

## RELATED TO BIGOTRY: THE REPRESSION OF SWINGERS IN EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BRITAIN

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**Mark Roberts**

### OVERVIEW

Swinging is a safe, international, middle class and increasingly popular leisure choice for married and courting couples. Yet contrary to its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, the United Kingdom effectively criminalizes swingers in contrast to the high degree of tolerance it rightly extends to gay men for precisely the same activities.

This provides the justification used by unethical elements in the press to harass swingers even in their own homes. The British government promotes bigotry against swingers by funding an NGO that campaigns against swingers by pretending contrary to the scientific evidence that their lifestyle is detrimental to any couple's relationship.

The British government should recognise its responsibilities under the European Convention on Human Rights to respect the sexuality of swingers and stop discriminating against them. It should cease to fund the NGO that campaigns against swingers and investigate whether it has breached its charitable status; and should legalise swingers' activities and lightly regulate their dedicated premises through Acts of Parliament.

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## 1 SWINGERS FOR BEGINNERS

### 1.1 Characteristics

Couples who jointly seek recreational sex with others while maintaining their emotional monogamy are most often called ‘swingers’.<sup>1</sup> Swingers’ sexual habits are typically characterised by partner-swapping, female bisexuality<sup>2</sup> and group sex.<sup>3</sup> Full penetrative sex, though common, is not essential.<sup>4</sup> Male bisexuality is absent.<sup>5</sup> All swinging couples have their own rules of sexual behaviour and these come in an infinite variety from the restrictive,<sup>6</sup> through the asymmetric<sup>7</sup> to the relaxed.<sup>8</sup>

Swingers find each other through contact advertisements in magazines,<sup>9</sup> newspapers<sup>10</sup> and on websites,<sup>11</sup> via chatrooms<sup>12</sup> and webcam<sup>13</sup> interfaces on the Internet, and at swingers parties<sup>14</sup> and clubs.<sup>15</sup>

Swinging is only part of the world of recreational sex, which also includes hard-core gay and lesbian activity, the bukkake scene,<sup>16</sup> the bisexual male scene,<sup>17</sup> the adult cinema scene<sup>18</sup> and the more directly sex-orientated sides of the various sexual specialities usually more associated with merely risqué displays. Recreational sex has in turn a wide penumbra of socio-sexual recreation, covering the whole spectrum of fun in a more-than-usually-sexual context but not normally actual sex. Most fetish, rubber and BDSM activities, adult babies, pony-girls<sup>19</sup> etc. and much of the gay and lesbian worlds are part of this outer circle.

Swinging itself is internally diverse. Couples can prefer couples only scenes; mixed scenes;<sup>20</sup> gang-bang scenes;<sup>21</sup> a younger or smarter scene where this is available;<sup>22</sup> party scenes; orgies; two-on-two scenes or ‘dogging’.<sup>23</sup> Among the more earnest the diversity extends even to the philosophical. Christian swingers,<sup>24</sup> for example, are among those who prefer the term ‘polyamory’<sup>25</sup> which they feel gives due emphasis to the emotional dimension of the style of swinging they favour. In Toronto there is an (anonymous) clergyman who claims to have been a swinger for 10 years.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.2 Demography

Swinging is an enthusiasm that crosses social, economic, political and religious boundaries.<sup>27</sup> The existence of a Christian swingers organisation in the USA is not as surprising as one might suppose (though they seem aware of the irony of their position).<sup>28</sup> American research has consistently found that swingers are, as Bergstrand & Williams say

“surprisingly mainstream, even conservative, in their characteristics.”<sup>29</sup>

Up to 90% of swingers identify with a religion and up to 47% regularly attend their place of worship.<sup>30</sup> More recent research has suggested lower levels of religious attachment that nevertheless are still higher than the norm.<sup>31</sup> US swingers tend to be Republicans, middle to upper-middle class, middle-aged and (over 90%) white.<sup>32</sup> They are less

racist, less sexist and uphold traditional relationship roles less than the population at large,<sup>33</sup> though they place the same importance on marriage and family life.<sup>34</sup> The incidence of disturbed family backgrounds (a charge levied by critics of swinging<sup>35</sup>) is lower than average.<sup>36</sup> This is not a subculture of the ghettos or the caravan parks.

