather participants, in order to avoid an additional population bias this can create. For example, Karlen's (1988) research on threesomes amongst swingers would have been influenced by the cultural norms of swinging, that value the primacy of the couple, and are sometimes stigmatising towards male bisexuality (Frank, 2008; Lind, 2005; Sheff, 2006). Similarly, research on sexual minorities has been critiqued for collecting data with biased samples because participants are commonly recruited from self-help groups, sexual minority political groups, or counselling services (McCormack, 2014), which may skew results towards a particular type of experience (Hartman, 2011). Although I excluded people from my sample that regularly engaged in swinging or attended LGBT groups, I did not, however, exclude someone for having ever engaged in such activities. Additionally, this research focused on threesomes involving both men and women, as there is already some research on all same-sex threesomes (e.g. Adam, 2006; Lasala, 2004) and being an under-researched topic area in general, there is need to limit the scope of the research population for issues of time/resources. Thus, it was felt that LGBT groups would potentially not be productive sites from which to solicit participants.

Methods of Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the method of data collection in this research. Qualitative interviews are a common choice for researchers in sociology because, as Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 34) suggest, they are extremely effective in 'exploring the stories and

perspectives of informants'. They are often seen as 'one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings' (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645). Specifically, a semi-structured interview allows for the researcher to follow up and ask further questions on interesting points that they did not expect to arise (Seale, 1999). I felt that because I was unaware of the responses I would get, it was important to have scope for flexibility, complexity of answers, and the capacity for participants to explain their answers; an advantage of semi-structured interviews over other methods (Sarantakos, 2005).

Interviews were conducted face-to-face with participants, but also with synchronous, online video applications such as Skype. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) suggest that the dominant position of face-to-face interviews as the pinnacle of excellence for qualitative interviewing means that other methods, such as online interviews, are relegated to lower positions. In lieu of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviewing is often seen as the preferred alternative (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). I, however, decided to not conduct telephone interviews. Although studies have shown that telephone interviews may be an effective means by which to study sexual behaviours, reducing reporting bias when compared with face-to-face interviews (Gribble et al., 1999), they lose important visual aspects of communication that ease the flow of conversation and help develop rapport (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hanna, 2012; Holt, 2010).

As well as an effective substitute for in-person interviews, applications such as Skype possess a number of advantages. Firstly, similar to telephone interviewing, it provides the researcher with synchronous communication, but is able to contact participants from a wide range of geographical locations, whilst keeping financial costs to a minimum (Hanna, 2012). But as previously mentioned, Skype, unlike telephone interviewing, still has the capacity to observe non-verbal communication through its video function. Additionally, it may allow those without the time to take part in a face-to-face interview the opportunity to participate (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014); reducing the time requirements of both interviewer and interviewee, as well as addressing ecological concerns around excessive amounts of travel (Hanna, 2012). Researchers using Skype also have the added bonus of being able to record their conversations for later transcription without the need for other technologies, which themselves may fail (Hanna, 2012).

As with any method of data collection, Skype still carries with it, its own set of problems. The most common, as suggested by Seitz (2015), are the possibility of call drop-out due to internet connection; inaudible sections of speech due to internet lag or background noise; diminished ability to read body language and physical cues; and reduced

capacity to establish rapport. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) additionally suggest that participants may be slightly less likely to show up for pre-arranged interviews organised for Skype, compared with face-to-face. Being stood up in this manner seems to be affected by whether the interviewer was already familiar with the interviewee (familiarity leading to a higher rate of attendance), suggesting that Skype may be a method most suitable for pursuing respondents that the researcher has already made initial contact with. Furthermore, reliance on technical knowledge, and the cost of particular technologies do, however, lead to potential issues of representation (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). Those not computer literate, or unable to afford a computer or smart-phone would consequently be excluded from the sample, if Skype were relied upon as the only method of interview. Fortunately, the risk of these issues can be minimised (if not eradicated) in relatively simple ways, such as confirming the quality of the internet connection before interviewing, ensuring participants find a quiet place to be interviewed, establishing contact prior to interview in order to develop a level of rapport, and not relying purely on Skype interviews.

Rather than follow an explicit interview script, the interviews focused on a number of topic areas in order to allow for any unexpected emerging themes (Bryman, 2012). Interviews were recorded for transcription, allowing for rapport to build between the interviewer and participant, unimpeded by note taking (Gratton & Jones, 2004), and allowing for a more natural flow within an interview (Reinharz, 1992). The interviews focused on their attitudes and experiences of threesomes, as well as four areas that may impact on their experiences:

- Previous sexual experiences
- Understanding of sexuality
- Experiences and attitudes towards sex
- Experiences and attitudes towards consensual non-monogamy
- Experiences and attitudes towards threesomes

Since the taboo nature of some of these topics (Rubin, 1984) may encourage participants to give socially desirable answers (Bryman, 2012), steps were taken to put the participants at ease and encourage more truthful disclosure. Hutchinson, Marsiglio and Cohan (2002) suggest starting with easier topic material and generate rapport, before moving on to more difficult topics. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) propose that participants are more likely to open up and give you a greater depth of detailed, personal information when you have

established a rapport, and the participants know more about you. Therefore, following Anderson's (2012) example, if desired by the participant, I disclosed my own relationship history and experiences. I also actively reminded participants that they were permitted to not answer any questions they are uncomfortable with (Hutchinson et al., 2002) since the research of highly personal topics has a higher chance of causing anxiety (Renzetti, 1990, as cited in Bahn & Weatherill, 2013). All participants were additionally given a brief description of the purpose of the research, the right to anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any time (Arksey & Knight 1999). Establishing rapport and trust through these practices, made participants more comfortable, and hopefully provided better insights into their experiences.

It is, however, important to recognise that the meaning of the information given by participants was co-constructed with the researcher, and thus, subjective. Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) suggest that for a long time, researchers themselves have been seen as a threat to objective research, creating a need for some kind of neutralisation of their influence. Fine et al. (2000), however, propose that those engaging in research should accept that they are part of the research, and are therefore involved in the construction of knowledge. Fontana and Frey (2000) suggest that researchers are now recognising that rather than being a neutral tool for investigation, interviews are an interaction between two (or more) people, in which the results are negotiated and contextualised, leading to an increased understanding of how people's lives work rather than simply focus what happens in people's lives. In order to limit the subjectiveness of the data we need to be reflexive, not ask leading questions, and ask specifically about things for clarification.

Data Analysis

Because this project was concerned with developing an understanding of threesome behaviours, an under-researched topic, an inductive (rather than deductive) framework was utilised for data analysis. Whereas a deductive process looks to test pre-established hypotheses, an inductive process looks to the data in order to establish patterns, thus conclusions are firmly rooted in the data itself rather than the other way around (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using Karlen's (1988) study of threesomes as a foundation, a deductive process would, however, have been possible in this research, whereby his conclusions were retested to determine whether they still hold true. It was, conversely, felt that because Karlen's (1988) data was collected over such a long period (seemingly more than 20 years),

and because societal attitudes regarding gender, sex and sexuality have changed so much since that period (Anderson, 2014; Worthen, 2014), this approach may have not led to especially fruitful data.

Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is an often under-utilised methodological strategy that shares many procedural elements with grounded theory, without being tied to an implicit theoretical standpoint (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, grounded theory suggests that a researcher should initially ignore all related literature relating to the topic in questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Stemming from Glaser's positivist background, he believed there to be tangible truths that will become clear through the course of data collection, thus engagement with prior research is initially unnecessary (Hallberg, 2006). Other reformations of grounded theory by Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Charmaz (2006), move away from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) positivistic leanings, but ultimately still look to generate theory from the data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). So rather than engage in what Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 85) refer to as 'grounded theory lite', using grounded theory's methodological steps, yet not explicitly looking to create theory, thematic analysis is a more appropriate methodological strategy that can still be used to generate theory, but does not restrict the researcher if they is no clear theory forthcoming.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) describe thematic analysis as, 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. They, however, suggest that there is no clear agreement on how one goes about conducting a thematic analysis. Thus, they give a six-stage process for conducting thematic analysis that shares many characteristics with other forms of qualitative data analysis (see: Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Firstly, the researcher familiarises themselves with the data, which in the case of this research involved multiple readings of the transcribed interviews, searching for reoccurring patterns. The second stage involves the generation of initial codes: assigning meaningful themes to sections of the data. The next stage involves a gathering of similar codes into broad, overarching themes, as well as smaller, sub-themes. These themes are also examined to see how they interact and relate to each other. Stage four involves a refinement of themes, some of which may now be dropped—due to a lack of data, or incorporated into larger themes. Stage five requires that the themes be further refined so that they accurately relate to that which they capture, and do not try encompass too much under only one heading. The final stage involves producing the written report, with assertions and analysis backed up with examples drawn from the data.

Limitations of Research

Limitations to this study are similar to those associated with most interview-based studies of sexuality that use a small selective sample: issues of representativeness and (Gledhill, Abbey, & Schweitzer, 2008) the reliability of self-disclosure (Gribble et al., 1999). Emergent research on sexual topics is often necessarily based on a convenience sample rather than a random sample. This is due to the inherent difficulties associated with locating subjects willing to speak about intimate sexual issues (Harris, Cook, & Kashubeck-West, 2008).

I recognise that this project has some fundamental limitations in its generalisability — the sample is relatively homogenous in regards to their level of education, race, ethnicity, and social class. Furthermore, participants have all been gathered from broadly similar cultures (North America and Western Europe), all being fluent enough in English to participate in an interview, and all being willing to talk about their experiences. The data, therefore, may not speak to those outside of these cultures, those whom have not been heavily exposed to the Anglosphere (English speaking countries), and those unwilling to be interviewed.

As well as the cultural bias that this recruitment strategy will create, it is also possible that those with negative experiences, and experiences that they want to forget, are under-represented in the findings. I therefore limit the generalisations drawn from my findings to those who share similar characteristics, while simultaneously noting that without further contemporary empirical evidence on men and women's experiences of threesomes, we cannot also generalise that other experiences are necessarily any different than this sample. More research is needed. Future large-scale surveys can build on my findings by exploring the patterns I have uncovered among broader, more diverse samples.

Related to self-disclosure, interviews may also present problems that other research methods negate. For example, Gribble et al. (1999) suggests that face-to-face interviews around sexual behaviours might result in embarrassment from participants, and lead to the withholding of important information. Conversations around particular sexual activities may not occur naturally with some individuals, unless specifically brought up, at which point people may 'feel reluctant to convey their uncensored thoughts' (Shir-Vertesh, 2013, p. 163), for fear of stigmatisation. Catania (1999) suggests that the sensitivity of a topic or question is related to the level of stigma attached to them. Unfortunately, whilst survey research may help to reduce reporting bias and the withholding of information, because of

the complex nature of sexual behaviours, questionnaires may be an ineffective method for capturing these nuances (Gribble et al., 1999). Thus, Catania (1999, p. 28) puts forward a number of considerations researchers should make in an attempt to foster 'conditions that influence honest self-disclosures by their direct or indirect effects on threat to self-esteem and/or emotional distress'. Characteristics such as the age, gender, race, social class, religion, contextual factors, and the perceived roles of both the researcher and the participant may all have an impact on the level self-disclosure, and therefore have been considered during each and every interview.

Ethics

There are a number of important ethical issues relating to both the participants and the practice of conducting research. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that when encouraging people to talk openly you acquire important ethical obligations towards them. Fontana and Frey (2000, p. 662) suggest that the topic of ethics have traditionally:

Revolved around the topics of *informed consent* (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truthfully informed him or her about the research), *right to privacy* (protecting the identity of the subject), and *protection from harm* (physical, emotional or any other kind)

Participants and their data should, therefore, be treated with respect. They should consent to, and understand how their information is to be used for research, receive the protection of confidentiality, and not be subject to harm (Densombe, 2002). Correspondingly, I gained approval for ethical clearance through the University of Winchester, whose guidelines correspond with those set forth by the British Sociological Association (BSA).

To allay participants' concerns over confidentiality, they were reminded that all identifying features from their interview would be changed as well as the original audio recording and interview transcriptions securely stored, and later destroyed. To further protect their anonymity and give the participants' plausible deniability to others, the interviews were referred to as, and "concealed" as an interview about 'attitudes towards relationships' (in line with other areas I research in) whenever in the presence of others.

Some ethical issues, such as obtaining consent from participants, informing them honestly about the nature of the research, and then debriefing them at the end, are, however, easier to overcome than others. Due to the sensitive nature of this project, there was potential for the participants to experience emotional discomfort during and/or after

the interview. To address this they were informed about the nature of the research, the topics to be discussed, and the purpose of the research, prior to taking part. This took the form of a verbal explanation, a written consent form, and time for the participants to ask any questions they may have. They were explicitly told and reminded during the interview of their right to not answer any questions they feel uncomfortable answering, as well as their ability to withdraw from the study at any point, without the need to give a reason to the researcher. This also included the withdrawal of their information from the study after the interview has finished. For this reason, contact details for myself were made available to the participants. They would have also been directed to appropriate support services should they have felt they needed further support. Furthermore, to increase the participant's comfort, they were allowed (within logistical reason) to select the site for interviewing.

Relating to the process of conducting research, Sarantakos (2005) suggests that research should also have academic integrity that can be trusted. It should therefore not be manipulated to gain particular findings, as it is seen as a trustworthy resource for knowledge (Ruane, 2005). In this research, I therefore aimed to present all aspects in a transparent manner that clearly expresses that which they are meant to. For example, data analysis drew heavily upon direct quotes from participants, using their own words to reflect interpretations. I, additionally, when possible, have provided numerical data to back up my assertions (see Appendix 2).

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter outlined the methodological strategy employed in order to undertake this research project. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a method for investigating the experiences of those who had ever had a multi-sex threesome, and the sample consisted of 28 individuals (12 men, 16 women). These participants' transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, and the results of these analyses are presented over the next five chapters.

Chapter 6: Sexual Norms

The nature of stigma means that being associated with one stigmatised behaviour or action can impact on other unrelated aspects of a person's public persona (Conley 2012a). In other words, others' awareness of this stigma is then used to explain unrelated behaviours or make assumption of the person (Goffman, 1963). Robinson (1997) has suggested that in the case of non-monogamy it is generally associated with, and stigmatised as, promiscuous. Indeed, in describing the Consensual Non-Monogamy Burden in chapter 3, I highlight that one of the core stereotypes is that consensual non-monogamy is purely about attaining more sex. Thus, in order to explore this stereotype of promiscuity, this chapter first explores participants' attitudes and experiences around casual sex.

In addition to the assumption of promiscuity, within the media, threesomes are also often seen as a "gateway" into more risqué sexual practices (Gladwell, 2017; Parker 2014; Sciortino, 2015). Some research has indeed suggested that those with prior experience of threesomes have an elevated interest in pursuing more when compared with those without the experience (Morris et al., 2016). Other research has also found a link between engaging in threesomes as well as group sex/swinging (Zsok et al., 2017). There is also the suggestion that threesomes may help cultivate interest in various forms of consensual non-monogamy (Kimberly & Hans, 2015; De Visser & McDonald, 2007). All of the above examples, however, suggest a unidirectional process: i.e. threesomes may lead to a greater interest in other sexual behaviours or relationship structures.

In order to explore the validity of this suggestion, this chapter explores participants' history of sexual exploration prior to their first threesome experience. Further information regarding the effect that their threesome experiences had on attitudes towards future sexual behaviours can then be found in chapter 10.

Findings suggest that participants are generally positive about casual sex for both themselves and others. Both the male and female participants saw casual sex as a way to gain sexual experiences, although downsides related to intimacy, mismatched expectations, and the use of sex to fulfil emotional needs, were also identified. Additionally, participants did not appear to have especially promiscuous attitudes towards casual sex, and many said that they were no longer interested in it.

With regards to participants' history of sexual exploration, six participants suggested that they had engaged in less common sexual behaviours or consensual non-monogamy

before their first threesome. Five of these participants also made direct links between their previous experiences and the advent of their first threesome.

Women's Attitudes and Experiences of Casual Sex

Owen et al.'s (2010) research suggests that 'hooking up [is] not an experience that most college students felt positively about, especially women' (p. 660). Although my female participants did highlight some of the negatives of casual sex and the potential for stigma (as demonstrated later in the chapter), they also highlighted many positives. Furthermore, all of them had previously engaged in casual sex and were accepting of it for others, even if they no longer desired it for themselves. Their attitudes reflect a growing acceptance and liberalisation of sex (Garcia et al., 2012), especially for women (Baumeister 2004; Harvey & Gill 2011; Rupp & Taylor 2010; Rupp et al., 2014; Worthen, 2014). For example, similar to other research (e.g. Bogle, 2008; Heldman & Wade; 2010) and some of the men later in this chapter, Jennifer suggested that university culture in particular was very accepting of casual sex:

Quite a few of my friends do it, every night they will take different people home. For me, that is maybe a bit much personally, but maybe that's because my family is a bit more prudish with topics like this. But as soon as I came [to university] it felt much more like you could talk about those types of things.

This acceptance of casual sex was not, however, limited to participants' own friends or specific in-groups of people. None of the female participants engaged in 'slut discourse' (Armstrong, Hamilton, Armstrong, & Seeley, 2014, p. 100)—stigmatising other women who engaged in casual sex. Jennifer suggested that she would not stigmatise those that engaged in casual sex, but did recognise that some people might attract stigma if having sex with specific people:

I wouldn't judge anybody that had [had a one-night stand]. As I've said I've got friends that do it. I mean if you know the person and they've already got a reputation then it might be stupid for you to go there, but most of the guys do anyway, they're not bothered. But it really wouldn't bother me if people are doing that. I wouldn't not be friends with them because they were doing that. If you enjoy doing it, then you enjoy doing it.

Looking at why women engaged in casual sex, four participants highlighted that it was a way to gain new experiences. Research has suggested that exploration and experience gathering

is an important component of good sex: 'Many participants likened great sex to an on-going "discovery process", exploration or journey where it was necessary to continually push and expand one's personal sexual boundaries' (Kleinplatz et al., 2009, p. 8). Demonstrating this desire for exploration, Julia suggested that the benefits of her experiences outweighed the potential negatives—stigma from others: 'I've had a lot of casual sex. Sometimes just to experiment. People find me an insane slut I'm sure, but I'm actually quite proud of that'. Rachel suggested that when she was younger she had decided to seek out casual sex because of an interest in having new experiences as well as boredom:

I kind of decided that I was a bit bored and wanted to be a slag. So it was a decision that I wanted to try things. I had had some one-night stands before, but maybe only one. I don't think that it's bad if others do it and sometimes it was fun, and other times just whatever. Sometimes for me these things are just a new and exciting experience, rather than for the pleasure aspect. I'm interested in sex and experiences, but I derive interest from the other aspects rather than the actual sex.

Colette felt that the decision to engage in casual sex was down to the individual, and for her, the most enjoyable aspect was the variety and newness that it brought:

It's a personal choice and I have no negative or positive feelings, everybody does what they want to do, and if they want to do it, two consenting adults, then that is fine with me. I'm not judgmental of other practices. I have no problem with the one-night stands, because it's all really exciting. The novelty factor and discovering something new, that's what gets me excited the most.

After one experience with casual sex, Jennifer had decided that it was not something she was interested in. Despite this, she still viewed it as good life experience, and she was glad to have done it:

So I went on a trip with the university and I was meeting lots of people for the first time, and I was just drunk, I had recently broke up with my boyfriend, and I was maybe a bit upset when I was drunk. So it upset me and one of the boys was actually really nice to me, and I maybe misinterpreted what he meant, and I think maybe that was a stupid idea. I mean it hasn't affected me, but I probably wouldn't do it again. It wasn't really good or anything, but I didn't regret it. It was more of a life experience so I can say now that I've done it, but I probably wouldn't do it again.

Emma had engaged in a lot of casual sex when she was younger, but was now no longer interested in it:

From an early age I was quite promiscuous, from probably about the age of 12 to nearly 16 I slept around quite a lot. I probably slept with about 70 people, between the ages of 12 and 19. After that, from 19, I had two longer relationships and then a bit of a fling in between, but it is completely not for me. I got it out of my system obviously.

Emma ascribed this decrease in interest to the realisation that she was seeking something she could not obtain through casual sex:

Yeah I realised what I was doing, you know when everyone says they were trying to look for a father figure? That's what I was doing, because my dad was crap and I never had anything to do with him really. I mean my mum and dad are still together, but I only slept with older men, a lot older as well. So I think I just grew up and realised that I'm actually not achieving anything, I'm not getting anything out of it so, I realised that I just wanted a long-term relationship.

She did, however, still feel that casual sex was fine for others, although she no longer had any interest in it:

I think if they are not in a relationship and not hurting anyone then good luck to them. As long as they are safe, practicing safe sex I think is important, but no, why not? If everyone is consenting and you're just having fun then brilliant. But it's not for me.

Two of the women in the sample specifically highlighted that their interest in casual sex waned when they became partnered. Rosie felt that now she was with her boyfriend, she was less interested in casual sex although she had pursued it in the past: 'Since I met my boyfriend I think I knew that I wanted to be with him, and that's all I really think about at the moment'. Nadia suggested that whilst she enjoyed being single, it was perhaps through rose-tinted glasses:

I like being single because I think I feel more fun when I'm single. But at the moment I am very happy being in a relationship. I think I have more fun when I'm single than I actually do. Looking back I think that I have so much fun when I'm single, but realistically I'm a lot more content now I'm in a relationship.

These women's comments might reflect the current stage of their relationship, perhaps still being in the romance phase of their relationship (Anderson, 2012), and not being interested in sex with other people. The comments could also reflect the women's diminished interest in sex and a departure from previous norms of casual sex (Montemurro, 2014).

In contrast, for Meika, being in a polyamorous relationship had not reduced her

desire to have casual sex with other people. Instead, she suggested that it helped her relationship with her primary partner:

I think it helps for me to sleep with other people and also if my partner does that because then there is this real need for re-connection afterwards and then it's like a different type of experience because you have been further away, but it's then easier to come back together again.

In summary, all of female participants had at some point engaged in casual sex, and were accepting of others that had casual sex. Looking at their motivations for casual sex, four women identified that casual sex was a source from which to build sexual experiences. For a variety of reasons, however, many women were now no longer interested in casual sex. Further enhancing our understanding of the female participants' desires (or disinterest) in casual sex, the next section highlights the female participants' perspectives on intimacy.

Women's Thoughts on Intimacy

Intimacy came up as a recurrent theme amongst the women in the sample. Many of them stated that sex with intimacy, or at least having some sort of connection with the person, was the most desirable type of sex. This desire for intimacy, consequently, impacted on the ways in which these women approached casual sex. This preference for some sort of connection is also found elsewhere in research suggesting that casual sex amongst young adults is most commonly engaged in with friends or ex-partners (Giordano, Manning, Longmore, & Flanigan, 2012). Additionally, other research has suggested that a key component of great sex for both men and women includes a 'strong connection with one's sexual partner, whether that relationship lasted a few hours or dozens of years' (Kleinplatz et al., 2009, p. 5). Although establishing a strong connection with someone quickly may be possible, Eshbaugh and Gute (2008) found that having sex with someone you have only met in the last 24 hours was a strong predictor of sexual regret amongst college women. Perhaps because of the difficulty in establishing intimacy quickly, Joanna said she preferred sex in a relationship because of the intimacy it helped foster:

That's why I would say I have not had many one-night stands and they've not been very enjoyable for me. You also feel more tense, less relaxed maybe, they are unable to know how to make you cum and so it's less enjoyable.

Kirsty also said that preferred sex with someone she was closer to: 'I'd rather have sex with, and I've had much better sex with people I am emotionally invested in. A drunken shag is never really that great'. Meika felt that she could have sex without an emotional attachment, but admitted that it was not as good: 'It's not necessary but it makes the experience better'.

Perhaps because of this desire for some sort of intimacy/connection, some of the female participants suggested that they preferred friends-with-benefits arrangements. Friends-with-benefits refers to an arrangement where friends have repeated sexual encounters whilst avoiding romantic commitment (Bisson & Levine, 2009; Weaver, MacKeigan, & MacDonald, 2011). Philippa suggested that she was no longer particularly interested in one-night stands, but instead preferred the casual intimacy of a friends-with-benefits arrangement:

I used to have one-night stands but I'm not really that keen on them any more. They're not really very sexy and that's fine, sometimes they are, but not really. Friends-with-benefits is nicer. If you have one or two regular people that you can have sex with them that is more satisfying.

Eva also highlighted that she was currently enjoying a friends-with-benefits arrangement:

I sort of have a friends-with-benefits arrangement with someone at the moment and that's working very well for both of us. In the past I'd have always thought that's going to be really complicated, and feelings are going to get in the way and upset things but that's not the case. That's been going on for about four months. And it's going well.

Conversely, some female participants were specifically wary of friends-with-benefits arrangements because of the complications they can bring, and the potential for unreciprocated romantic feelings developing (Bisson & Levine, 2009). Although in the past Lauren had happily pursued casual sex, she had intentionally avoided friends-with-benefits situations:

I don't think I've ever had friends-with-benefits, I think I've purposefully stayed away from that just because of the potential complications. Throughout my life I've had a lot of male friends and so many times it has come up in my life where they thought that we were going to be more than friends and I made it clear that they are not and they pull all of this friend-zone bullshit. So I make those boundaries really clear.

Rosie said that when she had engaged in friends-with-benefits in the past, she had found the semi-casual nature of them to be uncomfortable:

I think when I was younger after a little while the friends-with-benefits situation got to me a little bit. I would want it to be something more or I didn't want it to be going on any more. I suppose one way or the other I didn't want to stay in that status for too long.

Two participants also offered warnings that casual sex might sometimes be used as a replacement for intimacy or other emotional needs. Demonstrating this particular use of sex, in the past Rachel had used sex as a way to gain intimacy she stopped herself getting from elsewhere: 'I think because I was so avoidant, I was using sex as a kind of source of intimacy that I wasn't allowing myself to get from people'.

Eva had not always had a positive relationship with casual sex and felt that in the past she had sometimes pursued it as a way of boosting her self esteem:

I think that wasn't so much about sex, as about self esteem maybe. I think that's a bit different now. Last time I really went out and looked for sex, it was to find affirmation. But I don't feel like I'm in that kind of place now; it's more just an expression of physicality. Rather than trying to sort out some kind of emotional need.

She also suggested that others might try to use sex as a solution to other problems:

I think that it is important that if you have a lot of casual sex then I would suggest that it's important to examine your motives. But then that's the same for everything. I would worry if it were a plaster to cover up an esteem issue. I don't think that works and in the long run and I think it can lead to negative cycles. Sex is such a wonderful thing, but it's not some sort of miracle drug that can sort out your emotional needs.

As demonstrated by the women in this section, intimacy was a consideration for many female participants when engaging in casual sex. Intimacy was often seen as lacking from short term sexual encounters (such as one-night stands), but for some, it could be present in more committed, yet still casual arrangements. Consequently, perspectives on intimacy encouraged participants to seek out/avoid particular types of casual sex.

Men's Attitudes and Experiences of Casual Sex

Like the female participants, all of the male participants talked about having engaged in casual sex, and viewed it as acceptable for other people to engage in. Only one male participant suggested that they harbored any judgment for those that engaged in casual sex, and this was solely targeted at women. Rob recognised that in the past he had judged women under different criteria than men:

Yeah, it's real bad, but I hate birds that do it. I would never go out with someone who I had known had fucked loads of people. But I might sleep with them because I know that it's an easy target. I've got such a double standard, and it's really, really, bad. I know how bad it is, but I know exactly what goes on in those encounters, and I don't want to be with someone whose got to that point where they say "fuck it I'll just let anyone have me". But I'm not like that anymore.

This sexual double standard has also been documented in much of the literature of casual sex (England et al., 2008; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). In contrast, other male participants either made no distinctions between men and women, or also viewed it as acceptable for women to engage in casual sex.

Some participants highlighted that the cultures and peers around them regarded casual sex as normalised and acceptable. For example, Dan had an accepting attitude towards casual sex: 'I think it's fine. As for others, I'm not really much to judge people. People should definitely enjoy themselves'. Mike saw casual sex (and different types of sex in general) as another type of "product" that people were able to choose to consume from a range of options:

I think that it's one of those things that people now, in the consumer age; there is the sex side of things as well. People, if they want something, then they go and get it. The Internet has opened up so much. Millions of people can see that there's other sex out there, and go get it themselves.

When James was asked how common casual sex was for his university peers, he said: 'Different groups do [it], and different groups don't. I know some friends who have different values, and there are other people who would go out of their way to have as much sex as they can with different people'. He went on to suggest that these differing viewpoints coexisted harmoniously together: 'I think they both know what's going on but I think it's becoming more accepted now that you can just do what you want to do'. James also

suggested that this acceptability of casual sex was not restricted to men: 'I know a lot of girls [at university] who sleep with lots of people too'.

Similar to some of the female participants, casual sex was often constructed as something that could help build ones' range of sexual experiences (Attwood & Smith, 2013; Joseph & Black, 2012; Wignall & McCormack, 2017). Indeed, research has suggested that those who describe having had "great" sex lives talk about: 'Purposefully cultivating their understanding and experience of sex and sexuality throughout their lives. They intentionally sought out experiences...that they believed might help to bring about optimal sexual experiences' (Ménard et al., 2015, p. 84). However, for some of the male participants, continuing with casual sex was not viewed as something that they would do forever. In contrast to the female participants, the pursuit of casual sex was associated with a particular time of life, rather than something they imagined they would become bored of. Six out of the twelve male participants suggested that casual sex would be abandoned either once one had gained enough experience, or once one had a long-term romantic partner, rather than deciding it was something they no longer enjoyed; even though Anderson's (2012) work on monogamy shows that this belief system mostly fails men after being with a long-term romantic partner. For these men, casual sex therefore might reflect the uncertain nature of young adults' life circumstances (Giordano et al., 2012). For example, Kyle suggested that having casual sex was very normal for people of his age, although he proposed that this might change, as he got older:

I think it is totally acceptable. It's fine. I feel like we are kind of at that age where we should be doing this. Because pretty soon we are going to be locked down and never be able to do this again. So long as you are a faithful person, which I think people should be, I think it's fine for like someone who is 17 or even 27. But once you start getting a little bit older I feel like you should start looking for someone a bit more serious, taking life a bit more seriously at that point. That's my personal opinion but when I get to that age maybe my opinion will change.

Will suggested that casual sex was easier to find when you were younger as opportunities to meet people, as well as entering into serious relationships, became barriers with age:

Yeah, when I was single I was definitely for it, but now that time has gone. It's best to make the most of it when you can. You don't know when you're going to be in a relationship. If I could have picked when to have a serious relationship I probably would've said around now, starting now, but you can't pick and choose these things. When you're doing these things at university or travelling then you're meeting a lot of people and these things are fun. But if you're older then I think it would be really difficult, because it's more difficult to meet people. Your groups get smaller as you

get older. People don't really have big house parties any more, and you don't really meet girls in clubs because it's too loud. I've got quite a few single guy friends, and it doesn't seem that fun. I think it happens less now, at least for friends who I talk to, one-night stands are more a university or maybe a gap year type thing.

Stuart suggested that he had experienced a lot of casual sex when he was younger, and so was less interested in it now. Similar to Kyle's perspective, Stuart felt that the prospect of impending adulthood had made him feel like he needed to be more responsible:

Yeah, without a doubt I got it out of my system. When I was younger, I was what you would call a player; I would see a lot of people at the same time. I mean I'm not afraid to admit that. So I've done casual dating once or twice, been sleeping with people for like a month, two months, but I didn't start getting serious till I was about 17 or 18 because I think that's when I started to realise that I was going to be an adult soon, I can't be messing around like this. Even though I'm at university now, and everyone says it's the university experience. But for the whole time that I've been at university I've been in a relationship.

Similarly, Rob felt that he had maybe lost his desire for casual sex. This had come after many years of being single, and many sexual partners:

I've had hundreds of one-night stands. It doesn't bother me. I was single at the time, and I got to a point where I was just sating my appetite. I had to have sex. I couldn't not have it. But I had no sexual emotion or desire for that person. I just needed to do the act. But I've been single for so long now, and I've done [being single and having casual sex] so now I'm thinking about settling down.

For Scott, he also felt that casual sex was something that he had finished with, and decided that it was longer something that interested him: 'Yeah, I've done that quite a lot in the past year, but only up until now'. His decision to turn away from casual sex was related to him feeling like he had now had that experience: 'I'm not going to do it when I'm 30. I've done it for a year that's it, and I'm saying no; whereas someone else might be doing it for two or three years, or maybe never stop'. Despite his personal lack of interest in casual sex, he did feel strongly that others should have their own experiences of it and determine what is right for them: 'Everyone needs to do it, everyone needs to try it, everyone needs to understand themselves mentally and sexually'.

David felt that he had now gained enough experience of casual sex to determine that he preferred to have sex with a regular partner:

There were only a couple of weeks in-between starting to go out with my current girlfriend, so there were a few [one-night stands] within a week, which was a different experience. It wasn't a bad experience, but not something I would be encouraged to have again. I'd rather sleep with one person because when you know what someone likes, it's more appealing.

These men clearly demonstrated a comparable acceptance of casual sex to the female participants. In contrast, however, their perspectives on engaging in casual sex were more closely linked with accruing sexual experience. A lot of participants also suggested that they would only stop having casual sex when they entered into a relationship, or became "too old" for it.

Male Perceptions of Risk in Casual Sex

Four male participants highlighted that despite the acceptability of casual sex there were, however, potential risks. These problems centered on issues that arose when there was a disparity in expectations of what the casual sex would mean. Although not exclusively targeting women, there were underlying suggestions that it was others who might become too attached after sex, rather than themselves. This issue therefore became something that men needed to be cautious of. Stuart said:

If you can do it, and get away with it, then do it. Like with some people where I'm from, a lot of girls are quite clingy. So with some guys, some of my friends and myself we've had experiences with girls texting you the next day, and bothering you when you go out. So if you can get away with it and not have to see them or speak with them again, if you can keep it as a one-time thing and not be a needy person, and them not be the needy person, then you're fine.

Similarly, Kyle said that he did not have a problem with detaching emotionally from sex: 'If the other person can handle it then it's very fun. If they are prone to getting attached or they don't understand what the situation is then it can be pretty awkward'. Scott also highlighted problems that could come from having sex with women: 'It brings complications. It just does, there is no way you can have sex with a woman and there's nothing there. Everyone says, "Don't do it, friends-with-benefits never works out", and it's true, even when you sleep with a girl once'.

This suggestion that women are more likely to become attached after casual sex reflects the 'gendered social norm in which girls are seeking relationships and boys are not' (Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2006, p. 474). However, research presents mixed

conclusions as to whether women are more interested in casual sex experiences becoming something more serious, or whether there is more similarity between the sexes (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Manning et al., 2006; Reid, Elliott, & Webber, 2011). Presenting a more egalitarian view, Simon said:

I think there is a danger with some peoples' attitudes, say somebody wanted to start a relationship and the other person just wanted a one-night stand, for example. If there is that kind of difference in expectation of what someone wants then that can cause problems. But if both people understand what the purpose of it is and are happy with that then I don't see it as anything wrong with that.

In contrast to the female participants, only one of the males highlighted intimacy as a consideration when engaging in casual sex. Being polyamorous, Steve had permission from his partner to pursue casual sex if he wanted, but he did not pursue sex as an end in itself. Instead, he used sex as a means to further amplify intimacy:

I guess if I meet someone that I'm attracted to, I want to connect with them as much as possible and I feel that bringing it to a sexual level allows for another level of intimacy. I haven't really had a one-night stand in the classic sense of just meeting someone, not having a conversation, getting drunk and going back to their place. It's always been framed by a friendship or a connection so I think whenever I have pursued sex with someone, it's always been to try and get through to another level of intimacy with them.

Thus, for some men, unwanted desires for attachment became a potential risk to their sexual autonomy and could be the source of problems. Consequently, some men emphasised the need for everyone to understand the purpose of the sex, whilst at the same time recognising that it was not necessarily just women that might want more out of sex than the actual sex. Only one participant highlighted the positives of enhanced intimacy and attachment. Importantly, being that this participant was in a polyamorous relationship, it is unlikely that he felt the development of intimacy or attachment would restrict him in the way that other men suggested.

Men and Women's History of Sexual Exploration

Some have suggested that threesomes may be used as a gateway into other sexual behaviours or relationship set-ups (Kimberly & Hans, 2015; De Visser & McDonald, 2007). Indeed, in my research, I find some evidence for this suggestion, and this is explored in

chapter 10. There were, however, six participants who were already exploring more alternative sexual scripts, or consensually non-monogamous relationship set-ups long before their experience of a threesome. For example, Cathy had at one time engaged in a dominant/submissive relationship:

I had a slave. The setup was a I would call him and tell him to "Get his grubby, dirty, disgusting body around mine", because he liked being degraded and I would tie him up and humiliate him, beat him up a little bit, and leave him. Sometimes I would go to his place and tie him up and degrade him and leave him there, because that's what he liked.

