

**Relationship Agreements and Communication in Monogamous and
Consensually Non-Monogamous Relationships**

by

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**A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph**

**In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
in
Family Relations and Applied Nutrition**

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIP AGREEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION IN MONOGAMOUS AND CONSENSUALLY NON-MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIPS

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Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) has gained increasing academic interest and popularity within the media (Conley et al., 2013). The purpose of this study was to investigate agreements and communication across diverse relationship types. Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, reported their 'relationship type' (polyamorous, swinging, open, monogamous), and completed a questionnaire about their agreements and related variables. The most common agreement among CNM participants was to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever they want, as long as there were no secrets. Monogamous participants were most willing to consider engaging in sex with others, as long as it was together. Communication about agreements was more frequently reported in CNM compared to monogamous participants. Overall, this research suggests that participants' agreements are largely consistent with their identified relationship type; CNM may be characterized by more frequent relational communication than monogamous relationships, but may also rely on a degree of implicit communication.

Acknowledgments

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who supported me to pursue, complete, and defend my Master's thesis. First off, I want to thank my advisor Dr. Robin Milhausen whom I admired for a number of years before I became her student and we began working together. Robin's passion for sexuality research is contagious and she inspired me to pursue my own academic interests in relationships and sexuality. Robin's energetic orientation toward life that 'anything and everything is possible' extends into what she does both professionally and personally, and I am incredibly grateful for what this type of support has offered me throughout my Master's degree. I also want to acknowledge Jessica Wood. Because I used secondary data analysis, my project relied on Jessica's PhD dissertation, and so without her this really would not have been possible. Jessica was also there for me through some of the most difficult moments of pursuing this thesis, offering me reassurance and emotional support in an extremely kind and gentle way. Jessica helped me gain skills and tools to complete the thesis; she was there for me, as both a moral and logistical supporter and I can't thank her enough. Robin and Jessica were my advisory team in this process, and I could not have managed both the thesis and clinical components without them.

I also want to acknowledge Ruth Neustifter and John Beaton. These two people were my clinical supervisors in the Couple & Family Therapy program and were also involved as a committee member and co-advisor for my thesis. I was so grateful to have both of these individuals at my defence. I was very thankful for Ruthie's unique perspective and engaging in the defence in a transparent manner by openly sharing about their own CNM relationship structure and identity, as well as their academic expertise in the area of my thesis topic. I was also appreciative of John's clinical application questions and engaging in a genuinely curious

manner. I learned a lot in the process of the defence and being faced with questions, and I was so glad to have a team of interested academics challenging me in unique and different ways.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my family and friends. My Aunt Pam for offering me a sense of home and groundedness during a challenging time; my parents for always supporting me intellectually and teaching me the values of honesty and openness; my brother for courageously modeling pushing the boundaries and challenging norms; and Areej for enlightening me on the value of mindfulness and spaciousness.

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Introduction

Popular sex and relationship therapist Esther Perel articulates the crisis of desire that modern lovers face, a contradiction between the need for security and adventure within committed romantic relationships (Perel, 2013). Perel frames current relationship norms of obtaining a “passionate marriage” within a socio-historical context, “So we come to one person, and we basically are asking them to give us what once an entire village used to provide” (Perel, 2013). She proclaims that marriage, as an economic institution, and passionate love have historically been mutually exclusive endeavors. Our conflation of the two in current North American culture places an immense amount of responsibility onto the role of one’s spouse or long-term romantic partner.

Relationship researchers have recently turned their attention toward consensual non-monogamy (CNM), a relationship structure whereby couples agree to have extra-dyadic sexual and/or romantic relationships (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matstick, Valentine, 2013). CNM is an umbrella term used to describe relationship configurations where emotional, sexual, and psychological needs can be met by multiple people (Conley & Moors, 2014). Some scholars have suggested that the central tenets of CNM relationships could potentially shed light on ways to integrate novelty and distance into monogamous long-term relationships; the attributes that Perel describes as necessary ingredients for desire within a monogamous context (Conley & Moors, 2014).

While Perel describes the basic tension between security and novelty, Western academic conceptualizations of intimate relationships have emphasized the former. Key features of romantic relationships often include certainty, stability, and permanence within the context of the dyad (Finn, 2012). Western psychosocial theories associate romantic relationships with stability,

dyadic security, and “one love” by way of fidelity and avoidance of alternative sexual partners (Erikson, 1964; Bowlby, 1969; Homans 1961, Levinger, 1965). This emphasis on permanence perpetuates dominant narratives of heterosexuality and monogamy within current relationship norms. Critical relationship researchers argue that this static power marginalizes and oppresses people who are engaged in alternative relationship types, but also limits transformative possibilities of relating (Finn, 2012).

The prevalence of divorce, infidelity, serial monogamy, and the introduction of hook-up culture into university and college settings exemplifies the ways heterosexual, monogamous marriage does not encompass the range of current sexual and/or relational practices within North America (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006; Mosher, Chandra, & Jones, 2005; Bradshaw, Kahn, Saville, 2010). Consensual non-monogamy also challenges these traditional Western understandings of romantic coupledness by introducing the concept of having multiple partners, therefore expanding the definition of romantic relationships. Investigation of relationship agreements within these alternative relationship types potentially opens up space to re-conceptualize the basic human tension of security and novelty that Perel (2013) describes.

Although there has been a recent popularization and academic interest in CNM, these relationships are also highly stigmatized within North America, and are therefore often invalidated and undermined as a valuable way of romantically relating (Conley, Moors, Matstick, Ziegler, 2012). Researchers also face difficulty in operationalizing CNM due to the overlapping relationship types and conflicting behaviours and definitions within categories of swinging, polyamory, and open relationships found across the literature. The stigmatization of CNM and misrepresentations of its categories necessitates an examination of common agreements made between romantic partners across relationship types in modern day North

America. Non-monogamy has been prefaced with the word “consensual” across the literature, so as to distinguish the ethical practices of CNM from infidelity. Consent refers to the active and ongoing communication that people in swinging, poly, and open relationships engage in to establish relationship agreements and to prioritize values of honesty and transparency within their relationships (Wosick-Correa, 2010; McDonald 2010; Cohen 2015; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). It is important to investigate the level of communication people engage in about relationship agreements, as well as whether people perceive their partner to share a mutual understanding of the agreements made about sexual and/or emotional connections with others.

The proposed study will investigate relationship agreements and communication across different relationship types (monogamous and non-monogamous). To provide a foundation for this work, I will present several theoretical perspectives and dominant narratives of relationship norms. Next, I will examine the current socio-sexual landscape within Western culture. I will then discuss CNM relationships within this landscape, operationalizing types of CNM relationships and relationship agreements, and discussing communication. Finally, I will propose the current study, which examines the sexual and relationship characteristics and relationship agreements among monogamous and consensually non-monogamous participants using secondary data analysis of data from a larger study.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspectives and Dominant Narratives of Relationship Norms

Recent relationship researchers have coined the term *dyadic containment* to describe, “how we know, experience, and authenticate” romantic relationships (Finn & Malson, 2008). Within this model, dyadic refers to the structural organization of romantic relationships into two persons, or “the couple”; and containment describes the continual self-regulating process of

maintaining romantic and sexual relating to within the dyad. Finn & Malson, in their 2008 study on CNM relationships, indicated that couples used the words intimacy, inside, and exclusivity to describe their romantic relationships. These terms refer to the dichotomization of inside-outside, or private-public. The researchers argue that the “inside” or “private” has been privileged within Western socio-historical, political spheres and these descriptions provide evidence of how social power is preserved and maintained through dyadic containment (Finn & Malson, 2008). Finn & Malson (2008) argue that romantic coupledness is privileged as the highest form of relating in Western culture and is viewed as that which contains “life’s essence.” This epistemological framework can be described as essentialism, with the notion that romantic relationships are a necessary component to truly *knowing* oneself. The privileging of romantic coupledness through essentialist ideals instills the pursuit and achievement of a stable and “contained,” heterosexual, monogamous relationship as a foundational component to one’s identity.

The queer movement of the 1990’s approached sexuality and relationships from a different epistemological framework, using social constructionism to challenge essentialist ideals of associating gender and sexuality with one’s core identity. Queer theorists suggest that gender and sexuality are more appropriately understood as a product of the social, cultural, and historical context of language and discourse (Foucault, 1978; Weeks, 2003). This shift from essentialism to social constructionism has challenged predominant norms of relationships and sexuality and opened up space for new perspectives on romantic relating.

Queer theorists and social constructionist authors have described predominant norms through the concepts of hetero- and mono-normativity, which will be core concepts used to inform this study. Popularized by Michael Warner (1993) and born out of queer theory, the term hetero-normativity describes the societal assumption that heterosexuality, being sexually and

romantically attracted to partners of the opposite sex, as the only “normal” sexual orientation. Mono-normativity, a term coined by Pieper and Bauer (2005), describes the societal expectation that romantic relationships are sexually and emotionally monogamous. These norms are often reinforced by social and legal institutions, which contribute to dominant narratives about romantic and sexual relationships (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Finn, 2012).

Scholars have described relationship norms of hetero- and mono-normativity with direct reference to power and morality. Gayle Rubin (1984), an influential feminist researcher studying sex and gender politics, demonstrates the hierarchical organization of, “appropriate sex behaviours, acts, and identities” through an illustration of what Rubin calls the “charmed circle.” In this image, there is a distinction made between what is within the “charmed circle,” that which is heterosexual, monogamous, and procreative, and what is outside the “charmed circle,” that which is homosexual, non-procreative, casual, and promiscuous. Rubin argues that the behaviours outside of the charmed circle are deemed immoral by society, and therefore these practices are stigmatized. Rubin challenges this hierarchical organization by proposing additional, more important, moral considerations for sexuality, “the way partners treat one another, the presence (or absence) of coercion, and the quality of pleasure they provide” (Moors & Schechinger, 2014, 477).

Despite Rubin’s influence on the field of sexuality studies, the vast majority of more traditional sexuality and relationships research has continued to reproduce hetero- and mono-normative ideals (Moors & Schechinger, 2014; Wosick-Correa, 2010). Moors & Schechinger (2014) argue for the importance of conducting research on sexual and relationship practices outside of the charmed circle, so as to challenge the dominant narratives and broaden representations of human sexuality within academia to be more representative of the existing

diversity within Western society. The proposed study will examine communication and relationship agreements within monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships; therefore contributing to research that is inclusive of sexual behaviours that fall outside of the charmed circle (i.e. sex that is casual, in groups, between same sex individuals, extra-marital, and/or non-monogamous) (Rubin, 1984).

Psychosocial theories and research, queer theory, and current sexuality research, taken together, suggest that predominant relationship norms can be conceptualized in terms of dyadic containment, hetero-normativity, mono-normativity, and the charmed circle. Despite dominant narratives about these constructs (i.e., romantic relationships should meet all sexual and emotional needs, romantic relationships are healthiest and normal if they are dyads comprised of a man and a woman), research and theorizing about relationships and sexuality often neglects representation of the realities of the current sexual landscape within Western societies (Moors & Schechinger, 2014).

Sociosexual Landscape within Western Culture

There is a contradiction between what is societally approved of or considered “optimal” and the sexual and romantic practices of North Americans (Conley et al. 2012). The history of polygamy, rates of divorce, infidelity, serial monogamy, hooking up, and engaging in consensually non-monogamous relationships challenge the predominance of monogamy and the historical association of certainty and stability within monogamous romantic relationships (Conley et al., 2013).

It is rare that human beings engage in true life-long monogamy. Rising divorce rates in modern industrial societies have historically been a cause for cultural panic (Jenkins, 1992). A recent study found that the probability of a woman’s marriage ending in divorce has steadily

increased over the course of the 20th century, plateauing at around 43-46% within the last decade (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006). While rates of divorce offer one example of how human behaviour transgresses the “ideal” of life-long monogamy, the prevalence of infidelity augments this reality. The majority of people living in the United States endorse this “ideal” of monogamy by way of disapproving of infidelity. In 2016 Gallup, a public opinion poll in the U.S., found that 88% of Americans viewed men and women having an affair as “immoral.” However, rates of infidelity suggest that, “current relationships are generally monogamous in name rather than deed” (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, p 752).