The situation in Britain is not identical. There has been no research. In the absence of hard figures, from my own 8 years of experience I perceive that an earlier predominance of the late-middle aged and C2s among British swingers has abated. A substantial growth in the number of participants has brought with it a more balanced profile across ages, income and social background. In particular, economically successful couples in their thirties and aspirational 20-something graduates have begun swinging in considerable numbers.<sup>37</sup> An analysis of couples advertising in *Desire Contact* magazine,<sup>38</sup> Britain’s leading swingers contact publication, found an average age of 43 (men 45, women 41) with only 15% over 50, 26% under 40 and 59% in their 40s. The Guardian has suggested there are between 500,000 and 1m swingers in the UK.<sup>39</sup> The Internet has vectored this minor social revolution.<sup>40</sup>

In British swingers clubs I have encountered people from the ranks of Hasidic Jewry, television presenters, ministerial advisers, retired diplomats, orchestral conductors, professional singers, dancers and sports-people, big corporate names, local councillors, classical and rock musicians, many doctors and lawyers, builders, taxi drivers, IT whiz kids, marketers, advertising geniuses and policemen and women. Just about every profession, every race and an extremely wide range of nationalities is represented. In my assessment Asians are statistically over-represented among UK swingers as, inevitably, are former Catholic schoolgirls. Among younger swingers the media (broadcasting, press and advertising industries) followed by lawyers and the self-employed are probably the largest occupational groups.

### 1.3 Perceived benefits

Bergstrand & Williams<sup>41</sup> justify their academic interest in swingers by recounting American rates of admitted affairs (37% of husbands, 29% of wives), divorce, family instability and neglected children.<sup>42</sup> In the light of this:

“any attempt to redefine “love” and strengthen the marital bond is worthy of our attention. If swingers have found a way to stabilize relationships, prolong family ties, and enrich the lives of couples we would be remiss if we did not take their lifestyle and their redefinition of monogamous love seriously.”<sup>43</sup>

It is not claimed for swinging that is appropriate for every relationship or even a large percentage of them.<sup>44</sup> What is claimed is that it benefits or at least brings harmless enjoyment to a proportionately small but numerically large minority of couples. Estimates for the proportion of couples in the US who have included something that can be described as swinging at some point in their relationship vary from 1% to 15%.<sup>45</sup>

Although sexual promiscuity is posited as the antithesis of emotional fidelity in the western romantic tradition, swingers maintain that joint experiences of recreational sex enhance their sexual and emotional bonds. By openly acknowledging their individual desires for sexual variety and pursuing these needs together, swingers claim to obviate the usual sources of deceit, betrayal and guilt in relationships. These destructive impulses, they say, are replaced with a deeper understanding and a higher plane of trust.<sup>46</sup>

Some have argued that because of the very high degree of mutual knowledge and trust, this mental bond displaces sex from its status dictated by Judeo-Christian tradition as the central mystery of a relationship. Anne Terrien, a student at George Washington University, elucidated this point in a precocious conference paper delivered in 2002:

“At the heart of a strong swinging relationship is not sex at all; rather, there is the openness, trust, and communication necessary to both talk openly about desires and fantasies and to act on them within the bounds of commitment.”<sup>47</sup>

Butler (1979) quoted a female interviewee thus:

I have a lot more emotional aspects of life other than just sex. Sex is just one part of it. I have many years invested in building a complete and total relationship with my husband. Sex, like I say, is just one facet of it and it's been exclusive where as all my other relationships with people have not been exclusive. I'm able to talk to people. I'm able to dance with people, with all these things then why can't I have sex with them? It doesn't have anything to do with the exclusive relationship I have with my partner, who happens to be my husband. This is my choice and it's the total, exclusive relationship that I want to keep and want to have and I don't want to get rid of; yet I do have needs to have sexual fulfillment that I can't get from just one type of person. One person can't satisfy all my needs, and I can't satisfy all of anybody else's needs. As far as I can see, that's impossible.

The Society for Human Sexuality<sup>48</sup> enumerates 14 potential advantages of swinging:

- Variety of sexual partners and experiences
- Pleasure and excitement
- Increased social life
- Watching others so as to learn new techniques for your spouse
- Overcoming sexual inhibitions
- “Recapturing one's youth”
- Feeling reassured that you're still attractive and desirable.
- Increasing mutual attraction and love within the marriage.