It has been suggested that men are more sexually agentic than women (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015) and thus more likely to initiate less common sexual practices, such as anal sex (McBride & Fortenberry, 2010) or swinging (Dixon, 1984; Frank, 2008). Despite this suggestion, only one male participant described being particularly experimental with his sexual behaviours. Rob had explored a number of different sexual activities, but suggested that it was often his female partners who had instigated these suggestions:

BDSM, domination (me dominating them); some birds are just into different stuff, and asked to do things I don't normally do, so I was like, "Sure why not". I did some weird vampire stuff once with someone. That got a bit weird, drawing blood and stuff like that. But it didn't bother me, it didn't faze me.

Rob did, however, suggest some activities that he was reluctant to get involved with:

A lot of my mates have said you should try getting fingered in your arse when you're having sex, but I'm like, "No, it's not for me". I've had girls try to do it and I'm like, "Na, I'm not ready for that yet". And it's not something I've been favorable to. I've had girls lick my arse and things like that, but I think it's one of those things that when you're in the moment, stuff gets crazy and you just go with the flow. But I didn't know how to feel afterwards, I guess because I felt like I'd been put in a vulnerable position, and I don't know how I feel about it. Whether I would do it again, I don't know.

Although Rob was not interested in being rectally stimulated himself, his comments about his friends suggest he has peers who view male anal penetration as acceptable and pleasurable. The attitude of his friends also echoes research by Branfman, Stiritz and Anderson (2017) suggesting that heterosexual male anal eroticism is losing its stigma amongst young men.

For all of the five female participants, it was in part these sexual behaviours they had experimented with that led them to have a threesome, rather than the other way around. For example, Cathy's interest in a threesome stemmed from her voyeurism:

So I would watch other couples, it was always couples. It has to be within my sexual weirdness, there has to be boundaries. And all the people I've watched, I knew them personally. They were good friends believe it or not. They felt safe and comfortable with me and I'd watch them and I would film and take photographs. And the film and the photographs would be for them and watching would be for me. I'd like watching. Sometimes I would maybe wank over it afterwards but the height of it would be from the moment, not afterwards. But isn't that weird? Normally people would masturbate in the room whilst it was going on or afterwards, whereas for me I didn't masturbate during it, but instead I was directing and telling them what to do and stuff like that.

Sometimes these couples would ask Cathy to join in, and although she was uninterested, it made her start to consider the idea of a threesome:

I feel very comfortable watching couples, and what started to happen was the female would grab my hand to join in and that's not what it was about for me. All the guys would say, "Are you not interested?" But because they were in a relationship and I didn't want to be the cause of something. And a lot of the time I didn't fancy the guys. So that kept happening and I suppose then the idea of a threesome popped into my head.

Kirsty suggested that getting into a relationship at an early age had encouraged her and her partner to enter into an open relationship. After approximately two years of being in a relationship, having partnered at around fifteen years old, her male partner had been: 'A bit scared about only being with one person'. Consequently, they decided to be in an open relationship:

We decided that we would be in an open relationship but we were only in it for a couple of months. And I didn't really want to, or feel the need to do anything. But I was quite happy for him to. But then it got to the point where I wanted to, but he didn't want to. I feel like we were maybe a bit young when I look back on it. Eventually, we just decided not to be in an open relationship. And then just became monogamous. And then we probably continued going out for another six months or so and then it ended for other reasons.

Although not a direct cause of her threesome experience, Kirsty suggested that her and her partner had a threesome for similar reasons to entering into an open relationship: discomfort in the sexual restriction that monogamous relationships can bring. Julia also

described feeling restricted, but for reasons of her sexuality; she desired an opening of her relationship in order to better understand her attractions and feelings towards women.

During her second serious relationship with a man she said:

Within a year I already said to him that I really like girls and I want to do something about that. If we are going to stay together forever then I need to figure this out first because it's not reasonable for me that I just ignore that part of myself.

Julia's first threesome came a number of years later when trying to bring together two separate partners, and is discussed more in chapter 8.

Two female participants also described engaging in various forms of sex work, facilitating situations that allowed for their first threesome. Both of these women's motivations for sex work can be contextualised with the lifestyle/exposure model (Davis, 1971 c.f. Cobbina & Oselin, 2011), rather than for example, economic need or prior sexual abuse. This model, although specifically talking about prostitution, suggests that women become involved in sex work in part because of specific social contacts that help to facilitate it. This was true for both Rachel and Sarah.

Rachel described meeting a photographer who suggested she might pose for some erotic photographs: 'So I met this photographer and basically it was to do fetish photos. It was okay, it was risky and dangerous but it was okay. Thankfully he was really genuine'. Through this photographer, Rachel was introduced to others who were interested in fetish activities: 'He introduced me to the fetish scene and there was a [sex] club near me, so I went with him and that's how I met the owner. I helped with those [fetish] nights, and then started working all nights'. The context of the sex club, and the fact that Rachel started to casually date the owner, thus allowed her the opportunity for her first threesome.

Sarah also described engaging in erotic photography as the catalyst that led her into sex work, and subsequently, threesomes:

I started with like outside modeling, which then went into erotic modeling, which then just turned into escorting and stuff. At first it was just the photos, and then it was like, "What if you sucked my dick next time and I'll give you more money?" and then "What if I fucked you next time?"

These experiences led Sarah further into escorting, and although she did go on to have a threesome with this photographer and another female escort, her first experience was with another client. She did not, however, have prior warning that it was going to happen:

So this girl showed up and he wanted to do double penetration and so told this girl to strap up and then told me to ride her, and this girl was like “Oh, you have done this before right?” and I was like “No” and you can sort of tell that she was like “Woah, okay”. But anyway, I very rarely had orgasms in a sex work context but with this one I remember riding her until I did cum. And then after that he only really pulled me in for threesomes.

Sarah found that being asked to engage in threesomes in a sex work context had some positives for her:

It was almost like a container that was created, which made it a little safer to explore in. Because there is less pressure of an implication of what does this mean between me and this other person? So that whole initial stage of figuring things out was taken care off, and also it was very low pressure. I thought to myself, “She is also a sex worker so there's no pressure on me to perform in any way”.

Although Sarah enjoyed her threesome experiences as a way to explore and have sex with other women, she did still have some difficulties:

It's hard to enjoy it when you sense that somebody is not really that into it. I could tell that most of the other women that were doing it weren't queer, so there was this level of inauthenticity. Sex work is a performance, which didn't bother me but with the interactions with women I would really enjoy. But there was also this feeling where I would wish that it was for real. Like it did bother me that they weren't feeling the same things that I was feeling.

Thus, whilst these findings do not refute research suggesting that threesomes may lead to interest in other sexual behaviours, they instead offer a more nuanced perspective. We must not assume that people's sexual experiences follow a linear path—one where a particular behaviour logically leads into the next. Additionally, rather than being a gateway into other sexual behaviours, for some, threesomes may simply represent another option for those that are interested in expanding their experiences of sexual activity.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter aimed to explore participants' attitudes and experiences of casual sex. All participants had engaged in casual sex at least once, with some having had considerably more experience. Participants' attitudes broadly suggest a culture that is accepting of both men and women who engage in casual sex; viewing it as important for experience building. Participants did not, however, hold sex and the pursuit of sex as important above all else.

Some women described a desire for intimacy in their sexual encounters, whereas a number of men suggested that they either had, or would at some point leave casual sex behind. Thus, whilst participants do suggest liberal attitudes towards casual sex, they do not appear to stand out as any more promiscuous than monogamous people who engage in casual sex (see Garcia et al., 2012).

Participants were also asked about the history of sexual exploration prior to their first threesome experience. Some have suggested that threesomes may be a “stepping-stone” into other sexual behaviours (Kimberly & Hans, 2015; De Visser & McDonald, 2007). However, for six of the participants their exploration of less common sexual practices or consensual non-monogamy had already started prior to their first threesome experience. So whilst a threesome might still be the first logical step for some in challenging monogamism or traditional sexual scripts, it is not necessarily the first thing that people will do. Further information and discussion related to the idea of a threesome being a “gateway” can be found in chapter 10.

Chapter 7: MMF Threesomes

Schippers (2016) suggests that our collective cultural understanding of “what a threesome should be”—the threesome imaginary—disqualifies the MMF threesome as an acceptable practice amongst the majority of men and women. This is a finding also reflected in empirical data on threesomes (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Joyal et al., 2014; Karlen, 1988). There is, however, a difference between the cultural expectations of men and women with regards to MMF threesomes: women are stigmatised more than men who engage in them (Jonason & Marks, 2008). When women engage in MMF threesomes they are labeled as either sexually promiscuous or a victim—perhaps perceived as coerced into such behaviours (Schippers, 2016). Men are subject to different stigma, potentially bringing their heterosexuality into question (Frank, 2008). But this is not necessarily the case, as the opportunity to have sex with a woman may be seen as a justifiable cause for the presence of another man (Anderson, 2008). Despite this defence, men who engage in threesomes with other men are still looked upon less positively (by both men and women) than men engaging in FFM threesomes (Jonason & Marks, 2008).

This chapter explores participants’ experiences and expectations around this less culturally acceptable form of a multi-sex threesome, finding MMF threesomes to be less stigmatised than has been previously suggested. Of the 28 male and female participants, nine had engaged in MMF threesomes: three women, and six men. I find that whilst women do hold reservations about MMF threesomes, many are still attracted to the idea, especially when men interact together sexually. Furthermore, the majority of men are happy to engage in MMF threesomes as a way to bond with their friends, for fun, or for the experience.

Women’s Negative Perceptions of MMF Threesomes

Of the 16 women in the sample, only three had ever had an MMF threesome. I will discuss these women’s experiences in greater depth later in the chapter, and first examine women’s perceptions of MMF threesomes who had not engaged in them. For the 13 women without experiences of an MMF threesome, seven were reluctant to the idea, but not necessarily for the reasons Schippers (2016) suggests. For example, Colette expressed a worry that the physical challenge of two penises in sex might lead to a loss of sensuality; something she strongly desired when having sex:

I thought about it, and I think I would have been intimidated to be honest. Lots of penises to manage at the same time...I don't think in my mind I would feel as aroused, because it's nice to be desired by two men, but the technical aspects, being penetrated by two men at the same time, that would be a little bit too much for me; more hard-core than sensual.

For others, since their initial threesome(s), their sexuality had developed in a way that meant they were no longer interested in threesomes involving men. For example, Sarah said: 'It's just the blending of masculinity and femininity that is what I'm really interested in. But it's not the male body, but the female body that I am interested in'. Because of this, she now only dated transsexual men or very masculine women.

Overall, justifications for not wanting to engage in MMF threesomes were varied. Some reasons did, however, repeatedly come up, and they are categorised as: I) a lack of interest; II) fear of physical intimidation; III) porn's representation of MMF threesomes.

Five participants had a basic lack of interest MMF threesomes. Rosie suggested that she was: 'Not really interested in having a threesome with two guys to be honest. I'm more into girls than guys sexually, and the thought of two men together doesn't really turn me on'. For Sue (who will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 8), her bad FFM experience had put her off the idea of any more threesomes altogether: 'I'm very much when I'm in love, I'm in love with that person, and sharing that person isn't an option'. Jennifer also highlighted that her partner was open to the idea, but she wasn't interested:

Don't know why, just the thought of doing it with two guys wasn't appealing whatsoever to either of us. He was like, "We can if you want to", and I could see the look on his face, and I was like "No really its fine, you're safe".

Interestingly here, although Jennifer's boyfriend said that he was open to an MMF threesome, she interpreted him as not really wanting to do it. By saying: 'You're safe', it suggests that she feels it would be harmful to some aspect of him; perhaps his masculinity, or even sexuality. This, however, stands in contrast to other research suggesting that men do not view MMF threesomes as homosexualising (Scoats et al., 2017).

Four of the female participants suggested that the idea of an MMF threesome was physically intimidating. Cathy said that, with two men, 'There would just be too much testosterone, and I'm a strong woman but I couldn't defend myself with two men'. She added, 'That's being used and abused and I'm not up for that'. Sarah echoed the sense of danger. Referring to when she had previously engaged in sex work, she commented:

So some guys would ask for that, but I was always like hmmmmm. I did make some friends who were doing sex work and I talked with one who was like, "Dude you do not know basic safety! Never go anywhere with two men, it's just a big no!"

Stuart, one of male participants, also commented that the female in his MMF threesome had expressed similar concern about the physicality of being with two men at the same time:

Obviously the girl was like, "Just be easy"... I mean, she was quite small, quite petite, and we were guys that were taller than her, and so she was like "Yeah just be gentle and don't throw me around, because there's two of you"

Linked to this fear of intimidation, some participants also indicated that their perceptions of MMF threesomes had been partly influenced by how they are portrayed in pornography; primarily that MMF threesomes are aggressive. Although Nadia was able to recognise that porn was not necessarily true to life, its representations of MMF threesomes were enough to make it an unattractive prospect:

My only knowledge of two males, one female threesomes is from porn, and it always just seems absolutely brutal. The woman just seems to be absolutely violated, and obviously porn isn't a true representation of sex but it's never something that I've watched and I thought that's really appealing to me. It just looks like, really uncomfortable.

Nadia acknowledged that pornography often gave an inaccurate depiction of sex, but felt that she did not really have any other frame of reference to draw upon when it came to threesomes.

Representations of MMF threesomes in pornography were also linked by some participants to the objectification of women. When asked about whether she might consider engaging in this type of threesome, Colette stated that:

I associate that more with porn, and feeling like an object that two men are sharing... You feel like you're probably the thing that they're sharing. I don't know, it's weird, because it could be completely different. I guess it could be really satisfying and open, but that's the first idea that popped into my head.

Kirsty also indicated that although she had never had a threesome with two men, the impression she had from porn would put her off: 'It feels a bit like the girl is just being

fucked. But then it could be different. It might be different'. Additionally, although Joanna had engaged in numerous MMF threesomes, all of these had included men who interacted sexually with each other. Subsequently, she suggested that porn was probably a contributing factor to why she would be less interested in a threesome where the men were not involved with each other:

The idea of being the only woman doesn't massively appeal. Maybe I'm just thinking of porn and stuff, but it makes me think it would be more like, "Here's this piece of meat, let's have sex with her". But I know it doesn't necessarily have to be like that but in my head I think that's what an MMF threesome without the guys interacting would be like.

It could be suggested that these women demonstrate a certain level of 'porn literacy' (Albury, 2014, p. 173); able to cast a critical perspective over pornographic representations and accept it as not necessarily demonstrative of real life practices. But despite this acknowledgement of the fictional basis of much pornography, these women were still using MMF threesomes' representation in porn as a reason not to engage in them. It is also worth noting that these comments from the women in my research (alongside others later in the chapter) demonstrate an acceptance and admission of porn consumption.

Women's Experiences of MMF Threesomes

Three female participants had engaged in an MMF threesome, all of who were happy to do it again, although only Joanna was actively pursuing them with her partner. For these women, both Joanna and Meika highlighted some positive and negative aspects of their experiences, whereas Julia only highlighted positive aspects. This difference might, however, be attributed to the fact that Julia had only had one MMF threesome experience, whereas the other two participants had numerous experiences.

Julia said, 'That was really focused on one guy, so I didn't really interact with the other guy much'. She was thus open to the prospect of more MMF threesomes (as is discussed in the next section), although it was not something she was currently pursuing. She also suggested in any threesome, not limited to MMF threesomes, there were multiple reasons why she might engage in one:

It depends very much. Sometimes it is just looking to have a connection with the three of us. Sometimes it's just for sexual gratification in that moment. Sometimes it's building up a kinky dynamic with one specific partner...But sometimes I also just

like to be in service of two people and let me facilitate your relationship growing and becoming bigger and better.

Meika, who had MMF experiences with three different combinations of people, highlighted difficulty in finding suitable male participants: 'It's more difficult to find men who are comfortable being sexual around other men'. Seemingly, even being in the presence of another man in a sexual context could become 'too much' for some men, although recent research suggests that this perspective may be diminishing (Scoats et al., 2017). Recalling her first experience, even though the men had not been interacting together, there had still been problems:

I was very young and I think it was very awkward for the guys. I think one of them came and the other one said, "Oh the smell of the sperm of the other guy is making me nauseous", and then he couldn't continue. It's childish and stupid.

In order to find suitable men for an MMF threesome, Joanna had sometimes turned to a mobile phone app that could be tailored towards finding people of particular sexualities for dating or casual sex. For her, this had been a successful strategy: 'I know that men have a lot of casual sex on Grindr so I knew it was a very easy way of finding a man that would like to have casual sex'. Although her and her partner had tried other apps, some seemed to be more effective than others: 'I think with Grindr it will always be easy, Tinder less so, 3nder we are yet to see'.

The selection of Grindr was also based on the desire to find another male who would have sex with both of them. Joanna said: 'I think we wanted a guy who was not just going to be into me, but would also be into my partner'. Joanna felt that this was a strategy that would help her and her partner find someone who was more in line with their sexual values:

When I think of a guy who only wants to have sex with a woman then I think of a guy who's a bit homophobic possibly. I know I'm making assumptions, but I wouldn't feel as comfortable or connected with someone like that, and that's important for me.

For Meika, even when she was able to find two men who were comfortable to be sexual in each other's presence, there were other concerns. Speaking of the technical challenge of two penises, Meika suggested that, 'With guys it can be harder because it's more work, and it's nice when I feel it's two guys pleasing me but sometimes it feels like it's me having to

please two guys rather than just one'. This had sometimes been exacerbated when her and her partner had threesomes with straight men: 'I think I have to pay even more attention to my partner because when a guy is straight, because it's just me and my partner or the other guy and me'. This contrasted with her depiction of a threesome with another woman, which felt a lot less primarily focused on her:

When the third is a girl then my partner can be with her as well so I can relax a little bit more, and there can be a moment where I just mellow out and watch the two of them.

Meika suggested that MMF threesome experiences with her male partner were much better when both could be fully involved, thus bringing them together as a couple rather than separating them (De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Parsons et al., 2013). In one example, she said: 'He was making out with the guy and being sexual with the guy and I think that made it a lot easier for me and also, it was hot'. Initially though, this situation had been more for her benefit than for his: 'It was maybe more me that wanted to do it, and see him with another guy'. But circumstances had now developed beyond this:

I think he would identify as straight but I don't know, it's becoming very fluid. For him it can be very hot in fantasy. But I get the sense that he doesn't fall in love with guys at all, but has nothing against the sexual experience.

Meika also felt that this was a more positive way to have threesomes:

It's often great with my current partner because I feel it is something we are doing together. He gets turned on by seeing me with someone else and I get turned on with seeing him with someone else. I think in some way it's also a reinforcer of how nice it is to be with the partner that you are with.

Joanna suggested that two out of her three MMF threesomes had been quite positive experiences. In both of these cases, Joanna felt that the men had been friendly, not too overtly sexual, and demonstrated a willingness to connect on a deeper level, even if this was only at the level of friendship. Similarly, this desire for intimacy has also been demonstrated in other research (Giordano et al., 2012) as well as in chapter 6. For example, when talking about one of these men, she said:

He was a really nice guy. Someone I felt we connected with a bit more. Someone you could imagine being a friend. And the sex was all quite quick but I think he stayed a bit longer and chatted so it felt a bit more intimate, nice, comfortable.

In another example, when looking on Grindr for men Joanna said that a friendlier message had stood out from the others:

I got a lot of messages but one seemed a bit friendlier than the others. A lot of messages on that can be...not aggressive, but forward. But he said let's go for a drink and it was a nice bar that we know and like and so we met him there.

Joanna and her partner then decided to ask him back to their house to have sex:

He was keen and we went back to our place and we had sex. We all did stuff with everyone, I had sex with him, my boyfriend and him didn't have any sort of anal sex but did everything else and yeah that was fun. He didn't stay over and we knew he was having relationship issues so I sent him a message saying I'm going off of Grindr but if you want to meet again then here is my number. We didn't hear from him again so I kind of thought that was that until quite recently when I heard from him saying that he would like to meet up and it's something I would consider doing again.

For Joanna's remaining MMF threesome experience, she highlighted one situation that her and her male partner had been in which had not been enjoyable because of the behaviour of the second man. Joanna and her partner met another man on 3nder and organised a meeting at their home. However, when the other male got there, she explained that: 'He was really drunk, and he was kinda okay to chat to but we had only had a couple of drinks'. After some conversation they had sex, but Joanna suggests that the experience was not particularly positive:

Yeah the sex was not good. He was just very chauvinistic. It really makes me cringe. It makes me feel embarrassed. And we've laughed about it, but maybe it's the thought of friends knowing about it. Like he was a bit objectifying and that made me feel a bit crap.

When talking about this threesome in particular, it also prompted her to emphasise the differences she had experienced between MMF and FFM threesomes:

Comparing the girl and the guy threesomes I've had, the girl ones have felt more intimate and more like, not a relationship, but more like a thing. Whereas with the

guys its been more like sex, and that's it. And with him it was very much like he was there to have sex and that was it.

Despite this negative experience, Joanna and her partner continued to have MMF threesomes. This experience, whilst embarrassing, served as a 'learning experience' for the couple, who were then better able to select future partners.

Aside from the example given by Joanna, the two other remaining females had not experienced the aggression and objectification some participants highlighted as a worry. It was, however, evident in some of the experiences male participants shared, and this is discussed later in the chapter.

Women's Desires for MMF threesomes

In addition to the three women who had MMF threesomes, there were six others who were open to the idea. When asked if it would be something she would ever consider, Lauren replied: 'Oh fuck-yeah. Dude I've been trying to get that to happen for like years! But it just never panned out. One time, I thought it was finally going to happen, and then he ghosted me'. Philippa was similarly interested, and suggested that, 'I would like to try with two guys. I think because I find men more attractive, and although I liked it with a woman, I find for me, cunnilingus is not that big of a turn on'. For all of the nine women interested in MMF threesomes, there was also an interest in seeing male same-sex interaction.

Similar to the women in Neville's (2015) research, participants highlighted that they got sexual pleasure from seeing men interact together sexually, although for the majority, their experience of this was limited to consumption of pornography or literature. For example, Cathy suggested that she found it: 'Very arousing! Even if I was just watching'. Likewise, Philippa found: 'Man-on-man pretty hot'. For Lauren, this heavily influenced her porn consumption: 'I watch gay porn waaaaaaaay more often than I watch straight porn. It's simple math. More dicks!'

Although not describing an interest in watching pornography specifically, one participant, Sarah, recollected that:

When I was younger I was like super into gay male sex, like that's what got me off, I read erotic stories about it. That was my porn consumption. All of my earliest romantic attachments or crushes were all on as yet to come out gay boys.

Comparable with Sarah's enjoyment of male on male erotica, other similar examples can be found in slash fiction—a genre consumed primarily by women and gay/bisexual men. Within this genre, stories are created based on authors' already established characters and settings (Davies, 2005) and males frequently 'metamorphose into bi males if they have women in their lives, or gay if they appear sexually ambiguous in the original material' (Davies, 2005, p. 197).

This desire to see men interact sexually also fed into the female participants' wishes around MMF threesomes. For eight out of the nine women open to MMF threesomes in the future, a key factor in increasing their enjoyment (or expected enjoyment) was the extent to which the males interacted with each other. Joanna suggested that in an MMF threesome: 'I do find the guy on guy action quite hot, so it's an element I like'. Lauren also felt that the men interacting would lead to an enhanced experience and she referred to how aroused she thought it would make her: 'Watching two men interact rocks my socks. So, it would make the threesome better because I'd be a human geyser'.

Lauren went on to suggest that she would view guys not interacting in an MMF threesome as a reflection of cultural homophobia: 'I would want them to interact. If I could only get them should the conditions be that they wouldn't interact, because of stupid homophobic norms. I'd take what I can get. But ideally, I'd want them to interact'.

Julia also suggested that she was very interested in an MMF threesome, but had not found the right people to do it with: 'I'm definitely open for a threesome with two guys, I actually find it quite hot, but I haven't really found guys to do that with'. The difficulty Julia highlighted hinged on her desire to see same-sex male interaction:

If there is no homo, there is no trio. I find it really annoying if they are reluctant to touch each other. I mean they like it when I make out with someone [of the same sex], and I like it when they make out with someone [of the same sex].

Julia suggested that this kind of situation could be difficult to find and, consequently, she had only once engaged in an MMF threesome. She recognised that this difficulty was in part due to the stigma around male bisexuality: 'If male bisexuality was more accepted then I think, I would have more MMF threesomes'. This recognition of male bisexual stigma—in which male bisexuality is stigmatised more so than female bisexuality (Eliason, 2000)—was also identified by Colette: 'I do not know a lot of bi guys, maybe two or three that have been open about it anyway, because maybe there is a much higher stigma associated with a guy being bisexual'. These statements support other research that suggests elevated levels of

stigma for bisexuals over both heterosexuals and homosexuals, and in particular for male bisexuals (Eliason, 2000; Herek, 2002).

Usually, when questioned about engaging in an MMF threesome, there was the underlying assumption that the men would not be interacting with each other. But when scenarios were suggested whereby the men did interact sexually, this had the potential to reduce anxieties about this type of threesome. Kirsty suggested:

Yeah, I think because I would probably say it's quite important because if you're going to have a threesome, that it should be about all three of you...I would feel less apprehensive if they were going to enjoy each other as well.

For Cathy, who previously suggested that she would worry for her safety in an MMF threesomes, she felt that, 'I would feel far more comfortable if the men where interacting together'. Colette also suggested that if the men 'Kissed and touched each other', then this might reduce her anxieties. Colette did, however, suggest that the experience would still need to be sensual, and she would not want to feel excluded: 'If they both interacted together sensually and I was part of it all, I might like it. You never know until you try, right?'

This reduction in apprehension may be linked with the perceived notion that threesomes where men engage sexually with each other lead to reduced objectification and subjugation of the woman. For example, McCutcheon and Bishop (2015) found that one of the reasons why some women preferred watching gay porn was the shift in power dynamics that it created. They suggest that, 'participants consistently referred to an atmosphere of equality in gay pornography, regardless of whether or not role reciprocity was depicted between performers (i.e., alternating between 'top' and 'bottom' roles) (p. 80). Thus, there may also be a similar presumption around MMF threesomes that include same-sex sexual interaction.

Men's Perceptions of MMF threesomes

This section explores men's attitudes towards MMF threesome from the perspective of those without experience of one. Six men had not engaged in an MMF threesome and of these six, three suggested they would not be interested in an MMF threesome. None of these men expressed outright disgust or homophobia towards the idea, but instead, for two of them, concerns were focused around their current romantic partners (this topic is discussed in more detail in chapter 10). For example, James suggested that he wouldn't

enjoy seeing his partner with another man: 'I wouldn't want to have a another guy penetrate her at all'. Will expressed a similar sentiment:

I'm not attracted to men in any way really, so it just wouldn't be an enjoyable experience because not only do I not really want to see another guy with Michelle, I'm not interested in the experience with the guy either.

Additionally, Will suggested that his aversion to an MMF threesome probably also precluded him the opportunity to have an FFM threesome with his current partner—something that he would happily engage in given the opportunity: 'We are quite about equality. We have to play by the same rules. She makes a point of it'. This was, however, an agreement that Will had accepted rather than suggesting that the benefits of having an FFM threesome would outweigh the downsides of having to have an MMF threesome (Anderson, 2008). The existence of this agreement can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Firstly, that his partner would not fear the stigma that is meant to accompany MMF threesomes for women (Schippers, 2016). It could, however, also be interpreted as a defense mechanism against requests for FFM threesomes, as she knows that Will would never agree to the opposite.

For the remaining participant uninterested in an MMF threesome, Steve was unsure whether he would want to have another threesome at all, with anyone:

Subsequently I've had opportunities where I could've maybe had them, with a bit of organisation, but it's never really appealed to me. It's not something that I wanted to repeat, and it's not because of my experience, I've just never felt the need to.

He went on to suggest that he wasn't sure whether he liked the dynamic that was brought about by threesomes, and the discomfort this may bring:

I mean with my partner now for example, she's had threesomes, and is that up for that kind of thing. She has said, "Oh we could arrange it with this person", and I've never wanted to pursue that. I don't know if that appeals to me at all. I always remember that line from Peep Show [British Sitcom]: "I don't want to have two more people that I can't look in the eye". So I have the declined to do it, because firstly I don't know if I like that dynamic and secondly I'm not sure if it would make me feel comfortable. And I could imagine it being great but it's kind of weird thinking through the practicalities of it.

Other participants who not had an MMF threesome had openness, if not strong motivation, to engage in one. Simon suggested that although he didn't have any attraction towards men,

and felt that he was unlikely to do anything sexual with another guy, he had become a lot more open as he had gotten older:

That's actually something I thought about in the past and its not that there's been the opportunity to do it but just hypothetically. And I think that as I've gotten older, I care less, like when I was younger I would never want to do anything with a guy, but now, I wouldn't really care so much. I think I'm just a bit older and more mature.

For David, his motivations were purely based on his partner's desires. He explained that although he wasn't really interested in an MMF threesome for himself; as him and his partner had already had an FFM threesome, he was happy to engage in one for the sake of his partner: 'We spoke about it and I said that I would have done it, it wouldn't bother me, there wouldn't be anything between me and the guy, it would just be purely on her. But she wasn't interested'. Interestingly, this phenomenon of having sex for the benefit of one's partner has been documented numerous times amongst women (e.g. Elliot & Umberson, 2008; Hayfield & Clarke, 2012), but appears less common amongst men.

For Scott, the thought of not knowing the other man well enough was something that made him cautious about engaging in an MMF threesome. He felt that there would be a risk that the other male in the threesome might treat the woman badly, and this could create awkwardness:

I don't know what my friend is like in bed, whether he is going to treat her like shit? And I don't want to be in that situation where he treats her like shit and I'm like, "What are you doing?"

Scott felt that a threesome with a stranger could be potentially risky for the woman involved: 'Obviously I've got respect for women, but [a threesome] can go either way'. He did, however, suggest that this worry might be mitigated if he was with a 'really close friend' whom he had a better understanding of.

Men's Experiences of MMF Threesomes

All of those with MMF experience emphasised the need to feel extremely comfortable with the other male in order for the experience to happen. What this comfort meant was sometimes different, but was most commonly expressed in terms of friendship. Being good friends with another man seemed to enable an MMF threesome to become a possibility. When a close male friend was involved, the emphasis was on fun, bonding, and experience

building rather than the sexual elements of the interaction. This emphasis on fun has also been found elsewhere where sex is represented more and more as a leisure activity with multiple purposes (Atwood & Smith, 2013; Joseph & Black, 2012; Wignall & McCormack, 2017).

Rob had one of his MMF threesomes with a close male friend, and framed it as an entertaining experience rather than an erotic one: 'So yeah, we were pretty drunk, it was pretty funny. It wasn't crazy serious sex, it was just a laugh with your best mate sort of thing'. Another male participant suggested that an MMF threesome facilitated bonding with the (male) friend. Kyle said that him and his male friend 'decided that it would be a bonding experience. Like fuck it, we'd been friends for so long, we might as well tag-team a girl together'. The type of overtly misogynist language used by Kyle was not common amongst other male participants, but does suggest that for some men MMF threesomes can be about male bonding as well as the objectification of women at the same time (Anderson, 2008).

Stuart had his threesome with two close friends and suggested a similar focus on enjoyment and fun rather than sexual excitement:

Because obviously they were both my friends. All three of us were friends and we've known each other since primary school. So it was obviously quite a strange experience, being so close, but it was quite funny, it was such a good experience.

For Stuart, the main reasons for engaging in a threesome were that he thought it would be a funny thing to do, as well as being an experience:

I was with another guy and this girl. We were at a house party, and me and her were talking for ages, I knew her quite well. So we were just joking around, having a talk, and one of my friends came over and says, "Oh are you getting on that tonight?", and I was kind of like, "no I wasn't intending on it but now she's probably thinking about it and I'm thinking about it". So we were just talking for ages and he was still there, and I turned around and said, "Wouldn't it be funny if us three had a threesome?" And he said, "Yeah that's stupid", and she and was like "I'd never try that". But then my friend said, "Hang on, it would actually be quite cool to experience one, like we're young, we could actually say that we've had one", and the girl was like, "I don't want to be a slut, to be seen like I'm a slut", and we said, "Well I don't see a reason why we have to tell anyone, we could just keep it between us". So it took her about 20 minutes to come round, and she decided, fuck it, we're only young once, we might as well try it. So we went back to mine and that was it.

This pressure on the woman to have sex might be seen as demonstrative of her feeling the need to capitulate to male desires (Wood, Mansfield, & Koch, 2007), objectifying herself by

doing so (Yost & McCarthy, 2012). Clearly, Stuart did not interpret things in this way and emphasised the casualness and playfulness of the encounter:

So she had oral sex with both of us. And then she had sex with both of us. There was a thing called an Eiffel tower that we did. And we also played rock paper scissors, in order to determine who went next and in what way. I mean she was laughing at the same time, she found it funny.

When asked if he minded that another male had been involved, he stated: 'No, not at all, because it was one of my friends'. Because of the friendship that he shared, it hadn't been a problem, but he suggested that this could be different with a stranger:

If it was someone who I didn't know that well, I'd be quite awkward around them. Because you might be like, oh shit I need to be impressive in front of this guy and stuff like that. But we both knew each other so we were like screw it, who cares.

Demonstrating the impact of friends in these situations, Mike found his experience of a threesome with strangers to be anxiety provoking. Having looked on the internet for people interested in having sex, Mike found a couple that he started corresponding with. Despite sending multiple messages and speaking on the phone with them, Mike somewhat feared for his safety during his first time with this couple: 'I was quite nervous about it, and it was quite hard to get a hard-on at first because I thought I was probably going to get my head kicked in or something'. Mike's fears were, however, unfounded, and he continued to meet the same couple multiple times. He suggested that a relaxed atmosphere alongside mutual trust and respect were fundamental for fostering a positive relationship between them:

It's got to be so chilled out, you know, you are going into someone's house, you're having sex with his wife, everything's got to be really chilled, everyone's got to get on. We always make it clear that if anyone is not comfortable with anything then we say.

Importantly, Mike's experience of an MMF threesome with people that were not friends meant that the focus on the sexual elements of the encounter was foregrounded. Rather than talk about his interactions in terms of bonding or having a laugh, it was instead about the eroticism of the situation: 'I quite like the idea of a husband watching me have sex with his wife. I really get off on it to be honest with you'.

Mike was one of only two male participants to suggest they got sexual gratification from MMF threesomes. Although he was not interested in interacting sexually with the

other male, he felt that: 'If there is a guy and a girl, you're still getting double the pleasure because I'm getting off on him watching me'. He also suggested that: 'I don't get uncomfortable with another guy being turned on by me. I'm cool with that'. When asked if there was anything that he did not like about the situation, the only thing he could highlight was: 'The exchange of bodily fluid sort of grosses me out a bit. The other day we were having sex and he came, and I put my knee in it, and that made me feel uncomfortable'.

The majority of male participants suggested that they were comfortable with the idea of an MMF threesome and none felt that engaging in one would challenge their sexuality. Nine of the men identified as straight, one as mostly straight, and one as queer. The remaining male participant chose not to identify with any particular label for his sexuality, but recognised men's attractiveness, although he was not motivated to seek out sexual encounters with them. Despite this, he was the only participant who had actually had the opportunity or desire to experiment sexually with another male in a threesome.

Dan, the other male who sought sexual gratification from his threesome, and the only male to actually interact with the other male sexually in his threesome, did not really feel like the experience was particularly experimental. Instead, it was similar to how others framed their experiences: 'It never felt super exploratory even though it was my first time doing that, it just seemed like a super fun thing to do'. Dan's experience was, however, at least partially motivated by a desire to have sex with the woman present. The two of them had been secretly meeting for a number of months to have sex without the knowledge of her partner. Whilst away on a camping trip with the two of them, Dan initiated a threesome with the two of them after a night of drinking:

I think what had happened was, I jokingly sat on Holly's lap, and then got Toby to sit on my lap. Then I can't remember if I started making out with her, but I started stroking his dick through his pants and then we all went back to the tent, and there was a threesome.