Determining the prevalence of infidelity is a difficult task due to the variability in the operationalization of this term. Within the research on romantic relationships, infidelity is defined as including one or all of the following: extradyadic sexual intercourse, extradyadic sexual activities, and emotional betrayal (Moller & Vossler, 2014). In one study, 60-70% of married couples experienced a hidden infidelity (Vangelisti & Gerstenberger, 2004). A national survey, using more conservative definitions of infidelity, found that infidelity occurred in approximately 20-25% of marriages in the U.S. (Wiederman 1997; Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001). A meta-analysis of 50 studies found that 24% of women and 34% of men have engaged in extradyadic sex (Tafuya & Spitzberg, 2007). Research also shows that dating and cohabiting relationships have higher rates of infidelity compared to marriages, and the prevalence of infidelity was found to be 70% among one sample of dating undergraduates (Adamopoulou, 2013; Allen & Baucom, 2006). The Internet and other technological advancements have made defining this construct even more complicated with the introduction of “cyber-cheating.” The ability to send photos, videos, texts, or watch live porn in an instant has diversified and blurred the lines of infidelity, therefore necessitating greater communication and more meticulous

consideration of relationship boundaries and agreements. When considering the gender breakdown, a recent study found that there were no significant differences between men and women in the prevalence of infidelity, with 23% of men and 19% of women reporting that they had “cheated” in their current relationship (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011). Whether couples remain faithful or not during their relationship, people are more commonly engaging in ‘serial monogamy,’ and practicing sexual and romantic exclusivity with one partner at a time. A 2005 nationally representative sample of Americans found that males aged 30-44 had a median of 6-8 opposite sexual partners and females had 4 (Mosher et al., 2005).

There is a dearth of research on the nature and prevalence of what might otherwise be called ‘infidelity’ or ‘cheating’ within CNM relationships (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Mint, 2004). In one study it was found that intimacy, passion, commitment, and satisfaction were lower for Australian gay males in open relationships that had broken a relationship rule (Hosking, 2013), whereas other researchers have simply made the assumption that adherence to agreements is important within the context of CNM (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). This demonstrates the need for further research on this topic. Mono-normative assumptions are embedded within the words of infidelity and cheating by way of conflating consensual non-monogamy and non-consensual non-monogamy (infidelity), and therefore cannot account for CNM relationship experiences (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Ritchie & Barker (2006) articulate the mainstream narrative of one true love, by describing jealousy as a natural response to alternative threats, with cheating and infidelity as the only available language to identify non-monogamous relationships. One qualitative study on agreements in CNM found that these participants used the term ‘breaking the rules,’ rather than cheating to veer away from mono-normative assumptions (Wosick-Correa,

2010). Therefore, the current study will use agreement transgressions and infidelity when assessing both CNM and monogamous participants' behaviours.

Some researchers suggest that “hook-up culture” across college and university campuses, beginning in the 1990's, has led to increasing casual sex relationships. These relationships challenge mono-normativity by popularizing and normalizing casual sexual agreements, rules that are contradictory to monogamy (Anderson, 2010). The prevalence of hooking up across college campuses ranges from 53-76% (Stinson, 2010). One study found that undergraduate students had twice the number of hook-ups compared to first dates (Bradshaw et al., 2010). It is noteworthy that, contrary to these findings, a decline in sexual activity of adolescents from 1991-2015 was found using a nationally representative sample; suggesting that hook-up culture may not exist as broadly, but rather exclusively in university and college settings (Twenge & Park, 2017). Hook-up culture norms are outlined as follows: no romantic or sexual exclusivity, no commitment, no intimacy, and potentially more than one sexual partner at a time (Garcia 2012); whereas monogamy norms are: romantic and sexual exclusivity, commitment, intimacy, and one sexual partner (Schmookler & Bursik, 2007). Anderson (2010) argues that within university culture, non-monogamy exists as a ‘covert norm,’ and therefore students are expected to navigate a cultural cognitive dissonance. Although the practice of hooking-up and the practice of monogamy are seemingly contradictory ways of relating, they share a commonality in that their agreements are often implicitly understood/assumed, rather than explicitly communicated because they both exist as social norms (Garcia, 2012, 161).

Consensually Non-Monogamous Relationships

Consensual non-monogamy (CNM), a relationship type whereby couples agree to have extra-dyadic sexual and/or romantic relationships (Conley et al., 2013), can be distinguished

from non-consensual non-monogamy (NCNM), or infidelity, and has sometimes been referred to as ‘responsible non-monogamy’ (Matstick, Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Rubin, 2013). The number of individuals in CNM relationships is thought to be comparable to (or larger than) the number of people identifying as LGBTQ population (Mosher et al., 2005). Research indicates that approximately 5-6% of the American population is currently involved in consensually non-monogamous (CNM) relationships and that approximately 21% of single adults in the U.S. have engaged in CNM at some point in their lifetime (Rubin, Moors, Matstick, Ziegler, & Conley, 2014; Hauptert, Gesselman, Moors, Fisher, Garcia, 2016). Popular interest in CNM appears to have increased, with celebrities publicly endorsing CNM, or coming out as participating in CNM, and with more newspapers, magazine articles, blogs, and self-help books published on the topic (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Taormino 2008; Easton & Hardy, 1997). One study used Google Trends to track American’s searches of CNM and found that Web queries related to CNM have increased significantly over the last ten years (Moors, 2016). This study is particularly compelling because Google Trends circumvents the widespread methodological issue within sexuality research of social desirability, whereby participants tend to respond favourably and within perceived social norms (Alexander & Fisher, 2003; van de Mortel, 2008). The last 20 years has also seen a surge of research and scholarship on CNM, with publications on the topic steadily increasing over the last few decades (Brewster et al., 2017); topics ranging from sexual and relationship satisfaction, attachment, stigma, health, politics, power, and demographics (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Mitchell, Bartholomew, Cobb, 2013; Moors, 2016; Conley et al., 2013; Klesse, 2014; Rubin et al., 2014). The most well-known and researched CNM relationship types includes swinging, polyamorous, and open partnerships (Conley et al.,

2012). These relationships differ in terms of their emphasis placed on sexual and/or romantic connections with partners, resulting in diverse relationship agreements.

Swinging, also known as ‘co-marital sex’ and ‘partner-swapping’, describes dyads/couples, usually consisting of a heterosexual man and a heterosexual or bi-sexual woman, who consensually agree to have sexual relationships with others outside of their primary relationship (Jenks, 1998). Swingers often participate in extra-dyadic sexual activity together, usually within specific social contexts, such as swingers’ clubs or swingers’ parties (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Relationship agreements among swingers often consist of restricting extra-relations to sexual engagement, while setting the intention of avoiding becoming emotionally or romantically involved in these extra-dyadic relationships (Kimberly & Hans, 2017; McDonald, 2010).

Polyamory translates to *many loves* and as a relationship type is defined as engaging in loving, intimate relationships with multiple people, where all parties are aware of and consent to the arrangement (Matstick et al., 2013). Polyamory has also been described as a belief, a personal identity, a sexual orientation, and a relational orientation (Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2006; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Klesse, 2014). Polyamory can be distinguished from swinging in that there is an emphasis on developing intimacy and romance within these multiple sexual relationships. Polyamorous people have often distinguished their relationships from other CNM types by suggesting that their behaviours and relationships are more meaningful than casual sex (Frank & DeLamater, 2010).

Open relationships are defined as partners who agree to have extra-dyadic sexual relationships (Matstick et al., 2013). Open relationships can be distinguished from swinging in that partners engage in extra-dyadic sexual activity independently, rather than together at

swingers' social events. Open relationships can be distinguished from poly in that extra-dyadic relationships are usually sexual in nature, and romance is often preserved to the primary relationship (Matstick et al., 2013).

Relationship Agreements

Although swinging, poly, and open relationships share more commonalities with one another compared to monogamy in terms of consensual extra-dyadic sexual activity, there are also several differences in their associated relationship agreements and the ways they involve sexual, romantic love, and emotional connection (Barker & Langdridge, 2010, Matstick et al., 2013). Despite the fact that types of CNM relationships differ in terms of specific relationship agreements, all types either challenge the notion of 'one true love' or the societal norm and moral value/belief that sex should only occur within a romantic, committed relationship of two adults (Matstick et al., 2013).

Open Relationships

The definition of open relationships varies across the literature. One study defined open as an umbrella term used to describe relationships whereby all parties consent to various non-monogamous agreements (Zimmerman, 2012). Others have defined open relationships as those where there are implicit or explicit agreements to engage in extradyadic sexual activity (Cohen, 2015). In a recent review on CNM, open relationships were prefaced with the label 'gay' because researchers found that the bulk of this literature describes gay male's non-monogamous configurations and experiences (Barker & Langdridge, 2010).

Consistent with the umbrella definition of open relationships, some researchers argue that relationship agreements are best understood as existing on a continuum, with agreements on the one end being more closed, and on the other end being more open (Hoff & Beougher, 2010).

Eeden-Moorefield, Malloy & Benson (2015) recently conceptualized the diversity of relationship types using three separate axes of continuum; the continuum of romantic emotional closeness, the continuum of sex/physical contact, and the continuum of negotiation. Using these continuums and different combinations of their ranges, these researchers defined nine relationship identity categories as follows: heteronormative monogamy, flexible monogamy, monogamish, monogamy unspecified, semi-open unspecified, open unspecified, unidentified openish, identified openish, and ambiguously open (Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2015).

Recent researchers interviewed 39 gay couples and found that some had closed agreements, such as being strictly monogamous or threesomes only, whereas others had open agreements with the common theme of separating emotional and physical intimacy, and forbidding emotional connections with outside sexual partners (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). A minority of couples did not place any restrictions on their extra-dyadic sexual activity, with no explicit sexual agreements and more of a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. Those with no explicit sexual agreements relied heavily on values of honesty, respect, and discretion (Hoff & Beougher, 2010).

By interviewing couples separately about their relationship agreements, Hoff & Beougher (2010) provided evidence of the discrepancies between relationship type and relationship agreements. These researchers categorized agreements as closed (monogamous), open (agreement to engage in extra-dyadic sexual activity), and discrepant (partners had different understandings of their relationship agreement) (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). Some participants who described themselves as monogamous, in the closed agreement category, engaged in sexual activities with others outside of their primary relationship (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). For example, one partner had a profession as a masseur, and so this couple had a mutual

understanding that the masseur could masturbate his clients and it would not be a violation of their monogamous identity (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). Another couple that identified as monogamous would invite third parties to join in on sexual activity (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). This demonstrates discrepancies between relationship type with agreements within the gay male population, and a need for further research that investigates this across a more diverse sample of CNM and monogamous participants.

Swinging

There are few recent studies that describe the ‘swinging lifestyle’ (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; McDonald, 2010; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). The most recent studies on swinging refer to journalist Terry Gould’s book “The Lifestyle: A Look at the Erotic Rites of Swingers” (1999), which is largely based on information accumulated by Robert McGinley, a key player in the swinging movement and founder of the North American Swing Club Association (NASCA) (de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Although the data from Gould’s book is largely based on anecdotal evidence, it provides a historical narrative for the swinging lifestyle within North America (de Visser & McDonald, 2007). Based on Gould’s account, swinging behaviour originated in the 1950s in California, when military couples would engage in ‘wife-swapping’ at ‘key parties’ (Jenks, 2001). Husbands would place their keys in the ‘key bowl’, and then the wives would take random sets of keys from the bowl; whoever keys she ended up with would become her sexual partner for the night (Jenks, 2001). This historical account demonstrates the social nature of swinging as a ‘couple activity’, as well as the reproduction of patriarchy within this alternative relationship category, with wives being referred to as objects for trading purposes. However, language in the swinging community has evolved to refer to swinging as a

mutual and joint recreational activity that both partners consent to equally, reflecting the more egalitarian values within modern swinging relationships (McDonald, 2010).