- Re-creating that “first date” feeling of anticipation and excitement, in a safe way that won't harm your marriage, and to exercise social skills (e.g. flirting) that you may not have used in along time.
- It's human nature to appreciate someone even more if you notice other people desiring them, which may explain why swinging makes me feel even more attracted to my partner.
- Although this may vary slightly from club to club, I've found the swinging community to be quite accepting of a wide variety of body types, sizes, ages, and shapes.
- It's an opportunity to dress sexy or [in the case of on-premises parties] to go completely nude.
- It's an opportunity for people with healthy sex drives to have that aspect of themselves appreciated rather than snickered about.
- It's an opportunity to socialize and form friendships amongst people who are comfortable talking about sex openly.<sup>49</sup>

It has been commented that the swingers lifestyle is ‘banal’<sup>50</sup> and this list certainly implies that some couples begin swinging with otherwise dull social lives, restricted outlets for conversation and self-expression, lacking in sexual self-confidence and with a feeling that their best years are behind them. Such a description fits a large percentage of middle-aged C1 and C2 couples. For historic reasons swinging has usually been considered, both by protagonists and antagonists, from the perspective of the middle-aged married person.

However, this is increasingly an out of date picture. Fever, the young swingers' party club with which I am involved<sup>51</sup> points to biology as a general explanation for the motivation of swingers.

“The thrill of sexual adventure is so powerful that we can follow it impulsively even when it threatens our happiness in other important areas of life. We are actually all biologically programmed to be like this - the optimum procreative strategy for both sexes is monogamy plus adultery.”<sup>52</sup>

In contrast to the 14 pros of swinging listed by the Society for Human Sexuality, Fever - whose partygoers are overwhelmingly unmarried and on average 14 years younger than the sample of swingers from *Desire Contacts* in 2.1 above - takes fast-paced social lives, expanding horizons, sexual self-confidence and the legitimacy of experimental sex with multiple partners for granted. “Recapturing youth”, improving sexual techniques, shedding inhibitions and socialising with people who are comfortable talking about sex do not figure.

“Swinging allows a couple to have sexual variety in the context of a loving relationship; constantly reaffirms the desirability of each partner in the eyes of the other; completely blows away the need or temptation for sexual deceit; provides sexual opportunities that are not really available to single people; and

removes the prime cause of relationship breakdown. As each partner is instrumental in providing the other with fantastic sexual experiences beyond the hope of most people, swinging can actually reinforce the bonds between a couple.”<sup>53</sup>

Fever argues that swinging can benefit couples who are:

“BOTH sexually self-confident and adventurous and who don’t want emotional fulfilment to mean sexual retirement.”<sup>54</sup>

and enumerates six reasons why such a normal young couple might enjoy swinging.

“If you share your innermost sexual wishes and fantasies together. If acting them out together would bring you closer rather than provoke jealousy. If you are proud of your lover and want to show him or her off in an atmosphere where their talents will be appreciated. If having other people present would heighten your sexual enjoyment. If you both want to do things with your bodies that you cannot do by yourselves. If you would find making love with your lover and other people mind-expanding and self-esteem enhancing; then you should consider swinging.”<sup>55</sup>

Part of this echoes the earlier point made from an older perspective about gaining appreciation for having a high sex drive or being a good lover. If a couple’s hobby was chess, Fever claims, nobody would expect them to play only with each other.<sup>56</sup>

Fever highlights four extraordinary circumstances where they believe swinging may enhance or ultimately save a relationship “in almost a therapeutic way”:<sup>57</sup>

- Couples with bisexual women, who clearly cannot find sexual fulfilment within a monogamous relationship either heterosexual or lesbian.
- Other situations where one partner cannot satisfy all the sexual needs of the other
- Couples with asymmetric levels of sexual experience, where one partner feels the need to ‘catch up’ with that of their partner without excluding him or her.
- Couples for whom habitual promiscuity was such an important part of both their lives before they met that a monogamous relationship involves too great an abstinence from pleasure to be realistically sustainable.

Finally, personal growth for both sexes but especially women is another benefit claimed for swinging. Anne Terrien offers the perspective that

“The outside world does not offer anywhere near the same degree of security in non-sexual situations let alone those that are sexually charged. Swinging can be seen as an incredible source of sexual freedom for

women who would otherwise not have a sexual outlet other than that available within the bounds of marriage or commitment... Swinging offers not only sexual freedom, but also offers the ability for self-discovery.”<sup>58</sup>

This corroborates Butler’s seminal findings that in the “second stage of swinging”:

“a woman becomes selective because she no longer needs to prove she is desired or can satisfy other men. In order to make the experience meaningful, she arrives at a point where she feels that she must refuse the advances of many men. She learns to define her preferences more clearly and to learn to act on these preferences. This is an experience that many women never have because they rely on their husbands to make decisions in social situations. In short a woman learns to individuate both herself and others”

But how does this long litany of pros match up against scientifically researched cons?

