of the intersections of race, class, gender and culture which operate in the acceptance (or non-acceptance) of diverse ways of relating. Finally, Eleanor Wilkinson and Jamie Heckert (Chapter 25 and Chapter 26) both engage with anarchist perspectives, offering an expanded understanding of non-monogamies which might be one of multiple loves rather than multiple lovers, and which might be more explicitly political and radical in dismantling existing power hierarchies.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed putting it together. We also hope that it paves the way for future dialogue between the people engaged with various styles of non-monogamy and for further consideration of the ways in which all relationships are constantly being co-created, negotiated and deconstructed on both an interpersonal and societal level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the dialogues we have had over the years with various people in our own lives.

Meg would like to thank Nick, Darren O., Ani, Erich and Christina for inexpressibly valuable conversations, love and support along the way. She would also like to thank the UK poly community for engaging in her research and for helping her to explore all these questions on an academic and personal level.

Darren would like to thank Ian, Neil and Adam for helping him to learn more about love and friendship than he could ever have possibly wished for or expected. He also sends a special thank you to his co-editor, Meg; his friend and colleague who contributes so much more than she could know to what he thinks and does.

2 Deconstructing Monogamy
Boundaries, Identities, and Fluidities across Relationships

Katherine Frank and John DeLamater

I'm married and I'm not gonna cheat on my wife. I've just come to the decision that looking isn't cheating...

What does faithful even mean, Kate? Does it mean I'm faithful in my mind? Does a one-night stand in a hotel room somewhere mean that I am not faithful to my wife? I am faithful to my wife because I love her and there is no one else I want to share a life with...

A lot of people in swinging do it because their marriage has run out of gas... we weren't looking for a spark or a replacement... We were looking for an extension of being married...

Consensually non-monogamous relationships may be referred to as 'alternative relationships', suggesting a deviation from a unified, traditional model (Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Levitt, 1988; Rubin, 2001). Sometimes such distinctions provide useful information about how people understand their relationships. There are indeed dominant discourses of love, sex, and marriage within which individuals are positioned and sexual exclusivity with the loved one remains an important element in heterosexual romantic equations (Gross, 2005). There are times, however, when 'monogamous' couples are unproductively homogenized, especially in academic discussions. Such a theoretical bifurcation between relationship styles (monogamous or 'alternative') can flatten out important differences in practice, belief and experience.

This chapter explores how the boundaries of fidelity are defined, justified, lived and negotiated for couples with varying practices of sexual exclusivity. Drawing on survey data and interview materials collected from married couples participating in a variety of arrangements (monogamous relationships, secretly or nonconsensually non-monogamous relationships, open marriages, polyamory and swinging) we explore here both similarities in the process of setting social and sexual boundaries across relationships and the variation in agreements that were reported by married individuals. We argue that viewing transgressions simply in terms of whether a spouse engages in sex outside the relationship, or defining relationships simply by
counting the number of intimate partners, misses the various ways that lines are drawn to demarcate acceptable social and sexual interaction with others, as well as the meanings of sex, love and intimacy impacting these decisions. When comparing individuals engaging in varied practices of sexual exclusivity, or even when categorizing couples or individuals into relationship types for means of analysis, then, we must recognize both the similarities in strategies used to protect intimate bonds and the instabilities of the categories deployed.

Our research included quantitative and qualitative components. Survey data were collected from 200 individuals. Participants were required to be over 18 years of age and legally married. They were recruited in a variety of ways: word of mouth, brochures, advertisements, articles in print and online publications, email lists, Internet forums, and special interest and lifestyle groups. Participants contacted the first researcher for access codes and were directed to a secure website to take the survey anonymously. Paper surveys were also available, but only one was requested. Married individuals were allowed to take the survey without their spouse’s participation; spouses, however, can be identified using case ID numbers. For polyamorous families, matching case numbers were assigned to the legally married participants but additional partners were allowed to take the survey if they desired. Each individual responded without access to their spouse’s answers. Interviews were also conducted with 50 survey respondents who expressed interest and reported a variety of sexual practices related to exclusivity.