Relationship agreements among swingers are largely centered on the dyad, which demonstrates a reproduction of relationship norms of dyadic containment by way of emotional containment. Studies show that swingers maintain their primary relationship by separating emotional and physical intimacies and prioritizing emotional fidelity (Visser & McDonald, 2007; Bergstrand & Williams, 2000). Some swingers actually consider themselves to be monogamous despite their participation in extra-dyadic sexual activity (McDonald, 2010). A qualitative study on jealousy among swingers outlined the common rules that swingers abide by; “a) paramount loyalty (physical and emotional) to the primary relationship, b) restricted intensity of engagement with extra-dyadic partners, c) no emotional involvement with extra-dyadic partners, and d) honesty and openness about involvement with other people” (de Visser & McDonald, 2007, 461). More recently, researchers interviewed swingers about their lifestyle and, using grounded theory methodology, created a model that described transitions into swinging, experiences swinging, and themes used to maintain relationship satisfaction (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Kimberly & Hans (2017) found ‘enhanced trust,’ ‘open communication,’ and ‘self-imposed rules’ were used by swingers to navigate sexual involvement and swinging behaviour. This research illustrates how dyadic containment can be reinforced by the couple through virtues of trust, honesty, respect, and active communication with one another (McDonald, 2010; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Although swingers preserve romance for the primary relationship, research has also found that swinging couples sometimes have friendships with other swinging couples (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). However, these relationships are often emotionally limited so as not to threaten the

primary bond, or they are sexually limited and the emphasis is placed on shared lifestyles (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Kimberly & Hans, 2017).

Gould (1999) provides definitions about swinging that reveal explicit relationship agreements. Terms such as open swinging and closed swinging are used to distinguish swapped couples who engaged in sexual activity openly in the same room, versus swapped couples who engaged in sexual activity in separate rooms (Jenks, 2001). Swinging behaviour can also include inviting a third member to join in on sexual activity with a couple (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Some couples might agree to 'soft swinging,' allowing extra-dyadic kissing and other intimate behaviours, while prohibiting penetrative intercourse or other forms of genital contact (McDonald, 2010). The behaviours a swinging couple engages in are largely dependent on the relationship agreements of the primary couple.

Swinging behaviour might also include a political intent. In Gould's (1999) account of the origins of swinging, he discusses the differences between utopian and recreational swingers. He proposed that utopian swingers desired a cultural movement in challenging marital norms, whereas recreational swingers engaged in the activity with no political agenda. This example shows how the definition of swinging goes beyond a solely social activity toward more of a personal or relationship identity. Jenks (2001) suggests that perhaps this label of 'utopian swingers' was synonymous with 'poly.' Jenks (2001) also discussed the possibility of poly people engaging in swinging behaviours; this overlap highlights the difficulty in operationalizing the various CNM relationship types by relationship agreements.

Polyamory

Despite polyamorous people engaging in loving relationships with multiple people and resisting sexual exclusivity, likening polyamory to free love and 'anything goes' is not an

accurate portrayal of their relationship agreements (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Across the literature poly relationships are known to place a high-level of importance on ethical behaviour, overt communication, negotiation, 'self-knowledge', agency, honesty, and trust (Conley et al., 2012, Wosick-Correa, 2010; Klesse, 2014; Klesse, 2006; Matstick et al., 2013).

Poly relationships can be hierarchically organized, and agreements with partners may differ in terms of level of commitment and closeness (Klesse, 2014). Sometimes polyamorous people have a primary relationship that is dyadic in nature, whereby the emotional bond between the couple is prioritized above other romantic connections (Easton & Hardy, 1997). Both members of the dyad agree to other relationships as long as the emotional bond in the primary relationship is prioritized and considered the strongest. Other poly relationships are non-hierarchically organized. These more complex constellations have sometimes been described using shapes. For example, a V can describe those relationships where there is an agreement to have two equally significant relationships but one's partners are not intimate with each other (Easton & Hardy, 1997). A triangle is used to describe the configuration where all three parties agree to have equally significant relationships with one another (Easton & Hardy, 1997). Polyfidelity is a term used to describe a small group of three or more people who agree to engage in romantic relationships with one another and are sexually exclusive with each other, or fluid-bonded (Lano & Parry, 1995). A polyfidelitous relationship differs from other poly relationships in that the commitment is focused on 'group membership,' rather than 'dyadic containment,' and there is an emphasis on equality of power (Peterson, 2016). Polyfidelity is a practice that challenges binary and dyadic understandings of gender and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual and primary/secondary) (Peterson, 2016).

Polyamorists attempt to challenge relationship norms of dyadic containment and mono-normativity by embodying the belief that it is possible and worthwhile to have loving, sexual, romantic relationships with more than one person at the same time (Haritaworn et al., 2006). Poly relationship agreements are thus often guided by this principle. One researcher recently introduced the term ‘agentic fidelity’ to describe the value that guides poly people in creating and sustaining agreements that support the prioritization and maintenance of their relationship(s). Agentic fidelity is defined as, “an acute self-knowledge that informs one’s ability to articulate needs, desires and boundaries to a partner while exercising agency through personal choices in determining and demonstrating commitment aside from the socially normed tenets of sexual and emotional exclusivity” (Wosick-Correa, 2010, p 45). Agentic fidelity can be likened to dyadic containment, in that it is an active process to preserve the relational bond, but differs in that it is defined by making agreements and choices that reflect the unique needs of those parties involved, rather than reflecting the dominant narrative of mono-normativity.

The majority of research on polyamory has focused on discourse and identity politics, rather than specific relational/sexual agreements (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Cook, 2005; Klesse, 2006). For example, interviews from a recent qualitative study revealed that poly people distinguish themselves morally from swingers by articulating that the latter are practicing promiscuous, casual sex (Klesse, 2006). Klesse (2006) reviews the negative connotations associated with promiscuity, such as shallowness, narcissism, immaturity, and lack of responsibility, so as to demonstrate the ways swinging and other open non-monogamies can become demoralized, but also the ways stigma operates *within* this sexual minority group of CNM. This debate reveals the difficulty some poly people might have in being labeled a ‘utopian swinger,’ or in even being identified with swinging behaviours, despite the potential overlap and

similarities in their relationship agreements. Further research is needed on the common agreements of polyamorous relationships to understand some of this overlap in different CNM relationship types, as well as contributing to a greater understanding of how security and novelty are balanced within CNM relationships.

The review of the current literature on relationship agreements within CNM outlines the difficulty that researchers face in defining these constructs. Relationship agreements, behaviours, identities, and political orientations often overlap in swinging, polyamorous, and open relationships; but there are also several markers of distinction within these categories. The complexity of these alternative relationship types begs the question, ‘how do people engaging in CNM come to a mutual understanding of their relationship agreements?’ The next section will review the literature on the importance of communication and establishing of relationship agreements within committed monogamous and CNM romantic relationships.

Communication

Communication is a necessary component to intimacy, and is also a strong predictor of sexual and relationship satisfaction (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Rovine, 2005); MacNeil & Byers, 2009). Research shows that disclosing sexual preferences increases a partner’s understanding of one’s sexual needs, and therefore increases sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). MacNeil & Byers (2009) also found that if sexual disclosure is mutual, and conducted by both partners, sexual *and* relationship satisfaction are increased.

Across the literature on CNM relationships, communication is noted as an essential component to relationship success and commitment (Kimberly & Hans, 2017; de Visser & McDonald, 2007; Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Taormino, 2008; Easton & Hardy, 1997). Those engaging in swinging, polyamorous, and open relationships place a strong emphasis on the value

of communication in establishing boundaries through agreements and practicing ongoing negotiation (Wosick-Correa, 2010; McDonald 2010; Cohen 2015). Montenegro (2001) outlines communication as an essential narrative for building trust and respect among partners in CNM relationships. In the context of describing agentic fidelity, Wosick-Correa (2010) emphasized the importance of communication; specifically the “chosen commitment to open, honest communication, [and] disclosure when desired,” that polyamorous people engage in (Wosick-Correa, 2010, 58). Throughout this study participants reported communicating about logistics, such as rules about what is permitted and not permitted within these relationships, and full disclosure or total honesty when discussing with their partner about extra-dyadic sexual and/or romantic engagements (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Participants also described preserving a particular type of ‘specialness’ for their relationship, which might provide insight into how communication about the relationship and determination of chosen values contributes to intimacy and closeness (Wosick-Correa, 2010).

Communication facilitates the creation and renegotiation of sexual and relationship agreements, whether that communication is explicit or implicit. Although explicit/verbal communication is often cited as a necessary component to relationship agreements across the CNM literature, there are also instances where partners rely on implicit communication. In a recent study on the swinging lifestyle, it was found that swingers engaged in both verbal and non-verbal communication; using explicit conversations to establish rules for swinging and/or using body language to convey sexual interest/disinterest of prospective partners (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Hoff & Beougher (2010) interviewed 39 male same-sex couples and found that 72% had explicit/verbal agreements about extra-dyadic sexual activity, whereas 13% had implicit (mutual understanding) agreements. Similarly, Hosking (2013) examined

communication about rules within male same-sex monogamous, threesome-only, and open relationships; in this study 73% of men reported explicit communication during the establishment of relationship agreements. Participants in open relationships were very certain their partner shared similar beliefs about the rules of their relationship, and it was found that the more discussion partners had about the agreement, the more certain they were that their partner shared similar beliefs about the agreements (Hosking, 2013). In the Hosking (2013) study, multiple members within a relationship were not interviewed; therefore it is not known the degree to which understandings were mutual, rather only the perception of mutual understanding is known. That said, Hoff & Beougher (2010) suggest that parity, or mutual understandings, of relationship agreements were more important factors for adherence to relationship agreements, compared to the explicitness of the agreement, which challenges the notion that explicit/verbal communication is the most effective means of understanding (Hoff & Beougher, 2010).

In comparison, research on boundaries and communication in monogamous couples suggest that explicit communication about relationship agreements are less common than in CNM relationships. In a review paper on boundaries and identities of 250 opposite-sex married couples, Frank & DeLamater (2010) found that those in monogamous relationships were less likely to explicitly discuss sexual exclusivity compared to those in CNM relationships. Hosking (2013) also found that a significantly larger proportion of monogamous relationships were founded on 'unspoken' or implicit agreements compared to open and threesome-only relationships. These findings might indicate that norms of monogamy are so strongly perceived that sexual and relationship agreements are considered unnecessary to discuss, therefore having an impact on the degree of explicit communication about agreements within heterosexual, monogamous couples.

Limitations of Past Research

Research on relationship/sexual agreements and communication within monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships to date has been limited by an emphasis on ‘gay’ male relationships (Hauptert, Moors, Gesselman, Garcia, 2017), sampling methodology (Rubin et al., 2014), conflation of identity, agreement, and behavioural variables, and an exclusive focus on CNM behaviours (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). As well, communication is an essential component to relationship agreements in both CNM and monogamous relationships, and has been cited as one of the foundational underpinnings of CNM relationships, but few studies have directly assessed different types of communication (explicit and implicit) across a diversity relationship types (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Kimberly & Hans, 2017; Cohen, 2015; McDonald, 2010).

Relationship agreements literature has largely focused on gay males (Hauptert et al., 2017). Despite research interest in sexual agreements partially originating from the fear of spread of sexually transmitted infections, studies show that the primary motivations for creating and sustaining sexual agreements among gay men are not HIV prevention (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Hoff, Beougher, Chakravarty, Darbes, Neilands, 2010). The cited reasons gay men create agreements include establishing and strengthening intimacy, fostering closeness and trust, increasing sexual and relationship satisfaction, and creating structure (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Hoff et al., 2010; Hoff & Beougher, 2010). As such, sexual and relationship agreements are likely relevant to more than just gay men in open relationships, and should be studied in among individuals who identify with other sexual orientations and relationship types.

Although there has been a recent explosion of research on consensual non-monogamy, research on communication about relationship agreements is lacking. Studies have often addressed the type of communication (explicit/verbal versus implicit) used to negotiate and establish relationship agreements within either gay male relationships or opposite-sex swinging relationships, but no studies to date have identified the type of communication across various relationship types and sexual orientations (Hoff & Beougher 2010; Hosking 2013; Frank & DeLamater, 2010; Kimberly & Hans, 2017).