#### 1.4 Research

Swingers are an under-researched phenomenon. Bergstrand and Williams, whose work has already been cited, conducted the latest research, drawn from by far the biggest sample yet, with over 1000 participants from across the USA. Their paper “Today’s Alternative Marriage Styles: The Case of Swingers” published in the *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* in October 2000<sup>59</sup> is currently the leading authority on the subject. They are candid about the shortcomings of their methodology but it is significant that their findings are in line with previous studies on swingers going back 30 years. The paper summarises earlier research, is relatively short and worth reading in the original.

To those unfamiliar with the corpus of learning on swingers the results are surprising in both result and clarity. Bergstrand & Williams found that swingers are happier in their marriages than the norm.<sup>60</sup> 60% of swingers said that swinging improved their relationship and only 1.7% said it made their marriage less happy.<sup>61</sup> Half of those who rated their relationship very happy before becoming swingers maintained it had become even happier.<sup>62</sup> 90% of those with less happy relationships said swinging improved them.<sup>63</sup> Almost 70% of swingers claimed no problem with jealousy, around a quarter admitted to some jealousy but only 6% said it was very much a problem.<sup>64</sup> Swingers rate themselves happier (59% against 32% very happy)<sup>65</sup> and their lives much more exciting (76% against 54% exciting)<sup>66</sup> than does the rest of the population, by surprisingly large margins. There was no difference between the responses of men and women.<sup>67</sup>

It would be conventional to contrast this study with others from which differing conclusions could be drawn. The problem is there are none.<sup>68</sup> That is not to say they could not be some. A contemporary and properly sampled study

of ex-swingers would be fascinating and if it established a verifiable rate for the success or failure of swinging relationships it would be seminal. However, in the last three decades what research has been done is relentlessly positive about swingers. Sceptics of swinging have produced not a single page of scientifically researched data to support their prejudices, as we shall see later in some detail.

A typical critic of swingers is Dr. David Woodsfellow, an Atlanta psychologist who claims to have counselled more than 1,000 couples in 24 years as a marriage therapist.

“When clients tell him they swing, he tells them to stop. ‘The human need for security – the question of ‘Am I not enough for you?’ – is real enough that most people can’t do this for long’ before one partner begins to feel threatened or coerced, he says. ‘I believe swinging is a recipe for disaster, and I’ve seen plenty of examples where it’s torn a marriage apart.’...the Lifestyle can easily compound problems in a shaky relationship and damage a healthy one, Woodsfellow says. ‘Now, most people believe that [swinging] doesn’t work for the vast majority of couples’ he says.”<sup>69</sup>

This is as good as scientific scepticism of swinging gets. Given the enormous weight of supposition in favour of the traditional monogamous relationship model, it is to say the least underwhelming.

Woodsfellow employs the rhetorical ruse of arguing against something his opponents do not maintain – a ‘straw man’ – in this case by upholding the uncontentious truth that swinging doesn’t work for most people and can cause more problems in a troubled relationship. The true burden of his argument lies in the sentence “I believe swinging is a recipe for disaster”. It has two components. One is that swinging *is* a recipe for disaster, not *can* be, not *often* is, not *usually* is, but *always* is a disaster.

The other is the weasel words we will encounter again – “I believe”. Dr Woodsfellow is prescribing narrow lifestyle strictures, with grave consequences for the happiness and fulfilment of millions of people, on the basis of personal faith. Nor quite enough faith, however, to quantify and publish his ‘research’ so that others can verify it.

Woodsfellow follows a pattern familiar from anti-swingers in the UK: “Therapists’ lay down prescriptive rules for the behaviour of others, absolute rules that allow no leeway for individual difference. They refuse to accept that any alternative relationship model can work for however small a proportion of the population. They justify themselves with reference to anecdotal encounters with troubled couples, who nevertheless have not been studied sufficiently to produce a scholarly paper, thus preventing the evidence from being verified or the conclusions challenged. These anecdotes in turn are drawn from a sample that excludes successful swingers, because happy people do not visit counsellors.