Participants ranged in age from 20 to 75 years (mean = 41) and there were nearly equal proportions of males (49%) and females (51%). Our requirement that participants be legally married was a necessary limitation that unfortunately did not allow us to include same-sex couples. We hope to amend the study in the future to do so, as we expect same-sex couples will add significant insights to our findings. However, despite the fact that heterosexual marriage was a core requirement, participants reported same-sex behavior and same-sex intimate partners in both the surveys and the interviews. White Americans made up 89% of the sample; the rest of the sample was 4% Black¹, 1.5% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 2.5% other. Fifteen percent of the respondents self-designated as working class, 27% as lower middle class, 47% as upper middle class, and 9% as upper class. In terms of education, 6% reported high school or less, 30% had completed some college (including junior college), 27% had earned a bachelor’s degree, and 27% reported graduate or professional education. With regard to religious attendance, 35% reported attending less than once per year, 34% reported attending several times per year to several times per week, and 30% reported attending weekly or more often. Respondents reported living in 33 states and the District of Columbia (n = 20), and four other countries.

The survey was composed of existing scales and original questions; respondents were also allowed to write detailed explanations of their answers, generating over 100 pages of text. Interviews were semi-structured and conversational, that is, participants provided extended narratives about their relationships and occasionally also asked questions of the interviewer (the first author). Interviews usually lasted one to one and a half hours, and follow up interviews were conducted if participants requested. Interviews were taped, transcribed, and edited for verbal repetitions and non-essential pauses. All names and certain identifying details have been changed. The term ‘monogamous’ is used here in the colloquial sense to denote sexual exclusivity for the duration of an intimate relationship, not in the anthropological sense. And although swinging, polyamory, and open marriage may overlap and diverge in complicated ways, they are considered here together as forms of consensual non-monogamy.

The first section of this chapter explores the boundaries of fidelity as they are understood by our respondents. The second section explores the complexities introduced by multiple identities, divergent spousal identities, and fluidity over the life course, in practices, and in couples’ agreements about acceptable social and sexual extradyadic behavior.

**NEGOTIATING BOUNDARIES**

National surveys estimate that 20% to 25% of Americans have engaged in extramarital sex (EMS) (Laumann et al, 1994; Greeley, 1991, 1994). Many of these surveys rely on the question ‘Have you ever had sex with someone other than your husband or wife while you were married?’ (See Greeley, 1991). Unfortunately, however, both researchers and the public often conflate reports of the prevalence of EMS or extramarital involvement (EMI) with the prevalence of adultery or infidelity in marital relationships. Laumann et al. (1994), for example, in a book written for the general public based on the National Health and Social Life Survey, claim that ‘more than 80 percent of women and 65 to 85 percent of men of every age report that they had no partners other than their spouse while they were married’ (p. 105), and in their more academic tract they write: ‘Over 90 percent of the women and over 75 percent of the men in every cohort report fidelity within their marriage, over its entirety’ (p. 214). The researchers then argue that, contrary to popular beliefs, ‘marriage is such a powerful social institution that, essentially, married people are nearly all alike—they are faithful to their partners as long as the marriage is intact’ (1994: 105). Similarly, Greeley (1991), using data from the General Social Survey, notes ‘a strong propensity to fidelity’ (p. 204), again based on reports of the number of partners respondents have had during their marriages.

Yet, arguably, the fact that most respondents in these studies are reporting no outside ‘sexual partners’ does not mean they have not engaged in behaviors that they (or their spouse) would consider transgressive of the relationship. After all, what is often not asked in such research are more
making out to be cheating, and slightly more than half consider phone sex or cybersex to fall in this category. About one-fourth of the respondents consider patronizing a strip club, using pornography and fantasizing about other sexual partners to be cheating. We also explored understandings of cheating using a composite variable based on how respondents identified themselves and on their reported practices: monogamous, consensually non-monogamous (CN), or secretly or nonconsensually non-monogamous (SNN). Monogamous participants defined more potential interactions and activities overall as cheating and were more likely to define fantasies about sex with others, visiting strip clubs, and pornography use as cheating; monogamous participants were also less likely to change their definitions of behaviors as a function of qualifying conditions. Many respondents who had engaged in SNN behavior in their current marriage also perceived intercourse, oral sex, and paid sex to be cheating but were somewhat less likely to define non-penetrative sexual activities as cheating than monogamous participants. Individuals in CN relationships found more situations and activities potentially acceptable than the other two groups. For CN individuals, however, infidelity was more contextual. As a survey respondent wrote: ‘even fly-fishing could be considered cheating if despite your spouse’s disapproval, you acted in secret, felt shame . . . and/or lied.’ Individuals in CN relationships may be more sensitive to such nuances in part because of the lack of institutionalized social norms for handling their agreements.