Currently, there are few studies that describe the demographics of CNM relationships, and past data may be skewed by inadequate sampling methods (Rubin et al., 2014). Researchers studying CNM populations have primarily relied upon purposive sampling strategies, such as snowball sampling, often accessing participants through sexuality list-serves (Sheff & Hammers, 2011). The proposed study will be using a large-scale survey through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to access a more diverse population. MTurk is an online marketplace for work, which has been shown to be more demographically diverse than Internet and college samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

Within the CNM research, relationship type, relationship agreements, and behaviours are sometimes conflated. For example, Whitton and other researchers use the term open to refer to a lack of rules, whereas Hosking (2013) describes open as an agreement in which it is okay to have sexual contact with men outside the relationship, which may or may not include specific rules. Simultaneously, open is used as the broader category to define non-monogamous relationships (Barker & Langdrige, 2010). A recent study on the methodological issues within CNM research discusses the concerns associated with collapsing poly, swinging, and open relationships within the willingness to engage in CNM or 'CNM desire' scale (Moors *et al*, 2015; Sizemore &

Olmstead, 2017). The current study will ask participants to report their CNM relationship type, so as to identify within-group differences. Additionally, little research has investigated agreement transgressions (secretive non-consensual sexual behaviour or infidelity/cheating behaviour) within CNM relationships (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Mint, 2004); whereas these topics have been extensively studied in samples that are assumed to be monogamous. In the present study, both CNM and monogamous participants will have the opportunity to identify their relationship types (poly, open, swinging, monogamous, etc.), as well as their specific agreements, ~~and~~ transgressions, and infidelity. The aim of the current study will be to determine what agreements correspond with different relationship types, as well as to distinguish relationship agreements from adherence to relationship agreements (behaviour).

Furthermore, CNM research has often focused exclusively on attitudes and behaviours (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). There are only a handful of papers that have used or assessed the recently created willingness to engage in CNM or ‘CNM desire’ scale (Moors et al., 2014; Moors et al., 2015; Moors, Selterman, Conley, 2017; Sizemore & Olmstead, 2016; Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). No study to date has used this measure to assess both CNM behaviour and CNM willingness including both CNM and monogamous participants. Additionally, there has been very little research specifically on threesomes, despite some studies citing a significant prevalence of this sexual practice, as well as increased visibility in the media and in pornography (Scoats, Joseph, Anderson, 2017; Rupp, Taylor, Regev-Messalem, Fogarty, England, 2014; Pornhub, 2014). The current study will use the ‘CNM desire’ scale with additional measures on engaging in threesomes, in order to assess agreements and behaviour among CNM participants, as well as the willingness to engage in CNM among monogamous participants.

As shown above, most research has used limited sampling methods while conflating

certain variables. As well, past research has focused on specific CNM population groups, such as swingers, polyamorists, or gay male open, but these studies have not allowed for data collection from a range of people engaging in CNM with the freedom to identify their own relationship type, agreements, behaviours, and degree of communication. Finally, the preponderance of CNM research has focused on attitudes and behaviours, rather than investigating CNM desire (willingness to engage in CNM). Thus, the purpose of the current study is to investigate demographic characteristics, relationship agreements, communication, mutual understandings about agreements, and CNM desire across participants with diverse relationship types (poly, swinging, open, monogamous).

Research Questions

1. What are the demographic, sexual, and relationship characteristics of monogamous and consensually non-monogamous persons in the current sample?
2. What are the most common relationship/sexual agreements endorsed by participants in monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships? More specifically, how does relationship type correspond with relationship agreements in monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships?
3. To what degree do participants communicate about their relationship agreements within monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships?
4. To what degree do participants perceive their partners to share their own understanding of their relationship agreements?
5. What percentage of CNM participants transgress their relationship agreements? What percentage of monogamous participants report engaging in infidelity? What percentages

of CNM and monogamous participants have an implicit (unspoken) agreement that they will be sexual with other people?

Methods

Participants

Data was collected as a part of a larger survey on sexual motives and satisfaction among monogamous and CNM relationships. For the larger study, 348 participants were recruited online using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). An initial screening process occurred in order to find participants who were currently in CNM relationships. Of the 4919 participants who completed the screening questionnaire, 142 met the initial criteria (i.e., currently be in a CNM relationship, have had sex with a partner at least once in the past month) and completed the full-length survey. Following this, participants who indicated they were in a monogamous relationship were invited to take the full-length survey after being matched generally to the CNM sample on key demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, education). A total of 206 monogamous participants completed the survey.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online marketplace for work, which registered members can use as a platform either to post surveys and other opportunities for work, or to participate and be paid for their labour. MTurk has been used by social psychologists to recruit participants for experimental and survey research (Burmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Paolacci & Chandler, 2011). Studies have shown that the workers on MTurk represent a more demographically diverse sample compared to Internet and college samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011).

After completing the initial screening survey, participants who met the initial survey criteria were invited to complete the longer, full survey. Interested participants clicked on the Human Intelligence Task (HIT) on the MTurk website survey link and were directed to a secure survey on Qualtrics. Once reaching the survey, participants were provided with an information-consent letter, stating that the HIT consisted of a survey that would take approximately 20 minutes. Participants were asked for their consent to participate, as well as their age. If participants provided their consent and were over the age of 18, they would continue on to complete the survey. At the end of the survey, participants were paid \$2.50 for their time.

Measures

The original study included a variety of measures, such as demographics variables, engagement in CNM (relationship type, relationship agreements), sexual motivation, sexual/relationship satisfaction and individual wellbeing. The current study included the following measures: demographics, relationship type, relationship agreements, agreement transgressions, infidelity, communication, and perception of partner's mutual understanding of relationship agreements.

Demographic Variables

The demographic section included items assessing participants' age, gender identity, ethnic and racial background, current geographical location, income, sexual orientation, relationship status, number of partners, relationship duration and parental status.

Relationship type

Participants were asked if they were currently in a sexual relationship. If they selected 'yes', they were asked to describe their current relationship with the following response options: *single (not dating anyone), in a monogamous relationship (i.e., both partners have agreed to*

have a sexual and intimate relationship with each other only), in consensually non-monogamous relationship(s) (i.e., in a sexual and/or intimate relationship with one or more partners and your partners know about it/agree to it).

If they were monogamous they were asked to state their current relationship status with the following response options: *casually dating one person, seriously dating one person, living with one partner, but not married or engaged, engaged to one person, married to one person, other: please specify, or I choose not to answer.*

If participants were in a CNM relationship they were asked to choose all that applied from the following response options: *casual dating (dating more than one person), open relationship (one or both of us has sex outside of the relationship), polyamorous (one or both of us are in multiple loving and/or sexual relationships), swinging relationship (one or both of you go to parties/clubs/ etc., where partners may be exchanged for the night), living with one partner, but not married or engaged, living with multiple partners, but not married or engaged, engaged to a partner, engaged to more than one partner, married to one partner, married to more than one partner, other: please specify, or I choose not to answer.*

Primary partnership among CNM participants was assessed by asking individuals, “*Do you consider any of your relationship partners to be a primary partner (e.g., spend more time with them, have a deeper level of commitment)*”.

Relationship Agreements

CNM participants’ behavioural engagement in CNM was assessed using a modified version of a recently developed 6-item scale assessing willingness to engage in various CNM relationship structures (Conley, Edelstein, Chopik, 2014). In the original measure, participants rated the extent to which they and their partner engage in a variety of activities, using a 7-point

Likert-type response format where 1 = *very unwilling* and 7 = *very willing*. The stem for all items was “You and your partner:...” and sample items include: “...go together to swinger parties where partners are exchanged for the night”, and “...may have sex and romantic relationships with whomever you want, but there must be no secrets between you.” In a community sample of heterosexual men and women, Moors et al., (2014) reported a Cronbach’s alpha value of $\alpha = .90$ for this measure. In a more recent study, this scale was determined to have a single-factor structure, suggesting that items are highly related and measure a single construct (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2016). As well, the scale had demonstrated convergent and divergent validity measures (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2016).

In the current study, the response options were changed to “yes/no” in order to determine what behaviours participants were *currently* engaging in rather than what they were willing to engage in. Two additional questions were added in order to reflect the diverse CNM arrangements reported in the CNM literature (items 7 and 8 in Appendix A). To assess monogamous participants’ willingness to engage in CNM, participants were asked about the same activity items using the modified scale as described above, but given the stem: “Please answer the following questions thinking about how willing YOU might be in your current or most recent relationship to make the following relationship agreements.” Finally, one question was added to reflect the monogamous relationship agreement about sexual and emotional fidelity (item 9 in Appendix A).

Agreement Transgressions

CNM participants’ agreement transgression behaviour was assessed using the stem “You and your partner:...” with the sample item, “have agreed on sexual and relational boundaries that include other people, but you have gone outside of these boundaries without telling them.”

Infidelity

Monogamous participant infidelity was assessed using the same stem “You and your partner:...” with the sample items, “are in a monogamous relationship, but you have had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else without them knowing,” and, “are in a monogamous relationship, but you suspect they have had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else.”

Implicit and Explicit Communication

Participants’ implicit and explicit communication was assessed using two separate items. Implicit communication was assessed directly following the agreement-transgression and infidelity questions, using the same stem, “You and your partner:...” with the sample item, “have an unspoken agreement that we will be sexual with other people, but we haven’t talked about it.” For explicit communication participants were asked, “to what degree have you and your primary partner discussed the boundaries or “rules” related to sexual or emotional connections with other people?” and then rated themselves on a 4-point Likert-type response format where *1=not at all* and *4=a great deal*.

Mutual Understanding About Agreements

Participants were asked about the degree of how similar they perceived their partner to respond to agreement questions. Participants were asked, “Do you think your partner would respond the same way you did to the above questions on relationship agreements?” and then rated themselves on a 4-point Likert-type response format where *1=I do not think they would give the same responses that I did* and *4=I am quite sure that they would give the same responses that I did*.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were reported for the following demographic variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship type, relationship status, relationship length, number of relationship partners, gender of relationship partner, geography, education, and income. Percentages were used to describe the demographic, sexual, and relationship characteristics of CNM and monogamous participants. Behavioural engagement in CNM, willingness to engage in CNM, implicit communication, agreement transgressions, and infidelity were reported using percentages for CNM and monogamous participants. Because of the low participant rate (N=6) among individuals in swinging relationships, data from these participants were not included when data on relationship agreements was broken down by relationship type. Participants that identified as being in multiple relationship types, including swinging, were analyzed. A chi-square goodness of fit test was performed to determine whether proportions of relationship agreements were found differentially across CNM and monogamous participants. A chi-square goodness of fit test was also performed to determine whether there were significant differences in the proportions of CNM and monogamous participants' reports of degree of communication and belief that their partner would respond similarly. Superscript letters are used to denote a subset of CNM categories whose column proportions differed significantly from each other at the .05 level. All analyses were conducted separately for CNM and monogamous participants, and controlling for age. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 25.0.

Results

Data screening

The sample for the current study was comprised of CNM and monogamous participants recruited as part of a larger study on the impact of sexual motivation on relationship/sexual

satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of CNM and monogamous individuals. First, the CNM sample was selected from the 4919 participants who completed the screening questionnaire. Two hundred and twenty-five CNM-identified participants met the screening criteria, and of these, 210 responded to the survey. Two of these participants were removed because they did not answer survey questions past the consent to participate. Of the 208 remaining participants, only those who met the inclusion criteria of being in a consensually non-monogamous relationship, having had sex in the past month, and currently being in a relationship were selected for data analysis of the original study. Three participants were excluded because they had not had sex in the past month. Fifty-three participants were excluded because they reported that they were single or monogamous after they had originally indicated that they were in a CNM relationship. Five participants were excluded because they reported they were not currently in a relationship. Five more participants were removed because they did not complete the survey past the demographics questions. The resulting sample consisted of 142 CNM-identified participants. Following this, monogamous participants selected from those who completed the screening questionnaire based on matching criteria of gender, ethnicity, and age to create a sample comparable to the CNM participants. The resulting sample consisted of 206 monogamous-identified participants. The total sample consisted of 348 participants (N=142 consensually non-monogamous, N=206 monogamous). Cases with missing data were deleted list-wise. See Table 1 for a summary of participant breakdown.

Table 1

Participants excluded from the analytic sample.

Criteria	Number of participants	Remaining Sample
Completed screening questionnaire	4919	
CNM-identified and met the criteria	225	

Responded to the survey	210	
Did not answer past consent to participate	2	208
Did not have sex in the past month	3	205
Later reported that they were single or monogamous	53	152
Were not currently in a relationship	5	147
Did not complete the survey past demographics	5	142
Monogamous-identified participants matched on gender, ethnicity, and age	206	
Total participants		348

Research Question 1: What are the demographic, sexual, and relationship characteristics of monogamous and CNM participants in the current sample?