Dan suggested: 'Definitely in the back of my mind was, "this is the way to have sex with Holly and I really want to have sex right now"'. One might, therefore, interpret this as a case of the good cause scenario (Anderson, 2008), whereby Dan justifies that engaging in sex with Holly was worth the cost of having to engage sexually with Toby. But like the more inclusive men in Anderson's (2008) research, Dan did not justify his experience in this manner. Although he said that it was a means by which to have sex with Holly, he also suggested that: 'I think I thought it would be a lot of fun to have sex with Toby there, too'.

Additionally, having had a previous threesome where one of the others had felt somewhat excluded, he wanted to avoid this situation again:

I didn't really want that to happen so that's why I made out with Toby, I gave him a little blow job, and I actually really enjoyed having Holly on top of me and stroking his cock, it was super fucking hot.

Perhaps linked with this focus on fun rather than exploration sexuality or sexual gratification, there was usually the assumption for those participants with experiences of MMF threesomes that there would be no sexual interaction between the men involved. This was either conveyed explicitly or based on presumed understandings of the other male's heterosexuality. For example, in Stuart's threesome, his friend quickly outlined that there would be no male sexual interaction: 'The guy said straightaway we are not doing anything, and I was like yeah okay that's fine'. Stuart, however, came across as more casual, perhaps not objecting to this arrangement, but equally, not wholeheartedly agreeing.

For Fred, all of his MMF threesomes had been with what he termed 'very straight guys'. This meant that there was never really a need to explicitly state that the men wouldn't be interacting. Describing his first threesome, he said:

It was with a mate of mine—a guy, and a girl. He was a security guard and I came over one day to watch a film with them. They started going for it a little in the corner as we are watching a film, and she looked over and said, "Do you want to come and join in?" So nothing was verbalised by my friend but I know he is a very macho man, so I knew that it would always be at opposite ends. It wasn't ever going to be you and I involved together in this. And that has been most of my experiences; it has always been with very straight guys.

For Kyle, his comfort with MMF threesomes stemmed from not just the closeness of friendship, but also a shared acknowledgement of everyone's heterosexuality:

All of the guys who I had it with, we'd been friends for at least a year. And we had established where we stood sexually, we were both very comfortable with our sexuality, we understood where each other were. That we were straight. I feel like I would never really do that with some other people, because we just don't click like that. So it has to occur between two people that really click in terms of what their experiences are.

Thus far, the examples of men's MMF threesomes have focused broadly on the positives; the emphasis on fun, the bonding between friends that it can create, and the freedom to engage in these activities with fear of being homosexualised. There were, however,

suggestions from two of the men that the consideration of the woman involved in their experiences had been unimportant. Whilst few in number, these experiences all appeared to involve alcohol and high levels of intoxication on the part of the men involved. Research on men has suggested that quantity of alcohol consumed and frequency of consumption are both associated with higher levels of sexual aggression, body objectification, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual advances (Gervais, DiLillo, & McChargue, 2014).

Rob described a situation where he and his friend had been out drinking and decided to call Rob's friend's ex-girlfriend: 'We literally just phoned up and he [Rob's friend] was like, "Me and Rob are horny and both want to fuck you if you want to?"' The woman was initially unsure, so Rob's friend suggested that having a threesome might lead to them to getting back together. Rob's description of the event suggests no concern with regards to the experience of the woman that joined them:

Rob: So she just turned up, we bent her over a park bench and went at it. So yeah, we were pretty drunk. It was pretty funny.

Researcher: How was her experience, did she enjoy it?

Rob: I don't know, I just didn't care. It didn't bother me at all.

Rob went on to suggest that when he had sex in a threesome with another man, the context of this specific situation changed his attitudes towards both the woman and sex. With the woman, the fact that she was engaging in a threesome helped Rob to objectify her. To Rob, this meant that he no longer had to consider their feelings during the act: '[In an MMF threesome] you can get away with things, treat them [women] like shit kinda thing'. This was contrasted with dyadic sex, where 'you're all about that person'. With regards to sex, the presence of another man encouraged him to view the situation competitively; effectively competing with the other male in a test of sexual bravado. Indeed, Rob said that:

In a threesome you're just like, fuck em'. I wasn't there to treat them good, I was there to fuck em', and if the other guy would do it, then I'd do it harder. Almost like competition, I wanted to be the better one at that time. Whether or not they enjoyed it I don't know, but at the time I didn't give a shit.

Another participant, Kyle, gave two examples similar to Rob's. In the first example, Kyle brought a girl home to hook up with her. Upon arrival, his (male) roommate said to him, 'Dude I haven't had sex in so long, could you help me out? You've been having sex a lot, can't you, like, do this for me?' This 'Do this for me'—reminiscent of Anderson's (2008) good

cause scenario—is in reference to allowing him to have sex with the girl Kyle has brought home, to which Kyle agreed. Kyle reasoned that:

Because she was really drunk, and we were all really drunk, I assumed that she wouldn't really care who she was hooking-up with as long as she was hooking-up. So as I am hooking-up with her I kind of slide him in between us. And she starts hooking-up with him, and then she realises that I am moving away so she grabs me, and now it's like all three of us are kind of making out. Well she's making out with him and then making out with me.

At no point, however, was the female consulted as to whether she might be interested in this, nor had she consented to the threesome. This supports Abbey's (2002) suggestion that, 'the mere presence of alcohol leads many students to assume the woman wanted sex' (p. 121). For a time, the female in the three seemed to accept this situation, kissing with both of the men, but simultaneously, not entirely conscious of the situation. This particular encounter ended when the female realised what was occurring:

We moved to the bed, she starts going down on me, and he starts taking off his pants and puts on a condom, and starts going from behind. And that lasts for like five or six minutes before she realises what's actually happening. And she freaks out and was like "What the fuck". And then she runs upstairs and she's like, "I can't do this".

In this example, Kyle clearly helped to facilitate a case of non-consensual group sex. Interestingly, engaging in non-consensual behaviours like this with only one person would be considered sexual assault or rape. But because Kyle had secured consent for himself, he drew no distinction between what she had specifically consented to and what she had not. He presumed that as she had consented to sex, this included group sex. From this perspective, the woman was seen as a passive subject for the fulfillment of male desires (Gavey, 1992).

In another example, during senior week—the period of time at American universities between final assessments and graduation where students often celebrate with peers or family, or go on short trips to mark the end of university—Kyle described a situation at a holiday house that him and his friends had rented to celebrate the end of University. In a shared lounge, him and a male friend were sat under a blanket either side of a girl Kyle had hooked up with before. Sexual activity started happening, but owing to drugs and alcohol, neither of the men were able to perform sexually: 'We had been doing so much coke that we couldn't get it up'. Eventually, the men decided that there was little point in continuing

and put an end to things: 'I was like, "Yeah I can't get it up", and him, "Yeah me neither", and so we were like "Well, get out"'. The female in the three 'Got really pissed off about that, because we basically just kicked her out after she had done all of this shit and cheated on her boyfriend'.

Chapter Conclusions

With one level of analysis, it might appear that the results discussed in this chapter support Schipper's (2016) suggestion that the MMF threesome is more stigmatised, especially for women. Being that only three women out of 16 had engaged in MMF threesomes, it might appear that women are uninterested in them. However, few women overtly stigmatised MMF threesomes. When stigma was attached, it came in the form that an MMF threesome might not be safe, and two male participants gave examples that demonstrated that these fears might not be unfounded.

These stigmatisations were not, however, all encompassing and these assumptions of danger reduced when it was suggested that the men might be sexually interacting together. In fact, this was a source of desire for a number of these women. Previously, Esterline and Galupo (2013) have suggested women are not interested in watching men interact together in a sexualised manner 'except when it is treated as a game' (p. 117). Nevertheless, many of the women in my sample found this prospect to be arousing (either hypothetically or from their experiences), and in fact the most desirable way to have an MMF threesome. Other research has also suggested that some women do enjoy viewing these interactions because they find them attractive (Neville, 2015).

For the men, MMF threesomes were much more common, and six out of twelve male participants had engaged in one, and nine would be happy to engage in one in the future. For the majority of men, the focus of their MMF threesomes was around fun, friendship and experience rather than seeking an erotic or sensual experience. Even the one participant who had his first same-sex sexual experience in an MMF threesome chose to emphasise the fun nature of the experience. These men's behaviours are best contextualised through Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory. No longer being subject to high levels of homophobia means that these men are able to express openness to having sex alongside their friends without fear of being homosexualised (Anderson, 2008). These men also add weight to the growing body of literature suggesting that people

use sex for a number of different reasons; for some, it has become a leisure activity (Atwood & Smith, 2013; Joseph & Black, 2012; Wignall & McCormack, 2017).

It is, however, important to note that even if there is a greater abundance of inclusive masculinities, and less men embodying orthodox notions of masculinity (Anderson, 2005; 2009), this does not necessarily mean that MMF threesomes might not still be harmful to women. Indeed, if we do not presume patriarchy to be linked to a hierarchy of masculinities, then even if inclusive masculinities proliferate this does not necessarily diminish the patriarchy (Anderson & McCormack, 2016; Anderson, 2008). Consequently, MMF threesomes still have the potential to be objectifying to women, and serve primarily male sexual desires, even amongst more inclusive men.

Chapter 8: FFM threesomes

Much of the previous research on threesomes has suggested a cultural bias towards FFM threesomes over MMF threesomes (Joyal et al., 2014; Karlen, 1988; Schippers, 2016; Thompson & Byers, 2017). This chapter explores participants' FFM threesomes, their reasons for having engaged in them, and the circumstances that led to them happening. Across the sample of 28 participants (12 men and 16 women) only one participant, a male, had not engaged in an FFM threesome. Importantly, this participant had not actively avoided FFM threesomes, and while had the opportunity to engage in one, he decided that the women had been too drunk to sufficiently consent.

The findings suggest a number of differences in the motivations and circumstances that lead men and women to engaging in FFM threesomes. For some of the female participants, similar to other research (Karlen 1988; Rupp et al., 2014), they used FFM threesomes as a comfortable way to explore their same-sex desires. For some, after this initial exploration, threesomes took on a normalised status, and thus would be incorporated in regular sexual behaviours. For other women, they demonstrated a general openness to FFM threesomes, which when combined with alcohol, helped to facilitate their experience. A number of women also highlighted occasions when they had engaged in a threesome for reasons not specifically related to desiring a threesome. This might be in order to please one's romantic partner, or friend; but other times, a threesome was the only way in which a woman felt she could secure sex with someone she desired.

For the male participants, a lot of their discussions focused around the idea of a threesome building one's range of sexual experiences. After having acquired this experience, interest in threesomes consequently diminished for some men. Men's experiences were also usually connected with heavy alcohol consumption and spontaneity, making them somewhat comparable with hook-ups (Garcia et al., 2012). Finally, men's thoughts about the interactions that took place in their threesomes suggest particular assumptions and expectations as to "whom" a threesome is for.

Women's Experiences of FFM Threesomes

Karlen's (1988) study of threesomes suggests that women often desire FFM threesomes in order to explore their sexuality. More recent research has found the most common reason for threesomes are curiosity, followed by participants suggesting that 'it just happened'

(Morris et al. 2016; p. 65). Whilst my participants stated these motivations, there were also other reasons. Primarily, women's motivations around their own desires for sex as well as engaging in performances of sexual desire featured more than other research has suggested.

Exploration of Sexuality and the Normalisation of Threesomes

Four of the women talked about their FFM experience as being an exploration of their sexuality; deepening their understanding of their same-sex attractions. Three of them had explored their sexuality within the context of a heterosexual relationship; which may be a more socially acceptable circumstance from which to look for a threesome (Schippers 2016). These experiences were contextualised as both exploratory, whilst at the same time, relationship building. For example, Colette discussed the idea of an FFM threesome with her partner and they agreed that they should try one. She explained: 'I had always had an interest in women and I had never tried it, so I thought that this could be a great opportunity to do so. And at the same time, being really playful with my partner'. Similarly, Joanna highlighted a desire to explore her sexuality alongside a general desire to explore different types of sex. When asked what were the motivations for her FFM threesomes she said:

Sexual curiosity, general curiosity, we (her and her partner) knew it would spice [the relationship] up a bit. Even if you've been in a relationship there's an extent to what you can do with two. But I guess it was just fun, exploring my sexuality, all those things.

For Rosie, it was not until her boyfriend suggested a threesome that she started to consider how appealing it might be to have sex with a woman:

I think I've only realised that I'm bi in the last year or so. I think it was only when John asked about a threesome that got me thinking about having another girl in bed and doing stuff with her, and I really liked the idea of it more and more, the more I thought about it. It kind of took me a little while to think about whether I would like it or not.

She did, however, suggest that in hindsight she previously had feelings towards women at an earlier age: 'When I was a child, there was this one girl, and she was just really hot in my mind. Looking back I kind of think, it makes sense that I am bi, but I never really noticed it before'. Rosie's FFM threesome helped her to develop a better understanding of her own

sexuality: 'I think it maybe got me more into girls than I was before. I had never been with a girl before'. Although Rosie focused her discussion of the experience on how it developed and confirmed her understanding of her sexuality—as other women have also suggested (Rupp et al., 2014)—at the same time she said that: 'I never felt so connected to John as I did after the threesome'.

For Meika, although she was in a long distance relationship, she was pursuing sex with others without the knowledge of her partner. She did, however, specifically seek out heterosexual couples as a way for her to explore her sexuality. This was mainly down to the perceived difficulty in finding and approaching women on their own. Like some of the women in Rupp et al.'s (2014) research, she proposed that an FFM threesome had been a 'safe' way to explore her attraction to women: 'I was maybe thinking that I was actually more into women than men, but it was really hard to find women, it was such a different world to what we have now'. At the time, Meika felt extremely shy around women whom she was attracted to, and approaching them came with a number of difficulties:

I think I had a lot of internalised shame about liking women. And also the difficulty of hitting on someone and not knowing both whether if they were gay and if they were available, that would just be beyond my bravery.

Her being in a long-distance, monogamous relationship with a man further compounded these difficulties: 'To have dates with single bi or lesbian women, they weren't really cool with me being in a relationship'. Thus, Meika started to look towards others who were also exploring their sexuality: 'So I would mostly find women and couples who wanted to have some kind of bisexual experience and that was kind of the way that I did that'.

All of these women who initially had threesomes to explore their sexuality described being happy to engage in more FFM threesomes. For example, Colette described another threesome her and her partner had planned: 'So we had all discussed that she would come over on the said day. And then we had a few drinks together and then we kind of decided what things we did and did not want to do. Yeah and then I guess we just got to it'. Joanna and her partner were also planning on having more: 'We have a few people in the pipeline on 3nder'. Whether this interest in having threesomes would develop into anything else is not, however, clear, although this is discussed more in chapter 10. It may be as Schippers (2016) suggests; threesomes are only considered acceptable when they are an impermanent and infrequent aspect of a relationship.

Running counter to this narrative of monogamy, were two participants who identified as polyamorous and engaged in threesomes frequently. For Meika and Julia, threesomes had taken a normalised position, sometimes as a normal aspect of a relationship or as just another potential opportunity to engage in. For example, when Meika was in a three-person relationship she suggested that: 'Threesomes would be the normal way which we would have sex'. For Julia, she had also used the context of a threesome to test the possibility of developing the relationship between two of her partners. Julia was in a polyamorous vee (Easton & Hardy, 2009) with a long-term male partner as well as a girlfriend. Within a vee relationship, two people are romantically connected to another, but without being connected to each other. The person they are connected to—in this case Julia—is referred to as the “pivot” or “hinge”, as they are the connect between all three parties. She said: 'We were figuring out whether there could be something triad-ish for us. I was, of course, super interested because they were both my lovers, and I really, really fancied them both'.

Both Julia and Meika still engaged in threesomes for reasons that were not directly related to their relationship. As mentioned in chapter 7, Julia offered multiple perspectives on why she might engage in threesomes:

Sometimes it's just looking to have a connection between three people. Sometimes it's just for sexual gratification in that moment. Sometimes it's building up a kinky dynamic with one specific partner. For example, me and a guy were topping my girlfriend and we really had a fantastic dynamic! But sometimes I also just like to be in service of two people and facilitate their relationship growing and becoming bigger and better.

Meika suggested that she had moved on from seeing threesomes as something that stood out as particularly different from other sexual activities:

I think I've kind of moved on from threesomes. I think when you're a monogamous couple and when you start to explore new sexual experiences then sometimes threesomes are the next step. But now, my focus is not really on threesomes. If that happens because there happens to be three people in a room then that's great. I think many things such as who you are with, men or women, gay or straight, or with one person or many people, all of these things have become a lot more fluid. For me it's not really having threesomes any more, it's more having group sex.

As demonstrated, for some women, FFM threesomes can be a comfortable way to explore their sexuality (Rupp et al., 2014). Although FFM threesomes may start with this purpose in mind, they may also develop other functions. For example, threesomes have the capacity to

be relationship affirming and bring a couple closer together. For those that enjoy threesomes, they may also start to become a more regular behaviour. In particular, for those who choose consensually non-monogamous relationships, threesomes might also become a normal sexual practice, one that can be chosen from a range of sexual options.

Being Presented with an Opportunity

Whilst some women described circumstances where they had already decided that they would like to engage in an FFM threesome, and maybe looked to pursue this, many women were presented with an opportunity and decided to take it. Demonstrating this variety, there was a relatively equal balance between threesomes that happened spontaneously and those that were planned. Many of these unplanned threesomes might be categorised as, and shared a number of similarities with, hook-ups (England et al., 2008; Garcia et al., 2012). However, in contrast to much of the literature on hook-ups, female participants described aspects often not associated with hook-ups, such as explicit discussions about logistical issues, concerns before the threesome, and aftercare.

Although Julia had previously planned threesomes, she suggested that, typically: 'They gradually happen. So we wouldn't really see it coming and then all of a sudden it would be happening. Sometimes there is a bit of a set up, but usually there isn't'. Lauren had her first experience with her former 'high school sweetheart' and a good female friend whom she had grown up with: 'I don't remember exactly, but I think he just thought it was a good idea and I was like "Yeah sure". Because that's the kind of person I am, I'll try anything once or twice or maybe four times'. Lauren's openness to sexual experiences allowed for similarly casual acceptance of a threesome proposition a number of years later: 'It was with my partner and someone he knew. Basically it was a situation where he said, "I know this person who is curious about doing this. Are you open to it?" and I was like "Yeah sure"'. Likewise, Philippa's openness also meant that she was presented with an opportunity. She described a situation with a man she was having casual sex with, and a woman that he had been having casual sex with: 'So he had told her it was something I was interested in and she said she would like to do it so we suggested it'.

Concurring with a lot of literature on hook-ups (See: Garcia et al., 2012), oftentimes these opportunities occurred around the consumption of alcohol, and the lowered inhibitions this can create (Reid et al., 2011; Stinson, Levy, & Alt, 2014; Yost & McCarthy, 2012). In contrast to the male participants, the females did not tend to discuss alcohol as

being particularly salient to their threesome experiences; perhaps owing to women's greater capacity for sexual fluidity (Diamond, 2009), they are less reliant on alcohol to lower their inhibitions. Emma's first threesome came unexpectedly with her best friend and that friend's husband, who Emma had previously been in a relationship with:

I think we were all quite tipsy, and it was her that suggested it. I can't remember at the time but I think I was like "Yeah I'm up for that", and then Steve said that he was as well and so we ended up with all three of us in bed together

Colette described an opportunity that emerged after having gone to a party with friends:

It was just a university party and my now best friend and a mutual friend from school. And we had parked our car at his place so when we came back from going out we were all in his room and it just kind of happened. Really, really naturally, organically.

Similarly, Jennifer's first FFM threesome happened during her time at university: 'It came up in a game of Never Have I Ever'—a drinking game whereby participants take turns suggesting things that they have never done; if other people have done it, then they are meant to consume some of their drink. 'It was here that I had said to my boyfriend that if the opportunity arose, then we could have a threesome'. Knowledge of Jennifer's openness to a threesome piqued the interest of a bisexual woman in the group-Laura. Whilst out at a club with the group, Laura propositioned Jennifer:

We went to the toilet together, and because it was packed we went in the same cubicle. So we shut the door and I sat down, went to the toilet and before we left she started kissing me all of a sudden. And I thought, that's a bit weird, because all of the boys aren't here, why she doing this? I didn't clock it. She then said, "Oh you and your boyfriend said you wanted to have a threesome, I am up for it if you are"

So whilst alcohol, and places associated with alcohol such as parties or clubs did feature in some female participants' descriptions of their threesomes, being drunk did not.

Consequently, whilst alcohol may have acted as a social lubricant, somewhat helping facilitate a threesome, overall it seemed more important that the female participants had a prior openness to a threesome.

Performing Desire

Thus far, I have only addressed female participants' experiences where they chose to have a threesome because they wanted to have sex with one, or both of the other people. Sex, however, can have multiple motivations (Atwood & Smith, 2013; Leigh, 1989; Meston & Buss, 2007). Four participants discussed times when they engaged in an FFM threesome because of the wishes (or perceived wishes) of their partner, or what Elliott and Umberson (2008) call 'performing desire' (p. 391).

Of these Four, two participants highlighted situations where they used sex, or gave the permission for their partner to have sex with another woman, as a way to settle "psychological debts" they felt they had accrued. Emma's first threesome, as discussed previously, was with her friend and that friend's partner. Her friend consequently had a negative reaction to the experience:

I think my friend; she struggled to get over it. Hence it ended up a couple of years later, with my partner and her; she was telling me that this was a good idea, and I was like no, but I felt a bit like, I couldn't really say no as he's up for it, she's up for it, and I did that with her husband

Thus, in this situation Emma was able to both please her partner's desires as well as attempt to re-strengthen the friendship with the other woman.

Colette described an experience where she had initially talked about trying a threesome with her boyfriend, but then at a party, she ended up having a threesome without him: 'I was in a relationship with someone at that point and afterwards I felt really, really bad. Afterwards I felt that I owed him, so then I repeated the experience with him, with the same girl as before'. Although Colette had already discussed a threesome with her boyfriend, the fact that she had cheated on him was an additional motivator for her to do it again, thus assuaging some of her guilt from her infidelity.

For Sue, she decided to initiate an FFM threesome with her friend and her husband primarily to make him happy: 'I was always out to do anything that would make him stay with me because he never wanted to'. Sue started to regret her decision almost immediately:

As a woman, when you are addicted to a bloke, which I was, to see him so obviously interested in another woman is hugely painful. He concentrated virtually solely on her. He paid lip service to me but really you could see, for him, anyone who was new and skinny was it, and it really hurt me.

Sue did not, however, feel that she was able to intervene and stop what was happening: 'I would have lost him'. Instead she rationalised that the relative benefit of making her partner happy would outweigh how it made her feel:

I played the game, and it didn't last that long because he didn't ever last that long and I think looking back he didn't actually make love to her, he only made love to me. But in the end, the sex didn't take seconds.

Rachel engaged in threesomes because her partner wanted them, but did not feel that she got much from them herself: 'I suppose I felt it was more that I was just pleasing someone, and not so much for myself. Just sort of going along with it and not really caring. Not really against it, but not really for it'.

Two more female participants highlighted instances during their threesomes where they engaged in a sexual behaviour mainly for the benefit of the male. Comparable to situations where girls engage in public performances of same-sex kissing (Hamilton, 2007; Rupp & Taylor 2010; Rupp et al., 2014), Nadia suggested that she had interacted sexually with her friend during a hook-up for the pleasure of the male, although she did still derive some arousal from this:

I mean like the same thing as going back to the kissing girls in front of boys, it was more for his benefit, and I enjoyed the fact that he would have been getting turned on from it. And then that turns you on. But in terms of being with my friends I didn't really get anything from that. It was more him enjoying it that was appealing.

Kirsty described a situation with her boyfriend and a girl that he knew: 'It was much more focused on him, I mean everybody kind of did a bit of everything but probably the focus was more on him but I would say'. There were, however, a variety of reasons why this was the case:

I remember, me and her, we did do things to each other and at the same time, that was probably, would I say that was more for his enjoyment? I don't know. It wasn't a bad experience at all, it was fun, it was great. I think me and her not interacting as much was maybe down to nervousness or inexperience perhaps.

So although the threesome was perhaps from Kirsty's perspective, mainly for her boyfriend's benefit, she still received enjoyment from his enjoyment.

Other research has also demonstrated comparable examples of engaging in this “performance of desire” for the benefit of people’s relationships or the happiness of one’s partner (Hinchliff, Gott, & Wylie, 2012). For example, within swinging there is the concept of ‘taking one for the team’, meaning that ‘one consented to sex without a high level of personal desire so that the group could play’ (Harviainen & Frank, 2016, p. 13). In some heterosexual marriages individuals will engage in more sex than perhaps they would normally desire to make their partner happy (Elliott & Umberson, 2008). By doing so, individuals aim to ‘reduce marital conflict, enhance intimacy, and facilitate a spouse’s well being’ (p. 398). Similarly, Wood et al. (2007) found some postmenopausal women felt that sexual intercourse was an obligatory aspect of a relationship, despite their own lack of interest. Hayfield and Clarke (2012) have given similar examples and refer to these instances as *unwanted consensual sex*; accommodating the perceived needs of others at the detriment to one’s own sexual enjoyment.

Some of the above examples might also be contextualised through the ideas of social exchange theory. Drawing from economic models, social exchange theory offers an ‘economic analysis of noneconomic social situations’ (Emerson, 1976, p. 336). Conceptualising behaviours within a cost-benefit analysis, people are likely to choose a course of action that minimises their cost and maximises their benefit, thus resulting in a favourable outcome (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). From this perspective, performing sexual behaviours that you are uninterested in can be interpreted as a “cost” through which other “benefits” can be gained. For example, Elliott and Umberson (2008) found that some married heterosexual couples ‘use housework or use sex to get more of what they want from the relationship—a kind of conscious or unconscious exchange system’ (p. 401). This perspective does, however, assume that social actors possess the agency to make free decisions ignoring that individuals may be constrained by the intricacies of their relationship (Jamieson, 1999). If we take Sue’s experience as an example, then we see indications of deep-seated relationship inequalities, which may have influenced her decision to initiate a threesome.

Looking at these women’s experiences, it seems clear that engaging in a threesome, or particular sexual behaviours within a threesome, is not always necessarily motivated by the sexual desires of the individual. The dynamics of a romantic relationship or even friendships may encourage individuals to initiate/pursue threesomes for other reasons. Seemingly, sex within a three may have multiple different motivations in the same way that dyad sex does (Meston & Buss, 2007).

Sexual Compromises

Linked to the idea of performing sexual labour to make ones partner happy (Hinchliff et al., 2012), or 'taking one for the team' (Harviainen & Frank, 2016, p. 13), there were also single woman who were willing to make compromises in order to have sex. The notion of making compromises when selecting a sexual partner is not new (e.g. Li & Kenrick, 2006; Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002), but this has not yet been explored in relation to consensual non-monogamy, or more specifically, threesomes. In my research, I find three examples of such compromise, where women agree to have sex with two others, despite not being interested in one of them.

Three women identified instances where they had the opportunity to have sex with someone they desired, but they were unable to isolate that person away from others. For two of the participants, this took the form of joining a couple where they were only really interested in one of the members. For the remaining participant, it was joining with two people who had already "coupled up" and had begun hooking-up. Thus, in the language of social exchange theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004), participants decided the relative cost was worth the benefit; they decided to have FFM threesomes because this was a method that would allow them specifically to have sex with one of the members of the three. These three women were not especially interested in one member of the three, but willing to engage in a threesome if it allowed them to have sex with the remaining person.

For two of these women, their primary goal was to have sex with the other woman. Lauren described a situation where she was attending a sex club, but without the intention of having sex:

A really famous porn star had opened up a premier sex club; it was actually a really nice place. Believe it or not, but I was really curious about it and I wanted to check it out. I did not go to have sex with people. I just wanted to see what all the fuss was about. My plan was to just go there have a couple of drinks and a leave.

Her plan, however, changed when she saw someone she was attracted to: 'Basically this chick came in and she was just a carbon copy of Jenna Jamison, was like super hot, with her husband. Long story short, I was like, yeah I'm going to fuck that chick'. Lauren approached the female whilst her partner was in the toilet, and started engaging in sexual activity with her. When the female's partner returned, they all moved to somewhere more comfortable and started to engage in a threesome.

Cathy recalls a similar situation, where she found a couple whilst out at a bar in town:

I knew they'd be up for it, you can read certain people and I knew they be up for it. It was her I was interested not him. It was her I wanted to see her naked and I remember saying something as such.

During her first threesome with this couple, Cathy was explicit in laying down guidelines with the regards to the male: 'So I made rules, I had a rule of "your dick does not go anywhere inside me, that's the deal". And he was like "okay". These rules were adhered to on this first occasion, but not during a subsequent encounter. Cathy seemed to, however, accept this as the cost of being able to have sex with the woman she found desirable: 'The first time he's stuck to that rule, the second time he didn't, however it's kind of worked-ish, thankfully he was behind because I just did not fancy him, it was her that I was after'.

For the remaining participant who had engaged in a sexual compromise, Nadia suggested that it was done for the purpose of having sex with the male in the threesome rather the female. Nadia and her best friend at the time were on a holiday to Morocco: 'We were completely seduced by these Moroccan barmen who, looking back were probably the sleaziest, most horrible men ever. But we went to the same bar every night for a week and we got quite friendly with them'. One night the four of them went back to the barmen's apartment to drink, and Nadia's friend started to hook-up with one of the barmen. Nadia, however, was also attracted to this man, and uninterested in his colleague:

His friend started trying it on with me but I wasn't really that into it. And this went on for a little while and in the end, he just got really annoyed and kind of stormed out because his mate was getting some and I was just not interested. So he stormed out.

After this, Nadia ended up getting involved with her friend and the remaining man, although she was somewhat reluctant to engage sexually with her friend: 'So it was mainly focused on him. He had sex with both of us. We both gave him oral sex. And then my friend gave me oral sex. But I didn't give her oral sex'. When asked if there was a particular reason for this, she suggested:

It just wasn't for me at the time. I wanted to do it, to be the person that would go for it, but actually, when it came to it, I was just like "I don't know if I fancy that". I gave her like some "hand action". But even with that I didn't feel entirely comfortable.

Evidently, all of these women's desire to have sex outweighed their disinterest in one of the people they joined. These threesomes therefore represent occasions when it was not a threesome that was desired, but just sex. Importantly though, these women were accepting of the idea of an FFM threesome, even though they did not specifically desire it.

Men's Experiences of FFM Threesomes

Much research has suggested that men generally show a greater interest in threesomes than women, particularly FFM threesomes (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Hughes et al., 2004; Scoats et al., 2017; Thompson & Byers, 2017; Zsok et al., 2017). It might therefore be expected that men would be more likely to seek threesomes out. The majority of the male participants, however, suggest that whilst they are interested in having threesomes—in order to expand their range of sexual experiences—they did not seem overtly interested in seeking them out. Instead, threesomes frequently happened unexpectedly, often when consuming large amounts of alcohol. Additionally, the male participants also highlighted specific expectations about threesomes in relation to sexual interaction. These typically, although not exclusively, followed the assumption that the man should be the focal point of an FFM threesome.

Building Sexual Experience Through Casual Sex

For the men, FFM threesomes were often talked about in terms of experience building, i.e. having a threesome added to one's range of sexual experiences. Although some female participants did highlight the experience building nature of their threesomes (usually in specific reference to their sexuality), they also emphasised multiple other reasons. For men, however, most commonly they spoke about their desire to build sexual experience, or at least their openness to new sexual experiences. Seemingly for some of the men in my sample, threesomes have become another aspect of exploring sexual pleasure (Attwood & Smith, 2013), sexual exploration (Stinson, 2010), and building upon one's sexual experiences in the same way that hook-ups can be used (Armstrong et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000). For example, Dan suggested his threesome experiences had been fun, but were also something that had helped him grow: '[Having a threesome] is a really cool experience and I value [my experiences] of them a lot'. David explained that it was important for people to have a

multitude of different sexual experiences when they were younger (at the time he was 20 years old) as not doing so might lead to problems later on in life:

I see my father, he got married young, and he didn't experience things when he was younger, he didn't sleep with many people, and then he had affairs. I think you should just get it out of your system when you are younger. If you're interested in it or wonder what it would be like, then do it. If you don't do it then you're going to regret it. If you do you regret it when you do it then you learn from it.

James suggested that the best thing about his threesomes had been: 'That it was a new experience'. Mike said that his main motivation for having an FFM threesome was that he hadn't done it before, and it was offered to him: 'I'd never had sex with two women, and the first time it was offered to me, it was offered on a plate. I was single, so I went for it'. Subsequently, threesomes had now become normalised for Mike: 'I suppose it's one of those things with threesomes, it's quite standard. It's sex with a third person. And you end up having sex with either one or two people, in the same room'. He saw this as part of a larger societal shift towards a more liberal sexual culture:

I think that it's one of those things, people now, in the consumer age, there is the sex side of things as well. People, if they want something, then they go and get it. So the Internet has opened up so much. Millions of people can see that there's other sex out there, and go get it themselves.

Stuart highlighted a desire for novel sexual experiences alongside a general desire to have sex: 'I mean with threesomes I think it's more of for the fact of you just want to get laid and you want to have that experience'. Stuart added that he would be open to more FFM threesomes in the future, but would use the knowledge he had gained from his first experience in order to optimise it:

I'd want to try to with two girls again, just for the fact that during the first experience I was quite shut out. So now I'm a little older and a little more experienced, there are a few things I would like to try with two. To be honest, not being intoxicated, that might be a bit of a plus because it's not fun to get an erection when you're drunk. So maybe being sober and having a little more time to get to know the person, so you don't go into it thinking, "Oh I don't know this person I really need to impress them" and stuff like that. So I'd maybe do it with people I trust more.

Scott suggested that because he had now had a threesome, he was less interested in having another unless it improved upon his first experience. When asked if he would have another FFM threesome, he said:

Probably with the same people, but not with anyone else. Now that I've done it I feel that I could get more from it with the same people. I think for me I'm never going to have a threesome with two other people unless I know them, and its talked about this time.

Perhaps in part because of the associations between building sexual experience and hook-ups (Armstrong et al, 2010; Paul et al., 2000; Stinson, 2010), male participants frequently compared FFM threesomes to one-night stands. Additionally, for most of the male participants, their FFM threesome had only been a one-time encounter; thus making one-night stands the most obvious point of comparison. Only two participants had repeated FFM threesomes with the same people, and in both of these cases it only occurred one more time.

Although FFM threesomes were compared with one-night stands they were not generally seen as any better or worse than other casual sexual encounters. For example, Simon stated:

It was just fun, it was a kind of one night stand, and I think everyone knew the situation, it was on holiday, you don't need to see the people again if you don't want to. There's no kind of negative or downside to it really.

In one respect, however, some saw threesomes as advantageous over hook-ups as there was the assumption that they would be inherently less serious. By nature of it being a threesome, some participants viewed there to be a clearer understanding of the casual nature of it. In other words, participants did not worry about potential misinterpretations about what the sex might mean to the others, as was discussed in chapter 6. For example, James suggested that there was an absence of emotional connection in his threesome, whereas this might not have been the case if it had been only two: 'It definitely wasn't as emotional, if I had had sex with just one of them I think it would've been more emotional, but I don't know because I didn't'. Mike suggested that this lack of emotional connection made things less complicated: 'If you go in as the third person, you don't really have the emotional connection with those people, so I go in and I get what I want out of it and I leave'.

Emphasising the relaxed atmosphere, Fred felt that threesomes were an unpressured way to have sex compared to sex with just one person:

No one takes them seriously, and in terms of the pressure for people, if you are sleeping with your love for the first time, someone you have met and have been dating for 10 weeks then the pressure on that moment is so much that it's hardly ever going to be good. And again even on one-night stands, the sex is never going to be absolutely fantastic. It's hit or miss. Whereas from the first time I had a threesome, especially to the last time, the people I have been with, it's kind of like a really good mixture of like a one-night stand and like someone in a relationship.

Thus, whilst threesomes are seen as a good way to build up ones range of sexual experiences, in a similar way to hook-ups (Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Stinson et al., 2014), they are also viewed as being more directly related to no-strings-attached sex. However, as the next section will demonstrate, people often do not necessarily choose to engage in threesomes because of the perceived benefits. Instead, they are often linked with spontaneity and alcohol.

Spontaneity and Alcohol

Only two males stated they had arranged FFM threesomes. One participant arranged to have an FFM threesome with a specific girl he had been infrequently hooking-up with. Kyle said: 'I started asking her would she be interested in a threesome and after a while she was like, "Yeah definitely. If you can find someone, I would be down"'. Another participant would look for people online whom he could have group sex with, and would engage in both MMF and FFM threesomes, as well as other larger combinations of groups, so was not specifically looking for FFM threesomes.