The findings for sexual intercourse, oral sex, and a long-term sexual relationship are not surprising. Most of those claiming that they would ‘certainly not’ or ‘probably not’ consider intercourse cheating were those in CN relationships. What is more interesting is the number of people overall who considered activities such as phone sex/cybersex (52%), pornography (20%), or even fantasizing (23%) to be transgressions. As these behaviors are imaginative in nature, their designation as cheating involves high levels of erotic policing of oneself and of the spouse. In response to an open-ended survey question about what kinds of additional behaviors would be considered cheating, respondents described similar boundaries against ‘lusting in the heart’:

Forming a close relationship with a man and excluding my husband from the relationship. Visiting a man in his home, or having him visit me in my home, when no one else is present, for the sole purpose of enjoying each other’s company.

If I were to frequently go to lunch or something with someone who I was physically attracted to and flirted with, even if we both paid for our own meals and nothing else ever happened.

No going to places that discourage marital commitments without total honesty and full disclosure to the other . . . We have both ended friendships with individuals that were cheating on their spouse.
I consider cheating: porn, strip clubs, lap dances, phone sex, going to Hooters to ogle young girls, flirting with my female friends, rubbernecking in front of me, discussing me with others.

A number of women specifically argued that pornography was a form of cheating; other women only accepted porn if it was ‘kept secret’ or was ‘not offensive.’ Masturbation was also mentioned as transgressive by both male and female respondents. As one man wrote, ‘Masturbation is withholding part of myself... similar to cheating.’ Another man sought to eradicate even his memories of previous partners:

I wish that I had no memories of other experiences, so that I may more readily and more easily dwell in my mind ONLY on my wife. I believe my past behavior to be shameful... I have been working on bridling my thoughts...

Even individuals who refused to classify these more imaginative transgressions as on par with a physical or emotional betrayal, sometimes still expressed concern. Fran, for example, said, ‘It’s almost like a scale of one to ten... You know, sexually, physically with somebody is a ten... and having fantasies would maybe... be a three.’ Another respondent wrote: ‘One can engage in masturbation while doing all over petting with another person... Although this is cheating... it seems much less serious than having intercourse.’

Such self-reflexive erotic policing is actually encouraged by some infidelity ‘experts.’ In psychologist Shirley Glass’s (2003) book for example, emotional infidelity is presented as an unfortunate, but avoidable, accident. Glass writes that the couples she sees in her therapeutic practice are not engaging in infidelity as a means of intentional thrill seeking; rather, this ‘new infidelity is between people who unwittingly form deep, passionate connections before realizing that they’ve crossed the line from platonic friendship into romantic love.’ Because of increased opportunities for intimate relationships, the line between platonic and romantic feelings has become easier to cross (2003: 1). Though originally involved in ‘peer relationships,’ ‘people who truly are initially just friends or just friendly colleagues slowly move onto the slippery slope of infidelity’ (2003: 2). As precautions against such ‘fatal attractions,’ Glass suggests refusing to fantasize about other partners, eliminating flirting, and avoiding ‘risky situations’ (2003: 41). But ‘danger zones’ are all around us: at work, in ‘your own backyard’ in the form of friends and neighbors, and on the Internet. In another similarly ominous book, Gary Neuman argues that ‘when a spouse places his or her primary emotional needs in the hands of someone outside the marriage, it breaks the bond of marriage just as adultery does’ (2001: 26). He warns couples to ‘insulate and protect your marriage against emotional infidelity by avoiding friendships with members of the opposite sex’ (2001: 23; italics mine)—this idea of ‘marital isolation’ is a cornerstone of his philosophy. Like Glass, Neuman cautions that even ‘good’ marriages are not immune to this danger (2001: 29).

Both Glass and Neuman write primarily to a heterosexual audience and from the perspective of observing heterosexual marriages in clinical and research settings. Although it is unclear how their observations might apply in same-sex relationships, for some of the married couples we surveyed and interviewed, these warnings would not have seemed frivolous. Several interviewees limited their contact with all members of the opposite sex in an effort to remain monogamous. One interviewee said he would never have lunch with a female co-worker alone or allow a woman to close the door to his office. A woman told me that she never spoke to another man at work or at church unless absolutely necessary. More than a few couples described infidelity on the part of themselves or their spouses that had begun platonically online or at work and then blossomed into a full transgression that negatively impacted the marriage. As Glass and Neuman would have predicted, these individuals believed that the ‘affair’ preceded sexual contact.