Participants ranged from 20-70 years of age with a mean age of 34.13 ($SD=9.95$). There was no significant difference ($p=.86$) in age between CNM participants and monogamous participants. Participants' relationship length ranged from 0.08 to 46.25 years. On average, monogamous participants had been together longer ($M=8.08$ years, $SD=8.50$) compared to CNM participants ($M=4.76$ years, $SD=4.97$). This difference of 3.32 years, 95% CI [-4.77, -1.86], was significant $t(331)=4.48$, $p<0.001$, and had a medium effect size (Cohen's $d=0.48$). Participants identified their gender, with the majority of the sample identifying as women (48.9%, $n=170$) and men (48.0%, $n=167$), and the rest of the sample identifying with other gender identities. See Table 2 for detailed gender breakdown. Most of the sample identified as heterosexual (76.7%, $n=267$), 13.2% ($n=46$) as bisexual, 3.2% ($n=11$) as gay, and the rest of the sample reported various minority sexual orientations. The majority of monogamous participants were heterosexual (91.3%, $n=188$), whereas approximately half of CNM participants (55.6%, $n=79$) identified as heterosexual. See Table 3 for detailed sexual orientation breakdown. The majority

of the sample identified as white (71.6%, $n=249$), 11.8% ($n=41$) identified as Black or African American, 4.9% ($n=17$) identified as having multiple ethnicities/racial identities, and the rest of the sample reported a variety of ethnic/racial backgrounds (e.g. American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, Mexican/Mexican American/Chicanp, Puerto Rican, Dominican). See Table 4 for detailed ethnicity/race breakdown. One hundred and twenty-five participants described their area of residence as urban (35.9%, $n=125$), 162 (46.6%) suburban, and 61 (17.5%) rural. See Table 5 for detailed area of residence breakdown. Most participants graduated from college/university (41.4%, $n=144$), had some college/university education (26.4%, $n=92$), or a Master's degree (10.6%, $n=37$), with the rest of participants reporting a variety of educational experiences including trades, high school, professional degree, PhD, or postgraduate work. See Table 6 for detailed education breakdown. Finally, 125 CNM participants (88.0%) considered at least one of their partners to be their primary partner (e.g., spend more time with them, have a deeper level of commitment). Please see Table 7 for additional demographic information on participants' income.

Table 2

Gender of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Gender	CNM % (<i>n</i>)	Monogamous % (<i>n</i>)	Full sample % (<i>N</i>)
Woman	48.6 (69)	49.0 (101)	48.9 (170)
Man	47.2 (67)	48.5 (100)	48.0 (167)
Transwoman	0.7 (1)	0 (0)	0.3 (1)
Gender queer/Non-binary	2.8 (4)	0.5 (1)	1.4 (5)
Multiple gender identities	0 (0)	1.9 (4)	1.1 (4)
Gender fluid	0.7 (1)	0 (0)	0.3 (1)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Table 3

Sexual orientation of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Sexual Orientation	CNM % (<i>n</i>)	Monogamous % (<i>n</i>)	Full Sample % (<i>N</i>)
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Heterosexual	55.6 (79)	91.3 (188)	76.7 (267)
Gay	5.6 (8)	1.5 (3)	3.2 (11)
Lesbian	0.7 (1)	0 (0)	0.3 (1)
Bisexual	23.9 (34)	5.8 (12)	13.2 (46)
Pansexual	6.3 (9)	0 (0)	2.6 (9)
Queer	2.8 (4)	1.0 (2)	1.7 (6)
Uncertain or questioning	2.1 (3)	0.5 (1)	1.1 (4)
Asexual	1.4 (2)	0 (0)	0.6 (2)
Sexual orientation not listed	1.4 (2)	0 (0)	0.6 (2)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Table 4

Ethnicity/race of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Ethnicity/Race	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Total % (N)
American Indian, Alaska Native	0 (0)	1.5 (3)	0.9 (3)
Black, African American	12.7 (18)	11.2 (23)	11.8 (41)
White	71.1 (101)	71.8 (148)	71.6 (249)
Asian Indian	2.1 (3)	0.5 (1)	1.1 (4)
Chinese	2.8 (4)	3.4 (7)	3.2 (11)
Filipino	0.7 (1)	0.5 (1)	0.6 (2)
Japanese	0 (0)	0.5 (1)	0.3 (1)
Vietnamese	0.7 (1)	1.0 (2)	0.9 (3)
Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano	3.5 (5)	2.9 (6)	3.2 (11)
Puerto Rican	1.4 (2)	1.5 (3)	1.4 (5)
Multiple ethnicities/racial identities	4.9 (7)	4.9 (10)	4.9 (17)
Dominican	0 (0)	0.5 (1)	0.3 (1)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Table 5

Residence of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Residence	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Total % (N)
Urban	37.3 (53)	35 (72)	35.9 (125)
Suburban	45.8 (65)	47.1 (97)	46.6 (162)
Rural	16.9 (24)	18 (37)	17.5 (61)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Table 6

Education of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Education	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Total % (N)
High school graduate	9.2 (13)	8.7 (18)	8.9 (31)
Some college/university	28.9 (41)	24.8 (51)	26.4 (92)
College/University graduate	41.5 (59)	41.3 (85)	41.4 (144)
Some trade/technical/vocational training	0.7 (1)	0.5 (1)	0.6 (2)
Trade/technical/vocational training degree or diploma	1.4 (2)	6.3 (13)	4.3 (15)
Some postgraduate work	4.2 (6)	6.8 (14)	5.7 (20)
Master's degree	10.6 (15)	10.7 (22)	10.6 (37)
Professional school degree (e.g. MD)	2.8 (4)	0 (0)	1.1 (4)
Doctoral degree (PhD)	0.7 (1)	1 (2)	0.9 (3)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Table 7

Income of consensually non-monogamous and monogamous participants.

Income	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Total % (N)
Less than \$10,000	5.6 (8)	4.4 (9)	4.9 (17)
\$10,000-19,999	13.4 (19)	5.3 (11)	8.6 (30)
\$20,000-29,999	15.5 (22)	9.2 (19)	11.8 (41)
\$30,000-39,000	14.1 (20)	13.1 (27)	13.5 (47)
\$40,000-49,000	14.8 (21)	13.6 (28)	14.1 (49)
\$50,000-59,000	12.7 (18)	13.1 (27)	12.9 (45)
\$60,000-69,000	5.6 (8)	13.1 (27)	10.1 (35)
\$70,000-79,000	2.8 (4)	6.3 (13)	4.9 (17)
\$80,000-89,000	4.2 (6)	2.4 (5)	3.2 (11)
\$90,000-99,000	3.5 (5)	4.9 (10)	4.3 (15)
\$100,000-149,999	5.6 (8)	12.1 (25)	9.5 (33)
More than \$150,000	2.1 (3)	2.4 (5)	2.3 (8)
Total	100 (142)	100 (206)	100 (348)

Research Question 2a: What are the most common relationship/sexual agreements endorsed by participants in monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships?

Participants were asked to respond to items about their relationship agreements related to engaging in sexual and romantic activity with additional partners. Consensual non-monogamous participants were asked about agreements within their current primary partnership and monogamous participants were asked about their willingness to make agreements about engaging in sexual and romantic activity with additional partners. Most CNM-identified participants agreed that they were, “allowed to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever they want, but there must be no secrets between them”, with 71.1% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement.

The second most common agreement reported among CNM-identified participants was being, “allowed to have sex with whomever they want, using protection, no strings attached, no questions asked”, with 67.6% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement. The third most common agreement reported among CNM-identified participants was being, “allowed to form outside romantic relationships, but they must always be less important than the relationship between the two of you,” with 54.9% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement. The fourth most common agreement reported among CNM-identified participants was being, “allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms,” with 52.8% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement.

The relationship agreement that most monogamous-identified participants reported that they would be willing to agree to was to be “in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other, neither of them having any other partners”, with 75.7% of the monogamous sample

endorsing willingness about this agreement. Interestingly, this was not the least common agreement among CNM-identified participants; with 8% of poly participants and 15.4% open participants endorsing this agreement.

The second most common relationship agreement that monogamous-identified participants reported willingness to agree to was being “allowed to engage in sex with others, as long as it was together (e.g. threesomes)”, with 26.7% of the monogamous sample endorsing willingness about this agreement (30.3% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement). The third most common relationship agreement that monogamous-identified participants reported willingness to agree to was being, “allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms,” with 15.5% of the monogamous sample endorsing willingness about this agreement (26.8% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement).

The least common relationship agreement that both CNM and monogamous-identified participants reported in their endorsement and willingness to agree to was being, “allowed to have sex with others, but never the same person more than once,” with 8.5% of the CNM sample endorsing this agreement and 5.3% of the monogamous sample endorsing willingness about this agreement. Within the CNM sample there was no significant difference between relationship types for participants who endorsed this agreement.

Table 8

Relationship agreements endorsed by CNM-identified participants and willingness to make relationship agreements endorsed by monogamous participants.

Item: Relationship Agreement	CNM agreements % Endorsed (n)	Monogamous willingness about agreements % Endorsed (n)
Are allowed to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever they want, but there must be no secrets between you.	71.1 (101)	7.8 (16)
Are allowed to have sex with whomever you/they want, using protection, no strings attached, no questions asked.	67.6 (96)	8.7 (18)

Are allowed to form outside romantic relationships, but they must always be less important than the relationship between the two of you.	54.9 (78)	7.3 (15)
Are allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms.	52.8 (75)	15.5 (32)
Are allowed to engage in sex with others, as long as it is together (e.g. threesomes).	30.3 (43)	26.7 (55)
Go together to swinger parties where partners are exchanged for the night.	26.8 (38)	11.7 (24)
Are in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms.	14.1 (20)	7.3 (15)
Are in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other. Neither of you has any other partners.	10.6 (15)	75.7 (156)
Are allowed to have sex with others, but never the same person more than once.	8.5 (12)	5.3 (11)

Note. N's in this table are higher than in table 9 because 28 people chose not to answer CNM type question.

Research Question 2b: How does relationship type correspond with relationship agreements in monogamous and consensually non-monogamous relationships?

There were largely no significant differences in terms of endorsing the relationship agreements depending on type of CNM relationship. However, within the CNM sample a significantly smaller percentage of participants in exclusively open relationships (47.7%) compared to poly (84%), but not multiple relationship types (61.1%) endorsed the agreement to be, “allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms.”

A second significant difference related to the agreement to be “in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms” was found in the CNM sample, although few CNM participants endorsed this agreement overall. Specifically, a significantly larger proportion of participants in poly relationships (28%) compared to exclusively open relationships (10.8%) endorsed this agreement.

Table 9

Relationship agreements endorsed by CNM-identified participants (including poly, open, and participants in more than one relationship type).

Relationship Agreement	Poly % Endorsed (n)	Open % Endorsed (n)	Participants in more than one relationship	Chi-Square Test	Cramer's V
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			type % Endorsed (n)		
Are allowed to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever they want, but there must be no secrets between you.	80% (20)	73.8% (48)	77.8% (14)	$X^2(2)=.415$, p=0.813	Cramer's $V=0.062$, p=0.81
Are allowed to have sex with whomever you/they want, using protection, no strings attached, no questions asked.	56% (14)	73.8% (48)	77.8% (14)	$X^2(2)=3.33$, p=0.19	Cramer's $V=0.18$, p=0.19
Are allowed to form outside romantic relationships, but they must always be less important than the relationship between the two of you.	52% (13)	56.9% (37)	55.6% (10)	$X^2(2)=.177$, p=0.92	Cramer's $V=0.041$, p=0.92
Are allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms.	84% ^a (21)	47.7% ^a (31)	61.1% (11)	$X^2(2)=9.86$, p=.007	Cramer's $V=.302$, p=0.007
Are allowed to engage in sex with others, as long as it is together (e.g. threesomes).	40% (10)	26.2% (17)	27.8% (5)	$X^2(2)=1.70$, p=0.43	Cramer's $V=.13$, p=0.43
Go together to swinger parties where partners are exchanged for the night.	24% (6)	23.1% (15)	27.8% (5)	$X^2(2)=.17$, p=0.92	Cramer's $V=0.040$, p=0.92
Are in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other. Neither of you has any other partners.	8.0% (2)	15.4% (10)	0% (0)	$X^2(2)=3.70$, p=0.16	Cramer's $V=0.19$, p=0.16
Are in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms.	28% ^a (7)	10.8% ^a (7)	16.7% (3)	$X^2(2)=4.06$, p=0.13	Cramer's $V=0.19$, p=0.13
Are allowed to have sex with others, but never the same person more than once.	8% (2)	10.8% (7)	5.6% (1)	$X^2(2)=.52$, p=0.77	Cramer's $V=0.069$, p=0.77

Note. Superscripts are used to identify significant differences in percentage of 'poly', 'open', and 'participants in more than one relationship type' endorsing the agreement.