More commonly, men seemed to engage in FFM threesomes because they were open to the idea, and the opportunity presented itself. Nine out of 11 identified this to be the case. For Scott, it happened after a night out when talking about it with two friends: 'It became a joke. And as soon as someone says something like that, it's either going to happen or it's not'. Fred had engaged in multiple threesomes, and suggested that: 'They've always been kind of in the moment things'. James suggested that the speed at which his threesome happened had caught him by surprise: 'That first bit was like an adrenaline rush, but almost in a scared way. I didn't have enough time to think about what to do'.

Two of the participants specifically highlighted that the spontaneity of their threesomes had been a positive factor. Will suggested that the unexpected nature of his

threesome had made it better than had it been planned:

I think the best thing was just kind of how it happened out of the blue. It wasn't planned so that made it a lot more exciting. I'm sure it would've been exciting even if it had been planned, but I guess we weren't expecting it.

Fred suggested that he and his wife enjoyed the spontaneity of threesomes, and the anticipation that it could happen at any time:

I think part of the enjoyment we've had has been the in the moment-ness of it, and knowing that we could be out somewhere and it might happen. And it is more her than me, but we've definitely talked about it more than we've done it. And she'd nudge me and be like, "She's alright", and whether it happens or not, it gets the senses going. It makes the night a bit more risqué, and then you get home and the sex can be almost better because you've got the images of what could have happened. It doesn't always need to happen. It's the fact that you're both talking about it.

This experience specifically supports others' suggestion that threesomes do not have to be real to provide sexual excitement to relationships (Schippers, 2016; Kolod, 2009). Simply talking about potential threesomes, or reminiscing about them, can provide sexual excitement for some couples (Wosick, 2012), although none of the female participants specifically highlighted this.

Linked with the spontaneity of the male participants' threesomes, and in contrast to the female participants, alcohol (and sometimes drugs) seemed to feature heavily in the descriptions of their experiences. This is perhaps unsurprising given the links that alcohol has with casual sex (Reid et al., 2011; Stinson et al., 2014; Yost & McCarthy, 2012), and the role that it plays as 'an agent for lowering social and sexual inhibitions' (Paul & Hayes, 2002, p. 654). For eight of the male participants, alcohol (and marijuana on two occasions) appeared central within their FFM experiences, as did the contexts of their experiences, normally occurring after having been out drinking at bars, clubs, or parties. Drinking or taking drugs were frequently talked about as a precursor to FFM threesomes. Alcohol and being intoxicated were sometimes described as an aid that helped establish a playful, relaxed atmosphere and, consequently, a threesome. Will described the situation before his threesome as: 'Just chatting and messing around. We had had a bit to drink'. Scott described a similar scenario:

We all went out, we all went to the club. It wasn't even insinuated until we came

back after that night. So we were having a few joints and just relaxing. And it became a joke. . And yer know, I was pissed, I was high, I was on form, making it funny.

Kyle described his experience: 'So we get to my place, drink a shitload of alcohol, smoked some weed and started making out and clothes come off'. Later on during this threesome when Kyle had reached orgasm too soon, rather than carry on, he again used intoxicants as a method to preserve the relaxed atmosphere whilst he recuperated:

I just came immediately. So I got really embarrassed, and was like shit, this is no good, I can't just leave them here waiting. So I was like okay guys, give me like 15 minutes, let's smoke another joint, chill out for a little bit and then I'm good again to go.

For others, similar to the men in Stinson et al.'s (2014) research, alcohol was used as a way to explain (or potentially excuse) their behaviours. Phrases from my participants such as: 'We were obviously very drunk', or: 'Obviously my girlfriend was drunk, and I was drunk' suggested that there is a clear understanding of the links between alcohol and hooking-up behaviours, and how the former may lead to the latter. The importance of alcohol was also recognised by Fred: 'I dare say alcohol plays a part in a lot of these stories, it gets a lot of people's inhibitions free'. But for him, he felt the impact was minimal: 'I'd say for me alcohol doesn't play a part. I might be a little bit loose with my words, and a bit more direct with my innuendo, but I don't think it plays a major part'.

Seemingly, as it does during hook-ups (See: Garcia et al., 2012), alcohol can play an important role in facilitating the right circumstances for a threesome. Thompson and Byers (2017) have hypothesised that: 'many young adults would be open to participating in [a multi-gender threesome] if initiated by someone else—presumably someone with a strong interest—but most would not be sufficiently motivated to seek out a threesome themselves' (p. 7). It is perhaps then not surprising that so many of the male participants' threesomes happened spontaneously, under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol, for men at least, may act as the social lubricant that encourages people to bring the idea of a threesome up when they might have otherwise not. Drunkenness may also be seen as an excuse that can potentially excuse their behaviours and protect them from social stigma (Bogle, 2008).

Expectations Around Sexual Interaction

For men, engaging in sex has the capacity to boost their social standing amongst other men

(Bird, 1996; Grazian, 2007; Sweeney, 2014); consequently other considerations may be seen as less important. For example, research has suggested that when engaging in casual sex, men often view their own sexual pleasure as paramount, and women's desires are thus often relegated (Backstrom, Armstrong, & Puentes 2012; Boyer & Galupo, 2015; Stinson et al., 2014). This elevation of men's status in the eyes of other men is also particularly true when engaging in FFM threesomes. Sheff (2006) suggests that an FFM threesome can bolster a man's masculinity as they are seen able to please multiple women, whilst being perceived as desired by multiple women (Jenefsky & Miller, 1998). Consequently, men may have particular desires or expectations as to what will actually occur during an FFM threesome, i.e. that it will/should be all about them.

Evidencing this aforementioned expectation around FFM threesomes, when the man's "needs" were not paramount, two of the participants indicated that it had been a less satisfying experience. David's disappointment was mainly around his expectations of what an FFM threesome would be like; namely that it would be focused around him. When this was not the case, it left David feeling disappointed. His second experience with the same people, however, was more egalitarian, and thus more enjoyable: 'The second time was better than the first. It included all three of us, whereas the first time I was in the background. It included all of us more in the second one, which was nice'.

Stuart also described a threesome with two females where he felt somewhat left out. During the experience, the two girls were a lot more focused on each other than Stuart, which he found surprising because he thought that one of the girls was particularly interested in having sex with him. Stuart interpreted this as having been a "show" for his benefit:

They think, "Oh I've seen this in porn, if me and her kiss a lot before we do stuff that will really turn him on". But I was just kind of sat here like, "I'm here, I'm a participant, come on"

Because of this perceived unequal distribution of attention, Stuart suggested that he had preferred his MMF experience: 'I think I enjoyed the guy and the girl more because with the two girls it's more that they focused upon themselves rather than the me'. Despite this issue, Stuart still suggested that it had been a good experience, and eventually it became more enjoyable:

I felt like I was the third person, viewing it all. So it was quite awkward at the beginning. But still, I'd never knock it back, it was still a good experience, and when

them two had stopped with each other, and focused a bit more on me more than it got a lot better.

Providing a different perspective, Kyle's experience was not particularly focused on himself, yet he still found a way to demonstrate his sexual mastery (Allen, 2006; Roberts, Kippax, Waldby, & Crawford, 1995) thus defending his masculinity. Kyle's experience was with two women he had separately had casual sex with previously, but his interactions with the one of the women was limited: 'Whilst she had gone down on me in the past, and was willing to do it again, that was the extent of it. She didn't want to have sex, and she mainly wanted to focus on the other girl'. Potentially mitigating the negatives of this situation, Kyle still felt that he had an important role within the threesome:

I was like commanding, "You go here, you go here, you do this, you do that", cos they were all awkwardly, "What do you want us to do?" I feel like girls in this situation generally don't want to take the lead role.

Perhaps further demonstrating the expectation that men are normally the focal point of FFM threesomes, male participants frequently did not question instances where the women did not interact together. Five male participants highlighted threesomes where sexual interaction between the females was limited to either kissing, or nothing at all. For example, Scott suggested: 'It was a little bit focused on me. They did kiss but I don't think they actually licked each other or did anything like that'. Despite a cultural expectation of the inherent bisexuality of women (Fahs, 2009), none of the men indicated surprise when females had not interacted sexually, nor did they suggest that it had effected their enjoyment of the threesome.

These men often contextualised the women's desire to have an FFM threesome, yet not sexually interact together, in terms of making a sexual compromise—something some of my female participants admitted to doing themselves. The men recognised that these women wanted to have sex in general, rather than specifically have a threesome, but a threesome was perceived as the only way to get sex. When kissing or small amounts of sexual interaction did happen, the motivation behind these actions appeared to have been for the benefit of the watching male (Worthen, 2014; Fahs, 2009). Evidencing this, James' threesome happened at the end of a New Years Eve party with two sisters he knew from school:

Obviously both very drunk, it was towards the end of the party, and her sister just came upstairs and they started kissing each other. And then the next thing I knew we were just having sex. But they weren't engaging with each other, apart from kissing.

This kissing, however, greatly reduced once James started having sex with them and became 'not anywhere near as much as at the beginning'.

Simon described his experience in Thailand where he met a woman and they went back to her apartment. However, living in a shared apartment with another female, and sharing a room with her meant that the two of them went to the bathroom to have sex:

But then the water pipe burst, literally the whole apartment was flooding, and her friend got up and was like "What the fuck are you doing?" So basically we couldn't be in the shower anymore, so we just got into bed, and started having sex in the bed while her friend was there.

After a short time, the woman having sex invited her roommate to join them. Not having been consulted about the invitation Simon reasoned that: 'It was more so that they could have sex I guess. They were just friends so I don't think that they were attracted to each other'. Whilst the women did engage in semi-sexual behaviour, this was done in a playful manner, lacking serious intention: 'There wasn't any kissing, it was more just like they were being playful. Sort of spanking each other, just feeling each other's bodies I suppose. They didn't go down on each other or anything like that'.

Steve's FFM threesome happened when he was abroad with fellow students: 'So it was a school trip to Europe and kids aged 16 to 18 were unleashed in this hotel, just getting drunk'. During this 'party situation', things started to happen with Steve and a girl who he had been interested in for a long time: 'It kind of came to a head that night, and we started getting it on in my hotel room. There were like loads of other people around, real cringe, I wouldn't do it now'. Whilst Steve was kissing her when an older girl whom he was also interested in came into the room and started to join in:

So at that stage, I'm being kissed by these two girls and this is going to sound ridiculous but they started eating ice cream off of me. I mean it's easy to please a 16-year-old if you introduce ice cream into the situation. So that was happening and then it started to get sexual. So they weren't really interacting together, it was just to me. But yeah, oral sex, and hands on genitalia, fingering, and then actually at that stage, the first girl left.

Although Steve said that it had been enjoyable to have the experience, looking back on it

now, he regrets how it had impacted on his relationship with the first girl. Being caught up in the moment, and the prospect of sex with an older woman had affected his judgment: 'I couldn't really see what I was losing in this other person'.

Contrasting with these experiences where men were accepting when the women were not interested in each other, two participants offered different perspectives. Whilst Dan enjoyed his FFM threesome, he felt that it would have been better had there been more mutual interest between all three parties. Dan explained that at the time he had recently formed an emotional connection with Mary, a friend of his friend, Kylie. After meeting up with both of them whilst travelling in Europe, it soon became clear that Mary was also interested in Dan. Upon arriving back at the apartment they had rented, things started happening between Mary and Dan, and Kylie started to feel left out:

She and I are making out and Kylie is like, "If anything is happening here I am in on it". She was peeved about Mary getting sexual adventures and her not having any, because apparently the week before, Mary had hooked-up with some guy when they were in another city.

Both Dan and Mary were fine with this, but for Kylie, despite instigating the threesome, she was more reluctant:

So Mary is a very sexual person and she was actually exclusively lesbian for years and now is just bi, so she was very much into Kylie, and was very open and happy with everything happening. Whereas Kylie is a much more conservative person, so I think that she was a little, in some ways tighter about the whole situation, withdrawn about it. For her she was essentially having sex with two friends, and it was mutual, we were friends with her and then we were really fiery for each other. So it's kind of like she was the weak link sort of thing.

Although Dan suggested he very much enjoyed the experience, looking back on it he felt that it would have been better had Kylie demonstrated more interest: 'After the buzz had faded a bit and I looked at it, it was a bummer that Kylie was not quite fiery about it'.

Being in a romantic relationship, Fred described an experience where he made sure to keep his wife involved in the experience so to not negatively impact their relationship. In Fred's relationship there was the expectation that if they had extra-dyadic sex, it was something they did together. Fred and his wife, alongside a female friend were all hanging out at a house and messing around in a playful manner:

I ended up being strapped down to a bed, whilst they were mucking around and

teasing me, nothing really sexual to start. I think my wife was kind of getting into that state but I didn't really sense that the other girl was.

After a while Fred's wife left the room, and the teasing continued to escalate into something more sexual:

This other girl started to get a bit risqué, putting her hand up the shirt, and running down the inside of the leg, and I didn't want to exactly say stop, but I was kind of asking, "Okay what are you doing here?" Trying to keep the mood alive, and then she started getting into and zipping the pants and giving a blow job, and I'm like, "Where's my wife?"

Fred was enjoying the situation, but did not want to overstep any boundaries with his wife, and wanted her to fully understand the situation that was happening. The other girl called his wife back into the room whereby she joined in and Fred: 'Just laid there whilst they took turns doing things'.

Although there were some who suggested otherwise, the male participants generally demonstrated a greater enjoyment when an FFM threesome was mainly focused on themselves. Consequently, when the women were more interested in each other, this made the threesome less enjoyable. When women were not interested in interacting together then it might be interpreted in a number of ways. It might be read as supporting the assumption that men feel that FFM threesomes are mainly about them. Conversely, it might be understood as the women making a sexual compromise, as demonstrated by some of the female participants earlier in the chapter.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated some similarities, but also a lot of differences in the motivations and circumstances that lead to men and women's FFM threesomes. First, I showed that a number of women had engaged in FFM threesomes as a form of sexual labour; using their sexual capital in order to strengthen relationships, or keep a partner happy. Women also had threesomes for other reasons, such as to explore their sexuality, as a sexual compromise, they had the opportunity, or simply that it had become something that they enjoyed. Conversely, the experiences of FFM threesomes for men shared many more commonalities with the literature on hook-ups. Compared with the female sample, these threesomes were more often spontaneous, sometimes selfish, and did not share the same level of importance; instead they were more heavily connected with alcohol

consumption, and had an atmosphere of casualness.

It would not, however, be wise to understand men's engagement in FFM threesomes as always this way without first looking at more men who had experienced FFM threesomes whilst in a relationship—as these men tended to demonstrate a less hedonistic approach to their threesomes. Regardless of whether their threesome experience was from within a relationship or not, some men did still demonstrate a more sensitive and caring approach to their experience (even if this was only in subsequent reflection). The thoughts and feelings of others were still a consideration, and correspond with other research suggesting a softening of masculinities, and the proliferation of inclusive masculinities (Anderson, 2014; Anderson & McCormack, 2016).

Likewise, it would also not be wise to assume that women normally have a threesome from within the context of a relationship. For the female participants in my research, this sort of threesome was indeed the most common and the majority (twelve out of sixteen) were usually part of a romantic couple for their experiences. This may, however, reflect a reporting bias related to the social acceptability of particular types of threesomes. Karlen (1988) and Schippers (2016) have both suggested that threesomes where a couple are joined by a third are more socially acceptable. Consequently, women who have threesomes when not in a romantic couple may be less willing to speak about their experiences for fear of the stigma they may receive (Schippers, 2016).

Contrasting the number of participants who had engaged in an MMF threesome in the previous chapter, it does suggest that threesomes involving two women are indeed considered more socially acceptable, even if this simply represents a reporting bias based on the heightened stigma around MMF threesomes.

Chapter 9: Jealousy & Communication

Making up part of the Consensual Non-monogamy Burden (as discussed in chapter 3), the presumption of elevated jealousy is often a reason why people don't consider consensual non-monogamy as a viable alternative to monogamy (Aguilar, 2013; Conley et al., 2012a; LaSala, 2004). Furthermore, there is the assumption that strong monogamous relationships prevent jealousy (Conley et al., 2012a). Jealousy is thus considered intolerable as it symbolises a failure at monogamy.

Missing from this dominant discourse on jealousy is, however, the different ways in which jealousy can be conceptualised (Ritchie & Barker, 2006) or worked through (De Visser & McDonald, 2007), in order to minimise, or even neutralise its negative impact. Because those in monogamous relationships assume that their relationships should be jealousy free, they may therefore neglect to learn strategies to manage their jealousy (Conley et al., 2013).

This chapter explores the participants' experiences of jealousy, and how these were navigated, when engaging in a threesome. Experiences of jealousy were most often found when romantic couples engaged in a threesome. Twelve of the female participants had engaged in a multi-sex threesome when in a relationship, whereas only three of the male participants had. More specifically, ten women out of the 15 participants who have had a threesome whilst in a relationship expressed that they had at some point felt jealousy in connection to one of their threesome experiences.

For the majority of these participants, when jealousy did arise as an issue, it did not appear to have particularly long-term impacts on their romantic relationships. Issues of jealousy were usually seen as something that could be discussed between partners, worked through, and solutions could be put in place to minimise the future impact of jealousy. Understandings of jealousy also appeared to become better over time and participants with the most experience of consensual non-monogamy appeared to be best situated to deal with these feelings.

Exclusion

The most common way in which jealousy manifested was when people felt left out or excluded. This sometimes happened in a corporeal sense, whereby one of the threesome participants was less physically involved in sexual activities, but exclusion was also constructed psychologically, when participants felt that the other two were more interested

in each other. For example, Lauren suggested that her boyfriend had not been good at sharing his attention between her and her female friend: 'My partner was just all over her, and wasn't very good about dividing'. Sue also suggested that her husband and the woman that joined them were clearly only interested in each other—something later reconfirmed to her when she found out that they had had sex without her knowing:

He concentrated virtually solely on her. He paid lip service to me but really you could see, for him, anyone who was new and skinny was it, and it really hurt me. And she didn't make a huge effort to change that. In fact, a couple of months later he did end up having sex with her and I found out by sheer accident. It wasn't me giving him permission to go and sleep with other people, he was sleeping with enough people thank you very much, but the experience itself was really sad because it was obvious that all he was interested in was a new set of boobs.

The problem of exclusion was also documented in LaSala's (2004) research on gay male couples, specifically for those participants who only engaged in extra dyadic sex as a couple, in threesomes. One of LaSala's participants recalled their first threesome together:

In our first threeway experience, the person was obviously more interested in my partner than myself and during the course of having sex, it got to the point where I was off to the side watching them have sex. It did bother me and it did develop into an argument the next morning (p. 16).

For my participants, seven highlighted instances where they had felt left out. For Sue, the main reason for her negative threesome experience was the feeling of exclusion. Talking about her husband, she suggested that: 'He concentrated virtually solely on her'. She did, however, feel that had this not been the case, the experience could have been better: 'I probably would have been okay with sharing if it had been real sharing but seeing how much more interested he was in her was just horrible'. David suggested that his partner had only become jealous when, in a repeat threesome with the same woman, the woman had shifted her attention from his partner to him:

The girl wasn't really interested in me, which I think made my girlfriend less jealous because the girl fancied her more than myself. And that's why I think it got to [my girlfriend] the second time, because the girl had spent more time with me than with her.

Colette had not felt jealous often; on the few occasions when she did her jealousy mainly focused on the fear of exclusion. In one instance, she also felt intimidated by her female

friend's attractiveness. Colette said: 'Jealousy did happen once or twice; those little tiny feelings of him liking her more than me'. These feelings were at their worst during one experience where Colette found herself with what she perceived as few options. She felt that if she engaged in the threesome then she would feel less desired than her female friend, but at the same time, she feared that her partner and friend would still try to have sex even if she had not agreed to it:

I felt threatened because she was really, really good looking and I knew that my boyfriend really wanted her, and he pushed a little bit with that threesome. It wasn't left for me and her to introduce the idea. It was him pushing for it. And I was kind of backing out, but he convinced me. But then I thought, was it the two of them together trying to convince me? So I felt as though if I said no, would they go behind my back?

Much like other participants in relationships, when having a threesome Sarah wanted to feel part of a three, rather than an appendage. Although Sarah and her partner Robert have a somewhat open relationship, when Robert had instigated things with another woman without her, it created anxieties for Sarah:

I think I was a little insecure as Robert told me he had been making out with our mutual friend all night and he was bringing her home for me, I felt like I had no power in that situation. Like I wasn't even consulted.

By not being consulted on bringing someone home for a threesome, Sarah felt left out: 'It can't just be you fucking the other person and then I'm off to the side'.

For Joanna, feeling excluded did not happen straight away, but built over a number of repeat encounters with the same woman. Although describing her and her partner's experiences with this woman as broadly positive, after a number of meetings Joanna eventually felt that she did not want to continue having sex with her, although she was still interested in threesomes with other people:

Partly I got the impression that she was quite attached to [my boyfriend]. And we discussed the reasons that this could be, such as only having been with guys and so this is how she is with guys. Or maybe she was projecting her desire for a boyfriend on to him, or maybe she did have strong feelings for him. I felt that she was really into my boyfriend at that point and the situation became uncomfortable for me. So I said to my boyfriend that I didn't want anything to happen anymore with her.

Julia also discussed experiences of exclusion that had come with some of her polyamorous relationships with two other people: 'I had several triad poly relationships and I always found it very hard when my partners didn't want to engage in intimacy and sex with me, but they did want to engage with each other'. Julia felt that her experiences of jealousy had mainly been down to her lack of communication: 'Communication wasn't always as bright as I would want it to be. Jealousy was very much a part of it'.

Three women suggested that when exclusion did happen, communication and awareness of the need to balance attentions were often able to resolve problems, or minimise their impact. Lauren described a threesome with her partner where she felt neglected, and thus did not have a good experience: 'The first time, we almost didn't do it more than once because the first time was a little awkward emotionally. My partner was just all over her, and wasn't very good about dividing'. After talking about this with her partner they were able to have another threesome with this woman without further problems:

The second time I made sure we all sat down and made sure that we all knew what was happening, and that the expectations were the same for everybody. I know it alleviated a lot of anxieties I had, and I think it's alleviated some anxieties that she had, because I think that she was a little uncomfortable with the fact that he had been so focused on her.

Having had a large number of threesome experiences (around 100), Meika felt that in both FFM and MMF threesomes she needed to be conscious of how her partner might be feeling, so as to avoid him thinking he was redundant. This, in part, she put down to differences in sex: 'Threesomes are easier for women than for men, and I often noticed that with my partner feels left out, and so maybe he is more insecure because of that'. Because of this Meika felt that sometimes she would need to disengage from the situation: 'You have to keep a balance and at some point you need to be able to take a step back and just watch, and think okay it's not my turn now'. Being aware that her partner could sometimes feel dejected, she felt some responsibility to balance her own pleasure with taking care of her partner:

You could have such a wash of bad feelings come over you and then it's hard because you see the other people having a good time and you don't want to ruin their good time. And that makes it worse because you feel like you're a burden. But for me that doesn't really happen. I guess it sometimes makes it difficult because I know it can happen to my partner, and I feel responsible, and I need to shift my focus a lot. So maybe I want to focus on the niceness of the pleasure of the other

person but now I need to focus on giving the appropriate amount of attention to my partner so they do not fall into this pit of despair.

Meika highlighted that this was particularly the case when the third person was a straight male, uninterested in interacting sexually with both of them: 'I think I have to pay even more attention to my partner when a guy is straight, because it's just me and my partner or me and the other guy'. This contrasted with when the third person was another female: 'Then my partner can be with her as well so I can relax a little bit more, and there can be a moment where I just mellow out and watch the two of them'. The two other women with experiences of MMF threesomes both suggested that they had avoided threesomes with straight men (see chapter 7), which may explain why they did not highlight this same issue.

In another example, Joanna highlighted that even with preparation and prior discussion, feelings of being unwanted could still arise after the threesome had taken place. Joanna described a situation that occurred just after her first threesome with her boyfriend and a woman they had met whilst travelling. Joanna and her boyfriend invited the woman to stay with them in their private hostel room, which only had two single bunk beds:

So the threesome was fun, it was really exciting and a massive turn on. I guess the only thing that put a dampener on it was that it was getting really late and we were supposed to be going to a festival the next day, and I think there was a bit of confusion about who was going to sleep where. My boyfriend said that she could sleep in either bunk and she got a bit confused, but anyway I ended up sleeping alone and my boyfriend and her ended up sleeping on the bottom bunk together. And I guess I was pretty tired at that point so was happy to get a bunk to myself. I remember getting up in the middle of the night and seeing them cuddling together and being quite upset about it the next morning. So I guess that dampened the enjoyment of it even though it was still very enjoyable.

In combination with the confusion around sleeping arrangements that Joanna highlights, there was also another important theme that Joanna and other participants identified: the significance of doing things as a couple. Akin to the importance of not being left out, some participants highlighted the importance of threesomes being something that they did together, as a couple. For Joanna and her partner, being their first experience of extra-dyadic sex, they had not yet communicated clearly to each other that sexual activity was only meant to happen when all three of them were together: 'I was a little miffed about it when they carried on doing stuff together whilst I went to sleep'. Although annoyed with her partner, Joanna discussed the situation with him, and a couple of days later they met with the same woman again to have sex.

In contrast to the experiences of feeling left out that participants have mentioned, having threesomes with one's partner were also seen by some as a good way to avoid feelings of jealousy, when compared with other arrangements that allowed for extra dyadic sex. LaSala's (2004) research finds that male couples who engaged in threesome only arrangements were the most positive about extra dyadic sex and 'these couples did not seem to struggle with jealousy as much as the other open couples' (p. 15). Wanting to do things together as a couple could also be interpreted as a means by which participants can reaffirm their commitment to their relationship, and consequently each other—a form of monogamish arrangement (Parsons et al., 2013). This focus on the couple as a unit has also been found in some of the literature on swinging. Describing this, De Visser and McDonald (2007, p. 445-446) suggested that:

Couples were adamant that swinging is a couple activity that should be undertaken with a strong dyadic identity. All participants indicated that they were prepared to sacrifice personal desires and experiences in order to ensure that they experienced their pleasure as a couple.

Arrangements such as this served to provide a sense of security through the shared identity as a couple, rather than individuals.

Rosie described a situation with her partner where they were engaged in an open relationship, but neither of them were entirely happy with the other having sex with new people without themselves. Consequently, having FFM threesomes as a couple was a compromise that her and her partner came to:

So he doesn't like me sleeping with guys, so I don't sleep with guys. But he doesn't mind me sleeping with girls. I've said that if he wants to sleep with other girls, then "I don't like it but I'm not going to stop you". But then I said if we could have threesomes with other girls then would that maybe stop you sleeping with many more other people on your own?

After coming to this arrangement, Rosie's partner stopped pursuing sex with other women on his own. Doing this together also mitigated feelings of jealousy: 'The only time when I get jealous is when he is with other girls on his own. Other than that I've been completely fine with it'. This was echoed by Philippa, who although not in a relationship, felt similarly about a man who she would regularly hook-up with; the same man she had her threesome with:

I think what is interesting is when we had a threesome I didn't feel any jealousy at all but when we sleep with other people outside of this threesome situation, I do

sometimes, when I know he's been with somebody else and spent quite long intimate time with them, I'm not angry with him I'm not annoyed at him and I don't feel wrong but straight afterwards if I think about it makes me feel a bit uncomfortable and I don't really want to think about it. And that's interesting that if I'm there that it doesn't bother me but I'm not overly comfortable with the idea that I can be really close with someone who's that way with someone else.

Others described similar perspectives whereby they were happiest engaging in extra-dyadic sex in cooperation with their partner. Fred suggested that: 'We would never go off with other people separately'. Additionally, as mentioned in chapter 8, Rosie's threesome experience as a couple had relationship building qualities: 'I never felt so connected to John as I did after the threesome'. Aside from avoiding feelings of exclusion, Sarah also suggested that threesomes could be relationship affirming when done in a couple. When she had sex in a threesome with her partner, then: 'There is something bonding about it, experiencing something with your partner. It's like a shared experience'.

To summarise, whilst jealousy did occur with many of the participants who had a threesome with a partner, feelings of jealousy were rarely strong enough to completely put participants off of future threesomes. Aiding the management of jealousy there were also ways that it could be avoided or minimised. Open communication about feelings of exclusion, being cognisant of their partner's feelings, or acting as a "unit" all emerged as strategies for dealing with jealousy. Consequently, it might therefore be interpreted that romantic couples engaging in spontaneous threesomes might be more likely to lead to complications. Without having discussed expectations beforehand, participants might hold different beliefs as to what is acceptable or desirable for: the individuals in the couple, the romantic unit as a whole, and the third person that joins them.

Protecting the Primary Relationship

Alongside exclusion, another common way that jealousy manifested was the impact that a threesome might have on their relationship. Sometimes, specific behaviours were deemed as "special", reserved as only for the couple. Reibstein and Richards (1992) have suggested that 'sexual exclusivity is symbolic of "specialness" in couple relationship' (c.f. Jamieson, 2004, p. 36). Whilst not demonstrating absolute sexual exclusivity, some of my participants were motivated to maintain a certain distinction between dyadic sex and threesome sex through partial sexual exclusivity. In line with research on consensual non-monogamy (e.g. Wosick-Correa, 2010; Jamieson, 2004; De Visser & McDonald, 2007), sometimes couples

attempted to preserve the importance of the primary romantic relationship by restricting particular behaviours, such as how their partner orgasmed or whether or not they were allowed to engage in penetrative sex. Wosick-Correa (2010) has suggested that this type of arrangement sometimes happens with people engaged in polyamory and penetrative sex with secondary partners might at first be restricted, although subsequent relationships tended to see these restrictions dissipate.

Demonstrating a restriction in behaviours, Jennifer explained that the only suggested rule in her threesome concerned her boyfriend's orgasm: 'We said that my boyfriend had to cum in me and not her, and she said that she was happy with that'. Kirsty suggested that she, her male partner, and the female that joined them had discussed beforehand the types of things they were comfortable with doing: 'We had a few drinks together and then we kind of decided what things we did and did not want to do'. One of the things discussed was the issue of penetration: 'I had kind of said that I didn't want her to have sex with him'. This was also something highlighted by other participants. Colette described a situation where the woman joining them was the one concerned with preserving the primacy of their romantic relationship:

They felt they couldn't do everything, or certain things with the guy because he was my boyfriend and they didn't want to jeopardise our relationship. So they were more reserved on certain aspects like maybe kissing too long, or one of them didn't want to get penetrated, because for her that was a line that she did not want to cross, but she did want to experiment.

Colette reasoned that this concern might have come from the fact that the third person had been her close friend. Therefore, not wanting to damage the friendship, this friend was perhaps tentative in the behaviours they felt they could engage in.

Although not talking about certain acts specifically, when Emma described a threesome with her then partner, she had some regrets that she had allowed someone else into what she saw as a special part of her relationship:

I was the one that was like, 'No we shouldn't have done that'. It just felt a bit wrong, it's hard to describe how you feel afterwards but it's the feeling that she had shared something with my partner that we should share. Like it was our something special.

Repeated threesomes with the same person were also sometimes seen as a potential threat to dyadic relationships. By consciously limiting the couple's exposure to threesomes, this supports Schippers (2016) suggestion that when couples have threesomes, they are

acceptable only when they are temporary. Something that lasts longer is a threat to the institution of monogamy. This perception of threat is similar to that seen in Adam's (2006) or LaSala's (2004) research on gay male couples. In both studies, a number of participants described relationship agreements for extradyadic sex whereby neither member of the couple could have sex with the same person on repeat occasions.

Two female participants highlighted that repeated threesomes with the same person would be a potential threat to the relationship. For Kirsty and Jennifer, each of them suggested that if things continued for longer than one or two meetings, then the encounters would become more like a relationship, which was not desired by either woman. Kirsty said: 'I didn't want it to become a thing with her. It was our relationship!' Further evidencing the danger of repeated sexual interactions specifically with the same person, she suggested that she might be interested in another person, but not this same woman: 'I probably would have considered it with somebody else, but I just didn't want it to become a regular thing with one person, because then it's more of a relationship'. Jennifer suggested very similar feelings of wanting to protect her relationship: 'I don't particularly want to do it again. I think especially with the same girl, it needs to stop. Because it's her, it might get a bit weird. It's sort of adding a third person to the relationship almost'. For Jennifer, only when her boyfriend had suggested repeating the experience with the same girl had jealousy become an issue: 'The only time where I felt a little bit jealous was when my boyfriend at the time had said, "Shall we do it again with her?" and I kind of just wanted it to be what it was'.

One participant, however, talked about overcoming these feelings that her relationship was being threatened. When it became clear that extra-dyadic sex was just about sex rather than looking to establish a more romantic relationship, this helped to alleviate insecurities. Rosie and her partner had discussed her feelings of jealousy which helped to minimise them: 'It's okay now because we talked about it and I think I'm definitely a lot less jealous now because I know it's just about sex'.

However, not all of those in a relationship shared the same concerns towards the potential repercussions of a threesome. Three participants (two female and one male) suggested that because they felt that the relationship was not likely to last long, they were less concerned about negative consequences for their relationship. Emma felt that she might have been more concerned about what was happening had she been in a better relationship:

Yeah, had it been with a partner that I was head over heels in love with, then it might have been different, I might have put my foot down, but [the relationship]

was dead in the water. We were just going through the motions so I was a bit like, “Yeah, you can do what you like with him”.

Likewise, Rachel was apathetic about the threesomes she had with her partner: ‘I suppose I felt it was more that I was just pleasing someone, and not so much for myself. Just sort of going along with it and not really caring. Not really against it, but not really for it’.

In contrast, those not in committed relationships were less likely to discuss any restrictions or arrangements beforehand. When things were discussed, they were usually focused on one person’s specific desire to not engage in a particular behaviour. For example, Cathy said that she did not want to have sex with the male in the three. For Stuart, in one of his threesomes the male quickly made it apparent that he did not want any same-sex sexual interaction. In Stuart’s other threesome, one of the females said she: ‘Didn’t want me to cum on her or in her at all’. Only Mike, who had a lot of experience of multi-person sex, had engaged in any sort of in-depth discussions:

It might seem quite rule heavy but it seems safer that way because there won't be any awkward situations. Obviously you want to be relaxed whilst you're having sex, so I quite like the rules being in place because everybody knows where they stand. There is no worrying about if I do this will it be okay? You know it's going to be okay before you enter into the situation. So with this couple, I quite like it. I'm not usually someone who likes sticking to rules, but in a situation like this it does help to relax.

Thus, whilst rules or guidelines did come up for some of those having threesomes outside of a relationship, they were most important for those in a relationship. For those in relationships, threesomes appeared to be most acceptable when they were a temporary occurrence (Schippers, 2016), and when they privileged the established relationship. Threesomes in this manner, consequently and perhaps paradoxically do not challenge the norms of monogamy for those I interviewed; but instead served to support them by constructing the monogamous dyad as the most important thing. There is, however, potential that some of these restrictions might be loosened if couples were to continue having threesomes.

Communication

As already highlighted, frequently those who had had a threesome whilst in a relationship talked about the importance of communication for having a good experience. Discussions sometimes happened before the experience and served to make sure that expectations and

boundaries were clear amongst participants. Having had a number of threesome experiences, Julia looked back with some regret on her first experience with two of her romantic partners, where the level of communication had been minimal:

We had no clue what we were getting ourselves into at the time. We had such vague communication it was awful. We didn't set any ground rules about what we wanted and what we didn't. We didn't set any hard or soft boundaries. We didn't discuss jealousy at all.

Displaying an example of more direct communication, Fred and his partner had found a comfortable balance after their initial dialogue: 'We had one conversation about it, and in-depth discussion about our morals and rules and all that sort of stuff, and then we've just let it grow'. Having good communication did not, however, necessarily mean continual in-depth discussions, as other relationship consensually non-monogamous styles might (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Instead, Fred and his partner now relied on non-verbal communication to convey things:

Verbalising these things just never really happens. With my wife there were opportunities that came up, and we had to decide whether we were involved or not. And you had to look at each other, and almost verbalise it without saying anything, which was funny, but we both knew it was a good situation and we wanted to be there.

Sometimes instead of, or alongside of discussing things before the experience, couples would afterwards discuss any issues they had encountered during the threesome. Communication came up as a core theme amongst those in relationships for coming to terms with feelings of jealousy. For example, Joanna suggested that whilst she sometimes experienced jealousy, communication as well as time passing made it more manageable:

I would say it crops up now and then without realising, but I think through discussion I've learnt to regard jealousy as something that you can have a bit of distance from and it might change or dissipate over time and we can talk about it. So I guess it's something that might always come up but when you try something new I found that talking about it helps, and also time helps.