At the same time, we have also begun hearing about the ‘new monogamy,’ a phrase which often works as a sort of catchall for relationships that do not completely prohibit extradyadic eroticism, regardless of the self-proclaimed identities of the participants. Recently in the media: two journalists ponder whether to purchase ‘happy endings’ for their boyfriends at a massage parlor (Em & Lo, 2005); college students (and their parents) talk about ‘friends with benefits’ and ‘fuck buddies,’ non-committed relationships involving sexual activity, and therapists weigh in on the Internet about the benefits and limitations of the ‘new’ versus the ‘old’ monogamy (MSN.com, 2006). Polyamorists have appeared on Tyra Bank’s talk show, ‘new monogamists’ took to the couch on The Keith Ablow Show, and swingers have put their practices up for debate on Oprah (see also Ritchie, Chapter 5, this volume).

When our respondents were asked how frequently they discussed sexual exclusivity in their relationships, monogamous individuals were more likely than expected to say that they ‘do not feel the need’ for such discussions. Still, wide-ranging social changes in the United States over the last few decades—married women’s employment outside the home, corresponding increases in women’s economic independence, new conceptualizations of identity, and growing emphases on sexual pleasure and self-fulfillment (Giddens, 1992; Schmidt, 1998)—have impacted marital and relationship practices. Evidence of this impact is found in high divorce rates, the developing disjunction of marriage and reproduction, the normalization of premarital sex and cohabitation for certain groups, and an increased (visibility of) casual sexual activity (Gross, 2005). Such changes have arguably also influenced the meanings of love, sex, and marriage and led to reconfigurations of traditional models of intimacy. Love may or may not be seen as a
counterpart of, and justification for, both sexual activity and marriage. Sex has multiple meanings: recreation, emotional bondedness, a sacred marital act, or self-fulfillment, for example. In such a context, the negotiation of previously assumed elements of commitment such as sexual exclusivity becomes more frequent, even imperative, for some contemporary couples.

Yet despite their seemingly defiant practices, and despite the fearful popular response that they often receive, 'new monogamists' are anything but engaging in a sexual and emotional free-for-all (Em & Lo, 2005). There is a growing literature for individuals involved in CN relationships mapping some of this complex territory (Anapol, 1997; Bellemende, 2003; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Thomas, 1997). Openly non-monogamous couples often go through an explicit process of negotiation and boundary delineation (Jamieson, 2004; Adam, Chapter 6, this volume), defining particular behaviors, emotions, and kinds of partners as either acceptable or off-limits, for example. The CN individuals in our study were significantly more likely than those in the other groups to report regular conversations about sexual exclusivity with their partners. Like the couples studied by de Visser and McDonald (2007), discussion and negotiation was used to identify those aspects of relationships that are precious and exclusive to the relationship, and those aspects of the primary relationship that can be shared with others' (p. 472). For CN individuals, then, social and sexual relationship boundaries may be identified and policed through disclosure, discussion, and negotiation rather than through 'marital isolation' and inflexible notions of transgression.

Our interviewees who were in CN relationships discussed the situations they would be comfortable with, acceptable kinds of extradyadic activity, and how they monitored their own and their partners' behavior in the name of maintaining their bond. The potential 'rules' of extradyadic engagement that were discussed covered nearly all potential situations: out-of-town is okay; threesomes only; monthly 'hall-passes'; 'don't ask, don't tell'; 'not in our bed'; no emotional or long-term involvement; same-sex encounters only; no outside pregnancies; no sex with friends or co-workers; same rooms only; no kissing; no orgasm; etc. It is possible to find commentary, both pro and con, for nearly any possible boundary or arrangement (see also Adam, Chapter 6, this volume). One married couple who had dabbled in swinging but was more polyamorous at the time of the interview had a rule that if one of them was to have a sexual encounter with an outside partner on any given day, it could not interfere with lovemaking with the spouse if the spouse requested it. Another couple allowed each other 'hall passes' for solitary adventures, but only with prior permission and unquestioned veto power. Still another couple limited sexual activity to threesomes or foursomes with both of them present, with the possibility of renegotiating this arrangement in the future. They also did not 'hook up' with the same couple twice.

Monogamous and CN individuals may differ in terms of the meanings given to love, sex, and marriage, in what is most valued in the relationship (longevity or honesty, for example), in the specific social and sexual behaviors that are acceptable, and in the amount of discussion involved in setting those boundaries. While a full exploration of these meanings and understandings is beyond the scope of this chapter, the important point here is that similar processes are at work even in relationships that may look very different with respect to sexual exclusivity. The process of setting boundaries (and sometimes explicitly negotiating or renegotiating those boundaries) to define and protect intimate relationships, then, is one that crosses practices and identities.