Research Question 3: To what degree do CNM and monogamous participants communicate about their relationship agreements?

Participants were asked to complete further questions about relationship agreements, inquiring about transgressions and infidelity, implicit communication, and degree of communication about relationship agreements. There were a significantly higher percentage of CNM participants (48.6%) who endorsed “a great deal” degree of communication about relationship agreements compared to monogamous participants (28.6%), and there were a significantly higher percentage of monogamous participants (13.1%) who endorsed “not at all” degree of communication about relationship agreements compared to CNM participants (2.8%). In other words, CNM participants had a higher degree of communication and discussion about the boundaries or ‘rules’ related to sexual or emotional connection with other people compared to monogamous participants.

Table 10

Degree of communication in CNM and monogamous-identified participants about endorsement of and willingness about relationship agreements.

Degree	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Whole sample % (N)
Not at all	2.8 (4) ^a	13.1 (27) ^a	8.9 (31)
Not very much	15.5 (22)	22.3 (46)	19.5 (68)
Somewhat	33.1 (47)	35.9 (74)	34.8 (121)
A great deal	48.6 (69) ^a	28.6 (59) ^a	36.8 (128)

Note. Question used in survey: To what degree have you and your primary partner discussed the boundaries or ‘rules’ related to sexual or emotional connection with other people?

Research Question 4: To what degree do CNM and monogamous participants perceive their partner to answer agreement questions similarly?

There were a significantly higher percentage of monogamous participants (65.5%) who endorsed “I am quite sure [my partner] would give the same responses that I did” about

relationship agreement questions compared to CNM participants (52.1%). Further, there were a significantly higher percentage of CNM participants (42.3%) who endorsed “I think [my partner] would give *most* of the same responses that I did” about relationship agreement questions compared to monogamous participants (21.4%). In other words, monogamous participants were surer that their partner would give all of the same responses to the agreement questions compared to CNM participants. Whereas, CNM participants were surer that their partner would give *most* of the same responses to the agreement questions.

Table 11

Degree that partner would respond similarly to agreement questions.

Degree	CNM % (n)	Monogamous % (n)	Whole Sample % (N)
I do not think that they would give the same responses that I did	2.1 (3)	5.3 (11)	4.0 (14)
I think that they would give some of the responses that I did	3.5 (5)	7.8 (16)	6.0 (21)
I think that they would give most of the same responses that I did	42.3 (60) ^a	21.4 (44) ^a	29.9 (104)
I am quite sure that they would give the same responses that I did	52.1 (74) ^a	65.5 (135) ^a	60.1 (209)

Note. Question used in survey: Do you think your primary partner would respond the same way you did to the above questions?

Research Question 5: What percentage of CNM participants transgress their relationship agreements? What percentage of monogamous participants report engaging in infidelity? What percentages of CNM and monogamous participants have an implicit (unspoken) agreement that they will be sexual with other people?

A minority of monogamous-identified participants reported infidelity or cheating on their current partner (6.8%), and suspected their partner had engaged in infidelity or cheated (6.3%). An even smaller minority of monogamous-identified participants reported they had an implicit agreement to engage in sexual behaviour with others (3.4%). See Table 11 for details of percentage breakdown.

Table 12

Infidelity and unspoken agreement about sex with others endorsed by monogamous-identified participants.

Item	% Endorsed (n)
Are in a monogamous relationship, but you have had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else	6.8% (14)
Are in a monogamous relationship, but you suspect your partner has had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else	6.3% (13)
Have an unspoken agreement that you will be sexual with other people, but haven't talked about it	3.4% (7)

Almost one-third (29.6%) of CNM-identified participants reported transgressing their relationship agreements. Almost one-quarter (23.2%) of CNM-identified participants reported that their relationship agreements about non-monogamous behaviour were made implicitly.

Table 13

Agreement transgressions and unspoken agreement about sex with others endorsed by CNM-identified participants.

Item	% Endorsed (n)
Have agreed on sexual and relational boundaries that include other people, but you have gone outside of these boundaries without telling them	29.6% (42)
Have an unspoken agreement that we will be sexual with other people, but haven't talked about it	23.2% (33)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the demographic characteristics, relationship agreements, CNM desire, communication, transgressions, infidelity, and mutual understandings about agreements across participants with diverse relationship types (poly, swinging, open, monogamous). Participants ranged from age 20-70, with most monogamous participants reporting heterosexual orientations and CNM participants reporting more diverse sexual orientations. Results indicated that CNM most commonly endorsed the ‘no secrets’ agreement and also reported that they had a greater degree of explicit communication compared to monogamous participants. Some CNM participants reported relying on implicit communication (23.2%), as well as engaging in breaking the rules of their agreements (29.6%). Monogamous participants had greatest ‘CNM desire’ for threesomes (26.7%) and swingers’ parties (11.7%). The majority of CNM and monogamous participants reported mutual understandings about their agreements. These findings suggest that CNM relationships have diverse forms of communication (both verbal and non-verbal) and that monogamous participants are most willing to endorse CNM agreements that include the physical presence of their partner. As well, a notable proportion (one-third) of CNM participants endorsed transgressing their agreements. This could reflect the greater detail of their agreements, introducing more opportunities for transgressions, or be a factor of the greater flexibility of CNM agreements (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Nevertheless, transgressions within CNM should be investigated further as it could have implications on relationship functioning and satisfaction.

Demographic, Sexual Orientation, and Relationship Characteristics

One of the aims of the study was to determine the demographic, sexual orientation, and relationship characteristics of monogamous and consensually non-monogamous persons in the

current sample. The monogamous participants were selected to be similar to the CNM participants in terms of demographics (age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, education, income). The bulk of CNM literature has found participants to be demographically homogeneous (white, middle-upper class, middle-aged, highly educated), but Rubin et al. (2014) challenges this finding by arguing that this is a direct result of relying on community-based recruitment strategies, such as accessing participants through CNM networking sites. In the current study, CNM participants were recruited from an online labour market MTurk known to be more demographically diverse compared to Internet samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), which may offer insight into the variability of the current findings. Results of the current study indicated that some demographic characteristics of CNM participants were similar to those in other studies in the CNM literature (age, primary partnership), while in terms of other characteristics, the present sample showed more diversity (sexual orientation).

Age

Within the current sample, CNM participants had an average age of 34.13 years with an age range of 20-70 years of age, which reflects the age of participants in the majority of CNM literature. It has been suggested that the population engaging in CNM ranges from 30-50 (Jenks, 1985; Levitt, 1988), but more recent studies outline an overrepresentation of older, married couples and underrepresentation of emerging adults (18-29) as a result of sampling bias (Rubin et al., 2014). A recent systematic review on methodological issues within CNM research from 1974-2017 noted that CNM research has been limited in its scope of demographics, particularly in regard to age (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). One of the conclusions of this review was that many studies did not report participants' mean age or age range, a major methodological limitation (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). In recognizing that CNM offers ways of engaging in

romantic and sexual relationships alternative to hetero- and mono-normative arrangements, age may be an important variable to take into account in future research. CNM may be desirable for people at different developmental life stages and people may engage in CNM differently depending on their age (Elder, 1998; Conley et al., 2013; Rubin et al., 2014). Emerging adulthood (age 18-29), a life stage defined by experimentation and identity exploration (Arnett, 2015), is presented with many tensions in romantic engagements, career goals, and other life plans (Shulman & Connolly, 2013), therefore this may be a unique time of life to consider in future CNM research. The inclusion criteria for the current study, that participants must be in a partnered relationship, may offer insight into the mean age and age range of the current sample. A recent study using two nationally representative samples found that more than 20% of single adults engaged in CNM at some point in their life and that engagement in CNM was constant across various demographics including age (Hauptert et al., 2016). It is possible that just as many emerging adults and older adults are engaging in CNM, but may be underrepresented in the current sample due to variability in the way they are engaging in CNM (e.g., defining themselves as currently in a partnered relationship) and/or stigma operating in different social and cultural contexts (Conley et al., 2013).

Sexual Orientation

With regard to sexual orientation, the majority of monogamous participants (91.3%) identified as heterosexual, whereas approximately half of the CNM participants (55.6%) identified as heterosexual within the current study. These results indicate greater diversity in sexual orientation across CNM participants (23.9% bisexual, 6.3% pansexual, 5.6% gay, and 0.7% lesbian). A recent study using two nationally-represented samples of single Americans found that gay, lesbian, and bisexual participants were more likely to have engaged in CNM in

the past, which supports the findings from the current sample of increased diversity of sexual orientation within the CNM population (Hauptert et al., 2016). Researchers have explored the relationship between sexual orientation and relational orientation (monogamous, consensually non-monogamous), inquiring about whether sexual orientation might predict engagement in CNM or if engagement in CNM might predict sexual orientation. Normative assumptions, as well as some empirical findings, have often supported the former by associating non-monogamy with being a ‘gay male thing’ (Moors et al., 2014, Bettinger, 2005; Bonello & Cross, 2010; Klesse, 2007; Shrenoff, 2006; Hosking, 2013). Frequency of CNM engagement within the gay male population has been shown to be approximately 20-65% (Campbell, 2000; Hickson et al., 1992, LaSala, 2005; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), whereas frequency of CNM engagement within the general population has been shown to be 4-20% (Conley et al., 2013; Hauptert et al., 2016). Research indicates that gay male couples are significantly more likely than lesbian and heterosexual couples to have a non-monogamous agreement (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). More recent studies though, have shown that sexual minorities (gay, lesbian, bisexual) were equally likely to engage in monogamous and CNM relationships compared to heterosexual individuals (Rubin et al., 2014). Another study compared sexual minority groups’ (bisexual, lesbian, gay) attitudes toward CNM and willingness to engage in CNM, and it was found that all sexual minority groups were equally likely to be attracted to CNM (Moors et al., 2014). In summary, interest and engagement in CNM is not solely limited to gay-identified men; there are people of all different sexual orientations engaging in CNM.

Further, CNM research has demonstrated that polyamorous people identify as primarily bisexual, swingers predominantly identify as heterosexual (sometimes with female partners being bisexual), and open relationships often defined as ‘gay’ (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Jenks,

1998; Barker & Langdridge, 2010). Qualitative studies have outlined the risks associated with perpetuating stereotypes of gender and sexuality and contributing to the stigma of sexual and relational minority groups. Klesse (2005) describes the, “peculiar interrelation of bisexuality and non-monogamy,” suggesting that someone can only be legitimately and authentically bisexual if one is engaging in a sexual relationship with both genders, which therefore necessitates extra-dyadic/non-monogamous practices. Rubin et al. (2014) take another perspective and frame CNM within a hetero-normative context arguing that popular self-help texts describe CNM as something to explore or transition to from a ‘stable’, ‘heterosexual’, ‘dyadic’ couple relationship, rather than as a predominantly sexual minority pursuit. The current study asked participants about their relational orientation (i.e., the screening survey) prior to inquiring about their sexual orientation, and findings indicate more diversity of sexual orientation within CNM compared to monogamous relationships, which could imply a relationship between sexual orientation and engagement in CNM.

Relationship Characteristics (Primary Partner, Relationship Duration)

The relationship characteristics that were investigated in the current study consisted of relationship duration, as well as whether CNM participants had a primary partner (e.g., spending more time together, deeper level of commitment). In the current sample monogamous participants had been together significantly longer (8 years) compared to CNM participants (4 years), and it was found that 88% of CNM participants reported having a ‘primary’ partner. A recent review found that general trends in the CNM literature indicated no differences in relationship quality, satisfaction, and/or psychological wellbeing in CNM versus monogamous relationships (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). Therefore, other characteristics will be explored to shed light on the differences in relationship duration within the current study.