There are British examples of the tendency to offer advice to the public on the basis of unscientific (or even counter-scientific) anecdote that masks or misrepresents the consensus of learning on swinging. The BBC women’s magazine *Eve*<sup>70</sup> reported Dr Petra Boynton as saying about swingers:

“...in many couples she’s encountered, the men enjoyed the experience, but the women are more reluctant - feeling that they’ll lose their partner if they don’t join in.”

Surprisingly, given her willingness to comment on this subject, although Boynton assures us she is distinguished in her field

“I am a world leader in taking sex and research to the public”<sup>71</sup>

her own list of expertises and researches<sup>72</sup> does not include anything on swinging. (She has however broken new ground with her work on “ways to make cooking in relationships easier”<sup>73</sup> and “girls’ nights out”<sup>74</sup>).

If accurately reported, Boynton’s comment

- a) is apparently not based on published and falsifiable research by herself or anyone else.
- b) is offered in vague and unscientific terms that cannot be challenged – how many swingers exactly has Dr Boynton “encountered” and what was the methodology of this study?
- c) does not appear to be based on a valid sample
- d) runs counter to the consensus of published research on swinging

Boynton’s credibility as an authority on swinging is not helped when she goes on to say:

“People do have successful open relationships but they should be aware that they can unleash many insecurities and worries”<sup>75</sup>

Open relationships are an entirely separate phenomenon from swinging. The academic consensus is that swinging is a development within traditional marriage whereas open relationships are something much more revolutionary. For example, in his seminal college textbook Butler wrote:

“Swinging marriages probably represent the least revolutionary of the emerging alternative lifestyles. Generally, swingers challenge traditional beliefs only in the area of sexual monogamy. Strong relationships outside the pair bond are still, for the most part, regarded as threats rather than potentials for personal growth...Swinging may be a preservative rather than a catalyst for change in the basic structure of the family in our society... swinging supports rather than disrupts monogamous marriage as it currently exists in our society.”<sup>76</sup>

An elementary error of this sort suggests Boynton has little familiarity with the basic paradigms of the subject. One hopes that one day Dr Boynton will make available the private information that convinces her to draw such widely differing conclusions from those who have undertaken and published research in the conventional scientific manner.

Not all therapists agree with the likes of Woodsfellow and Boynton. Professor Petrushka Clarkson,<sup>77</sup> renowned Harley Street sex therapist and author, says group sex can be positive or negative for a couple:

“just the same as anything else – cars, food, alcohol, air travel.”<sup>78</sup>

Professor Clarkson cautions against general condemnation of swingers on the basis of unsuccessful personal experiences, the stock in trade of those therapists who can imagine no swinging experiences that differ from the failures of their own clients. And she also warns of those commentators who

“are only prescribing their own behaviour to others.”

This concurs with Thio (1988) that:

“We may conclude that swinging is like a two-edged sword - it may swing in the direction of positive consequences or in the opposite direction of negative consequences. The nature of the consequence depends more on the individual who uses the sword than on the sword itself”<sup>79</sup>

Glasgow’s Senior Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Prem Misra JP,<sup>80</sup> an expert in treating sex-offenders and sex-crime victims<sup>81</sup> told the Scottish *Sunday Mail* that

“in only two or three per cent of cases had the issue of ‘swinging’ ever become problematic for participants”<sup>82</sup>

In summation, insofar as science has yet been able to establish, the perceived benefits of swinging have been validated to an extraordinary degree. It remains true that swingers need more research, particularly in the UK, particularly among the younger unmarried swingers who did not exist when most of the major American studies were conducted. However it is significant that for 30 years studies have been uniform in suggesting the swinging lifestyle is beneficial for some couples. Those who refuse to accept these tentative conclusions are unable do so with reference to any scientific studies.