IDENTITIES AND FLUIDITIES

In this section, we explore the fluidities we observed over the life course, in terms of identities, and with regard to negotiated boundaries and agreements. Respondents were asked to identify their relationship (monogamous, open, swinging, polyamorous, or other), about their previous and current social and sexual extradyadic practices, and about their future intentions with regard to such involvements. Our initial plan was to compare individuals across practice types—monogamous, SNN, or CN—on existing measures of marital quality, beliefs about sex, love and marriage, and other dimensions of interest in the marriage literature. We anticipated some complexities in categorizing individuals, as the link between practice and identity is rarely straightforward. We thus also used our questions about past engagements—and future intentions to engage—in the potentially transgressive behaviors discussed in the previous section to ascertain how individuals were behaving at the time of the survey, not just how they identified. When asked to identify their relationship type, 33% of the sample self-identified as having either a 'swinging,' 'polyamorous,' 'open' or relationship 'other' than monogamous. Individuals were asked to explain their answer if they selected 'other' or 'none of the above.' When recoded for practices, behaviors, and intentions in the current marriage instead of identities, 50% of the sample was classified as monogamous (101 cases), 19% (38 cases) as SNN, and 30.5% (61 cases) as CN. The monogamous practice group increased to encompass individuals who had not themselves engaged in extramarital sex but whose partners had done so; the SNN group included individuals who identified as monogamous but indicated they had engaged in nonconsensual EMS in the current marriage. Eight individuals who had engaged in SNN had selected the category of 'other,' or 'none of the above' when asked to identify their relationship, as did eight individuals who were engaged in CN practices but did not identify with the terminology of 'swinging,' 'polyamory,' or 'open relationship.'

The qualitative data and interviews turned up other complexities. Some individuals self-identified as swingers or as polyamorous, but had not yet found outside partners. Some individuals who engaged in CN activity
also reported SNN activity within their current marriages. And although polyamory has been defined as a ‘form of relationship where it is possible, valid and worthwhile to maintain (usually long-term) intimate and sexual relationships with multiple partners simultaneously’ (Haritaworn, Lin, and Klesse, 2006: 515), and swinging is generally thought of as recreational sex without emotional involvement with outside partners, these distinctions are easily deconstructed. 2

Candace and Claude had a relationship involving both attendance at sex parties and close relationships with outside lovers—they rejected both the term ‘swingers’ and the term ‘polyamorous.’ ‘One of the great things we’ve learned in the last five years,’ Claude said, ‘is that there need not be—and should not be—any standard template for interpersonal relations.’ Kevin described how his marriage to Kira included two other women for about a year. Against his wife’s wishes, Kevin developed feelings for one of the women, which caused a serious rift because the initial agreement had been to ‘just have fun.’ Kevin was unsure how to describe both that past relationship and his current arrangements. The word ‘polyamorous,’ he admitted, ‘sounds kooky to me.’ At the same time, Kevin argued that this early experience, even though it sometimes included threesomes or group sex, ‘was absolutely not swinging... To me, swinging is about sex and this was more about the relationship.’ After successfully negotiating the conflicts brought up by this partly consensual, and partly transgressive, experiment, Kevin and Kira now regularly dated other people. Kevin dismisses words like ‘open marriage’ to describe what he ‘has with Kira,’ and also refuses words like ‘primary’ or ‘secondary’ for his ongoing extramarital relationships. Similarly, Kira also thought labels failed to describe her experience:

I say I have a pretty nontraditional relationship with my husband... I tend to lean towards monogamy anyway... And Kevin [has] been on dates with other women... but nobody’s really lasted. And this one girl has. So it gives me the feeling that in some ways, he kind of leans to more... one person at a time.

She noted that her boyfriend also ‘doesn’t feel like dating more than one person at a time.’ Kira’s conceptualization of her current situation, then, was of the marriage as CN but the parallel relationships as sexually exclusive.

For other individuals, the term ‘monogamous’ denoted an attitude that went beyond the absence or presence of sexual exclusivity—their practices were CN or SNN but they identified as monogamous anyway. Olive and her husband Owen occasionally engaged in threesomes and partner swapping; they also attended swinging parties together. Still Olive claimed: ‘our true relationship, to me, is still monogamous.’ David described himself as ‘a polygamist who ‘also likes open relationships;’ still, he was troubled when his wife Denise had a secret outside encounter early in the relationship. At the time of the interview, they had begun dating a young woman named Didi and conceptualized a future ‘marriage’ between the three of them as including no outside partners, what some might term a form of ‘polyfidelity.’