Rusbult's investment model conceptualizes longevity of a relationship as based on four factors: satisfaction, investment size, quality of alternatives, and commitment (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). The factor of greatest interest to the current paper is 'quality of alternatives' because CNM relationships, by their very nature, invite alternatives in closer proximity than monogamous relationships and/or what is endorsed within mono-normative Western culture (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). As well, recent studies have shown that CNM and monogamous relationships do not differ in terms of commitment, and therefore is not a variable of interest to this paper (Moors, Matstick, Schechinger, 2017). This model demonstrates how the presence of alternatives introduces forces that pull away from the dyadic relationship, perhaps that which opposes dyadic containment (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Rusbult & Buunk note, "an actual in-the-flesh challenger is not the only threat to a committed relationship," and go on to describe how the environment and "cultural variations in mating behaviour," can also influence attractiveness of alternatives (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). It may be that the very structure of CNM introduces and normalizes a process of diverting attention from one's primary partner, and therefore poses CNM relationships at more risk of opting for alternatives and therefore separation from a primary partnership. This may offer insight into why monogamous participants had significantly longer relationship durations compared to the CNM participants within the current sample. This difference in relationship length could also be an implication of the stability and permanence associated with heterosexual, monogamous coupledness (Finn, 2012). Contrary to this, a recent paper outlines how mono-normativity is embedded within current measures on relationship functioning, and therefore cannot adequately describe or assess CNM relationships (Conley, Matstick, Moors, Ziegler, 2017). Future research should develop measures that incorporate the

unique characteristics and processes of CNM relationships, so as to more adequately determine factors that contribute to relationship functioning.

Several studies have outlined the predominance of primary-secondary configurations in CNM relationships (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Jamieson, 2004; Barker, 2005). The current study supports this finding, with 88% of CNM participants reporting being in a 'primary' relationship. A recent paper investigated the differences between CNM primary and secondary relationships using Rusbult's model, as well as other cost-reward factors, such as acceptance, secrecy, relationship communication, and sexual frequency (Balzarini, Campbell, Kohut, Holmes, Lehmilller, Harman, Atkins, 2017). Results showed greater acceptance of primary partners (by family members and friends) and greater romantic secrecy of secondary partners, which may reflect the societal devaluation of CNM relationships (Balzarini et al., 2017; Conley et al., 2013). Several published studies have substantiated the stigma associated with CNM, including poly, swinging, and open relationships (Conley et al., 2013; Moors et al., 2013; Kimberly & Hans, 2017; Jordan et al., 2016). As well, it has been found that the commitment and stability within romantic relationships is negatively impacted by stigma (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). It is possible that people engaging in CNM are simultaneously navigating the cost of the stigma and their marginalized relationship status on top of the four basic costs and rewards (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Attempting to engage in CNM in a mono-normative culture, where optimal forces are pushing against this structure, may offer insight into the finding in the current study of CNM relationships being shorter in duration.

'Dyadic containment' is a theory that can be used to understand the organization of romantic relationships (Finn & Malson, 2008). Monogamous relationships engage in a process of 'dyadic containment' by way of sexual fidelity and reserving sexual behaviour to the 'inside' of

the dyad, and it is unknown the impact this could have on the longevity of a romantic relationship. Some studies have found that even CNM relationships exhibit ‘dyadic containment’, and reproduce the privileging of coupledness and mono-normativity within Western society (Finn & Malson, 2008). This could also speak to the privileging of the ‘inside’ and the predominance of primary-secondary relationships in CNM configurations, both in the current study and in the majority of research (Wosick-Correa, 2010; Jamieson, 2004; Barker, 2005). These considerations leave us with the following question: could ‘(dy)adic containment’ be a conscious process that monogamous and CNM relationships engage in to maintain the stability and certainty of their relationships, or is it a process that contributes to mono-normativity and stigma, making it more difficult for people engaging in CNM to challenge modern-day relationship rules and therefore maintain their alternative relationship status?

CNM – Most Common Agreements

Another aim of the study was to determine CNM participants’ most common relationship agreements, as well as monogamous participants’ willingness to endorse CNM agreements, also described by a recent paper as ‘CNM desire’ (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017). Explicit and implicit communication about these agreements and perception of mutual understanding of agreements were also investigated.

In the current study, the most common CNM agreement was, “being allowed to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever you want, but there must be no secrets between you,” with 71.1% of CNM participants endorsing this agreement. ‘No secrets’ places an emphasis on explicit and ongoing communication, which is consistent with the results on communication from the current study. CNM participants had a significantly greater degree of communication compared to monogamous participants about rules related to sexual and emotional connection

with other people. It is possible that monogamous participants were interpreting this question as irrelevant to them because of their monogamous agreement. Despite this possibility, some monogamous participants report willingness to engage in non-monogamous activity, which suggests that communication about sexual and emotional connection with other people is relevant to people in all different relationship types. These findings support the commonly accepted understanding that communication is one feature that distinguishes CNM relationships from the monogamous majority, as evidenced by the bulk of CNM literature that defines communication and ‘total honesty’ as the underpinning of how these relationships work (McDonald, 2010; Conley et al., 2012; Wosick-Correa, 2010; Klesse, 2006; Klesse, 2014; Matstick et al., 2013). The emphasis on values of honesty and transparency over the details of non-monogamous behaviour within this ‘no secrets’ agreement illustrates how CNM participants might establish an ‘agentic fidelity,’ whereby communication is prioritized above sexual/romantic fidelity (Wosick-Correa, 2010). This finding might also be an indication of dyadic containment, demonstrating the way partners on the ‘inside’ of the relationship have the privilege of communication. Communication could be described as a privilege by way of contributing to greater levels of intimacy and depth of closeness within these relationships, perhaps alluding to the ‘transformative possibility’ that Finn (2012) notes as a potential facet of CNM relationships (Laurenceau et al., 2005; MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Finn, 2012).

The second most common CNM agreement was being, “allowed to have sex with whomever you want, using protection, no strings attached, no questions asked,” with 67.6% of CNM participants endorsing this agreement. This agreement describes protected sexual activity as an external behaviour that can occur on the ‘outside’ of the relationship, therefore perhaps insinuating that romantic and emotional activity is that which occurs on the ‘inside,’ reproducing

the force of dyadic containment. Due to its emphasis on sex with additional partners, this agreement more reflects agreements present in the literature on open and swinging relationships (McDonald, 2010; Bergstrand & Williams, 2010; Hoff & Beougher, 2010). Correspondent to ‘no strings attached,’ a recent study found that swingers distinguished between love and sex and ‘shunned’ the former, prohibiting any emotional attachments with other partners (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Although the finding in the current study was not significant, a greater percentage of participants in open relationships and multiple relationship types compared to poly relationships endorsed this agreement, which may reflect the ‘type’ of CNM this agreement describes. A greater sample size might have led to this finding being significant, or there may not have been adequate power to detect a significant difference here. ‘No questions asked’ within this agreement also places an emphasis on a lack of explicit communication and more of a reliance on mutual understandings of extra-dyadic sex. Past studies have indicated that CNM folks use diverse forms of communication (both explicit and implicit), and that non-verbal cues are more commonly used by couples who have been together for a few years or longer (Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Kimberly & Hans, 2017). Within the current study, it was found that 23.2% of CNM participants endorsed having an, “unspoken agreement that we will be sexual with other people, but haven’t talked about it.” Ritchie & Barker’s (2006) research explored the ways polyamorists constructed their identities by using alternative language. For example, poly people used the term ‘compersion’ to describe the joy one feels for their partner’s experience of love and connection to another person, so as to challenge the mono-normative narrative of associating ‘jealousy’ with extradyadic sex (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). As well, poly people used ‘breaking the rules’ instead of ‘cheating’ to diverge from the mono-normative associations with infidelity (Wosick-Correa, 2010). This study outlines the lack of social script and/or the shortage of

language available to describe the workings of these alternative relationships, which may offer insight into why almost one-quarter of CNM participants endorsed relying on implicit communication. In a study on gay male open relationships, it was suggested that mutual understandings about relationship agreements are more important for adherence compared to explicitness of the agreement (Hoff & Beougher, 2010). The majority of CNM participants reported that they were sure their partners would give most or all of the same responses about agreement questions, suggesting perceived high mutual understandings. All of these findings on CNM participants together ('no questions asked', 'unspoken agreement', and partners' mutual understanding about agreements) indicate that people in CNM relationships use diverse forms of communication (verbal, non-verbal, etc.) to achieve mutual understandings about their agreements.

The third most common CNM agreement was being, "allowed to form outside romantic relationships, but they must always be less important than the relationship between the two of you," with 52.8% of CNM participants endorsing this agreement. These results correspond to the research on primary-secondary and the devaluing of secondary relationships (Balzarini et al., 2017). Although the current study did not produce evidence to support this, the emphasis on 'romance' within this agreement suggests greater relevancy to polyamorous relationships (Klesse, 2011). Dyadic containment is demonstrated directly by way of prioritizing romantic and emotional connections between CNM partners (Finn & Malson, 2008). An 'agentic fidelity' might follow from this agreement whereby partners determine the type of romantic activities that are given 'special meaning' with primary partners and romantic activities that are 'allowed' with secondary partners, so as not to threaten the bond within the primary relationship (Wosick-Correa, 2010).

Interestingly, it was found that 8% of poly and 15.4% of open participants endorsed the agreement to be, “in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other, neither of you having any other partners,” despite this monogamous or ‘sexual fidelity’ agreement being inconsistent with poly and open non-monogamous practices. It is possible that these participants were interpreting the question as referring to a ‘primary’ partner, or that these individuals were responding based on their current relationship type (i.e., with one person only) even though they might identify as a CNM person. A recent paper uses the notion of ‘becoming’ to describe the process of inhabiting the ‘suspended transition’ from a monogamous identity to a polyamorous identity (Cominguez, Pujol, Motzkau, Popper, 2017). This paper outlines the contradictions and tensions for people navigating the possibility to love more than one person at one time within Western culture where the norm is monogamy (Cominguez et al., 2017). These researchers suggest that identity categories are better described as, “both/and monogamous/polyamorous and neither/nor monogamous/polyamorous” (Cominguez et al., 2017). McDonald (2010) outlines a parallel of this ‘both/and’ sentiment about swinging identities stating that, “monogamy and non-monogamy feed off each other and are inextricably linked...the act of non-monogamy is designed to stimulate (among other emotional bonding factors) additional sexual activity, enhancing a bond with the primary partner, resulting in a more emotionally monogamous partnership” (McDonald, 2010). These studies may offer insight into why there was some conflicting evidence or overlap between monogamous/non-monogamous identities and monogamous/non-monogamous agreements within the current study.

Related to differences in relationship agreements between CNM types, in the current study there were a significantly greater number of participants in polyamorous compared to open relationships who endorsed being, “allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your

relationship on equal terms,” as well as, “to be in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms.” These agreements challenge dyadic containment and the hierarchy within primary-secondary configurations because they emphasize an *equal* investment into multiple relationships. Polyamory has diverse meanings throughout the literature (e.g., relational orientation, political stance, philosophy, practice), and can be distinguished from open and swinging relationships through its emphasis on love in multiple relationships (Klesse, 2014; Barker, 2005; Klesse 2007; Jordan et al., 2016). Polyamory, as a political practice, challenges compulsory monogamy through the belief that is worthwhile to engage in intimate, sexual, and loving relationships with more than one person (Haritaworn et al., 2006). Polyamory also challenges the conceptualization of love as a limited ‘resource,’ pushing the boundaries of our human capacity for romantic love to include multiple partners (Burleigh, Rubel, Meegan, 2017). Some polyamorous people describe themselves as ‘hard-wired’ into this relational orientation or having a predisposition toward desiring romantic love with more than one person, analogous to the argument that sexual orientation is not a choice, but rather an essential component of one’s identity (Klesse, 2014). It may be that participants in poly relationships identify with a ‘limitless capacity to love’ and ‘transformative possibility’ and are therefore more committed to politically challenging the basic organization of ‘the dyad’ and ‘heterosexual, monogamous coupledness’ compared to participants in open relationships. This may offer an explanation as to why poly participants were more willing to make these non-hierarchical agreements. Moreover, Klesse (2014) outlines the risks associated with understanding polyamory as an essential component to one’s identity by arguing that this does not represent the diversity of consensual non-monogamy, and therefore undermines the movement for recognition and anti-discrimination of all CNM

relationship types (Klesse, 2014). Future studies should continue to embrace the diverse orientations of relationships (both monogamous and consensually non-monogamous).