Safe Sex

One area where both those in relationships and those outside of relationships had similar discussions (or lack thereof) was safe sex and contraception. From the sample, 22 out of 28

discussed using some form of protection during their threesome. Of the remaining six participants: four could not remember whether they had used protection, one would get STI test after sex, and the remaining participant had used no protection. The most popular form of protection was condoms, used by 14 of the participants, and most favoured by those having sex outside of a relationship where ten participants identified using them. In line with other research suggesting that using protection when engaging in oral sex is not a common occurrence (Leichter, Chandra, Liddon, Fenton, & Aral, 2007; Stone, Hatherall, Ingham, & McEachran, 2006), no participants identified using protection for oral sex.

Participants only used condoms for penetrative sex and the effectiveness of their usage for STI protection was variable. Of those who used them, and where there was penetrative sex with two different partners, five participants had experiences of changing condoms when switching between partners, whereas three did not. Not changing condoms between partners can lead to elevated risk of 'third party transmission of infectious agents' (Friedman, Mateu-Gelabert, & Sandoval, 2011, p. 5) between those who might not necessarily engage sexually. Importantly, for these three participants who did not change condoms it had not been a conscious decision not to switch condoms, but a lack of knowledge that meant they had not considered it. Alternatively, they may have been focussed upon reducing the risk of pregnancy (rather than STIs) and consequently may have viewed their use of only one condom as suitable.

It is also important to note that when participants did change condoms, it was not necessarily their idea. Some situations suggested that had someone else not proposed it, participants would have continued without doing so. For example, Mike suggested that: 'They actually swapped it themselves. I was hot and ready to go into the other one, but they stopped and swapped it'. Likewise, James' answer suggests that changing condoms was not his idea: 'They made me change the condom between each other'. Nevertheless, other participants were proactive about this themselves. Meika, who had a lot of experience with group sex, highlighted that it was often something that others did not consider when engaging in threesomes or group sex:

I remember having sex with a couple and the guy's fantasy was to have the girl and I both in doggy style next to each other on the bed and he would go back and forth. Then I said, "That's great but you have to change condoms" and it kind of ruined the whole thing for him because when you have sex with someone for five seconds and then go to the next person and it takes a minute to put on a whole new condom, and how many condoms would you need?

For those that chose not to use condoms, oftentimes they used a combination of birth control methods (such as an implant or a contraceptive pill), in combination with STI testing, suggesting that for many, avoiding pregnancy was the key concern. For example, talking about Jennifer's threesome with her partner and another woman she stated that: 'I don't think we used any [condoms] because I've got the implant and so does she. I got tested afterward and so did he, so it was fine'. Before Philippa's threesome they discussed whether people had been tested recently as they preferred not to use condoms:

So he and I don't use protection but if we sleep with other people we do. So we've both been tested and are clean and he had spoken to her beforehand and suggested that maybe if we were having a threesome it might be awkward to use a condom. So he talked to her about STIs and asked her if she had been tested, and she recently had because she had recently split up with somebody. So we all agreed we weren't going to use a condom.

This type of strategy is, however, not uncommon in the literature. Having an established level of trust with people, such as friends of friends, or repeated sexual encounters, is a contributing factor to whether people believe they need to use condoms (Moran & Lee, 2014). Furthermore, other research has suggested that those in friends-with-benefits relationships, an arrangement that allows for repeated casual sexual encounters between the same people, participants often do not perceive a risk of STI infection and consequently are less concerned about protection (Weaver et al., 2011).

Although communication was seen as important for having a good threesome experience within a relationship, when not in a relationship, it appeared less of a concern. This lack of communication may be related to less concern for the others people's desires during casual sex (Backstrom et al., 2012; Boyer & Galupo, 2015; Stinson et al., 2014). It may instead reflect the desire for minimal verbal communication during casual sex (Kratzer & Aubrey, 2015; Weaver et al., 2011). Despite this difference in communication styles, both those in a relationship and those not still attempted to practice safe sex when in a threesome.

Chapter Conclusions

Previous research has suggested that consensual non-monogamy carries with it a presumed assumption of elevated jealousy in comparison to monogamy (Conley et al., 2012a). However, when looking at threesomes specifically, this chapter suggests that the potential

for increased jealousy may only be the case when romantically involved couples engage in threesomes. None of the participants who engaged in threesomes whilst single expressed any indication of jealousy.

When jealousy was highlighted, it was often related to feeling excluded from a threesome. This is perhaps unsurprising when going from a monogamous relationship where all attention is focused on the other person, to a threesome situation where attention is now divided. Additionally, the novelty of the new person may mean that they receive more than an equal share of attention from one or more of the couple. Participants in relationships therefore adopted strategies to reserve particular behaviours only for the romantic couple, thus emphasising the importance of the relationship, and creating an easily understandable demarcation between threesome sex, and sex within their dyad. Some participants were also cautious to make sure that the primary relationship was protected from more permanent additions to the relationship. This is maybe to be expected given that those in a relationship often want to preserve and protect the primary relationship when engaging in extradyadic sex (Adam, 2006; LaSala, 2004).

In a similar way to how Anderson (2012) suggests that cheating may paradoxically demonstrate love within a relationship, having a threesome with ones' romantic partner may send a comparable message. By restricting the behaviours that are available to the participants in the threesome it proclaims the importance of the couple's relationship. Additionally, to the person joining the couple it emphasises the recreational nature of the sex, rather than the potential of the threesome becoming something more serious.

For the ten female participants expressing experiences of jealousy, many took active steps to address their feelings of jealousy. Overwhelmingly, open and honest communication appeared to be a method by which participants could navigate feelings of jealousy in a positive way. This is in line with other research into consensually non-monogamous relationships (De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Robinson, 1997). Through these conversations, whilst jealousy might have still been experienced, its influence became less, and it did not necessary have to cause long-term damage to a relationship.

The one area where similar communicative behaviours seemed to cross over between those in relationships and those not, was the issue of contraception and safe sex. Across both groups, the majority of participants used some form of protection when having sex, or discussed their justifications not to. Approaches to protection varied, but seemed to reflect those used when hooking-up (Moran & Lee, 2014), or when engaged in longer-term casual sex (Weaver et al., 2011). In line with this, those having threesomes outside of

relationships most commonly used condoms; other participants generally discussed different forms of contraception that would protect against pregnancy, but not necessarily STIs. Some participants did, however, highlight a lack of knowledge around why utilising these same strategies might not be as effective for STI prevention when engaging in group-sex as opposed to dyadic sex. Furthermore, it is possible that some participants may have used the presence of alcohol in their threesome as a way to excuse their ignorance or later explain/excuse unsafe behaviours to others (Bogle, 2008; Stinson et al., 2014).

Clearly, many participants' methods of approaching jealousy and communication strategies in general share a lot of commonalities with other literature on consensual non-monogamy (McLean, 2004; Shernoff, 2006; Wosick-Correa; 2010). What participants chose to discuss, however, seemed to vary. Those with the most experience of threesomes (and consensual non-monogamy) were the most thorough in their discussions, possibly because they have encountered a greater range of issues in the past, and consequently, are more prepared. Additionally, with this greater wealth of experience, participants became more comfortable and confident at dealing with these issues in the future. Thus, it would appear that having gained more threesome experiences may enhance the likelihood of a good experience, and may in part explain why those with a first threesome experience are more likely to be interested in future ones (Morris et al., 2016; Zsok et al., 2017).

Chapter 10: Stigma and Changing Attitudes

Rubin (1984) suggests that our sexual values system is based on determining which forms of sex and relationships are acceptable. Acceptable behaviours exist within a charmed circle, whereas behaviours such as group-sex, consensual non-monogamy, or casual sex exist outside of this realm of acceptability (Rubin, 1984). These boundaries, however, have the capacity to shift and change (Gabb & Fink, 2015). Additionally, among different groups within society, there may be multiple variations on Rubin's (1984) charmed circle, and within these variations, some previously stigmatised behaviours may be brought in and incorporated into the charmed circle. For example, polyamorists are open to multiple concurrent, romantic relationships; practices usually relegated to the outer limits. Polyamorists, however, may still aim to distance themselves from, and stigmatise, sexual permissiveness (Klesse, 2006). Thus, there can be multiple variations of the charmed circle in operation amongst different groups of people. Consequently, there may be some difficulty in determining "the wise" (Goffman, 1963)—those who would not stigmatise you for your behaviour. This chapter explores participants' personal experiences of stigma before examining how their experience has impacted their attitudes towards others engaging in consensual non-monogamy. It also explores why some participants feel unable to have another threesome, despite being open to it.

The majority of participants were open with at least some people about their threesome experience(s) and had received positive (or at least not negative) reactions from others. For most, however, this openness did not extend to their parents. Instead, participants were most comfortable with telling close friends, but would also tell those not so close to them if asked directly. Despite this openness, participants still highlighted that they were careful about divulging information to those who they felt would be more judgmental, and a small number of participants recalled negative experiences where they had been stigmatised for their sexual behaviours.

Looking at whether their threesome experiences had altered their attitudes of other stigmatised groups, 11 participants suggested that their opinions of threesomes, or consensual non-monogamy in general, had changed since their first experience. These changes included a realignment of assumptions around threesomes, less judgement/more respect for those that engage in consensual non-monogamy and challenges to personal beliefs about monogamy. All the remaining participants felt that they were already open and

accepting of other sexual behaviours/relationship styles at the time of having had their first threesome.

Overall, 24 participants suggested that they would be happy to have another threesome; two said maybe, and two said that they would not. Despite a willingness to engage in more threesomes, seven participants highlighted their partner as a potential barrier to having one. Additionally, two more participants suggested that their current life situation would make a threesome unappealing.

Openness with Threesome Experiences

The majority of participants highlighted that they were selective in who they told about their threesome experience(s). Typically, participants were not open with their parents or family members about their experiences. This desire for privacy, especially from parents, has also been found in other research on stigmatised sexual behaviours (Bezreh, Weinberg, & Edgar, 2012; Vaillancourt & Few-Demo, 2014). Only two participants suggested that they would be happy to talk about their experiences with their parents, and one more participants had chosen to speak to a cousin. One of these participants, Stuart, said: 'I'm open with people, including my parents. I have no secrets with my parents'. David also suggested that he was very open with whom he had told about his experiences because he felt that it was nothing to be embarrassed about: 'If you've done it then you shouldn't be ashamed of it. And I speak freely about my sexual life, and my life in general. So I don't see why there should be a reason to be ashamed of it'. Unlike the majority of participants, this openness extended to his family. He had not, however, told his parents, although he was not opposed to this:

I've told my sister. If somebody asked me then I will tell them but I wouldn't just randomly say it. But she made a joke about threesomes and I was like, "What if I have?" and she was fine about it. It was the same when I told her I lost my virginity. I think all my family would just take the mick out of me to be honest. They are not very judgmental, just a bit sarcastic. But they wouldn't be ashamed of it.

Usually, instead of speaking to family, participants suggested they would confide in close friends, and those who they felt would not judge them. For example, Kyle suggested that he would tell his close friends about his threesomes, but be more careful with other people:

You obviously don't want to tell the wrong people, you don't want to tell a girl the first time you meet. Obviously with your good friends you will divulge, but with other people you keep it close to your chest until you figure out who they are.

Who participants said they were happy to divulge information of their threesome to, however, generally referred to active disclosure. This means that whilst participants were happy to, and would actively tell close friends of their experiences, they also said that they would tell others, but only if they were asked. This approach to disclosure, where people will disclose if they are directly asked, has also been found with swingers (Bezreh et al., 2012). Exemplifying this, James was happy to tell his close friends about his experiences, but would generally not speak about them unless asked. Thus far he had told:

Mainly my close mates, and my girlfriend. I never speak to family about that. Yeah my close mates from back home, who I've known since I was about two years old. Then my flatmates here and two guys from my course, but no one else from our course.

When asked why he preferred to not tell many people he suggested that he was quite a private person:

I wouldn't worry about stigma, I just like trying to keep myself to myself. It's just not something I feel comfortable about just bringing up in conversation, unless I was asked I suppose, and if everyone else was talking about it. But I wouldn't like it just focused on me.

Nadia also highlighted some people whom she would not tell, but suggested that she was open if asked:

Any family member is off limits. My best friend at home is a guy, and I definitely wouldn't really speak to him about it because I think that would be weird. I mean if people ask me about it or ask me any questions then I will tell them but it wouldn't be something I would just bring up. I don't mind talking about it, but only if I am prompted.

For Philippa, she had drawn a distinction between her friends whom she had known longer, and was closer to, and newer friends she had made whilst in post-graduate study: 'I've told most of my friends although there are some friends, probably more recent friends from university who I haven't told. And I'm not sure I would'. When asked why she might not tell her new friends, she suggested that they would perhaps not be comfortable with knowing, as well as potentially misunderstanding her experience:

Because I don't know them well and I think their backgrounds are very different; well, I could be misjudging them, but I think that some of them come from a background that is definitely a lot more traditional and they might not be as comfortable with it as myself and my friends are. They might think that means she's gay rather than just doing something different.

Although she did not particularly want to tell these new friends, she did, however, feel that if she were asked then she would not lie about it:

I think I'd be a bit awkward at first; I get a bit socially awkward at times in those situations, mostly because I think they would feel awkward. That is why I have not really mentioned it. If they asked me I would tell them.

Eva felt she had generally been quite open with whom she had told: 'I guess I maybe have told everyone, short of my boss and parents'. She felt that as her friends were open-minded people, they were unlikely to judge her. People she knew less well, however, might be different: 'It depends. It will depend on whether I thought it would change their judgment of me. Because with friends I assume that it doesn't because I guess I am friends with open-minded people'.

Alongside not wanting to feel judged by others, Eva also did not want others to associate her and her experience with the more stigmatised media portrayals of less common sexual behaviours:

I think because of that story that exists within society about, you know, the Channel 4 documentaries of people who do weird sexual things, they're all so needy and sordid and sick, and I feel like that is not at all my experience, because it was so joyful and free. It wasn't a depressing grey. But I guess people have the story that anyone who doesn't just do missionary on a Saturday night with their husband for seven and a half minutes, then they have some issue.

Jennifer had been strategic with whom she had told, but accepted that some people were always going to judge, whether you know about it or not:

I've been tactical, but my boyfriend has not necessarily been. I told people who I felt definitely wouldn't have a negative reaction to it. I told a few friends from home and they were like okay fair enough, but if it ever gets brought up in say drinking games then I'll happily say that I've had a threesome. But again, a year ago maybe I wouldn't have. But now it doesn't affect me at all. I mean we've all done stuff, and obviously some people are going to be judgmental, but not necessarily upfront.

When Kirsty was younger, she suggested she had been more forthcoming in telling people, but now she preferred just telling people if asked: 'I suppose I am relatively open with it. Probably during my undergraduate it was more of an "Oh I've had a threesome" kind of thing. But as I've got older, if somebody asks me then I would tell them'. Kirsty was still, however, like other participants, considered in whom she told. For example, she described intentionally withholding her experience:

When I knew there were a group of very, very, Christian people who might not have appreciated it. There was a group of us, and I am friends with them but they were talking about sex and a lot of them are like one or two partner people. I mean if they have really asked to be I would have told them, but no one asked.

Similarly, Mike highlighted that he had hidden his experiences from work colleagues who were religious and who he supervised:

I only tell my close group of friends really, I wouldn't tell work colleagues, parents, or anything like that, because they are all very straight-laced. The people I work with don't even drink to be honest, or go out, or anything like that. I worked with quite a lot of religious people before. And also in my role as a manager, I think it would be detrimental to that role.

Seemingly, Mike attempts to hide those aspects of his work identity that may be interpreted as 'incongruent with normative ideals of professionalism' (Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009, p. 782-83). Alongside Mike, Fred was also mindful about the effect that the associated stigma might have on not only him, but also his wife, and both of their careers:

I pick and choose who I tell what stories. Especially because of my wife and her position. People will apply their own judgment and unfortunately you have to bow to it. I would like to be the crusader and say "It doesn't matter what we have done", but unfortunately we are not going to change anything, and if we're going to have a life that earns money in the profession that she is in, we need to make sure we stick to a married couple with two kids, happy family.

Even when Fred would tell stories with friends, he would often alter the details of the story so not to implicate his wife:

I've told a few people whom I trusted when we are trading stories of course. I certainly haven't told any family members. But yeah, friends, a lot of them know. I do, however, try to keep my partner out of most of my stories, or if we do tell people we know then I might change dates a little bit, or change one person for another.

Participants' threesome disclosure strategies, thus suggest an awareness of the stigma they might receive for having engaged in this particular behaviour. For this reason, many chose to only tell their friends about their experiences. Despite this, the majority of participants also said that they were open to telling other people if asked directly. This suggests that although participants recognise the potential for stigma, they also do not view the stigma as elevated enough to feel the need to hide this particular aspect of their life. There were, however, some exceptions to this rule: when interacting with religious people (who participants expected to hold more conservative sexual values), telling one's parents, or when participants felt that it would impact their (or their partner's) working conditions.

Positive or Indifferent Reactions to Threesome Experiences

Although participants demonstrated recognition of the stigma that might be attached to them, the majority of participants suggested that they had not received negative reactions from people whom they had told about their threesome(s). This may be somewhat connected with the fact that the more participants had engaged in FFM threesomes, rather than MMF threesomes; the former being viewed as more acceptable under certain conditions (Schippers, 2016). Importantly though, none of the participants suggested that they had received negative reactions for their MMF threesomes; the more stigmatised threesome for both men and women (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Joyal et al., 2014; Karlen, 1988). This potentially suggests that attitudes towards the make up of the threesome may be less important than individuals' overall attitudes towards threesomes. It is, however, important to note that a lack of negative reaction does not necessarily mean a positive reaction was received; sometimes reactions were indifferent. Additionally, participants being selective with whom they told about their experiences may have influenced the lack of negative reactions they received. As highlighted later in the chapter, two participants give examples of very negative experiences where they had not elected to be open about their experiences, but instead, had no choice.

When participants received indifferent reactions to their threesome experience(s), generally this did not present a problem. But for two participants whose activities extended beyond just threesomes, and included BDSM, group sex, and polyamory, they felt less comfortable with an indifferent reaction from others. Because of their indifference, Meika had elected to no longer talk to her work colleagues about her sex and relationship

experiences. However, this was not because of negative reactions, but because she didn't feel they could understand her perspectives, and would therefore not be able to engage at a deeper level in these conversations:

Yeah in the beginning I would share a little bit more with my colleagues but then that was always met with lots of "I don't know". It wasn't incredibly negative but their typical go to responses were like "Oh I could never do that". And even though it wasn't aggressive or super negative, or not even incredibly judgmental, it made me want to not even engage. It seems like there was such a big gap between how my world was changing and their views.

For Julia, she felt that she could not maintain friendships where she was not able to discuss her various partners:

I don't have any friendships where I uphold this mononormativity. I do have monogamous friends but if I can't talk about my lovers then I can't be friends, because it's such an important part of my life. And if I can't talk about it then I'm pushing away a big part of my life and so that wouldn't maintain a very valuable friendship in my opinion.

Looking to people's positive experiences, Mike said that he enjoyed sharing his experiences with people: 'I love it. It's good fun. My friend group at the moment is actually a lot younger than me, maybe 20 years younger, and they love hearing stories because they are just starting to explore that side of things'. Kirsty also felt like she had received no stigma: 'Mostly just curiosity to be honest. I don't think that I've had any negative responses'. Kirsty furthermore said that her friends had found it funny, although she had not interpreted this as negative:

I think the girls at uni were in disbelief and then just laughed, they just thought it was funny. It's such a taboo and I suppose they had come to uni at 19 and they probably hadn't come across anyone who had had a threesome before. It was probably a bit of shock at finding out that some people actually do it, rather than it just being something in porn or films.

Stuart found that his friends had also made jokes about his threesome, but he did not interpret his friends joking as having malicious intent: 'In a joking way they might say, "That's sick" or "Disgusting" but nothing negative as a dig at me'. This is similar to other research that has found joking or teasing is one of the ways that men attempt to generate intimacy with each other (Kaplan, 2006).

Philippa suggested that her having a threesome had not surprised her friends, in part due to her reputation:

They are very accepting. They're not shocked. They probably find it amusing, some of them, and I don't think much that I do really shocks them. I tend to like to try new things and different things and so it doesn't surprise them. And also they know I'm quite promiscuous too.

Cathy had only told very close friends and the responses she had received were positive: 'It takes me a long time to trust someone, it was three years before I opened up to one close friend. But they've all been fine. You know at that point that they love you and you just know'. Eva suggested that people had reacted in different ways:

Some people express jealousy, saying that they would quite like to do that, but I don't feel like they could. Some people viewed it as a really good piece of gossip that they have found really interesting to hear about, but probably wouldn't want to do themselves.

Further exemplifying the general lack of stigma around participants' threesomes, two men highlighted that they had received more stigma for their part in facilitating others' infidelity, than for having had a threesome. This contrasts with Anderson's (2012) study on why men cheat, but has also been found in other research suggesting those engaging in consensual non-monogamy are less stigmatised than those who cheat (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016). Kyle suggested that: 'I had a few negative comments for the time the girl cheated on her boyfriend but that was pretty minimal'. Likewise, Dan said:

I do have one sexual behaviour that I've been kind of castigated for by one friend back home, and it's the fact that the dude and girl who I had a threesome with, I was sleeping with a girl before the threesome happened, with him not knowing. So that, some people don't approve of so much and other people are like, "Eh it's fine, no one's getting hurt". So that one I definitely keep much more on the down low.

Thus, participants' responses suggested that the majority of people they told about their threesome(s) were not openly prejudiced towards them. Reactions were often positive (or at least not negative), and recipients of the information often responded with a mixture of curiosity, surprise, and amusement. Indifferent responses were usually deemed as acceptable, except those participants who viewed multi-person sex as a more central part of their life. Seemingly, participants' strategies for the disclosure of their threesome experience(s) allowed them to navigate around stigma they may have otherwise received.

The next section, however, highlights some examples where disclosure was not a choice, and stigma was received.

Negative Reactions to Threesome Experiences

Although the vast majority of participants' stories suggested non-negative responses, four participants could describe situations where they had experienced negative reactions for their sexual behaviours. For example, Jennifer described telling a friend back in her hometown:

One of my friends from back home was quite horrible about it. She was like, "Oh that's such slutty behaviour, why would you do that?" And I was just like, "It was a bit of fun, and an experience, and it's happened, and I don't think that it's slutty particularly". But that's her opinion, and that's mine. We don't really talk anymore anyway, and especially after that I was like, "If you're going to be like that then I don't need you in my life". She is literally the only person who's been negative about it though, everybody else has been fine. The boys thought it was hilarious.

Although only one instance, this stands in contrast to Schipper's (2016) suggestion that FFM threesomes, as was the case in Jennifer's example, are seen as part of a range of acceptable behaviours for women, as opposed to MMF threesome which are viewed as 'slutty'.

As previously highlighted, the majority of participants suggested that they would not tell their parents about their threesome(s). Joanna however, had direct experience of having to speak with her mother when she and her partner were outed by another family member. Joanna and her partner had been using Tinder to search for potential people to have a threesome with. Despite being open about this on their profile, when one of Joanna's relatives came across their profile, they suggested to Joanna's mother that her boyfriend might be cheating on her:

[My mother] initially had a lot of judgments and biases about me, but more so about my partner and our relationship, his personality and the quality of our relationship. I was quite angry about that but it came out of the place of care and concern. I think she still holds some of those prejudices but we have spoken to her and she is at least willing to try and understand it. And she is trying to be more supportive and understanding.

Similar to Joanna, who was able to challenge the negative assumptions around her threesome, Eva also described challenging someone who had particular judgments around

what her experience had meant. After having challenged her, the friend acknowledged her mistake and became very interested in learning about the experience:

I think people really want to put others in some kind of box. So I told one friend, I had a threesome, and she went, "Did you have sex with a girl? Oh my God, I thought you said you weren't a lezza?" So that sort of attitude, just because I'm having sex with a girl doesn't mean I'm a lesbian. This is a friend who has no mental filter, so speaks before she thinks. And I think she has quite conventional values, but she is also quite open-minded in the sense of when challenged, she'll often think about it and change her mind. So I just got a bit cross with her and said, "That's not really okay, actually it's a continuum and people don't necessarily fit into boxes, and it was fun so who cares?" And she went, "Yeah okay, fair enough, tell me more". She wanted to know all of the details then.

For Meika, her most negative experience of stigma was not specifically threesome related, but came from neighbours who had witnessed her and friends engaging in sexual activity as a group. Meika's neighbours called the police when they did not like what her and her friends were doing:

We were having a party here and there was another couple, so we were four people and we were having a really nice time. We had just moved into this apartment and we didn't have any curtains. It was a very mellow evening, it wasn't super sexual but it was just kind of playful and nice. We were just kind of chatting and didn't really want to move to the bedroom to make it more sexual and I think at that point my boyfriend started showing some rope things on me to the other two and we were all making out, and clothes were coming off and we were dancing. We were all pretty drunk and then at some point the police show up. Apparently the neighbours had called them, and apparently they had taken offence. I mean we didn't have any direct interaction with the neighbours and we were not even quite sure who they were, but the police were horrible to us even though we weren't doing anything illegal. You can be naked in your own house; we weren't even having sex. We were just dancing topless, it's not such a big deal but they were really intimidating and demanding.

Although small in number, these experiences do suggest that there is still a stigma around threesomes and group sexual behaviour. The fact that there are only a small number of examples is also likely to have been, in part, a product of the selective disclosure strategies that many participants chose to adopt. There were, however, examples where the participants were able to reduce the stigma around their behaviour and help the other person develop a better understanding of the presumptions they held.

Changing Perspectives on Consensual Non-Monogamy

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory suggests that interactions with an out-group under the right circumstances can enhance one's understanding of them, and thus help facilitate reduced prejudice towards them. Indeed, much research has demonstrated this reduced prejudice particularly for those from sexual minorities (Jarvis, 2015; Dashper, 2012; Herek & Capitanio, 1996), and in some cases, consensually non-monogamous relationships (Hutzler, Giuliano, Herselman, & Johnson, 2016). Research has also extended Allport's hypothesis to suggest that even non-direct exposure to out-groups can enhance familiarity, and thus reduce anxieties about them (Flores, Haider-Markel, Lewis, Miller, Tadlock, & Taylor, 2017; Lee, 2001; Riggle, Ellis, & Crawford, 1996). It has also been suggested that the positive effects of intergroup contact typically extend to other out-groups not involved in the contact (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011).

Although my participants did not necessarily interact with someone from an out-group, or stigmatised group, they became part of one (perhaps for the first time) by having a threesome. Seemingly, this was enough to impact some participants' perceptions of "others". Indeed, after having had a threesome, 12 participants suggested that their attitudes towards threesomes, or consensual non-monogamy in general, had since developed. Broadly, these changes in attitudes led to more positive perceptions and included: I) challenging preconceptions around threesomes; II) less judgement/more respect for those that engage in consensual non-monogamy; III) challenges to one's personal beliefs about monogamy.

Four male and four female participants suggested that their threesome experience(s) had given them a deeper understanding of threesomes specifically. For the men, they said that they now had a better understanding of the realities of threesomes, and that perhaps they were not as good as they had imagined. For example, Kyle suggested that:

I always assumed that the threesomes were the holy grail of sex, and then once you have it, it wasn't that great. I mean it was fun but it wasn't too special. Yeah it's hard to obtain but once you get it, you're like "Oh, okay".

David felt similarly disappointed after his first threesome, as it did not live up to his expectations. Interestingly, David highlighted a lack of intimacy within threesomes as a problem:

It was quite disappointing actually. When guys have threesomes they normally really boast about, say it was great, say I'd love to do it again, say I'd do it every day of the week sort of thing. But I probably would rather just have sex with one person if I'm honest. It's more intimate; it's a better feeling.

For David, having had the experience meant that he was unconcerned as to whether it happened again, but he was still open to it: 'If a situation occurred, then I wouldn't say no, if my girlfriend was happy with it'.

Scott also described how he now had a more realistic image of what might happen in a threesome. In part, his assumptions around FFM threesomes had been influenced by cultural representations of them:

Probably because society says that threesomes are like the best thing. And you get everyone bullshitting about it as well. And you know what, you never hear the truth. You can't even go online and look at it without seeing some ridiculous representation.

As he felt that others had exaggerated and misinformed him about what a threesome was like, he now felt it was maybe better to get first-hand experience of something before deciding what you thought of it:

I'd say that it's taught me not to listen to others. And it can be difficult to find out for yourself and not to listen to others. I'm not going to do something unless I know something about it. But you've just got to go and do it. And learn from your own mistakes, and do what you would like to do.

Consequently, when talking to his friends afterwards about his threesome he also tried to imbue more realistic expectations in them: 'I talked about it with my friends, but I was honest about what had happened. In part it was about giving people a sense of not to be scared'.

Mike had had numerous threesome experiences, and for him, it had now attained a normalised status: 'I suppose it's one of those things with threesomes, it's quite standard. It's sex with a third person. And you end up having sex with either one or two people, in the same room'.

In contrast to the men, the women who talked about gaining a better understanding of threesomes suggested that their experience(s) had made them question the negative assumptions they previously held. As Gill (2008) suggests, although it might be interpreted that women in contemporary society have sexual agency, in reality they may simply be

constrained in different ways, and encouraged/discouraged from engaging in particular sexual behaviours, such as threesomes. For example, after Colette's first threesome she felt that she now had a new sexual behaviour she could add to her repertoire: 'It was just kind of a revelation of this is a new practice, and I really enjoy it. And I really want to do it again, because it was a really positive first experience'

Cathy was now able to disregard the stigma she had once attached to threesomes. She suggested that she now saw threesomes as much less sleazy than she had done before:

My preconceptions before was swinging and group sex, and you know, rooms with mattresses in and baby oil and horrible smells, dark rooms or dogging in the car park at the weekends. A little seedy, but it's not at all, or I didn't think it was.

Demonstrating a presumption of the elevated levels of jealousy in consensual non-monogamy (Conley et al., 2012a), Joanna suggested that her thoughts around jealousy had been challenged by her experiences: 'I guess initially I was worried about feeling jealous so that's definitely something that's not been an issue, or maybe was slightly at the beginning but now is not at all'. Some of her threesomes had also challenged the idea that threesomes of are one off occurrence:

At first I thought it might be a one off sexual thing, but with one girl and maybe with one of the guys it's been almost like a mini relationship. So I think that aspect of it has been quite different to how I expected.

For Eva, she had previously held preconceptions about those who had threesomes, but now had a better understanding of why people might engage in them:

I guess maybe a part of me thought that it's some sort of neediness or something [on the part of the people doing it], but then obviously also a part of me didn't think that because I wanted to have one. I think people in general feel uneasy about things they don't understand, and I think maybe I didn't understand it, so I felt a little uneasy about it, but obviously not uneasy enough to not pursue it.

Four more participants also demonstrated an increased respect/decreased judgment for those that engaged in consensual non-monogamy. This is likely a result of the non-direct exposure (Flores et al., 2017; Lee, 2001; Riggle et al., 1996) people had to consensual non-monogamy. For example, Nadia felt that she now had a better understanding of how people might enter into consensual non-monogamy:

I suppose it shows how easily these things can happen and how easily people can fall into situations. So maybe I can empathise more with how someone would end up swinging. You know, the husband may just know a guy and it just happens.

She did not, however, feel that she was likely to pursue any form of consensual non-monogamy in the near future:

Not at this stage. An open relationship, I definitely wouldn't be able to handle. I think that's really not for me. Swinging and stuff, it's not something I want to get involved in right now, but I think I could maybe see the appeal when I'm older. It's not something I would rule out but it certainly not something I can see myself being involved in any time soon.

Similarly, Emma felt that although she was uninterested in having another threesome herself, she had developed greater respect for those that did engage in consensual non-monogamy:

I think that I've got a lot more respect for those people because I'd like to be the sort of person who is that confident in their relationship. It's almost a jealousy actually, because I've watched a few people on TV programs where they do these things, and you just think, "I wish that I could be like that". Not that I desire to do it, but just that I had that much confidence in the love that your partner feels for you, that no matter what, they are not going to leave you, and it's not going to affect either of you mentally. So I think you have to be mentally quite strong.

Joanna suggested that thinking about her threesome experiences had helped her to develop a deeper understanding of other forms of consensual non-monogamy, and dispense with some stereotypes:

I think before, it was a sexual preference or lifestyle that I didn't know anything about and had assumptions about. Maybe I thought people that did it were weird or maybe addicted to sex; maybe they had no boundaries. But it's made me realise that there's variation in it; how much difference there is in what you can do. For example, you can be married to different people, maybe not legally but you can be in long-term relationships with different people, or you can just have casual sex with other people. It might be sexually driven or for other reasons and is generally done with a lot more tact and care than I realised.

Jennifer said that she had become less judgmental of others as a result of her threesomes as well as having now experienced one-night stands:

I think I'm less judgmental about it. I think I may be used to think that you can only have sex with someone you have a connection with, and then I came to uni and had a good one-night stand and realised that wasn't the case. So I think now I'm more open to accepting what other people do and not being judgmental of them.

Five participants also suggested that their threesome had opened them up to the prospect of other sexual behaviours, or helped them start to question monogamy as the only relationship option. Jennifer felt that after her first threesome she was now more open to trying new sexual experiences, or at least not discounting them straight away. She said:

It opened me up in the sense that if [my boyfriend] asked about [trying something new sexually] then it would be something I would consider rather than just going straight to no. Before, if he were to bring it up I would be like "No, no, no". I think now I'd give it some more thought and more chance.

For Eva, being able to have sex without developing romantic attachments had opened her up to the idea of being in an open relationship:

I think that I always thought that I would just be a serial monogamist, but now I'm not so sure. I could sort of see myself in an open relationship. I would have thought previously that it would be too complicated, emotionally. But I guess the experience of having some no strings attached casual sex, and having a threesome that was no strings attached and casual, now I'm thinking that was a nice thing. And all of those experiences give you really different things. And I guess in terms of opinion on the people, yes I don't really have an opinion of them anymore. I think over the past couple of years I've become a lot more open in terms of I thought a lot about gender and sexuality.

Joanna also suggested that she and her partner had talked about other things they might be interested in after their first threesome:

Nothing drastically changed, I mean we talked about opening up a relationship and how we might do it, and if we would [have a threesome] again, and a lot about how it might happen again and who it would be with. We decided that we would negotiate as we went along. I think we are not in any rush to explore further but we've both had a couple of experiences doing stuff separately but it hasn't been entirely great so maybe it's something we're pursuing a bit slower'

Dan suggested that his threesomes had helped him start to question monogamy:

I guess it's opened me up to the idea of having sex with multiple partners, and I guess extend that thinking to the point where one of those people is your regular partner. Yeah, it's like a progression to an open relationship. So I think it helped me

open the door at least a little bit, and understanding the thoughts behind it. The previous me would have found that upsetting, it was a worldview that I didn't mesh with. But now, I'm just like "Sweet, power to you". And I wouldn't care if my friends did it, and if they did, I think the first two thoughts I would have would be one, does this mean I'm going to hook-up with them now? And two, is this something that I could consider for my own life? Could I be in that position? Because I think it could be a very good position to be in, if I could get past the original "Oh that's bad" stuff, then I think it would be a very healthy thing. I think I could see myself as someone who had a long-term steady partner where we introduced new partners to our relationship, but not really dating them as much as having them in for some physical relationship. But when you are with someone for a long time then you want to sleep with other people and that can be a really healthy thing to do, and it can be strengthening to the trust in a relationship.

Lauren suggested that her first threesome had had a big impact on her life: 'I would say it probably even influenced my decision to study sexuality and relationships. It's probably a huge point of influence in my life'. It had also been a catalyst that had encouraged her to explore more with consensual non-monogamy:

I've been in [consensually non-monogamous relationships], and I've been in monogamous relationships and I'm capable of being happy with the person or the people or the situation depending on where I am in my life. I mean I don't think it works for everyone, but I know a lot of people at this point who engage in consensual non-monogamy, and it certainly does work for them. Those people should be able to have healthy, happy relationships and not worry about being judged and discriminated against, that's bullshit. Just like how gay people should be in healthy, happy relationships and not worry about being discriminated against. Society needs to chill the fuck out and I'm not sure I would say get on board, but at least stop being judgmental about it.

For the remaining 17 participants, they all said that their threesome experience(s) had not changed their opinions towards either threesomes, or consensual non-monogamy. These participants all felt that they were already open and accepting of these ideas, although some recognised that it was not something that they desired for themselves. For example, Sue said:

I've always known that sort of thing wasn't for me. But I've also always felt that that kind of stuff is fine as long as nobody gets hurt and everybody is willing and you're not doing anything dangerous, but do what you need to do.