## 1.5 Popularity of swinging

Swinging is booming. The story is the same across the whole of western civilisation. Most large towns in western Europe have at least one swingers club. The most comprehensive listing available in English (<http://clubsandparties.com>) counts 61 in the Netherlands, 54 in Belgium, 107 in France, 117 in Germany, 152 in Italy, 113

in Spain, 23 in Austria and 9 in Switzerland. Virtually all of them are on-premises clubs. Paris has 40.<sup>83</sup> The large number in the Low Countries<sup>84</sup> include some which are renowned enough to be international travel destinations in their own right.<sup>85</sup> Cap D’Agde,<sup>86</sup> the famous nudist town in the South of France, has a population of 40,000<sup>87</sup> in the summer months, many of them swingers. It has around half a dozen swinger clubs and the notorious ‘adult beach’ where people have sex in the dunes at sundown.<sup>88</sup>

There are around 400 clubs in North America<sup>89</sup> and several swingers holiday resorts in the Caribbean.<sup>90</sup> In the USA and Canada swingers also hold conventions<sup>91</sup> where thousands of sexual adventurers fly from all over the continent to take over large hotels and party between the lectures and workshops.<sup>92</sup> Australia has over 90 swingers clubs.<sup>93</sup> They have spread to New Zealand, South Africa, Eastern Europe and South America.<sup>94</sup> Even Malaysia has one.<sup>95</sup>

Swinging is booming in the UK too. Given the lower base, it must have increased by a greater factor here than on the continent. The most authoritative listing, *Clubsandparties.com*,<sup>96</sup> includes 123 swingers clubs in the UK,<sup>97</sup> more than in France (107).<sup>98</sup> Although this does reflect the number of swinging enterprises in Britain (and the demand they are struggling to meet), there the likeness ends.

In France *libertinage* is recognised as a niche market within the leisure industry. Though standards vary the clubs are typically smart, licensed, well furnished, incorporate dancefloors and restaurants and have attractive playrooms<sup>99</sup> (the areas of swinging clubs where sex takes place, as opposed to the purely social zones). In acknowledgement of the great popularity of swinging the French government runs a safe-sex campaign *Couples Contre le SIDA*<sup>100</sup> directly targeted at *club echangisme* users.

The contrast with Britain could hardly be more stark. For while the French listing includes only on-premises clubs, very few of the British clubs have permanent venues and none are in the same league as continental clubs in terms of facilities. The clubs that do exist are little more than sexual shebeens. They live in a twilight world in constant fear of police or local authority busts, without serious investment, without alcohol licences, without higher spending consumers and the increased profits they bring. Consequently they are trapped in an artificial depression. Equally, their clientele run the gauntlet of cruel exposure by an ethically degraded press.<sup>101</sup> Historically this has frightened away potential middle-class custom, leaving only those with little or nothing to lose. These lower socio-economic elements in turn militated for lowest-possible costs and minimum standards, adding to the downward pressure on suppliers.

Although more middle-class consumers have now entered the swinging market, they do not generally find the quality experiences they take for granted in the rest of the leisure industry. As a result, they return much less frequently and spend a fraction of what they could if their needs were properly met.

## 1.6 London and Paris compared

To illustrate the disparity between Britain and the rest of the economically advanced world, it is instructive to compare the 44 swingers clubs listed by *Clubsandparties.com* in London and the South East of England<sup>102</sup> with the 31 it lists in Paris. The Parisian clubs are all purposely designed, licensed establishments open several nights a week if not every night and many incorporate a restaurant.

The real figure for SE England should be 32 as four are closed<sup>103</sup> and eight are duplicate names.<sup>104</sup> Four are only fetish clubs;<sup>105</sup> 2 are 100% gay in practice;<sup>106</sup> three are contact clubs<sup>107</sup> that also organise houseparties; five are believed by some to provide men with encounters with single women, particularly those who enjoy gang-bangs, not all of whom are amateurs. One is a dining club<sup>108</sup> that meets in private houses, two are social clubs<sup>109</sup> that arrange meetings in bars where sex does not take place, one is a quarterly party club that meets in private houses<sup>110</sup> and one is a twice-monthly party club that meets in bars and restaurants closed to the general public for the night.<sup>111</sup>

The remaining 13 have some sort of premises of their own. Five of these are private houses outside Greater London sometimes used for swingers parties<sup>112</sup> - in Brighton (weekly), Hertfordshire (monthly), Gatwick and Kent (once or twice a month) and Maidenhead (occasionally). Two are nudist establishments in the Kentish countryside<sup>113</sup> and are used unofficially one evening a week only.

Of the last six in London itself, two are nudist/health clubs<sup>114</sup> with weekly couples only nights; two are unoccupied houses converted to swingers venues<sup>115</sup> but only used for one or two days on the weekend. All four are unlicensed and badly undercapitalised. One is a basement bar (with a licence) that has one or two swingers nights a week and no swingers facilities whatsoever.<sup>116</sup> Finally, there is one in a warehouse in outer London<sup>117</sup> with an unlicensed raffle-ticket bar, a weekly programme of events, some soft furnishings and plywood walls dividing it up into discrete areas. But it is still a structurally unaltered warehouse in outer London.