Opportunity has been recognized as a ‘risk factor’ in traditional sociological studies of extramarital sex, but was also important in CN arrangements. David and Denise would have continued attempting to be being monogamous if they hadn’t developed the relationship with Didi. Another couple interviewed admitted that they desired a long-term, polyfidelitous relationship but hadn’t found ‘the right woman.’ For over 10 years, Irena and Ike had lived with another couple in a household including children. They had not ‘decided’ to become polyamorous or even to open their marriage; rather, their current arrangement had been the outcome of Ike’s affair with a neighbor. After the affair was discovered, Irena and the neighbor’s husband decided they also felt an attraction, and things developed to the point where they combined households. None of them really felt that the terms polyamory or open marriage ‘fit’ the peculiarities of their arrangement, particularly Ike, who was struggling with a desire to transgress the agreements of the quad by engaging in another secret affair.

Fluidity was exhibited in arrangements, identities, and practices over time, something difficult to capture in cross-sectional research or research that primarily draws respondents from identity-based groups or forums. Kevin and Kira began in a ‘traditional’ marriage, which eventually gave way to both of them admitting to boredom. Claude and Candace lived ‘mostly’ monogamously (she had a few transgressions early in the marriage) for over 30 years, then opened up their marriage to include swinging as well as some regular outside partners to which they were more emotionally attached. Jake and Jessica began dating in high school; when he turned 39, he approached her about opening their marriage. As Mormons, they had been ‘very monogamous because there wasn’t any other option.’ At the time of the interview, they had begun experimenting, although Jessica had been more successful than Jake in forming extramarital connections. Larissa and Luke experimented sexually with another couple (stopping short of intercourse) and discussed with each other their fantasies about threesomes. Larissa also had an extramarital sexual affair at one point in the relationship and several emotional affairs. At the time of the interview, however, they were ‘working’ on monogamy. Another respondent described his marriage as ‘totally open, then totally closed, and now totally open.’

Boundaries and rules are set, broken, and renegotiated across self-identified relationship type and over time as individuals and circumstances develop and change. Studying ‘polyamorous’ couples or individuals, or ‘swinging’ couples or individuals, then, may miss important segments of the population who either cannot or will not label themselves or their relationships. Further, asking simply for behavioral reports on surveys (‘Have you engaged in extramarital sex?’) can mask the actual practices, identities, and meanings involved. Certainly, there are times when it makes theoretical
and analytic sense to categorize individuals based on self-reported identities and/or practices. Other times, however, it is important to acknowledge that despite differences in identity or practices, the concerns, meanings, and processes underlying relationship dynamics may be extremely similar.

CONCLUSION

There is a continued need to explore consensual non-monogamy both generally and relating to particular identities or categorizations (polyamory, swinging, open relationships, etc.), as it is indeed overlooked in much traditional sociological research on marriage. However, we should be cautious about creating binaries or setting 'monogamy' up as a foil to other kinds of relationships. While this may be accurate when referring to an ideal, it is not always accurate in terms of how relationships are actually lived and how social and sexual exclusivity is practiced. Just as our theoretical terminology has been refined to refer to 'non-monogamies' instead of 'alterative relationships,' the idea of monogamy must be refined as well. Monogamy, after all, may be lived differently by individuals (as a 'safe haven' or a 'ball and chain,' for example), by couples, or even year-to-year by the same couple. The decision to be monogamous may be justified through beliefs about finding one's true love or through religious beliefs that are supported by a spiritual community. The decision to be monogamous may sometimes be motivated by financial considerations or desires to maintain a unified household. The boundaries of a relationship may be demarcated by physical contact with others, or by more imaginative or emotional involvements. The construction of monogamy as a category of research, analysis, or comparison thus should be a conscious process rather than something that happens by default.

NOTES

1. We used the category "Black" to capture those individuals who identified as African-American, Caribbean-American, and the like.
2. Swingers and polyamorists are often quick to disown each other despite the potential overlaps in practices and beliefs. Polyamorists may be critical of the supposed focus on recreational sex and emotional monogamy expressed by swingers or of the kinds of consumption or gendered display engaged in at swingers' parties or events. Swingers may not identify with the political or aesthetic choices made by polyamorists, and argue that a distaste for individuals who engage in recreational sex reflects conservative cultural attitudes. For more discussion, see Klesse (2006a) and Ritchie, Chapter 5, this volume.