Some participants did, however, describe other experiences that had helped facilitate them in thinking about consensual non-monogamy. For example, Philippa said that before having had her threesome she had been approached by a couple whom she had turned down: 'I

think my opinions changed gradually over the last few years after the couple approached me'. Stuart suggested that he had been exposed to consensual non-monogamy from an early age, and so had no problem with it: 'If people want to do something then they should do it. Like open relationships or swinging or whatever. It's like when my auntie spoke to me about these things from then on I was completely open about everything'. Julia described being taken with the idea of an open relationship from an early age: 'That the concept started to manifest itself into my head from the age of 15 onwards. And it just grew bigger and bigger'. Steve suggested that his threesome had helped him: 'Consolidate a kind of direction that was already set in motion', and further question the notion of exclusive relationships.

Clearly, for some, their first threesome had an impact on their perspectives towards consensual non-monogamy or threesomes. With regards to threesomes, some men and women both suggested that they now had more realistic attitudes towards them: men now suggesting they were not as good as they had assumed, and women suggesting they were not as bad as they had assumed. From their experience(s), some participants also suggested they now understood consensual non-monogamy better than they had previously. Despite being seen as a route into other sexual behaviours (Gladwell, 2017; Parker 2014; Sciortino, 2015), only five participants suggested that their experience(s) had encouraged them to become more open to new sexual behaviours. Interestingly, this number is comparable with the amount of participants who had engaged in less common sexual behaviours prior to their threesome (as highlighted in chapter 6).

The Prospect of Future Threesomes

Morris et al. (2016) suggest that those who have had a threesome are more interested in the prospect of having further threesomes, compared to those with no threesome experience. Others have also suggested that threesomes may help foster an interest in group-sex and may lead to exploration in other forms of consensual non-monogamy (Kimberly & Hans, 2015; De Visser & McDonald, 2007). This continued interest in threesomes is broadly reflected in my sample as well. Twenty-four participants suggested that they would have another threesome in the future (13 women and 11 men). Two more participants suggested that they might have another threesome, and the final two said that they were not interested in having another. Of those 24, however, nine felt that presently they would not

want, or not be able to have another threesome because of their current partner (seven participants) or their life circumstances (two participants).

From the seven participants who would have another threesome but felt that their partner was a barrier, two were women and five of were men. One of the women, Colette, felt that her partner was not the sort of person who would be interested in a threesome, so she had not brought it up: 'Oh, it would never happen with my current partner, I can't see it happening. It would have to be with other people'. Nadia felt that simply being in a relationship reduced the possibility of threesome opportunities coming up: '

It's something I would consider again, but realistically I don't know if the situation would present itself. Like I'm in a relationship now so I can't imagine how that situation would present itself. Certainly I don't think my boyfriend would actively seek it out. If in some bizarre turn of events it did present itself then I'd probably be keen. I wouldn't be worried about our relationship or anything like that. I just don't think that the situation would arise.

Looking at the male participants, as previously discussed in chapter 7, Will felt that because he was coupled, it was very unlikely to happen:

If I was single then I would definitely. With two girls, I wouldn't wanna do it with a guy and a girl. And whenever I've talked about it with my girlfriend we've always said well I wouldn't mind doing it if one of your friends is interested. And I Probably would do that if that happened and one of her friends came to stay and we got drunk here for one night, and it just happened, I wouldn't stop as long as my girlfriend is okay with it. If she wasn't okay with it then she would say something. But if there was a guy here then I wouldn't want that to happen, which is a bit hypocritical, so it's just never going to happen really.

Rob said that he wouldn't want to have a threesome with his current partner for a number of reasons. He was put off of the idea of an MMF threesome because he didn't want another man having sex with his girlfriend:

It wouldn't be something that I'd want to do with her. I wouldn't want anyone else, this is just talking about another guy, I don't even like the thought of her being with someone else, let alone whilst I'm there.

Regarding an FFM threesome, based on his friends' experiences, Rob worried about the impact it might have on the relationship, as well as not yet knowing whether she might be interested:

I haven't been in that position where she has suggested that she might be into it. I also don't then know how it would affect the relationship after. A lot of people I know, my mate had a threesome with his girlfriend and his friend, and my other mate did exactly the same thing, and they broke up after it because it just ruined the relationship afterwards. I don't know why, but seeing it happened to other people, I wouldn't want to risk it. It might be the best thing ever, but why would I jeopardise something quite good.

Similarly, James also would not want another man to join him and his partner, and felt that because he did not know whether his girlfriend was interested in a threesome, he didn't want to risk upsetting her by suggesting it: 'Maybe if it was with another woman, but definitely not with a man, and she'd have to definitely instigate it. I wouldn't want to suggest it to her because I wouldn't want to hurt her feelings'. This is comparable to the men in Anderson's (2012) research, who were interested in an open relationship but would not suggest this to their partner for fear of damaging the relationship.

David felt that because of his girlfriend's disinterest, a threesome was unlikely to happen again, although he would be open to it:

I doubt it if I'm honest. I don't think my girlfriend is that interested in having another one, but I haven't spoken to her about it. I just don't think we will. It's kind of an experience that we've had. But if a situation occurred, then I wouldn't say no, if my girlfriend was happy with it.

Kyle also felt that introducing extra-dyadic sex to a relationship would be risky: 'If I were married then I think I would be pretty dedicated to her and to keeping the family together and maybe not introduce different elements into it that could potentially fuck everything up'. Similarly, although Mike had not had a threesome with a partner, he felt that this was the riskiest scenario:

I think you would only have a bad experience having a threesome if you're with a partner and you get a third person involved. Because that's where mental issues, emotions, start coming into it. If you're going as the third person, you don't really have the emotional connection with those people. So I go and I get what I want out of it and I leave.

Interestingly, the perception of a partner as a barrier to future threesomes stands in direct contrast to some participants in chapter 9, who actively wanted their partner to be involved, and drew strength from forming an identity as a couple.

Looking at other reasons why participants were currently refraining from any threesomes, two felt that it was currently not a good time in their lives. Julia said:

I'm definitely open for it in the future. But currently at this moment in my life I am not interested because I'm in a very vulnerable spot and I'm more focused on my self-help, my own health, and care for myself. And threesomes are just a disturbing factor in that because they give insecurity and uncertainty. In the future I assume that I will definitely have more threesomes or more-somes, orgies or whatever.

Fred felt that the pressures and responsibilities of family life had impacted on him and his partners' sexual practices:

I think as a guy, if I were not married I would be seeking threesomes out. But I think because we are married, because we have kids, we are sort of creeping back under social convention. I think certainly if we were without kids and lived in London would have carried on what we were doing before. But I do think that we could do it again one day, it just has to present itself.

For the two participants that might have another threesome, Steve suggested that he wasn't sure whether he liked the dynamic that was brought about by threesomes, and the discomfort this could potentially bring:

I mean with my partner now for example, she's had threesomes, and is up for that kind of thing. She has said, "Oh we could arrange it with this person", and I've never wanted to pursue that. I don't know if that appeals to me at all. I always remember that line from Peep Show [British Sitcom]: "I don't want to have two more people that I can't look in the eye". So I have declined to do it, because firstly I don't know if I like that dynamic and secondly I'm not sure if it would make me feel comfortable. And I could imagine it being great but it's kind of weird thinking through the practicalities of it.

For Jennifer, she said that she did not want to gain a reputation:

I don't know, because it's quite a small University; quite a few people knew quite quickly. So I wouldn't particularly want to do it again too quickly because I don't want to be known as the girl that does threesomes. I don't want it to come across as that. I know that my boyfriend would quite happily do it again. But I don't know whether I would be as happy.

For the remaining two participants with no desire to have another threesome, they had both decided that it was not something that was suitable for them. Sue suggested that she became too emotionally involved with people to be able to share them:

I've always known that sort of thing wasn't for me. But I've always felt that that kind of stuff is fine as long as nobody gets hurt and everybody is willing and you're not doing anything dangerous but do what you need to do. What works for people, works for people. If people can do threesomes just for sex then good luck to them if that's what they want. I have no issue with that. But I would certainly never do that again. I'm very much when I'm in love I'm in love with that person and sharing that person isn't an option.

For Emma, she did not feel that either her or her partner would be able to deal with the feelings of jealousy that might arise. Emma also felt that her partner's previous infidelities had amplified her jealousy:

If my partner suggested it, which he wouldn't because we've talked about things like that, he couldn't cope with it and I certainly couldn't do it. And especially since his affair, I've turned into one of those jealous women. I don't voice it but a lot of people I know do. And I hate myself for it because we were always so open.

Whilst the sample broadly showed an interest in future threesomes, they were clearly conscious that their particular circumstances might not allow for this to happen. The biggest perceived barrier was one's romantic relationship, although the specifics of this varied amongst participants. Some other participants also highlighted that their current life circumstances would be a barrier. Finally, two participants were unsure whether they would have another experience, and two more did not want to. For the two that would no longer want to have another threesome, both of these were linked to previous negative relationship experiences.

Chapter Conclusions

The results put forward in this chapter suggest that whilst threesomes are thought of as a stigmatised sexual behaviour, this stigma often does not translate into lived experience. This may however, reflect the disclosure strategies of participants; they have the ability to "pass" as normal until questioned (Goffman, 1963). Whilst participants were open to telling good friends about their experiences, they were more reluctant with others, particularly parents. Contrasting with this selective disclosure to close friends, the same participants also highlighted that would not look to hide their experience from others if asked directly. This openness to disclosure may reflect a perception by participants that their social circles are relatively, if not entirely, accepting of people engaging in threesomes. As sex becomes seen as a leisure activity for more people (Atwood & Smith, 2013; Joseph & Black, 2012; Wignall

& McCormack, 2017), threesomes may consequently be seen as part of this, and thus not attract the expected stigma. It is not however clear, whether participants would be more stigmatised if their threesomes were something more committed, such as a polyamorous relationship. It may be that threesomes are categorised as an extension of hook-up behaviours, and thus deemed as acceptable; whereas, if they morphed into a more committed form of consensual monogamy, they may be more open to stigma.

Threesome experiences also had the ability to dispel myths related to them and challenge, on occasion, the institution of monogamy. Eleven participants reported that they since changed their opinions towards threesomes or consensual non-monogamy since their experience. For the remaining participants, they already felt that they were open to consensual non-monogamy; some citing prior exposure as having influenced their thinking. Both of these findings suggest that participants exist within cultures where monogamism no longer holds absolute hegemony. Thus for some, having a threesome appears to have the potential to open people up to consensual non-monogamy or become less judgmental of it, even if they still decide that it is not something they currently desire to pursue. Openness to threesomes does also not necessarily translate to action. Some participants highlighted that whilst they were open to threesomes, they saw them as incompatible with, or a potential threat to the stability of monogamous romantic relationships.

Chapter 11: Discussion

In this research, I set out to explore people's threesome experiences within contemporary society. The initial impetus for this project came from personal threesome experiences, and an inability to find a range of literature from which I could contextualise my experiences. Although there is a wealth of research on different forms of consensual non-monogamy, threesomes rarely feature.

Contrasting the academic literature, the media, pays substantial attention to the area. For example, they are frequently given a normalised status (e.g. Adriaens & Van Bauwel, 2014; Moore, 2014b) and are even seen as something that everyone should experience (Leitch, 2006). There are multiple magazine and online articles guiding people in their threesomes (e.g. Buxton, 2015; Gonzalez, 2014; Griffin, 2014); multiple representations in mainstream cinema and television; and even now dating apps specifically catering for threesomes.

Consequently, all of my own experiences, conversations with others, and exposure to threesome-related media encouraged me to explore other people's experiences of threesomes. From an academic perspective I asked: Why do people engage in them? And what meaning do they have for those that engage in them?

Academic research into threesomes arguably starts with Arno Karlen's (1988) study. His research highlighted a number of findings about threesomes, one of the most prominent being that women used threesomes as a safe way to explore their sexuality. FFM threesomes, consequently, were a desirable prospect for some women, whereas MMF threesomes were less so. Men who engaged in threesomes also seemed to favour FFM threesomes over MMF threesomes. Karlen attributed men's reluctance to engage in MMF threesomes as a result of both a biological desire to be dominant as well as the psychological challenge to their masculinity and heterosexuality that it might induce.

Karlen's (1988) research is, however, now quite dated, and wider cultural changes in attitudes towards gender and sexuality are likely to have impacted on how people view threesomes, and why they engage in them. For example, some suggest that having moved away from purely procreative notions of sex (Macklin, 1980), we instead now often see sex as a leisure activity (Attwood, 2006, 2011; Frank, 2008; Joseph & Black, 2012). Growing acceptance of homosexuality has also had a significant impact on what some men see as appropriate gender performances (Anderson, 2014; McCormack, 2012) as well as

heterosexual sexual behaviours (Scoats et al., 2017). Similarly, for women, there is now greater awareness of their capacity for sexual fluidity (Diamond, 2008) and the exploration of same-sex sexual behaviours are no longer as stigmatised as they once were (Rupp & Taylor, 2010; Rupp et al., 2014; Worthen, 2014). Consequently, Karlen's (1988) study may no longer give an accurate depiction of threesomes within contemporary society.

Looking at contemporary understandings of threesomes, Schippers (2016) proposes that we have particular expectations as to what constitutes an acceptable, modern, threesome: something she calls, the threesome imaginary. Consequently, threesomes that involve two women, and are a temporary occurrence—perhaps allowing a couple to add new sexual energy to their relationship—are tolerated. Conversely, engaging in MMF threesomes is not viewed as socially acceptable as much for men, or women—the former still being subject to questions regarding their sexuality, and the latter being viewed as either a victim or a slut (Schippers, 2016). Nor is a threesome that is anything more than temporary considered acceptable, as this presents a challenge to the institution of monogamy. Consequently, these cultural restrictions may serve to reproduce existing power relations in regard to sexuality, gender, and monogamy.

Seemingly, a preference for the threesome imaginary does appear to be reflected in some of the contemporary research on threesomes, although it emerges as much stronger in men than in women. For example, Zsok et al.'s (2017) research suggests that males significantly preferred FFM threesomes to MMF threesomes. Women, however, did not particularly favour one over the other. Thompson and Byers (2017) also found men to particularly favour FFM threesomes, whereas women demonstrated similarly low interest in both FFM and MMF threesomes. Joyal et al. (2014) found that 84.5% of the men in their sample had fantasised about an FFM threesome, whereas only 56.5% of women had fantasised about an MMF threesome. Whilst these studies provide partial support for the notion of the threesome imaginary, they also suggest that it is not an all-encompassing standard.

Some research challenges Schippers (2016) theorising more directly, further suggesting that the cultural influence of the threesome imaginary is not absolute. For example, Hughes et al. (2004) found men had a strong preference for FFM threesomes, whereas women had a stronger preference for MMF threesomes over FFM threesomes (53% compared to 27%). Some of the most recent research on threesomes also suggests that heterosexual men's preference for FFM threesomes does not necessarily translate into an aversion for MMF threesomes. I (Scoats et al. 2017) examined 30 heterosexual male

students, finding that only slightly more men had engaged in FFM threesomes compared to MMF threesomes (seven compared with five). Additionally, my colleagues and I found that 25 out of the 30 men would be open to an MMF threesome in the future. This research in particular suggests that the stigma around MMF threesomes may be diminishing amongst certain groups.

Highlighting an issue with the current body of literature on contemporary threesomes, the vast majority of these (apart from one of my own publications) are quantitative in nature, and often only include a small number of participants with actual threesome experience. Consequently, this body of research is unable to provide the rich description of other methodological approaches, as well as often only asking questions about theoretical threesomes, rather than lived experiences. Thus, these studies alone are unable to help us fully understand the intricacies of individuals' threesome experiences. Accordingly, with this PhD, I set out to examine people's threesome experiences from a perspective that allowed for the collection of rich, in-depth data, which could be then used to provide context and direction for future research.

Thus, this doctoral dissertation investigated the experiences of men and women who had ever engaged in a multi-sex threesome, from a qualitative perspective. Additionally, it makes up one of a number of studies I have conducted in relation to young men's masculinity, as well as threesomes; including a large multi-country survey on people's threesome experiences.

For the current study, people who had only engaged in all same-sex threesomes were excluded, as there is already a small body of research in this area, as well as a need to limit the scope of the study. Likewise, those who identified as swingers, and those frequently involved in LGBT groups were also excluded in order to reduce the recruiting bias that these groups can foster. My participants were gathered via snowball sampling as well as using personal connections and informal "research assistants". They consisted of 28 individuals (12 men, 16 women), roughly half of whom identified as heterosexual. Semi-structured interviews were used to examine their experiences, attitudes, and motivations around threesomes, sex and sexuality. Their interviews were then transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

The Why of Threesomes

Sex is often seen to have multiple purposes, meanings, and motivations behind it (Atwood & Smith, 2013; Leigh, 1989; Meston & Buss, 2007), and my research shows that threesomes are no different in this respect. Threesomes do, however, have the potential to become more complicated than dyadic sex, as there is a larger configuration of interpersonal interactions happening; each person in a three may relate differently to each of the other two. Furthermore, individual's sexual experience, sexuality, gender, romantic relationships, threesome experience, or communication skills, all have the capacity to impact the experience in different way. Because of this complexity, determining commonalities across threesomes can be difficult as oftentimes each experience is different. Despite this, and allowing for the nuance of differing experiences, I have identified a number of key themes that numerous participants highlighted.

Looking first at MMF threesomes—the type of threesome that much research has suggested is more stigmatised and less appealing to both men and women—I find that men and women do still engage in them. From the sample, a total of nine participants, six men and three women, had experiences of one. In exploring the differences in attitudes between men and women, I found there to be a fundamental difference in how each group viewed MMF threesomes. First of all, a lot of the men viewed MMF threesomes as a fun activity, which could help bond friends, and be seen as part of sexual experience gathering. Very rarely were MMF threesomes seen as a route for men to explore same-sex sexual behaviours, and there was usually the assumption that the men would not be interacting together sexually. These findings reflect the greater range of gendered behaviours now open to men and are very similar to the findings of Scoats et al. (2017).

Equally, however, rather than be seen as harmless, these men might also be interpreted as bonding over the objectification of women. Their behaviours could be seen as an extension of misogynistic practices rather than, or in addition to, an expansion of heterosexual practices (Anderson, 2008). Indeed, two male participants gave examples where they had engaged in what they saw as enjoyable MMF threesomes, but their behaviour during these threesomes demonstrated little regard for the women involved. One might therefore question why these women engaged in these MMF threesomes?

Along these lines, a number of scholars have questioned whether women in contemporary society are truly empowered with sexual agency (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Gill, 2008; Wood et al., 2007). As Burkett and Hamilton (2012, p. 829) highlight: 'Although

the blatant denigration of women is no longer acceptable, somehow it is women themselves who are freely choosing to partake in practices that conform to traditional gender stereotypes'. Seemingly, through the internalisation of patriarchal constructions of appropriate sex, women may privilege the sexual desires of men at the expense of their own (Wood et al., 2007). Consequently, this perspective may account for some women's engagement in behaviours they have perhaps little interest in—MMF threesomes.

The fact that the not many women had engaged in MMF threesomes suggests that at least within my sample, women had not internalised this particular male desire. Instead, some women cited having a basic lack of interest in MMF threesomes, whereas others suggested that it had objectifying/degrading qualities, as well as being potentially unsafe. For most of the women, however, their attitudes were not based in lived experience, but instead, based on pornographic representations of MMF threesomes.

Interestingly, perhaps because of these pornographic representations, as well as heteronormative assumptions regarding men, women often assumed that a threesome with two men would not involve the men interacting together sexually. When it was proposed that the men in a threesome would be interested in each other sexually, this made the possibility a lot more appealing and eased some of the female participants' fears. This appears to support Yost and McCarthy's (2012, p. 21) suggestion that: 'If women had a wider range of sexual imagery on which to draw, some would choose other means for sexual empowerment that were not simultaneously objectifying'. It also highlighted the extent to which some women enjoy the prospect of viewing male-male same-sex sexual behaviour. In fact, the three women who had experienced an MMF threesome suggested that these sorts of threesomes were the most enjoyable. Consequently, I would argue that many of the women in my sample did demonstrate sexual agency, disregarding sexual practices they viewed as degrading, and pursuing the sorts of sex that they themselves desired.

In comparing MMF threesomes to FFM threesomes, the latter were much more common, with 27 out of 28 participants at least once engaging in one. For women, comparable with other research (Karlen 1988; Rupp et al., 2014), FFM threesomes were sometimes used as a way to explore their sexuality. Women also, however, offered many other explanations for their female-female-male threesomes. For example, a number of women said that they had simply been open to the idea of this type of threesome, and at some point had found themselves in circumstances where it was suggested. For others, they engaged in FFM threesomes because they felt it would make someone else happy.

Alternatively, others engaged in “sexual compromises” where they only really wanted to have sex with one of the other people, but still had a threesome.

In contrast, men’s perspectives were much more focused on gaining sexual experience of new or novel sexual activities. Consequently, once an FFM threesome had been experienced, some men’s interest then lessened. Men’s experiences also seemed to share a lot of similarities with their attitudes toward hook-ups (Garcia et al., 2012), such as their spontaneity and connection with alcohol. Comparable to when men engage in hook-ups (Backstrom et al., 2012; Boyer & Galupo, 2015; Stinson et al., 2014) when men engaged in “hook-up threesomes”, some seemed to focus on their own enjoyment rather than consider the desires of the group.

Thus, it is clear that motivations for threesomes differ somewhat for both men and women. The men in my research, across both MMF and FFM threesomes, were primarily concerned with gaining experiences of novel sexual activities. Similar to Scoats et al.’s (2017, p. 13) research, these men viewed threesomes as ‘another different and unique experience to partake in’. In contrast, women offered a much greater range of explanations for engaging in threesomes. FFM threesomes were used to explore sexuality, and sex in general. They were also used as a way to make others happy, as well as sometimes being a sexual compromise that was made in order to have sex with a specific individual. Furthermore, sometimes women were just open to the idea of a threesome and took the opportunity when it was presented.

Contrary to women’s acceptance of FFM threesomes, however, many felt uneasy about the prospect of an MMF threesome, highlighting a fear for their safety. Despite this, some woman had still engaged in MMF threesomes in a way that prioritised their own desires. Even more women became interested in the prospect of an MMF threesome when the sexual interaction was not solely on the woman.

The Impact of Threesomes

Societal stigma has long been seen as a significant influencing factor with regards to people’s behaviour (Goffman, 1963), particularly in relation to sex (Foucault, 1976; Rubin, 1984). More specifically, the consensual non-monogamy burden has attempted to position monogamy as the only feasible relationship option (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Conley et al., 2013). Despite this anti-consensual non-monogamy discourse, my findings point towards an increasing acceptance of consensual non-monogamy, as well as a further deconstruction of

the myths surrounding it. Participants' experiences highlighted both positive and negative outcomes as a result of their threesome. Broadly, however, the majority of participants expressed positive experiences; receiving little stigma from those they told as well as seemingly minimal negative impacts to their romantic relationships.

Despite the suggestion that group-sex inhabits the outer limits of the charmed circle of behaviours (Rubin, 1984) participants expressed relatively few instances of direct stigma. Consequently, it might be useful to consider multiple charmed circles in operation across different groups, and my participants were part of groups that did not generally stigmatise threesomes. Looking at other research, there is also a strong argument for multiple variations on the charmed circle. For example, polyamorists might be acceptant of multi-person relationships, but may still stigmatise promiscuity (Klesse, 2006). Grunt-Mejer and Campbell (2016) also found heterosexuals to hold monogamy in higher esteem than open relationships, swinging and polyamory, but those with non-heterosexual identities, however, did not make a distinction between these four relationship types.

Largely, my participants were open with telling others about their experience(s), although they did suggest that they were sometimes selective of whom they actively disclosed this information to. Typically, participants were not motivated to tell their parents of their experience, as well as being cautious of those they perceived as judgemental. Many participants also suggested that they would not attempt to hide their behaviours from others if asked directly.

Participants' approaches to disclosure suggest that they understand that threesomes might not always be seen as acceptable, but equally, they do not feel so strongly that they felt they needed to always be closeted in their behaviours. Considering the average age of the sample, these results suggest that for those of younger generations, threesomes are often seen as an acceptable, if somewhat uncommon, behaviour. Additionally, although MMF threesomes are considered more stigmatised than FFM threesomes (Schippers, 2016; Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Joyal et al., 2014; Karlen, 1988), this does not mean that participants were more concerned about hiding these experiences from others. This may be a result of the growing acceptance of men engaging in semi-sexual behaviour in the presence of other men (Scoats et al., 2017), as well as a growing recognition of women's capacity for sexual desire (Baumeister, 2004; Wouters, 1998).

Having a threesome also seemed to be a contributing factor in fostering a better understanding of consensual non-monogamy. Firstly, some participants were able develop a more realistic notion of what threesomes are like. Interestingly, this realignment of

expectations demonstrated a divide between the sexes; some men felt that they had over-estimated how good a threesome would be; whereas some women had over-estimated its negative qualities.

Secondly, some participants suggested that they now had greater empathy and understanding for those who engage in other forms of consensual non-monogamy. Consequently, they developed a greater respect for consensual non-monogamy, even if they did not wish to pursue it further. Finally, as other research has suggested (Kimberly & Hans, 2015; De Visser & McDonald, 2007), some participants' threesomes had encouraged them to question monogamy, or at least become less dismissive of trying new sexual activities in the future. That is not to say, however, that threesomes necessarily lead to engagement in other forms of consensual non-monogamy or less common sexual activities. In fact, a similar amount of participants had already started to explore other less common sexual behaviours or relationship styles before their first threesome.

Related to the growing societal acceptance of consensual non-monogamy, the majority of participants also said that they already approved of it before they first had a threesome. This is maybe unsurprising given that in order to have a threesome, one would expect someone to be at least partially acceptant of some forms of consensual non-monogamy. Unlike other research, however, participants did not choose to highlight particular forms of consensual non-monogamy that were greater in acceptability than others (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016; Matsick et al., 2013). Despite all participants approving of consensual non-monogamy, and 24 being interested in having another threesome, some participants were still constrained by monogamism. In particular, and consistent with other recent research, men demonstrated a strong ownership script in that they didn't want other men to have sex with their female partners (Anderson, 2012).

My findings also highlight the impact that jealousy had on romantic couples. Ten participants who had their threesome with a romantic partner suggested instances of jealousy. These feelings of jealousy unanimously came from female participants who were engaging in FFM threesomes. Rather than suggest it is only women who experience jealousy, this is instead probably a result of the particulars of the sample; more women had threesomes whilst in a relationship, and few woman engaged in MMF threesomes. Had more men engaged in MMF threesomes with their female partners, then I would expect to find more instances of male jealousy as another man would likely be seen as a bigger threat to their relationship than another woman—as some male participants hinted at.

Jealousy was commonly related to feelings of exclusion or perceived threats to the relationship. Consequently, sometimes rules would be suggested to mark the sex within the threesome as distinctly different to dyadic relationship sex, thus preserving the monogamous relationship. Alternatively, some couples were able to overcome concerns by talking through them afterwards. When issues of jealousy did arise, the impact they had on the relationship was usually minimal, and openly expressing concerns either between the couple, or all three participants, emerged as an effective way to navigate these problems. Those with the most positive experiences of threesomes also seemed to be those with the most experience of threesomes, thus being aware of the problems that could arise, and adopting strategies to manage these.

At a societal level, the results suggest that participants inhabit spaces where the stigmatisation of threesomes is not all encompassing and many could find opportunities to share their experiences without prejudice. At a relationship level, threesomes did sometimes create problems with regards to jealousy. However, like other forms of consensual non-monogamy (De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Parsons et al., 2013; Ritchie & Barker, 2006), participants were also able to determine how to navigate these issues without the breakdown of the relationship.

The capacity to deal with these issues may have also contributed to overall attitudes towards their threesomes, which were broadly positive, and the majority said that would be interested in future threesomes. Furthermore, through their experiences, many participants developed a better understanding of the realities of threesomes, both the positives and negatives, as well as an enhanced respect for others who engage in consensual non-monogamy. Accordingly, people's engagement in threesomes seem to reflect a growing acceptance of consensual non-monogamy, whilst at the same time having the capacity to improve understanding of it.

Theoretical Implications

In this research I have drawn from a number of social theories related to human sexuality in order to contextualise my findings. In this section I will further elaborate on how some of these theories relate to my work.

Monogamism

Conceived by Anderson (2012), monogamism refers to the cultural hegemony of monogamy as a sex and relationship system. Within this system, individuals see monogamy as the default relationship setting, viewing it as desirable, optimal, and natural (Conley et al., 2012a; Ryan & Jethá, 2010). Consequently, alternatives are not afforded the same cultural value as monogamy (Frank, 2013; Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016; Robinson, 1997), and are often stigmatised (Conley et al., 2012a). Anderson (2010; 2012) suggests that it is this stigma around consensual non-monogamy, combined with a somatic desire for sexual novelty that leads men to cheat on their partners. As one of his participants said: 'At least with cheating there is an attempt at monogamy' (Anderson, 2010, p. 864).

I, however, argue that threesomes have the power to challenge monogamism. Although a threesome might be understood as a sexual "release" that allows couples to access to extra-dyadic sex whilst reaffirming the monogamous nature of their relationship (Schippers, 2016), engagement in threesomes maintains simultaneous power to challenge monogamy. This is evidenced when some participants suggested developing an enhanced empathy for others in consensual non-monogamous relationships as well as starting to question the suitability of monogamy for themselves. Whilst it appeared that some participants were likely to go on to have monogamous relationships, for others it was less certain.

Whether participants do go on to have consensually non-monogamous relationships is not, however, important. Within a hegemonic system such as monogamism, the choice of monogamy is an illusion, as there are no other options available. If by having a threesome, participants are then able to see viable alternatives to monogamy, they then have a wider knowledge from which to make a choice regarding their own monogamy, rather than it being forced upon them. Thus, engagement in a threesome may present an opportunity for more people to challenge monogamism.

Finally, future research should examine as to whether couples engaging in threesomes consider themselves monogamous. This might be an expectation relevant to cognitive dissonance theory. Anderson (2012) himself highlights that with cheating, by aligning oneself with hegemonic beliefs, one tries to minimise stigma. Threesomes may thus challenge monogamism, or paradoxically reproduce it as couples engage in them together.

Contact theory

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory proposes that positive interactions with a stigmatised group can help facilitate a greater understanding of them, and consequently, lead to a reduction in stigma towards them. Examples of this improved tolerance include contact with both sexual minorities and those engaged in consensual non-monogamy (Jarvis, 2015; Dashper, 2012; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Hutzler et al., 2016). Further research has also suggested that indirect exposure to stigmatised groups can enhance people's acceptance of them (Flores et al., 2017; Riggle et al., 1996), and this may also extend to other unconnected, but similarly stigmatised groups (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

Although my participants did not necessarily come into contact with stigmatised individuals, they may have felt that they became one, through the act of having a threesome. Consequently, for some, this perceived stigmatisation of the self perhaps encouraged them to reconsider the prejudices they held around other forms of consensual non-monogamy, as well as those that engage in them. In line with Allport's (1954) suggestions, these experiences did lead to some participants forming a better understanding of others, and reduced stigma towards them. For others, engagement in a threesome was not necessary to improve their attitudes towards consensual non-monogamy. Many participants suggested that they were already open to consensual non-monogamy before their first threesome, suggesting that they had already been exposed to positive representations of consensual non-monogamy.

Furthermore, participants' willingness to share their experiences with others, offers further challenges to monogamism. Although participants suggested that they were sometimes selective in who they told about their threesome(s), many participants demonstrated openness with other people—actively telling friends, and telling others if asked. Consequently, this may allow an even wider network of people to be exposed to consensual non-monogamy, potentially reducing stigma further through intergroup contact (Allport, 1954).

Homophobia

Homophobia is a theoretical tool for understanding societal beliefs and attitudes to homosexuality within a historical context and relates to the cultural fear of being homosexualised (McCormack, 2011) for wrongdoing of one's gender, or association with

symbols of homosexuality. During times of high homophobia, men and women's behaviours are subject to stricter policing, as associations with the opposite gender can mark one as homosexual in the eyes of others (Anderson, 2009). Within contemporary society, however, it has been suggested that decreasing homophobia has allowed men and women to broaden the range of gendered behaviours open to them (Anderson, 2014; Magrath, 2016; McCormack, 2012; Scoats, 2015; Worthen, 2014). Additionally, men are no longer subject to the one-time rule of homosexuality (Anderson, 2008)—whereby they are forever homosexualised for one transgression of gendered behaviour (Scoats et al., 2017).

Within the context of threesomes, these cultural changes related to gender allow men to demonstrate an interest, and engage in MMF threesomes without necessarily being homosexualised for doing so (Scoats et al., 2017). Accordingly, for the men in my research, MMF threesomes were often contextualised as being about bonding with friends, building sexual experience, and fun. There were also two male participants who derived sexual pleasure from either the presence of, or the sexual interaction with another male, without fearing homosexualisation. Furthermore, when male participants were uninterested in MMF threesomes this was more often connected to them not wanting to see their partner with another man, rather than fears around what it would mean to their own sexuality. All of these examples add further evidence in support of McCormack and Anderson's (2014a, b) suggestion of reduced homophobia and its implications for men's sexual behaviours.

For women, reducing homophobia is likely to have had less of a significant effect on their sexual behaviours given the lesser extent to which their same-sex sexual behaviours have been historically policed (Worthen, 2014) and the cultural assumption of female bisexuality (Fahs, 2009). Improved attitudes towards male bisexuality (Anderson et al., 2015) may, however, allow women greater opportunities to explore these erotic attractions.

In my research, the three women with MMF experience all suggested that men interacting together sexually was the most desirable type of MMF threesome. Additionally, other women also found the prospect of this type of threesome as appealing, as well as some suggesting that it would reduce their worries related to objectification or safety. This suggests that if attitudes towards male bisexuality (or same-sex sexual behaviours) continue to improve, it is likely that MMF threesomes will become more common, and potentially less oppressive to women, as the focus becomes less about the enjoyment of sex at the expense of the woman.

The Charmed Circle

Rubin (1984) suggested that our sexual values system was based on categorising acceptable, and unacceptable forms of sex and relationships. She conceptualised this within a hierarchy where good forms of sex (the charmed circle) included: heterosexual sex, married sex, monogamous sex etc., and bad forms of sex (the outer limits) included their relative opposites. Although some have suggested that what constitutes “good” sex has the capacity to change (Gabb & Fink, 2015), I suggest that it no longer makes sense to conceptualise only one sex and relationship hierarchy across contemporary western society. As I have suggested elsewhere, there is evidence to suggest numerous hierarchies in operation (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016; Klesse, 2006).

With regards to sex, people can now have access to, and develop knowledge around a variety of different sexual practices in the privacy of their own home (Anderson, 2012; Barker, 2005), thus helping to avoid the potential stigma of one’s peers (Goffman, 1963). People are also now exposed to a greater range of relationship styles (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Wosick-Correa, 2010) and pornography (Anderson, 2012) than ever before, which has likely contributed to increasingly liberal attitudes towards sexual behaviours (Attwood, 2005; Bernstein, 2001; Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

In addition, the increasing commodification of sex (Brent & Sanders, 2010) has started to position sex as a significant site for leisure and consumption (Attwood, 2006, 2011). Linked to this contemporary visibility of sex and the liberalisation of attitudes towards sex, stigma around casual sex also seems to be diminishing (England et al., 2008), particularly within university settings (Garcia et al., 2012; Heldman & Wade, 2010). Consequently, women are no longer assumed to lack sexual desire (Seidman, 1990) but have more freedom to pursue sex without fear of stigma (Armstrong et al., 2014; Rupp et al., 2014).

These societal developments suggest that many of the “bad” forms of sex that inhabit Rubin’s (1984) outer limits, are no longer considered to be negative, and they can be clearly seen in the participants of my research. Both the men and women suggested that they had liberal attitudes towards sex, and did not stigmatise casual sex, consensual non-monogamy, or threesomes. Furthermore, they were often open about these things with others, and generally received little stigma for this. We cannot, however, suggest that these same attitudes necessarily hold across differing demographic variables such as race, age, or class. Thus in the same way in which Anderson (2009; 2014) conceptualises a flattening of

masculine hierarchies, we may also be seeing something similar in terms of sex and relationships. This will need to be borne out in future research.