Monogamous – Most Common Agreements Willing to Consider

As expected, the most common relationship agreement that monogamous participants were *willing* to agree to was to be, “in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other, neither of you having any other partners,” with 75.7% of participants endorsing this agreement. This monogamous agreement of sexual and emotional exclusivity is consistent with dyadic containment (Finn & Malson, 2008).

The most common relationship agreements involving extra partners that monogamous participants were most willing to agree to was being, “allowed to engage in sex with others, as long as it was together (e.g., threesomes),” with 26.7% of monogamous participants endorsing this agreement. The second most common agreement involving extra partners that monogamous participants were most willing to agree to was being, “allowed to take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms” with 15.5% of monogamous participants endorsing this agreement. The third most common agreement monogamous participants were most willing to agree to was to, “go together to swingers parties where partners would be exchanged for the night,” with 11.7% endorsing this agreement. The increased accessibility of pornography has introduced and normalized sexual acts that have been historically stigmatized (e.g. that which is outside the charmed circle: homosexual, non-procreative, casual, and promiscuous), and may provide insight into why threesomes are the top non-monogamous agreement that monogamous participants were willing to consider (Scoats, Joseph, Anderson, 2017; Rubin, 1984). An article published by Pornhub in 2014 reported that the second highest search for women was ‘threesomes’ and the fourth highest search was ‘gangbang,’ suggesting a mainstream desire for

engaging in sex with more than one person (Pornhub, 2014). Additionally, in a recent study on experiences in the swinging lifestyle heterosexual couples were interviewed about their ‘transitions into swinging,’ and several of the participants described interest in (and fantasies) involving additional partners stemming from exposure to media that showed non-monogamous activity (Kimberly & Hans, 2017). As well, given that swinging is more highly associated with heterosexuality compared to other CNM types (Jenks, 1998), desire to swing may be a factor of sexual orientation, as the majority of monogamous participants identified as heterosexual within the current study. Popular portrayals of CNM are often shown by way of the heterosexual dyad ‘experimenting’ or ‘spicing things up’ by way of adding a new partner in a threesome or trying out the ‘swinging lifestyle’ (Taormino, 2008; Easton & Hardy, 1997). This might offer explanation as to the findings within the current study of monogamous participants’ desire for CNM.

Though threesomes seem to be the most acceptable form of non-monogamy among monogamous participants, threesomes by their very structure include same-sex sexual activity, and therefore is a sexual act that challenges both mono- and hetero-normativity. With approximately one-quarter of monogamous participants endorsing willingness to engage in threesomes and over 90% of monogamous participants identifying as ‘heterosexual,’ the findings within the current study supports a blurring of binary boundaries within hetero/homo and monogamous/non-monogamous identity categories. A recent paper uses the “one-time rule of homosexuality” to describe how masculinity and male sexuality have been policed within Western culture, stating that, “any same-sex sexual act or desire is perceived to mark that person as gay, regardless of sexual history, sexual identity, or sexual desire” (Scoats et al., 2017). These researchers argue that this one-time rule has been eroded through increased permissibility of

same-sex behaviour, shown by ‘bromances,’ hugging, cuddling, and even kissing in male friendships, without the ‘threat’ of one’s straight identity (Barrett, 2015; Anderson & McCormack, 2015; Anderson, Adams, Rivers, 2012). The willingness of heterosexual, monogamous identified people to consider same-sex, non-monogamous agreements offers more evidence to support a movement toward a fluid understanding of sexual identity and sexual orientation. Interestingly, the top three agreements monogamous participants were most willing to endorse included engaging in CNM together, showing how monogamous couples might reproduce dyadic containment. It is possible that the physical presence of both partners makes couples feel safer when considering engaging in extradyadic sex and romantic relationships.

Relationship Agreement Transgressions and Infidelity

Within the current study, 29.6% of CNM participants reported transgressing their agreements that involved engaging sexually and romantically with additional partners. Recognizing that the agreement questions were not entirely comprehensive of all possible CNM behaviours, it is possible that these transgressions represent items that were not measured within the current study. For example, some participants might have agreements that are more difficult to define, such as what specific romantic activities and/or amount of romantic time permitted with other partners, or more specific sexual rules, such as ‘no kissing’ other partners. It is also possible that CNM participants’ ‘agentic fidelity’ involves more detailed boundaries, and therefore there are simply more opportunities for CNM participants to transgress their agreements (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Where ‘cheating’ and ‘infidelity’ refer to transgressing one rule about sexual fidelity within monogamous relationships, these words are inadequate for describing transgressions of boundaries within CNM relationships, and therefore we cannot interpret the results from the current study as describing engaging in sex with another person

where it was not permitted (i.e. infidelity). Alternatively, CNM relationship agreements have also been characterized as agentic and flexible (Wosick-Correa, 2010), and it may be the case that proximity of alternatives and flexibility invite greater potentiality for transgressions (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). It is unknown whether the flexibility within CNM relationships renders transgressions to be less of a concern, or if the emphasis on ethical behaviour and overt communication within CNM relationships renders transgressions to be of greater concern. We know very little about the nature of agreement transgressions within CNM relationships, and we know less about the impact of these transgressions. Future research should explore transgressions within CNM relationships and the language used to describe ‘cheating’ within these relationships, as well as their impact, as this may have implications for therapists and other clinicians working with this population.

In the current study 6.8% of monogamous participants reported engaging in infidelity. This is less prevalent than what has been reported in the previous literature (including national samples and meta-analyses) (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007), largely because the current study asked about infidelity in the current relationship versus over a lifetime. As well, in the current study infidelity was defined as having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else, and this definition may have been narrower than what other studies use to operationalize infidelity within the context of monogamous relationships. With infidelity being labeled as immoral by 88% of Americans (Gallup poll, 2015), it is possible that participants’ responses were also impacted by social desirability. It would be interesting for future studies to explore stigma of infidelity within CNM relationships, so as to determine whether CNM have similar or different responses to and understandings of infidelity, compared to monogamous individuals. In the current study, it was not feasible to compare monogamous and CNM

transgressions/infidelity because participants were asked different questions. CNM participants were asked about agreement transgressions rather than specifically about their behaviours, whereas monogamous participants were asked explicitly about whether they had engaged in sex with someone else. It is likely that the proportion of CNM transgressions reported were amplified as a result of this. If future researchers want to compare prevalence of infidelity in CNM and monogamous relationships, measures that are more explicit and consistent across relationship types should be created.

Limitations

As is the case with much sexuality research, the current study is limited by self-report bias, with the potential for participants' responses to be impacted by social desirability (Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, Paulhus, 1998). Infidelity, in particular, is a stigmatized behaviour and therefore reports of infidelity are particularly vulnerable to social desirability bias (Zapien, 2017). An additional limitation relates to the sampling of CNM participants, CNM participants were asked about their agreements with their primary partner, which means results are based on a particular structure of CNM and therefore could be limited in their inclusion of the diversity that exists within CNM. This study was also limited by sample size. One of the aims of the current study was to determine within-CNM group differences, so as to fill the gap in research determined by Sizemore & Olmstead (2017) in their systematic review on methodological limitations within CNM research. There were not enough participants recruited to adequately analyze swinging participants' responses, and therefore some within-CNM group differences could not be determined.

Future Research

The current study quantitatively assessed the most common relationship agreements among CNM participants, as well as the most common non-monogamous relationship agreements that monogamous participants desired, using a modified version of the scale created by Moors et al. (2014). Modification included addition of questions regarding threesomes and being in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms. Results of the current study show that the top agreement monogamous participants were willing to consider was threesomes. This demonstrates limitations of the original scale and the importance of future research exploring themes and unique agreements within CNM relationships, so as to determine the most appropriate items for this measure. As well, many measures used to assess relationship functioning within CNM are said to have mono-normative assumptions embedded within them (Conley, Matstick, Moors, Ziegler, 2017). Future studies should investigate unique characteristics of CNM and suitable variables for the creation of relationship functioning scales that are not laden with mono-normative assumptions. The proximity of alternatives concept from Rusbult's investment model may be a useful variable, whereas commitment may be irrelevant as studies have shown no differences in commitment between CNM and monogamous participants (Moors, Matstick, Schechinger, 2017). Additionally, there has been very little research on non-hierarchical agreements within CNM relationships (Peterson, 2016). Future research should investigate how these agreements might challenge mono-normativity and the dyadic partnership structure, and the potential implications in creation of CNM measures.

Future studies should also investigate within-CNM group differences in their endorsement of agreements with a larger sample size, so as to make up for the limitations of a lack of swingers within the current study. Further, the current study included participants that

ranged from age 20-70. Future studies should investigate the ways CNM occurs similarly or differently depending on different developmental life stages by including age as an independent variable (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2017).

Results of the current study show that CNM participants relied on both explicit and implicit communication, and future studies should explore further the nuanced use of communication for creating and negotiating relationship agreements. Monogamous and CNM participants were compared on their degree of communication within this study, which could imply a process of evaluating which relationship structure is 'better' (Lehmiller, 2017). Future research should move beyond using monogamy as a standardized control group (Lehmiller, 2017).

With very little research on adherence to relationship agreements or transgression of agreements within CNM relationships, future research should qualitatively explore the nature and impact of 'breaking the rules' within CNM (Wosick-Correa, 2010). Once a better understanding about the language used to describe agreement transgressions has been determined, quantitative researchers can work to determine the prevalence of transgressions within CNM relationships. Future studies might also look at whether relationship transgressions are more or less harmful or if they are understood differently within the context of CNM relationships. This will be an important area of study as it is relevant to psychotherapists and other clinicians working with clients who have diverse relationship structures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study investigated demographic characteristics, relationship agreements, CNM desire, communication, agreement transgressions, infidelity, and mutual understandings across participants with diverse relationship structures (poly, swinging, open,

monogamous). Dyadic containment was used throughout as a lens with which to frame the results and our current understandings of how couples balance the basic tension of security and novelty within the context of monogamy and CNM. Results may indicate that monogamous participants express dyadic containment by having their partner present (i.e. security and safety) when exploring sexually; whereas CNM participants might express (dy)adic containment by using communication and negotiation (i.e. security and safety), while engaging in the novelty and distance of sexual and romantic relationships with others. It was noteworthy that one-third of CNM participants reported engaging in agreement transgressions, which could potentially invite risk of security, although future research is needed on the nature and impact of transgressions within CNM relationships. This study contributes to our understanding of the diversity of human sexuality and romantic relationships in the context of CNM and monogamous relationships. As the Western socio-sexual landscape diversifies, research on relationship agreements and communication within CNM relationships could have important implications for future therapists and other clinicians.

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Appendix A

Relationship Agreements, Agreement Transgressions, Communication

Please answer regarding your current relationship(s):

Response Options: Yes/No

You and/or your partner.....

1. ...are allowed to have sex with whomever you/they want, using protection, no strings attached, no questions asked.
2. ...go together to swinger parties where partners are exchanged for the night.
3. ...are allowed to form outside romantic relationships, but they must always be less important than the relationship between the two of you.
4. ...are allowed to have sex with others, but never the same person more than once.
5. ...are allowed to have sex and romantic relationships with whomever they want, but there must be no secrets between you.
6.are allowed take on a third partner to join you in your relationship on equal terms.
7. ...are allowed to engage in sex with others, as long as it is together (e.g., have threesomes).
8. ...are in a committed relationship with another couple on equal terms.
9. ...are in a sexual and emotional relationship with only each other. Neither of you has any other partners.
10. ...have agreed on sexual and relational boundaries that include other people, but you have gone outside of those boundaries without telling them.
11. ...are in a monogamous relationship, but I have had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with

someone else without them knowing.

12. ... are in a monogamous relationship, but I suspect they have had vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone else.

13. ... have an unspoken agreement that we will be sexual with other people but we haven't talked about it.

14. Do you think your primary partner would respond the same way that you did to the above questions?

- I am quite sure that they would give the same responses that I did
- I think that they would give most of the same responses I did
- I think that they would give some of the same responses that I did
- I do not think that they would give the same responses that I did

15. To what degree have you and your primary partner discussed the boundaries or "rules" related to sexual or emotional connections with other people?

- a great deal
- somewhat
- not very much
- not at all