Although the establishment of multiple charmed circles may appear less oppressive, Gill (2008), however, suggests caution in face of these liberatory tropes, writing, 'Power operates here not by silencing or suppressing female sexual agency, but by constructing it in highly specific ways. Power works in and through subjects, less by modes of domination than through discipline and regulation.' (p. 53). My findings do, however, suggest that many of the women did appear empowered to pursue the types of sex that they desired, often wanting different types of sex compared to the male participants, suggesting that they were more than just passive receptacles for the desires of men. Whereas the men generally valued uncommitted sex, the women often expressed some desire for a more significant connection with a partner, and thus rejected particular forms of casual sex.

Study Limitations

This study has similar limitations to other qualitative studies of sexuality and sexual behaviour that use a small selective sample—issues of generalisability (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Gledhill et al., 2008; Scoats et al., 2017). Firstly, there will be cultural biases stemming from the Anglo-centric nature of the sample, meaning that the research may not speak to experiences in other cultures. Furthermore, those with negative sexual experiences are likely to be under-reported because of the presumed stigmatisation that negative sexual experiences can cause (Laumann, Paik, & Rosen, 1999; Testa, VanZile-Tamsen, Livingston, & Koss, 2004). Additionally, those who are more likely volunteer for studies on sexual behaviour are also more likely to report higher rates of sexual variability, frequency, as well as liberal attitudes towards sex (Bogaert, 1996; Fenton, Johnson, McManus, & Erens, 2001; Strassberg & Lowe, 1995). Consequently, my results are unlikely to be representative across the general population. Without further research into this area, however, we cannot claim that the “average” threesome experience is necessarily any different to those that I have highlighted.

In addition, the sample is also perhaps over-representative of privileged groups, namely those who are white, middle-class, and of a certain level of education. It is not, however, clear whether these particular demographics stem from sampling issues, or whether they are perhaps demonstrative of privileges that have allowed the sample to

engage in more stigmatised sexual practices. Looking at Sheff's (2005, p. 278) study on polyamorous women, she suggested:

It is no coincidence...that women with class and race privilege reported feeling greater freedom in relationship style. The ample resources they commanded conferred increased ability to transgress social boundaries since their cultural cachet created the safety net that allowed them to challenge monogamous social norms while simultaneously weathering the storms of the complex relationship style.

Accordingly, my participants might have similarly benefited from their privilege and therefore felt greater agency to transgress sexual norms.

But whilst my sample might not be generalisable to the wider population, this was also not the motivation of the research. Qualitative research is concerned with collecting rich and meaningful data that can highlight the experiences of a particular group, at a particular point in time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). From such research, a greater depth of insight can be found compared with quantitative methods, and this insight can lead to new directions in research.

Implications for Future Research

The initial motivation behind this research was to gain greater insight into people's threesome experiences within contemporary society. Whilst there were a number of similarities with other previous studies on threesomes (e.g. Karlen, 1988; Thompson & Byers, 2017), there were also numerous findings that had not been previously highlighted. Here I will briefly highlight some of the implications of my findings for potential future research.

First of all, it is important to continue research into MMF threesomes, specifically, men who engage in MMF threesomes whilst in romantic relationships. It is not yet clear whether men are different in how they experience feelings of jealousy and the impact on their relationship, although some of the female participants' descriptions of their partner would suggest that it is similar. A number of men specifically said that they would not want to see their girlfriend with another man; but what then allows some men to engage in MMF threesomes with their partners, whereas others say they never would?

Additionally, it would be beneficial to further explore the experiences of women who had engaged in MMF threesomes. For the three female participants who had experience of one, each of them eroticised male same-sex sexual behaviour. However, by looking at some of the male participants' experiences we can see that male-male, same-sex sexual interaction does not necessarily happen very often. Consequently, it feels important to try and understand why some women do not view MMF threesomes as dangerous and objectifying in the same way that others do.

Finally, this research highlights the complex nature of threesomes, and this knowledge should be carried forward into future research. Given the multiple reasons, purposes, configurations, interactions, motivations around, and functions of threesomes, future researchers should be mindful to avoid reductionism when looking to understand threesomes. For example, recent research by Morris et al. (2016) on threesomes makes a number of assumptions regarding their participants. By asking: 'What was the outcome of having a threesome with your partner?' (p. 74), this makes the fundamental assumption that threesomes only happen when a single person joins a couple. However, as I have shown, this is not always the case. Additionally, as my research has shown, threesomes within the context of a romantic relationship often have different meanings compared with those outside of relationships. Consequently, future researchers should aim to be careful in the questions they ask, so to avoid erasing particular people's experiences.

Conclusions

To summarise, I argue that more inclusive attitudes towards those from sexual minorities, enhanced sexual freedoms for men and women, as well as societal expectations to explore new forms of sex, have allowed the for the possibility of a threesome to become a reality (for some). Of course, not all threesome experiences are positive, but as I have shown, nor are they all negative. It is therefore my desire that this research can help further balance the discourse that we have around threesomes. It is also hoped that this research can help those with a curiosity around threesomes to better understand the best way to navigate them. Finally, it is important to note that whilst motivations for a threesome may stem from one place, the resulting outcomes are sometimes more profound. They might help strengthen friendships, bring couples closer together, or even sow the seeds of doubt in the foundations of monogamy.

References

- Abbey, A. (2002). Alcohol-related sexual assault: A common problem among college students. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Supplement*, (14), 118–128.
doi:10.15288/jsas.2002.s14.118
- Adam, B. D. (2006). Relationship innovation in male couples. *Sexualities*, 9(1), 5–26.
doi:10.1177/1363460706060685
- Adams, A. (2011). 'Josh wears pink cleats': Inclusive masculinity on the soccer field. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(5), 579–596. doi:10.1080/00918369.2011.563654
- Adams, M., Oye, J., & Parker, T. (2003). Sexuality of older adults and the Internet: From sex education to cybersex. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 18(3), 405–415.
doi:10.1080/1468199031000153991
- Adriaens, F., & Van Bauwel, S. (2014). Sex and the City: A postfeminist point of view? Or how popular culture functions as a channel for feminist discourse. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 47(1), 174–195. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00869.x
- Aguilar, J. (2013). Situational sexual behaviors: The ideological work of moving toward polyamory in communal living groups. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 42(1), 104–129. doi:10.1177/0891241612464886
- Albury, K. (2014). Porn and sex education, porn as sex education. *Porn Studies*, 1(1–2), 172–181. doi:10.1080/23268743.2013.863654
- Alexander, M. G., & Fisher, T. D. (2003). Truth and consequences: Using the bogus pipeline to examine sex differences in self-reported sexuality. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 40(1), 27–35. doi:10.1080/00224490309552164
- Allan, A. J. (2009). The importance of being a 'lady': Hyper-femininity and heterosexuality in the private, single-sex primary school. *Gender and Education*, 21(2), 145–158.
doi:10.1080/09540250802213172
- Allen, W. (Director). (2008). *Vicky Christina Barcelona* [Motion picture]. United States: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- Allen, L. (2006). "Looking at the real thing": Young men, pornography, and sexuality education. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27(1), 69–83.
doi:10.1080/01596300500510302
- Allen, E. S., Atkins, D. C., Baucom, D. H., Snyder, D. K., Gordon, K. C., & Glass, S. P. (2005). Intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual factors in engaging in and responding to extramarital involvement. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 12(2), 101–130.
doi:10.1093/clipsy.bpi014

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Anderson, E. (2005). *In the game: Gay athletes and the cult of masculinity*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Anderson, E. (2008). "Being masculine is not about who you sleep with...": Heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sex Roles*, 58(1-2), 104–115. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9337-7
- Anderson, E. (2009). *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities*. New York: Routledge.
- Anderson, E. (2010). "At least with cheating there is an attempt at monogamy": Cheating and monogamism among undergraduate heterosexual men. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(7), 851–872. doi:10.1177/0265407510373908
- Anderson, E. (2012). *The monogamy gap: Men, love, and the reality of cheating*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, E. (2014). *21st Century Jocks: Sporting men and contemporary heterosexuality*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Anderson, E., Adams, A., & Rivers, I. (2012). 'I kiss them because I love them': The emergence of heterosexual men kissing in British institutes of education. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41(2), 421–430. doi:10.1007/s10508-010-9678-0
- Anderson, E., & Bullingham, R. (2013). Openly lesbian team sport athletes in an era of decreasing homophobia. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(6), 647–660. doi:10.1177/1012690213490520
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2016). Inclusive masculinity theory: Overview, reflection and refinement. *Journal of Gender Studies*. Advanced online publication. doi: 10.1080/09589236.2016.1245605
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2014). Cuddling and spooning: Heteromascularity and homosocial tactility among student-athletes. *Men and Masculinities*, 18(2), 214–230. doi:10.1177/1097184X14523433
- Anderson, E., Scoats, R., & McCormack, M. (2015). Metropolitan bisexual men's relationships: Evidence of a cohort effect. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(1), 21–39. doi:10.1080/15299716.2014.994055
- Arksey, H., & Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing for social scientists: An introductory resource with examples*. London: Sage.

- Armstrong, H. L., & Reissing, E. D. (2014). Attitudes toward casual sex, dating, and committed relationships with bisexual partners. *Journal of Bisexuality, 14*(2), 236–264. doi:10.1080/15299716.2014.902784
- Armstrong, E. A., Hamilton, L. T., Armstrong, E. M., & Seeley, J. L. (2014). “Good girls”: Gender, social class, and slut discourse on campus. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 77*(2), 100–122. doi:10.1177/0190272514521220
- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Arnett, J. J., Ramos, K. D., & Jensen, L. A. (2001). Ideological views in emerging adulthood : Balancing autonomy and community. *Journal of Adult Development, 8*(2), 69–79. doi:10.1023/A:1026460917338
- Attwood, F. (2005). What do people do with porn? Qualitative research into the consumption, use, and experience of pornography and other sexually explicit media. *Sexuality and Culture, 9*(2), 65–86. doi:10.1007/s12119-005-1008-7
- Attwood, F. (2006). Sexed up : Theorizing the sexualization of culture. *Sexualities, 9*(1), 77–94. doi:10.1177/1363460706053336
- Attwood, F. (2010). Sexualization, sex and manners. *Sexualities, 13*(6), 742–745. doi:10.1177/1363460710384553
- Attwood, F. (2011). The paradigm shift : Pornography research, sexualization and extreme images. *Sociology Compass, 5*(1), 13–22. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00356.x
- Attwood, F., & Smith, C. (2013). More sex! Better sex! Sex is fucking brilliant! Sex, sex, sex, SEX. In T. Blackshaw (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of leisure studies* (pp. 325–336). London: Routledge.
- Backstrom, L., Armstrong, E. A., & Puentes, J. (2012). Women’s negotiation of cunnilingus in college hookups and relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research, 49*(1), 1–12. doi:10.1080/00224499.2011.585523
- Bahn, S., & Weatherill, P. (2013). Qualitative social research: A risky business when it comes to collecting ‘sensitive’ data. *Qualitative Research, 13*(1), 19–35. doi:10.1177/1468794112439016
- Bailey, J. M., Kirk, K. M., Zhu, G., Dunne, M. P., & Martin, N. G. (2000). Do individual differences in sociosexuality represent genetic or environmentally contingent strategies? Evidence from the Australian twin registry. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(3), 537–545. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.78.3.537
- Ball, A. (Creator). (2008). *True blood* [Television series]. United States: HBO Enterprises.

- Baker, P. L., & Hotek, D. R. (2011). Grappling with gender: Exploring masculinity and gender in the bodies, performances, and emotions of scholastic wrestlers. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 1(Fall), 49–64. Retrieved from http://www.jfsonline.org/issue1/pdfs/jfs_issueFINAL.pdf#page=53
- Barash, D. P., & Lipton, J. E. (2001). *The myth of monogamy: Fidelity and infidelity in animals and people*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Co.
- Barker, M. (2005). This is my partner, and this is my... partner's partner: Constructing a polyamorous identity in a monogamous world. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 18(1), 75–88. doi:10.1080/10720530590523107
- Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (2010). Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent research and theory. *Sexualities*, 13(6), 748–772. doi:10.1177/1363460710384645
- Barrett, T. (2015). Friendships between men across sexual orientation: The management of sexual difference through humour. *Journal of Sociology*, 52(2), 355-370. doi:10.1177/1440783314562413
- Barta, W., & Kiene, S. (2005). Motivations for infidelity in heterosexual dating couples: The roles of gender, personality differences, and sociosexual orientation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(3), 339–360. doi:10.1177/0265407505052440
- Baumeister, R. F. (2004). Gender and erotic plasticity: Sociocultural influences on the sex drive. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 19(2), 133–139. doi:10.1080/14681990410001691343
- Baumeister, R. F., Catanese, K. R., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Is there a gender difference in strength of sex drive? Theoretical views, conceptual distinctions, and a review of relevant evidence. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(3), 242–273. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0503_5
- Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2004). Sexual economics: Sex as female resource for social exchange in heterosexual interactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(4), 339–363. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0804_2
- Baxter, L. A., & Wilmot, W. W. (1985). Taboo topics in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2(3), 253–269. doi:10.1177/0265407585023002
- Bernstein, E. (2001). The meaning of the purchase: Desire, demand and the commerce of sex. *Ethnography*, 2(3), 389–420. doi:10.1177/14661380122230975
- Bérubé, A. (1991). *Coming out under fire: The history of gay men and women in world war II*. New York: Plume.

- Beynon, J. (2002). *Masculinities and culture*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Bezreh, T., Weinberg, T. S., & Edgar, T. (2012). BDSM disclosure and stigma management: Identifying opportunities for sex education. *Journal of Sexuality Education, 7*(1), 37–61. doi:10.1080/15546128.2012.650984
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research, 10*(2), 141–163. doi:10.1177/004912418101000205
- Bird, S. R. (1996). Welcome to the men’s club: Homosociality and the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. *Gender & Society, 10*(2), 120–132. doi:10.1177/089124396010002002
- Bisson, M. A., & Levine, T. R. (2009). Negotiating a friends with benefits relationship. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*(1), 66–73. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9211-2
- Blackwell, C. W. (2008). Belief in the ‘free choice’ model of homosexuality: A correlate of homophobia in registered nurses. *Journal of LGBT Health Research, 3*(3), 31–40. doi:10.1080/15574090802093117
- Blanchard, C., McCormack, M., & Peterson, G. (2015). Inclusive masculinities in a working-class sixth form in northeast England. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 1–24*. doi:10.1177/0891241615610381
- Bogaert, A. F. (1996). Volunteer bias in human sexuality research: Evidence for both sexuality and personality differences in males. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 25*(2), 125–140. doi:10.1007/BF02437932
- Bogle, K. (2008). *Hooking up: Sex, dating, and relationships on campus*. New York: New York University Press.
- Boyer, C. R., & Galupo, M. P. (2015). “Prove it!” same-sex performativity among sexual minority women and men. *Psychology & Sexuality, 6*(4), 357–368. doi:10.1080/19419899.2015.1021372
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bradshaw, C., Kahn, A. S., & Saville, B. K. (2010). To hook up or date: Which gender benefits? *Sex Roles, 62*(9–10), 661–669. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9765-7
- Branfman, J., Stiritz, S., & Anderson, E. (2017). Relaxing the straight male anus: Decreasing homophobia around anal eroticism. *Sexualities*. Advanced online publication. doi:10.1177/1363460716678560.

- Brents, B. G., & Sanders, T. (2010). Mainstreaming the sex industry : Economic inclusion and social ambivalence. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37(1), 40–60. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6478.2010.00494.x
- Bricker, M. E., & Horne, S. G. (2007). Gay men in long-term relationships. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy: Innovations in Clinical and Educational Interventions*, 6(4), 27–47. doi:10.1300/J398v06n04
- Bringle, R., & Buunk, B. P. (1991). Jealousy and extra-dyadic relationships. In K. McKinney & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *Sexuality in close relationships* (pp. 135–153). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47–60. doi:10.1080/1364557032000081663
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burkett, M., & Hamilton, K. (2012). Postfeminist sexual agency: Young women’s negotiations of sexual consent. *Sexualities*, 15(7), 815–833. doi:10.1177/1363460712454076
- Burnette, J. (2008). *Gender, work and wages in industrial revolution Britain*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Burstyn, V. (1999). *The rites of men: Manhood, politics, and the culture of sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto press.
- Buss, D. M., Larsen, R. J., Westen, D., & Semmelroth, J. (1992). Sex differences in jealousy: Evolution, physiology, and psychology. *Psychological Science*, 3(4), 251–255. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.1992.tb00038.x
- Buunk, B. P., Angleitner, A., Oubaid, V., & Buss, D. M. (1996). Sex differences in jealousy in evolutionary and cultural perspective: Tests from the Netherlands, Germany, and the United States. *Psychological Science*, 7(6), 359–363. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.1996.tb00389.x
- Buxton, R. (2015). *Margret Cho’s guide for having a successful threesome*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/05/margaret-cho-threesome_n_6418912.html?utm_hp_ref=tw
- Caldwell, M., & Peplau, L. (1982). Sex differences in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles*, 8(7), 721–732. doi:10.1007/BF00287568
- Cancian, F. (1987). *Love in America: Gender and self-development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Carlson, J. (2010). The female significant in all-women's amateur roller derby emphasized femininity in sport. *Sociology of Sport*, 27, 428–440. doi:10.1123/ssj.27.4.428
- Carrigan, M. (2011). There's more to life than sex? Difference and commonality within the asexual community. *Sexualities*, 14(4), 462–478. doi:10.1177/1363460711406462
- Catania, J. A. (1999). A framework for conceptualizing reporting bias and its antecedents in interviews assessing human sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, 36(1), 25–38. doi:10.1080/00224499909551964
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory. A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chen, E. (2012). Caught in a bad bromance. *Texas Journal of Women & the Law*, 21(2), 241–266. Retrieved from <http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/tjwl21&div=12&id=&page=>
- Choi, K. H., Catania, J. A., & Dolcini, M. M. (1994). Extramarital sex and HIV risk behavior among US adults : Results from the National AIDS Behavioral Survey. *American Journal of Public Health*, 84(12), 2003–2007. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1615405/pdf/amjph00463-0133.pdf>
- Clements, B., & Field, C. D. (2014). Public opinion toward homosexuality and gay rights in Great Britain. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 78 (2), 523–547. doi:10.1093/poq/nfu018
- Cobbina, J. E., & Oselin, S. S. (2011). It's not only for the money: An analysis of adolescent versus adult entry into street prostitution. *Sociological Inquiry*, 81(3), 310–332. doi:10.1111/j.1475-682X.2011.00375.x
- Cockburn, C., & Clarke, G. (2002). "Everybody's looking at you!": Girls negotiating the "femininity deficit". *Women's Studies International Forum*, 25(6), 651–665. doi:10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00351-5
- Coelho, T. (2011). Hearts, groins and the intricacies of gay male open relationships: Sexual desire and liberation revisited. *Sexualities*, 14(6), 653–668. doi:10.1177/1363460711422306
- Coltrane, S. (1994). Theorizing masculinities in contemporary social science. In H. Brod & M. Kaufman (Eds.), *Theorising Masculinities* (pp. 39–61). London: Sage.
- Coltrane, S., & Adams, M. (2008). *Gender and families*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Conley, T. D., Moors, A. C., Matsick, J. L., & Ziegler, A. (2012a). The fewer the merrier?: Assessing stigma surrounding consensually non-monogamous romantic relationships.

- Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 13(1), 1–30. doi:10.1111/j.1530-2415.2012.01286.x
- Conley, T. D., Moors, A. C., Ziegler, A., & Karathanasis, C. (2012b). Unfaithful individuals are less likely to practice safer sex than openly nonmonogamous individuals. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 9(6), 1559–1565. doi:10.1111/j.1743-6109.2012.02712.x
- Conley, T. D., Ziegler, A., Moors, A. C., Matsick, J. L., & Valentine, B. (2013). A critical examination of popular assumptions about the benefits and outcomes of monogamous relationships. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 17(2), 124–141. doi:10.1177/1088868312467087
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859. doi:10.1177/0891243205278639
- Connolly, J., Craig, W., Goldberg, A., & Pepler, D. (1999). Conceptions of cross-sex friendships and romantic relationships in early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28(4), 481–494. doi:10.1023/A:1021669024820
- Corrigan, P., & Matthews, A. (2003). Stigma and disclosure: Implications for coming out of the closet. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12(3), 235–248. doi:10.1080/0963823031000118221
- Couch, D., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). Online dating and mating: The use of the internet to meet sexual partners. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(2), 268–279. doi:10.1177/1049732307312832
- Cox, B., & Thompson, S. (2001). Facing the bogey: Women, football and sexuality. *Football Studies*, 4(2), 7–24. Retrieved from <http://www.library.la84.org/SportsLibrary/FootballStudies/2001/FS0402d.pdf>
- Daly, M., Wilson, M., & Weghorst, S. J. (1982). Male sexual jealousy. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 3(1), 11–27. doi:10.1016/0162-3095(82)90027-9
- Daneback, K., Månsson, S. A., & Ross, M. W. (2007). Using the Internet to find offline sex partners. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior: The Impact of the Internet, Multimedia and Virtual Reality on Behavior and Society*, 10(1), 100–107. doi:10.1089/cpb.2006.9986
- Dashper, K. (2012). “Dressage is full of queens!” Masculinity, sexuality and equestrian sport. *Sociology*, 46(4), 1109–1124. doi:10.1111/j.1558-5646.2008.00557.x

- Davies, R. (2005). The slash fanfiction connection to bi Men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 5(2-3), 195–202. doi:10.1300/J159v05n02
- Davis-Delano, L. R., Pollock, A., & Ellsworth Vose, J. (2009). Apologetic behavior among female athletes: A new questionnaire and initial results. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 44 (2–3), 131–150. doi:10.1177/1012690209335524
- Day, K., Gough, B., & McFadden, M. (2007). 'Warning! Alcohol can seriously damage your feminine health.' *Feminist Media Studies*, 4(2), 165–183. doi:10.1080/1468077042000251238
- De Visser, R. O. (2009). 'I'm not a very manly man': Qualitative insights into young men's masculine subjectivity. *Men and Masculinities*, 11(3), 367–371. doi:10.1177/1097184X07313357
- De Visser, R. O., & McDonald, D. (2007). Swings and roundabouts: Management of jealousy in heterosexual swinging couples. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(2), 459–476. doi:10.1348/014466606X143153
- De Visser, R. O., Smith, J. A., & McDonnell, E. J. (2009). 'That's not masculine': Masculine capital and health-related behaviour. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14(7), 1047–1058. doi:10.1177/1359105309342299
- De Visser, R. O., & Smith, J. A. (2007). Alcohol consumption and masculine identity among young men. *Psychology & Health*, 22(5), 595–614. doi:10.1080/14768320600941772
- Deakin, H., & Wakefield, K. (2014). Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 603–616. doi:10.1177/1468794113488126
- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2002). *Ground rules for good research: A 10 point guide for social researchers*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Derlega, V., Lewis, R., Harrison, S., Winstead, B., & Costanza, R. (1989). Gender differences in the initiation and attribution of tactile intimacy. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 13(2), 83–96. doi:10.1007/BF00990792
- Derlega, V. J., Catanzaro, D., & Lewis, R. J. (2001). Perceptions about tactile intimacy in same-sex and opposite-sex pairs based on research participants' sexual orientation. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* 2(2), 124–132. doi:10.1037/1524-9220.2.2.124
- DeSteno, D., Bartlett, M. Y., Braverman, J., & Salovey, P. (2002). Sex differences in jealousy: Evolutionary mechanism or artefact of measurement? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(5), 1103–1116. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.83.5.1103

- Diamond, L. M. (2009). *Sexual fluidity: Understanding women's love and desire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dixon, J. K. (1984). The commencement of bisexual activity in swinging married women over age thirty. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20(1), 71–90. doi:10.1080/00224498409551207
- Dlamini, B. (2006). Homosexuality in the African context. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 20(67), 128–136. doi:10.1080/10130950.2006.9674706
- Dreher, R. (2014). *And so the campaign for polygamy begins*. Retrieved from <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/and-so-the-campaign-for-polygamy-begins/>
- Drummond, M. J. N., Filiault, S. M., Anderson, E., & Jeffries, D. (2014). Homosocial intimacy among Australian undergraduate men. *Journal of Sociology*, 51(3), 1–14. doi:10.1177/1440783313518251
- Easton, D., & Hardy, J. W. (2009). *The ethical slut: A practical guide to polyamory, open relationships & other adventures* (2nd ed.). Berkley, CA: Celestial Arts.
- Eck, B. A. (2003). Men are much harder: Gendered viewing of nude images. *Gender & Society*, 17(5), 691–710. doi:10.1177/0891243203255604
- Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1995). *Men in perspective*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Eliason, M. (2000). Bi-negativity: The stigma facing bisexual men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2–3), 137–154. doi:10.1300/J159v01n02
- Elliott, S., & Umberson, D. (2008). The performance of desire: Gender and sexual negotiation in long-term marriages. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(2), 391–406. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00489.x
- Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2(1), 335–362. doi:10.1146/annurev.so.02.080176.002003
- England, P., Shafer, E. F., & Fogarty, A. C. K. (2008). Hooking up and forming relationships on today's college campuses. In M. Kimmel (Eds.), *The gendered society reader* (3rd ed.) (pp. 531– 593). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eshbaugh, E. M., & Gute, G. (2008). Hookups and sexual regret among college women. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 148(1), 77–90. doi:10.3200/SOCP.148.1.77-90
- Esterline, K. M., & Galupo, M. P. (2013). “Drunken curiosity” and “gay chicken”: gender differences in same-sex performativity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 13(1), 106–121. doi:10.1080/15299716.2013.755732

- Ezzell, M. B. (2009). 'Barbie Dolls' on the pitch: Identity work, defensive othering, and inequality in women's rugby. *Social Problems*, *56*(1), 111–131.
doi:10.1525/sp.2009.56.1.111
- Fahs, B. (2009). Compulsory bisexuality?: The challenges of modern sexual fluidity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *9*(3-4), 431–449. doi:10.1080/15299710903316661
- Farvid, P., & Braun, V. (2006). 'Most of us guys are raring to go anytime, anyplace, anywhere': Male and female sexuality in Cleo and Cosmo. *Sex Roles*, *55*(5-6), 295–310.
doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9084-1
- Faugier, J., & Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *26*, 790–797. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.00371.x
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fenton, K. A., Johnson, A. M., Mcmanus, S., & Erens, B. (2001). Measuring sexual behaviour: Methodological challenges in survey research. *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, *77*, 84–92. doi:10.1136/sti.77.2.84
- Fetterolf, J. C., & Sanchez, D. T. (2015). The costs and benefits of perceived sexual agency for men and women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *44*(4), 961–970. doi:10.1007/s10508-014-0408-x
- Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S., & Wong, L. (2000). For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 107–132). London: Sage.
- Fisher, H. E. (1998). Lust, attraction, and attachment in mammalian reproduction. *Human Nature*, *9*(1), 23–52. doi:10.1007/s12110-998-1010-5
- Fleckenstein, J. R., & Cox, D. W. (2014). The association of an open relationship orientation with health and happiness in a sample of older US adults. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, *30*(1), 94–116. doi:10.1080/14681994.2014.976997
- Flood, M. (2008). How bonds between men shape their sexual relations with women. *Men and Masculinities*, *10*(3), 339–359. doi:10.1177/1097184X06287761
- Flores, A. R., Haider-Markel, D. P., Lewis, D. C., Miller, P. R., Tadlock, B. L., & Taylor, J. K. (2017). Challenged expectations: Mere exposure effects on attitudes about transgender people and rights. *Political Psychology*. Advanced online publication.
doi:10.1111/pops.12402

- Floyd, K. (2000). Affectionate same-sex touch: The influence of homophobia on observers' perceptions. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 140*(6), 774–788.
doi:10.1080/00224540009600516
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 645–672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1976). *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Frank, D. J., Camp, B. J., & Boutcher, S. a. (2010). Worldwide trends in the criminal regulation of sex, 1945 to 2005. *American Sociological Review, 75*(6), 867–893.
doi:10.1177/0003122410388493
- Frank, K. (2008). 'Not gay, but not homophobic': Male sexuality and homophobia in the 'lifestyle'. *Sexualities, 11*(4), 435–454. doi:10.1177/1363460708091743
- Frank, K. (2013). *Plays Well in Groups: A Journey Through the World of Group Sex*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality (an excerpt). In J. Strachey (Eds.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 7* (pp. 215–282). London: Hogarth Press.
- Friedman, S. R., Mateu-Gelabert, P., & Sandoval, M. (2011). Group sex events amongst non-gay drug users: an understudied risk environment. *International Journal of Drug Policy, 22*(1), 1–8. doi:10.1016/j.drugpo.2010.06.004
- Gabb, J., & Fink, J. (2015). *Couple Relationships in the 21st Century*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Garber, M. (2000). *Bisexuality & the eroticism of everyday life*. London: Routledge.
- Garcia, N. (Creator). (2012). *Polyamory: Married & dating* [television series]. United States: Showtime.
- Garcia, J. R., Reiber, C., Massey, S. G., & Merriwether, A. M. (2012). Sexual hookup culture: A review. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(2), 161–176. doi:10.1037/a0027911
- Gavey, N. (1992). Technologies and effects of heterosexual coercion. *Feminism & Psychology, 2*(3), 325–351. doi:10.1177/0959353592023003
- Giordano, P. C., Manning, W. D., Longmore, M. A., & Flanigan, C. M. (2012). Developmental shifts in the character of romantic and sexual relationships from adolescence to young adulthood. In A. Booth, S. Brown, N. Landale, W. Manning, & S. McHale (Eds.), *Early adulthood in a family context* (pp. 133–164). New York, NY: Springer.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. I. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Gervais, S., DiLillo, D., & Mcchague, D. E. (2014). Understanding the link between men's alcohol use and sexual violence perpetration: The mediating role of sexual objectification. *Psychology of Violence, 4*(2), 156–169. doi:10.1037/a0033840
- Gladwell, H. (2017). *52-year-old couple explain why they believe swinging has strengthened their marriage*. Retrieved from <http://metro.co.uk/2017/01/18/52-year-old-couple-explain-why-they-believe-swinging-has-strengthened-their-marriage-6386604/>
- Gledhill, S. E., Abbey, J. A., & Schweitzer, R. (2008). Sampling methods: Methodological issues involved in the recruitment of older people into a study of sexuality. *The Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 26*(1), 84–94. Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/15009/1/15009.pdf>
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gibbons, T. (Director). (2010). *Sister wives* [television series]. United States: TLC.
- Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology, 18*(1), 35–60. doi:10.1177/0959353507084950
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Gonzalez, S. (2014). *How to choose the right partner for a threesome*. Retrieved from <http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/love/how-to-choose-threesome-partner>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from prison notebooks*. London: New Left Books.
- Gratton, C., & Jones, I. (2004). *Research methods for sports studies*. London: Routledge.
- Grazian, D. (2007). The girl hunt: Urban nightlife and the performance of masculinity as collective activity. *Symbolic Interaction, 30*(2), 221–243. doi:10.1525/si.2007.30.2.221
- Gribble, J. N., Miller, H. G., Rogers, S. M., Turner, C. F., Rogers, S. M., & Millers, H. G. (1999). Interview mode and measurement of sexual behaviors: Methodological issues. *Journal of Sex Research, 36*(1), 16–24. doi:10.1080/00224499909551963
- Griffin, P. (1998). *Strong women, deep closets*. Leeds: Human Kinetics.
- Griffin, T. (2014). *Ménage a trois anyone? Read this first*. Retrieved from <http://madamenoire.com/493657/one-two-threesome-menage-trois-anyone/>

- Grunt-Mejer, K., & Campbell, C. (2016). Around consensual nonmonogamies: Assessing attitudes toward nonexclusive relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 52*(1), 45–53. doi:10.1080/00224499.2015.1010193
- Hallberg, L. R. M. (2006). The ‘core category’ of grounded theory: Making constant comparisons. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 1*(3), 141–148. doi:10.1080/17482620600858399
- Hamilton, L. (2007). Trading on heterosexuality: College women’s gender strategies and homophobia. *Gender & Society, 21*(2), 145–172. doi:10.1177/0891243206297604
- Hamilton, L., & Armstrong, E. A. (2009). Gendered sexuality in young adulthood: Double binds and flawed options. *Gender & Society, 23*(5), 589–616. doi:10.1177/0891243209345829
- Hammaren, N., & Johansson, T. (2014). Homosociality: In between power and intimacy. *SAGE Open, 4*(1), 1–11. doi:10.1177/2158244013518057
- Hammersely, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hanna, P. (2012). Using internet technologies (such as Skype) as a research medium: a research note. *Qualitative Research, 12*(2), 239–242. doi:10.1177/1468794111426607
- Harding, D. J., & Jencks, C. (2003). American association for public opinion research changing attitudes toward premarital sex: Cohort, period, and aging effects changing attitudes toward premarital sex. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 67*(2), 211–226. doi:10.1086/374399
- Hargreaves, J. A. (1994). *Sporting females*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, C. R. (2002). Sexual and romantic jealousy in heterosexual and homosexual adults. *Psychological Science, 13*(1), 7–12. doi:10.1111/1467-9280.00402
- Harris, C. R. (2003). A review of sex differences in sexual jealousy, including self-report data, psychophysiological responses, interpersonal violence, and morbid jealousy. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 7*(2), 102–128. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0702_102-128
- Harris, J. I., Cook, S. W., & Kashubeck-West, S. (2008). Religious attitudes, internalized homophobia, and identity in gay and lesbian adults. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 12*(3), 205–225. doi:10.1080/19359700802111452
- Harris, M. (1964). *Patterns of race in the Americas*. New York: Walker.

- Hart, S. L., Carrington, H. A., Tronick, E. Z., & Carroll, S. R. (2004). When infants lose exclusive maternal attention: Is it jealousy? *Infancy, 6*(1), 57–78.
doi:10.1207/s15327078in0601_3
- Hartman, J. E. (2011). Finding a needle in a haystack: Methods for sampling in the bisexual community. *Journal of Bisexuality, 11*(1), 64–74. doi:10.1080/15299716.2011.545306
- Hartmann, H. (1976). Capitalism, patriarchy, and job segregation by sex. *Signs, 1*(3), 137–169. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173001>
- Harvey, L., & Gill, R. (2011). Spicing it up: Sexual entrepreneurs and The Sex Inspectors. In R. Gill & C. Scharff (Eds.), *New femininities: Postfeminism, neoliberalism and subjectivity* (pp. 52–67). Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harviainen, J. T., & Frank, K. (2016). Group sex as play: Rules and transgression in shared non-monogamy. *Games and Culture*. Advanced online publication.
doi:10.1177/1555412016659835
- Hayfield, N., & Clarke, V. (2012). “I’d be just as happy with a cup of tea”: Women’s accounts of sex and affection in long-term heterosexual relationships. *Women’s Studies International Forum, 35*(2), 67–74. doi: 10.1016/j.wsif.2012.01.003
- Heldman, C., & Wade, L. (2010). Hook-up culture: Setting a new research agenda. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 7*(4), 323–333. doi:10.1007/s13178-010-0024-z
- Herek, G. M. (2002). Heterosexuals attitudes toward bisexual men and women in the United States. *Journal of Sex Research, 39*(4), 264–74. doi:10.1080/00224490209552150
- Herek, G. M., & Capitano, J. P. (1996). "Some of my best friends": Intergroup contact, concealable stigma, and heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*(4), 412–424.
doi:10.1177/0146167296224007
- Hinchliff, S., Gott, M., & Wylie, K. (2012). A qualitative study of heterosexual women’s attempts to renegotiate sexual relationships in the context of severe sexual problems. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 41*(5), 1253–1261. doi:10.1007/s10508-012-9903-0
- Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The status of method: Flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative Research, 3*(3), 345–357. doi:10.1177/1468794103033004
- Holt, A. (2010). Using the telephone for narrative interviewing: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 10*(1), 113–121. doi:10.1177/1468794109348686
- Hosking, W. (2013). Agreements about extra-dyadic sex in gay men’s relationships: Exploring differences in relationship quality by agreement type and rule-breaking behavior. *Journal of Homosexuality, 60*(5), 711–733. doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.773819

- Hudson, J. H. (2013). Comprehensive literature review pertaining to married men who have sex with men (MMSM). *Journal of Bisexuality, 13*(4), 417–601.
doi:10.1080/15299716.2013.842356
- Hughes, S. M., Harrison, M. A., & Gallup, G. G. (2004). Sex differences in mating strategies: Mate guarding, infidelity and multiple concurrent sex partners. *Sexualities, Evolution & Gender, 6*(1), 3–13. doi:10.1080/14616660410001733588
- Hutchins, L. (2001). *Erotic rites: A cultural analysis of contemporary US sacred sexuality traditions and trends* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Union Institute Graduate College, Ohio.
- Hutchinson, S., Marsiglio, W., & Cohan, M. (2002). Interviewing young men about sex and procreation: Methodological issues. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(1), 42–60.
doi:10.1177/1049732302012001004
- Hutzler, K. T., Giuliano, T. A., Herselman, J. R., & Johnson, S. M. (2016). Three's a crowd: Public awareness and (mis)perceptions of polyamory. *Psychology & Sexuality, 7*(2), 69–87. doi:10.1080/19419899.2015.1004102
- Ibson, J. (2002). *Picturing men: A century of male relationships in everyday American photography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ivins, S. (1956). Notes on Mormon polygamy. *Western Humanities Review 10*, 229–239.
Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com/openview/604a4c7205439ebc7feb5fb7abde9865/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1820945>
- Jackson, C., & Tinkler, P. (2007). 'Ladettes' and 'modern girls': 'Troublesome' young femininities. *The Sociological Review, 55*(2), 251–272. doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2007.00704.x
- Jamieson, L. (2004). Intimacy, negotiated nonmonogamy and the limits of the couple. In J. Duncombe, K. Harrison, G. Allan, & D. Marsden (Eds.), *The state of affairs: Explorations in infidelity and commitment* (pp. 35–57). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jamieson, L. (1999). Intimacy transformed? A critical look at the 'pure relationship'. *Sociology, 33*(3), 477–494. doi:10.1177/S0038038599000310
- Jarvis, N. (2015). The inclusive masculinities of heterosexual men within UK gay sport clubs. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 50*(3), 283–300. doi:10.1177/1012690213482481
- Jenefsky, C., & Miller, D. H. (1998). Phallic intrusion: Girl-girl sex in Penthouse. *Women's Studies International Forum, 21*(4), 375–385. doi:10.1016/S0277-5395(98)00042-9

- Johnson, K. R., & Holmes, B. M. (2009). Contradictory messages: A content analysis of Hollywood-produced romantic comedy feature films. *Communication Quarterly*, 57(3), 352–373. doi:10.1080/01463370903113632
- Jonason, P. K., & Marks, M. J. (2008). Common vs. uncommon sexual acts: Evidence for the sexual double standard. *Sex Roles*, 60(5-6), 357–365. doi:10.1007/s11199-008-9542-z
- Joseph, L. J., & Black, P. (2012). Who's the man? Fragile masculinities, consumer masculinities, and the profiles of sex work clients. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(5), 486–506. doi:10.1177/1097184X12458591
- Joyal, C. C., Cossette, A., & Lapierre, V. (2014). What exactly is an unusual sexual fantasy? *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 12(2), 328–340. doi:10.1111/jsm.12734
- Kaplan, D. (2006). Public intimacy : Dynamics of seduction in male homosocial interactions. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(4), 571–595. doi:10.1525/si.2005.28.4.571
- Karlen, A. (1988). *Threesomes: Studies in sex, power, and intimacy*. New York: William Morrow.
- Keleher, A., & Smith, E. R. N. (2012). Growing support for gay and lesbian equality since 1990. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59(9), 1307–1326. doi:10.1080/00918369.2012.720540
- Kelly, D. M., Pomerantz, S., & Currie, D. (2006). Skater girlhood and emphasized femininity: 'You can't land an ollie properly in heels'. *Gender and Education*, 17(3), 229–248. doi:10.1080/09540250500145163
- Khasawneh, O. M., Hijazi, A. H. Y., & Salman, N. H. (2011). Polygamy and its impact on the upbringing of children: A Jordanian perspective. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42(4), 563–577. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41604468>
- Kimberly, C., & Hans, J. D. (2015). From fantasy to reality: A grounded theory of experiences in the swinging lifestyle. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 46(3), 789–799. doi:10.1007/s10508-015-0621-2
- Kimmel, M. (1994). Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In H. Brod & M. Kaufman (Eds.), *Research on men and masculinities series: Theorizing masculinities* (pp. 119–142). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kleinplatz, P. J., Ménard, A. D., Paquet, M-P., Paradis, N., Campbell, M., Zuccarino, D., & Mehak, L. (2009). The components of optimal sexuality: A portrait of "great sex." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 18(1–2), 1–13. doi: 10.1080/15546128.2014.883264

- Klesse, C. (2006). Polyamory and its 'Others': Contesting the terms of non-monogamy. *Sexualities, 9*(5), 565–583. doi:10.1177/1363460706069986
- Knight, R. (2015). *You can now have a virtual threesome if you can't get one in reality*. Retrieved from <http://www.unilad.co.uk/nsfw/you-can-now-have-a-virtual-threesome-if-you-cant-get-one-in-reality/>
- Knox, D., Zusman, M., & McNeely, A. (2008). University student beliefs about sex: Men vs. women. *College Student Journal, 42*(1), 181–185. Retrieved from <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/College-Student-Journal/177412568.html>
- Kolod, S. (2009). Menopause and sexuality. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 45*(1), 26–43. doi:10.1080/00107530.2009.10745985
- Komarovsky, M. (1974). Patterns of self-disclosure of male undergraduates. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 36*(4), 677–686. doi:10.2307/350349
- Krane, V. (2001). We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sport. *Quest, 53*(1), 115–133. doi:10.1080/00336297.2001.10491733
- Krane, V., & Barber, H. (2003). Lesbian experiences in sport: A social identity perspective. *Quest, 55*(4), 328–346. doi:10.1080/00336297.2003.10491808
- Kratzer, J. M. W., & Aubrey, J. (2016). Is the actual ideal?: A content analysis of college students' descriptions of ideal and actual hookups. *Sexuality & Culture, 20*(2), 236–254. doi:10.1007/s12119-015-9318-x
- Lancaster, R. N. (1988). Subject honor and object shame: The construction of male homosexuality and stigma in Nicaragua. *Ethnology, 27*(2), 111–125. doi:10.2307/3773623
- Landén, M., & Innala, S. (2002). The effect of a biological explanation on attitudes towards homosexual persons. A Swedish national sample study. *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry, 56*(3), 181–186. doi:10.1080/080394802317607156
- LaSala, M. C. (2004). Monogamy of the heart: Extradyadic sex and gay male couples. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 17*(3), 1–24. doi:10.1300/J041v17n03
- Laumann, E. O., Paik, A., & Rosen, R. C. (1999). Sexual dysfunction in the United States: Prevalence and predictors. *Journal of American Medical Association, 281*(6), 537–544. doi:10.1001/jama.281.6.537
- Lehrer, E. (2013). *Gay marriage: Good; Polyamory: Bad*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-lehrer/gay-marriage-good-polyamo_b_4165423.html

- Lee, A. Y. (2001). The mere exposure effect: An uncertainty reduction explanation revisited. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(10), 1255–1266.
doi:10.1177/01461672012710002
- Leichliter, J. S., Chandra, A., Liddon, N., Fenton, K. A., & Aral, S. O. (2007). Prevalence and correlates of heterosexual anal and oral sex in adolescents and adults in the United States. *The Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 196(12), 1852–1859. doi: 10.1086/522867
- Leitch, W. (2006). *My girlfriend's kinky threesome*. Retrieved from:
<http://www.menshealth.com/best-life/sex-and-relationships-your-girlfriends-threesome?fullpage=true>
- Leigh, B. C. (1989). Reasons for having and avoiding sex: Gender, sexual orientation, and relationship to sexual behavior. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 26(2), 199–209.
doi:10.1080/00224498909551506
- Lenskyj, H. (1986). *Out of bounds: Women, sport and sexuality*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press
- Lenskyj, H. (2003). *Out on the field: Gender, sport, and sexualities*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Li, N. P., Bailey, J. M., Kenrick, D. T., & Linsenmeier, J. A. (2002). The necessities and luxuries of mate preferences: Testing the tradeoffs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 947–955. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.947
- Li, N. P., & Kenrick, D. T. (2006). Sex similarities and differences in preferences for short-term mates: what, whether, and why. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(3), 468–489. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.90.3.468
- Lind, G. (2005). Coming out swinging. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 5(2-3), 163–170.
doi:10.1300/J159v05n02
- Lippa, R. (2009). Sex differences in sex drive, sociosexuality, and height across 53 nations: Testing evolutionary and social structural theories. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 38(5), 631–651. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9242-8
- Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lukas, D., & Clutton-Brock, T. H. (2013). The evolution of social monogamy in mammals. *Science*, 341(6145), 526–530. doi:10.1126/science.1238677
- Macklin, E. D. (1980). Nontraditional family forms: A decade of research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 42(4), 905–922. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/351832>
- Malinowski, B. C. (1929). *The sexual life of savages in northwestern Melanesia: An ethnographic account of courtship, marriage, and family life among the natives of Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Manning, W. D., Giordano, P. C., & Longmore, M. A. (2006). Hooking up: The relationship contexts of “nonrelationship” sex. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 21*(5), 459–483. doi:10.1177/0743558406291692
- Martin, M. (1999). A boomer’s view of non-monogamy. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 3*(1–2), 135–142. doi:10.1300/J155v03n01_14
- Matsick, J. L., Conley, T. D., Ziegler, A., Moors, A. C., & Rubin, J. D. (2013). Love and sex: Polyamorous relationships are perceived more favourably than swinging and open relationships. *Psychology & Sexuality, 5*(4), 339–348. doi:10.1080/19419899.2013.832934
- Mays, N., & Pope, C. (1995). Rigour and qualitative research. *British Medical Journal, 311*, 109–112. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2550154/>
- McBride, K. R., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2010). Heterosexual anal sexuality and anal sex behaviors: A review. *Journal of sex research, 47*(2–3), 123–136. doi:10.1080/00224490903402538
- McCormack, M. (2011). The declining significance of homophobia for male students in three sixth forms in the south of England. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*(2), 337–353. doi:10.1080/01411921003653357
- McCormack, M. (2012). *The declining significance of homophobia: How teenage boys are redefining masculinity and heterosexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McCormack, M. (2014). The intersection of youth masculinities, decreasing homophobia and class: An ethnography. *The British Journal of Sociology, 65*(1), 130–149. doi:10.1111/1468-4446.12055
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2010). ‘It’s just not acceptable any more’: The erosion of homophobia and the softening of masculinity at an English sixth form. *Sociology, 44*(5), 843–859. doi:10.1177/0038038510375734
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2014a). Homophobia: Definitions, context and intersectionality. *Sex Roles, 71*(3-4), 152–158. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0401-9
- McCormack, M., & Anderson, E. (2014b). The influence of declining homophobia on men’s gender in the United States: An argument for the study of homophobia. *Sex Roles, 71*(3-4), 109-120. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0358-8
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview: Qualitative research methods series 13*. London: Sage
- McCutcheon, J. M., & Bishop, C. J. (2015). An erotic alternative? Women’s perception of gay pornography. *Psychology & Sexuality, 6*(1), 75–92. doi:10.1080/19419899.2014.983740

- McLean, K. (2004). Negotiating (non) monogamy. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(12), 83–97.
doi:10.1300/J159v04n01_07
- McNair, B. (2002). *Striptease culture: Sex, media and the democratization of desire*. London: Routledge.
- McNair, B. (2013). *Porno? Chic!: How pornography changed the world and made it a better place*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Magrath, R. (2016). *Inclusive masculinities in contemporary football: Men in the beautiful game*. London: Routledge.
- Meet the man behind the app that helps you get threesomes. (2014 February 26). Retrieved from <http://nextshark.com/meet-the-man-behind-the-app-that-helps-you-get-threesomes/#rmns>
- Ménard, A., Kleinplatz, P. J., Rosen, L., Lawless, S., Paradis, N., Campbell, M., & Huber, J. D. (2015). Individual and relational contributors to optimal sexual experiences in older men and women. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 30(1), 78–93.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2014.931689>
- Messner, M. A. (1992). *Power at play: Sports and the problem of masculinity*. New York: MacMillan.
- Meston, C. M., & Buss, D. M. (2007). Why humans have sex. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 36(4), 477–507. doi:10.1007/s10508-007-9175-2
- Mint, P. (2004). The power dynamics of cheating. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(3–4), 57–76.
doi:10.1300/J159v04n03
- Mitchell, J. C. (Director). (2006) *Short bus* [motion picture]. United States: THINKFilm.
- Montemurro, B. (2014). Getting married, breaking up, and making up for lost time: Relationship transitions as turning points in women’s sexuality. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 43(1), 64–93. doi:10.1177/0891241613494808
- Moore, L. (2014a). *15 things women think about threesomes*. Retrieved from <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/news/a33757/things-women-think-about-threesomes/>
- Moore, L. (2014b). *Nobody cares about your crazy threesome story*. Retrieved from <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/news/a33181/nobody-cares-about-your-crazy-threesome-story/>
- Moors, a. C., Conley, T. D., Edelstein, R. S., & Chopik, W. J. (2014). Attached to monogamy? Avoidance predicts willingness to engage (but not actual engagement) in consensual

- non-monogamy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 32(2), 222–240.
doi:10.1177/0265407514529065
- Moors, A. C., & Schechinger, H. (2014). Understanding sexuality: Implications of Rubin for relationship research and clinical practice. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 29(4), 476–482. doi:10.1080/14681994.2014.941347
- Moors, A. M. Y. C., Rubin, J. D., Matsick, J. E. S. L., & Conley, T. D. (2014). It's not just a gay male thing : Sexual minority women and men are equally attracted to consensual non-monogamy. *Journal Für Psychologie*, 22(1), 1–13. Retrieved from <https://www.journal-fuer-psychologie.de/index.php/jfp/article/view/325>
- Moran, C., & Lee, C. (2014). Australian women talk about non-romantic sex. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5(3), 210–231. doi:10.1080/19419899.2012.748685
- Morin, S. F., & Garfinkle, E. M. (1978). Male homophobia. *Journal of Social Issues*, 34(1), 29–47. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.1978.tb02539.x
- Morris, H., Chang, I. J., & Knox, D. (2016). Three's a crowd or bonus?: College students' threesome experiences. *Journal of Positive Sexuality*, 2(November), 62–76. Retrieved from <http://journalofpositivesexuality.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Threes-a-Crowd-or-Bonus-College-Students-Threesome-Experiences-Morris-Chang-Knox.pdf>
- Morrison, T. G., Beaulieu, D., Brockman, M., & Beaglaioich, C. O. (2013). A comparison of polyamorous and monoamorous persons: Are there differences in indices of relationship well-being and sociosexuality? *Psychology & Sexuality*, 4(1), 75–91. doi:10.1080/19419899.2011.631571
- Muncy, R. L. (1974). *Sex and marriage in utopian communities*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Neville, L. (2015). Male gays in the female gaze: Women who watch m/m pornography. *Porn Studies*, 2(2–3), 192–207. doi:10.1080/23268743.2015.1052937
- Ogburn, W. (1966). *Social change: With respect to cultural and original nature*. Oxford: Delta Books.
- O'Neill, G., & O'Neill, N. (1970). Patterns in group sexual activity. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 6(2), 101–112. doi:10.1080/00224497009550654
- Opie, C., Atkinson, Q. D., Dunbar, R. I. M., & Shultz, S. (2013). Male infanticide leads to social monogamy in primates. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 110(33), 13328–13332. doi:10.1073/pnas.1307903110

- Owen, J. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Fincham, F. D. (2010). 'Hooking up' among college students: demographic and psychosocial correlates. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*(3), 653–663. doi:10.1007/s10508-008-9414-1
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2010). To pass, border, or pollute: Polyfamilies go to school. In M. Barker & D. Langdrige (Eds.), *Understanding non-monogamies* (pp. 182–187). London: Routledge.
- Parker, L. (2014). *Are threesomes a gateway drug to open relationships?* Retrieved from <http://nymag.com/thecut/2014/11/my-threesome-led-to-an-open-relationship.html#>
- Parrott, W. G., & Smith, R. H. (1993). Distinguishing the experiences of envy and jealousy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64*(6), 906–920. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.64.6.906
- Parsons, J. T., Starks, T. J., DuBois, S., Grov, C., & Golub, S. A. (2013). Alternatives to monogamy among gay male couples in a community survey: Implications for mental health and sexual risk. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 42*(2), 303–312. doi:10.1007/s10508-011-9885-3
- Paul, E. L., & Hayes, K. a. (2002). The casualties of “casual” sex: A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college students’ hookups. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*(5), 639–661. doi:10.1177/0265407502195006
- Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). “Hookups”: Characteristics and correlates of college students’ spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *The Journal of Sex Research, 37*(1), 76–88. doi:10.1080/00224490009552023
- Peterson, G. T., & Anderson, E. (2012). The performance of softer masculinities on the university dance floor. *The Journal of Men’s Studies, 20*(1), 3–15. doi:10.3149/jms.2001.3
- Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L. R., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). Recent advances in intergroup contact theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*(3), 271–280. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.03.001
- Pettijohn, T. F., & Dunlap, A. V. (2010). The effects of a human sexuality course on college students’ sexual attitudes and perceived course outcomes. *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality, 13*(1). Retrieved from <http://www.ejhs.org/volume13/sexclass.htm?spnCategory=525&spnDomain=17&spnContent=23&spnContent=28&spnID=48658>

- Pieper, M., & Bauer, R. (2005, November). Call for papers: International conference on polyamory and mononormativity. Research centre for feminist, gender and queer studies, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.
- Plummer, D. (2006). Sportophobia: Why do some men avoid sport? *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 30(2), 122–137. doi:10.1177/0193723505285817
- Pollack, W. (1999). *Real boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: MacMillan.
- Pornhub's 2016 year in review. (2016 January 4). Retrieved from <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/2016-year-in-review>
- Pornhub's 2015 year in review. (2015 January 6). Retrieved from <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/pornhub-2015-year-in-review>
- Pronger, B. (1990). *The arena of masculinity: Sports, homosexuality, and the meaning of sex*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Pyke, K. D., & Johnson, D. L. (2003). Asian American women and racialized femininities: 'Doing' gender across cultural worlds. *Gender & Society*, 17(1), 33–53. doi:10.1177/0891243202238977
- Reid, J. A., Elliott, S., & Webber, G. R. (2011). Casual hookups to formal dates: Refining the boundaries of the sexual double standard. *Gender & Society*, 25(5), 545–568. doi:10.1177/0891243211418642
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, N., Smith, C., & Werndly, A. (2013). *Studying sexualities: Theories, representations, cultures*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Riggle, E. D., Ellis, A. L., & Crawford, A. M. (1996). The impact of "media contact" on attitudes toward gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 31(3), 55–69. doi:10.1300/J082v31n03_04
- Ritchie, A., & Barker, M. (2006). 'There aren't words for what we do or how we feel so we have to make them up': Constructing polyamorous languages in a culture of compulsory monogamy. *Sexualities*, 9(5), 584–601. doi:10.1177/1363460706069987
- Ritchie, A., & Barker, M. (2007). Hot bi babes and feminist families : Polyamorous women speak out. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, 8(2), 141–151. Retrieved from <http://oro.open.ac.uk/17251/>
- Roberts, C., Kippax, S., Waldby, C., & Crawford, J. (1995). Faking it: The story of "ohh!" *Women's Studies International Forum*, 18(5-6), 523–532. doi:10.1016/0277-5395(95)80090-C

- Robertson, S. (2003). 'If I let a goal in, I'll get beat up': Contradictions in masculinity, sport and health. *Health Education Research*, 18(6), 706–716. doi:10.1093/her/cyf054
- Robinson, V. (1997). My baby just cares for me: Feminism, heterosexuality and non-monogamy. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 6(2), 143–157. doi:10.1080/09589236.1997.9960678
- Rosenbaum, M. S., Daunt, K. L., & Jiang, A. (2013). Craigslist exposed: The internet-mediated hookup. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 505–531. doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.760305
- Ross, M. W. (2005). Typing, doing, and being: Sexuality and the internet. *Journal of Sex Research*, 42(4), 342–352. doi:10.1080/00224490509552290
- Ruane, J. M. (2005). *Essentials of research methods: A guide to social science research*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rubel, A. N., & Bogaert, A. F. (2014). Consensual nonmonogamy: Psychological well-being and relationship quality correlates. *Journal of Sex Research*, 52(9), 961–982. doi:10.1080/00224499.2014.942722
- Rubin, G. S. (1984). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In C. Vance (Eds.), *Pleasure and danger* (pp. 267–319). New York: Routledge.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, R. (2001). Alternative lifestyles revisited, or whatever happened to swingers, group marriages, and communes? *Journal of Family Issues*, 22(6), 711–726. doi:10.1177/019251301022006003
- Rumens, N., & Kerfoot, D. (2009). Gay men at work: (Re)constructing the self as professional. *Human Relations*, 62(5), 763–786. doi:10.1177/0018726709103457
- Rupp, L. J., & Taylor, V. (2010). Straight girls kissing. *Contexts*, 9(3), 28–32. doi:10.1525/ctx.2010.9.3.28.summer
- Rupp, L. J., Taylor, V., Regev-Messalem, S., Fogarty, A., & England, P. (2014). Queer women in the hookup scene: Beyond the closet? *Gender & Society*, 28(2), 212–235. doi:10.1177/0891243213510782
- Ruskin, K. (2011). *Polyamory loves new frontier or relationship suicide?* Retrieved from <http://www.drkarenruskin.com/polyamory-loves-new-frontier-or-relationship-suicide/>
- Ryan, C., & Jethá, C. (2010). *Sex at dawn: The prehistoric origins of modern sexuality*. New York: Harper.
- Salles, W. (Director). (2012). *On the road* [Motion picture]. United States: IFC films.

- Sarantakos, S. (2005). *Social research* (3rd ed.). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Savin-Williams, R. C., & Vrangalova, Z. (2013). Mostly heterosexual as a distinct sexual orientation group: A systematic review of the empirical evidence. *Developmental Review, 33*(1), 58–88. doi:10.1016/j.dr.2013.01.001
- Schippers, M. (2016). *Beyond monogamy: Polyamory and the future of polyqueer sexualities*. New York: New York University Press.
- Schippers, M. (2007). Recovering the feminine other: Masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony. *Theory and Society, 36*(1), 85–102. doi:10.1007/s11186-007-9022-4
- Schmitt, D. P. (2004). Patterns and universals of mate poaching across 53 nations: The effects of sex, culture, and personality on romantically attracting another person's partner. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 86*(4), 560–584. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.86.4.560
- Schmookler, T., & Bursik, K. (2007). The value of monogamy in emerging adulthood: A gendered perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 24*(6), 819–835. doi:10.1177/0265407507084185
- Schwartz, P., & Rutter, V. (1998). *The gender of sexuality*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Fine Forge Press.
- Schwartz, J., & Savage, S. (Developers). (2007). *Gossip Girl* [Television Series]. United States: Warner Bros.
- Schwartz, P., & Young, L. (2009). Sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 6*(1), 1–17. doi:10.1525/srsp.2009.6.1.1
- Sciortino, K. (2015). *Breathless: How to have a threesome*. Retrieved from <http://www.vogue.com/article/how-to-have-a-threesome-breathless-karley-sciortino>
- Scoats, R. (2015). Inclusive masculinity and Facebook photographs among early emerging adults at a British university. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0743558415607059
- Scoats, R., Joseph, L. J., & Anderson, E. (2017). 'I don't mind watching him cum': Heterosexual men, threesomes, and the erosion of the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sexualities*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1363460716678562
- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*(4), 465–478. doi:10.1177/107780049900500402
- Segrin, B. C., & Nabi, R. L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? *Journal of Communication, 52*(2), 247–263. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02543.x

- Seidman, S. (1990). The power of desire and the danger of pleasure: Victorian sexuality reconsidered. *Journal of Social History*, 24(1), 47–67. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3787630>
- Seitz, S. (2015). Pixilated partnerships, overcoming obstacles in qualitative interviews via Skype: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, 16(2), 1–7. doi:10.1177/1468794115577011
- Shackelford, T. K., & Buss, D. (1997). Cues to infidelity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(10), 1034–1045. doi:10.1177/01461672972310004
- Shannon, B. (2006). *The cut of his coat: Men, Dress and consumer culture in Britain, 1860-1914*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press/Swallow Press.
- Sheff, E. (2005). Polyamorous women, sexual subjectivity and power. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(3), 251–283. doi:10.1177/0891241604274263
- Sheff, E. (2006). Poly-hegemonic masculinities. *Sexualities*, 9(5), 621–642. doi:10.1177/1363460706070004
- Sheff, E. (2013). *Have your Jake and Edith too: Bisexual polyamorists*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-polyamorists-next-door/201309/have-your-jake-and-edith-too-bisexual-polyamorists>
- Sheff, E., & Hammers, C. (2011). The privilege of perversities: Race, class and education among polyamorists and kinksters. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 2(3), 198–223. doi:10.1080/19419899.2010.537674
- Shernoff, M. (2006). Negotiated nonmonogamy and male couples. *Family Process*, 45(4), 407–418. Retrieved from <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2006.00179.x>
- Shir-Vertesh, D. (2013). Love has (no) boundaries: Researching a sexual taboo. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 161–172. doi:10.11114/ijsss.v1i1.63
- Shire, J., Brackenridge, C., & Fuller, M. (2000). Changing positions: The sexual politics of a women's field hockey team 1986-1996. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 9(1), 35–64. Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/333356.pdf>
- Sinfield, A. (1994). *The Wilde century: Oscar Wilde, effeminacy and the queer movement*. London: Cassell.
- Smith, A., & Duggan, M. (2013). Online dating & relationships. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/10/21/online-dating-relationships/>
- Stanfors, M., Leunig, T., Eriksson, B., & Karlsson, T. (2014). Gender, productivity, and the nature of work and pay: Evidence from the late nineteenth-century tobacco industry. *The Economic History Review*, 67(1), 48–65. doi:10.1111/1468-0289.12017

- Star, D. (Creator). (1998) *Sex and the city* [Television series]. United States: HBO.
- Steinbach, S. (2011). *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, culture and society in nineteenth century Britain*. London: Routledge.
- Stephure, R. J., Boon, S. D., MacKinnon, S. L., & Deveau, V. L. (2009). Internet initiated relationships: Associations between age and involvement in online dating. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(3), 658–681. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01457.x
- Stinson, R. D. (2010). Hooking up in young adulthood: A review of factors influencing the sexual behavior of college students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, *24*(2), 98–115. doi:10.1080/87568220903558596
- Stinson, R. D., Levy, L. B., & Alt, M. (2014). “They’re just a good time and move on”: Fraternity men reflect on their hookup experiences. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, *28*(1), 59–73. doi:10.1080/87568225.2014.854683
- Stone, N., Hatherall, B., Ingham, R., & McEachran, J. (2006). Oral sex and condom use among young people in the United Kingdom. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, *38*(1), 6–12. doi:10.1363/3800606
- Strassberg, D. S., & Lowe, K. (1995). Volunteer bias in sexuality research. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *24*(4), 369–382. doi:10.1007/BF01541853
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Stiller, B. (Director). *Zoolander* [Motion picture]. United States: Paramount Pictures.
- Sweeney, B. N. (2014). Masculine status, sexual performance, and the sexual stigmatization of women. *Symbolic Interaction*, *37*(3), 369–390. doi:10.1002/SYMB.113
- Testa, M., VanZile-Tamsen, C., Livingston, J. A., & Koss, M. P. (2004). Assessing women's experiences of sexual aggression using the sexual experiences survey: Evidence for validity and implications for research. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *28*(3), 256–265. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00143.x
- The rules. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.ourplace4fun.com/rules1.htm>
- Thompson, A. E., & Byers, E. S. (2017). Heterosexual young adults’ interest, attitudes, and experiences related to mixed-gender, multi-person sex. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *46*(3), 813–822. doi:10.1007/s10508-016-0699-1
- Ticknell, E., Chambers, D., Van Loon, J., & Hudson, N. (2003). Begging for it: ‘New femininities,’ social agency, and moral discourse in contemporary teenage and men’s magazines. *Feminist Media Studies*, *3*(1), 47–63. doi:10.1080/1468077032000080121

- Townsend, J. M., & Wasserman, T. H. (2011). Sexual hookups among college students: sex differences in emotional reactions. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 40*(6), 1173–81. doi:10.1007/s10508-011-9841-2
- Treas, J., & Giesen, D. (2000). Sexual infidelity among married and cohabiting Americans. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(1), 48–60. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00048.x
- Tsapelas, I., Fisher, H. E., & Aron, A. (2010). Infidelity: when, where, why. In *W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg, The dark side of close relationships II* (pp. 175–196). New York: Routledge.
- Twenge, J. M., Exline, J. J., Grubbs, J. B., Sastry, R., & Campbell, W. K. (2015). Generational and time period differences in American adolescents' religious orientation. *PLoS One, 10*(5), 1–17. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0121454
- Vaillancourt, K. T., & Few-demo, A. L. (2014). Relational dynamics of swinging relationships: An exploratory study. *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families, 22*(3), 311–320. doi:10.1177/1066480714529742
- Wall, D. (1994). *The archaeology of gender: Separating the spheres in urban America*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Weaver, A. D., Mackeigan, K. L., & Macdonald, H. A. (2011). Experiences and perceptions of young adults in friends with benefits relationships : A qualitative study. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 20*(1-2), 41–54. Retrieved from [http://english2010information.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/84700384/Experiences and perceptions of young adults in friends with benefits relationships.pdf](http://english2010information.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/84700384/Experiences%20and%20perceptions%20of%20young%20adults%20in%20friends%20with%20benefits%20relationships.pdf)
- Weinberg, M., Williams, C., & Prior, D. (1994). *Dual attraction: Understanding bisexuality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weiss, R., & Samenow, C. P. (2010). Smart phones, social networking, sexting and problematic sexual behaviors—a call for research. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 17*(4), 241–246. doi:10.1080/10720162.2010.532079
- Weitzman, G. (2006). Therapy with clients who are bisexual and polyamorous. *Journal of Bisexuality, 6*(1-2), 137–164. doi:10.1300/J159v06n01
- Wernik, U. (1990). The nature of explanation in sexology and the riddle of triolism. *Annals of Sex Research, 3*(1), 5–20. doi:10.1177/107906329000300101
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125–151. doi:10.1177/0891243287001002002
- What women want. (2014 September 16). Retrieved from <http://www.pornhub.com/insights/what-women-want/>

- White, K. (1993). *The first sexual revolution: The emergence of male heterosexuality in modern America*. New York: New York University Press.
- Wiebel, W. (1990). Identifying and gaining access to hidden populations. In E. Lambert (Eds.), *The collection and interpretation of data from hidden populations* (pp. 4–11). Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- Wiederman, M. W. (1999). Volunteer bias in sexuality research using college student participants. *Journal of Sex Research, 36*(1), 59–66. doi:10.1080/00224499909551968
- Wignall, L., & McCormack, M. (2017). An exploratory study of a new kink activity: “Pup play.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 46*(3), 801–811. doi:10.1007/s10508-015-0636-8
- Willey, A. (2006). ‘Christian nations’, ‘polygamic races’ and women’s rights: Toward a genealogy of non/monogamy and whiteness. *Sexualities, 9*(5), 530–546. doi:10.1177/1363460706069964
- Willey, A. (2010). Science says she’s gotta have it: Reading for racial resonances in woman-centred poly literature. In M. Barker & D. Langdrige (Eds.), *Understanding non-monogamies* (pp. 34–45). London: Routledge.
- Wilson, G. D. (1987). Male-female differences in sexual activity, enjoyment and fantasies. *Personality and Individual Differences, 8*(1), 125–127. doi:10.1016/0191-8869(87)90019-5
- Wood, J. M., Mansfield, P. K., & Koch, P. B. (2007). Negotiating sexual agency: Postmenopausal women’s meaning and experience of sexual desire. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*(2), 189–200. doi:10.1177/1049732306297415
- Worthen, M. G. F. (2014). The cultural significance of homophobia on heterosexual women’s gendered experiences in the United States: A commentary. *Sex Roles, 71*(3-4), 141–151. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0389-1
- Wosick, K. (2012). *Sex, love, and fidelity*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.
- Wosick-Correa, K. (2010). Agreements, rules and agentic fidelity in polyamorous relationships. *Psychology and Sexuality, 1*(1), 44–61. doi:10.1080/19419891003634471
- Wouters, C. (1998). Balancing sex and love since the 1960s sexual revolution. *Theory, Culture & Society, 15*(3-4), 187–214. doi:10.1177/0263276498015003009
- Yost, M. R., & McCarthy, L. (2012). Girls gone wild? Heterosexual women’s same-sex encounters at college parties. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 36*(1), 7–24. doi:10.1177/0361684311414818

- Young, R. A., & Collin, A. (2004). Introduction: Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 64*(3), 373–388.
doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2003.12.005
- Zetizen, M. K. (2008). *Polygamy: A cross-cultural analysis*. New York: MacMillan.
- Zimmerman, K. J. (2012). Clients in sexually open relationships: Considerations for therapists. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 24*(3), 272–289.
doi:10.1080/08952833.2012.648143
- Zsok, F., Scoats, R., & Anderson, E. (2017). Sex in threes: Threesomes, gender, and sexual orientation. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Participant Demographics

Participant Number/Name	Sex	Age	Class	Race / Ethnicity	Occupation	Highest level of education
1. Sue	Female	57	Middle	White / Swiss	Retired	Level 4 NVQ
2. Cathy	Female	46	Lower middle	Mixed / European	University Teacher	Masters degree
3. Nadia	Female	25	Working	White / British	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
4. Joanna	Female	30	Middle	White / British	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
5. Philippa	Female	32	Working	White / British	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
6. Rosie	Female	20	Doesn't know	White / British	Student	Currently studying for a Bachelors degree
7. Julia	Female	26	Middle	White / Native Dutch	Customer Service/ Therapist	Masters Degree
8. Emma	Female	37	Working	White / British	Management	Thrown out of school at 14, but has completed some business courses
9. Eva	Female	27	Middle	White / German-Dutch	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
10. Colette	Female	36	Middle	White / French Canadian	Office Worker	Bachelors Degree
11. Jennifer	Female	19	Upper	White / British	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
12. Rachel	Female	31	Middle	White / British	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
13. Kirsty	Female	26	Middle	White / British	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
14. Meika	Female	28	Upper Middle	White / Dutch-American	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
15. Sarah	Female	27	Upper Middle	White / American	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
16. Lauren	Female	32	Middle	White / American	Researcher	2 Bachelor degrees
17. Kyle	Male	24	Upper Middle	White / American	Student	Currently in postgraduate education
18. Scott	Male	20	Middle	White-Mixed / British	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
19. James	Male	19	Upper	White / British	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
20. Mike	Male	41	Lower Middle	Black / British-Mauritian	I.T. Consultant	College diploma
21. David	Male	20	Doesn't know	White / British	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
22. Fred	Male	35	Working	White / Australian	Student / Teacher	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
23. Stuart	Male	22	Doesn't know	White / Irish	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree

24. Rob	Male	23	Lower Middle	White / British	Student	Currently studying for a bachelors degree
25. Will	Male	28	Middle	White / European	Office Worker	Bachelors degree
26. Dan	Male	27	Doesn't know	White / American	Programmer	Two Bachelor degrees
27. Steve	Male	31	Middle	White / British	University Lecturer	PhD
28. Simon	Male	24	Upper Middle	White / British	Salesman	Bachelors Degree

Appendix 2. Participants' Threesomes by Quantity & Type

Participant Number/Name	MMF experience(s) (Estimate of different constellations)	FFM experience(s) (Estimate of different constellations)	Estimate at number of total separate threesome acts
1. Sue	-	Yes (1)	1
2. Cathy	-	Yes (1)	2/3
3. Nadia	-	Yes (1)	1
4. Joanna	Yes (3)	Yes (3)	15 (3MMF)
5. Philippa	-	Yes (1)	1
6. Rosie	-	Yes (1)	1
7. Julia	Yes (1)	Yes (10)	Many (1MMF)
8. Emma	-	Yes (2)	2
9. Eva	-	Yes (1)	1
10. Colette	-	Yes (7)	8
11. Jennifer	-	Yes (1)	2
12. Rachel	-	Yes (5)	5
13. Kirsty	-	Yes (1)	1
14. Meika	Yes (3)	Yes (Many)	100+ (3 MMF)
15. Sarah	-	Yes (18) (15 within sex work)	20+
16. Lauren	-	Yes (3)	4
17. Kyle	Yes (3)	Yes (1)	4
18. Scott	-	Yes (1)	1
19. James	-	Yes (1)	1
20. Mike	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	6 (4 MMF)
21. David	-	Yes (1)	2
22. Fred	Yes (2)	Yes (3)	5
23. Stuart	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	2
24. Rob	Yes (2)	-	2
25. Will	-	Yes (1)	1
26. Dan	Yes (1)	Yes (1)	2
27. Steve	-	Yes (1)	1
28. Simon	-	Yes (1)	1