So despite first impressions London has in fact not a single, proper on-premises club to compare with Paris's 31.

Admittedly property prices are higher in London and Parisian clubs are not uniformly excellent. They tend to be overpriced, many let in single men and there is often a noticeable percentage of older men with young women-of-uncertain-status. Nevertheless, a swinging couple in Paris has a very wide choice as consumers almost every day of the week. In London, for on average fewer than two days a week there is a risible choice between establishments so downmarket that they could not compete anywhere else in the western world.

## 2 SWINGERS AND THE LAW

### 2.1 The dead hand of the state

The market is not at fault for the shoddy conditions that British swingers – and swingers visiting from overseas – are forced to endure. Demand for swingers' establishments is high, rising and would expand much further in free market conditions. Swingers who seek to exercise their sexual freedom of choice - and entrepreneurs who seek to satisfy that demand - face obstruction from the state.

British swingers are persecuted by laws at national and local level; they are persecuted by a press that does not recognise sexual acts as private, even in the home; and though they have no-one to speak on their behalf they are the victims of a campaign run by a well-funded NGO that jeopardises its professional and scientific reputation in its zeal to condemn them.

Their persecution violates two articles of the European Convention on Human Rights and stands in sharp contrast to the civil liberties now taken for granted by another sexual minority, gays.

The British government is responsible to a greater or lesser degree for every leg of the triad of persecution of swingers (law, press and bigotry); as well as the non-enforcement of the European Convention of Human Rights, despite its importation into British law by this very government; and the cruel inconsistency that allows gay men sexual *carte blanche* but criminalises the same activities when middle-class women are involved.

### 2.2 Legal repression of swingers

There was a time, before the Second World War, when the law reflected a wide social consensus in severely circumscribing permissible sexual conduct. The belief that it is appropriate for the state to regulate personal sexual behaviour has gradually withered. Piecemeal reforms have expanded the sexual space where the law is rightly silent, but more to the benefit of some sexual minorities than others. The most obvious beneficiaries have been gays. Those most obviously still persecuted are prostitutes. But even now in the C21st heterosexual couples who seek the thrill of recreational sex are also repressed, in some cases by archaic laws over 250 years old.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 s33<sup>118</sup> it is an offence to run a brothel and case law<sup>119</sup> has defined a brothel as

“a place resorted to by persons of opposite sexes for the purpose of illicit intercourse”.<sup>120</sup>

Prostitution does not have to occur.<sup>121</sup> This means the authorities can deem a venue where swinging occurs to be a brothel and illegal. It does not even need to be a regular event. The Metropolitan Police have within the last 10 years threatened prosecution for a projected one-off event that was not even a dedicated sex party.<sup>122</sup>

Under the same law

“in some circumstances group sex acts between heterosexuals might involve the commission of an offence...”<sup>123</sup>

according to a House of Commons Research Paper. Under case law dating from only 1983<sup>124</sup> premises where more than one woman offers herself as a participant in indecent physical acts with men is also a brothel, even if full intercourse does not occur. So even swingers parties where there is no penetrative sex can be deemed brothels.

In fact it is usually the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751<sup>125</sup> that is used in prosecutions because its one unrepealed section<sup>126</sup> allows the person in charge of the premises at the time to be charged as the brothel keeper regardless of who actually owns either the premises concerned or any entity renting them for the occasion. This should not be confused with the common law offence of Keeping a Disorderly House, which is also used against sexual adventurers.<sup>127</sup>

Under the licensing laws it has been an offence to allow a “brothel” on licensed premises.<sup>128</sup> The new Licensing Act 2003 changes this offence to one of

“allowing disorderly conduct on licensed premises”<sup>129</sup>

It will be interesting to discover whether the police and the Crown Prosecution Service regards this as a liberalisation of the law or a change allowing them and the courts a more arbitrary discretion over what is prosecutable. Somehow I think I know the answer.

Even the traditional charge used against pimps – living off immoral earnings<sup>130</sup> – has been used as recently as 1998 to fine the proprietor of a swinging club.<sup>131</sup>

Politicians or Chief Constables have the legal tools to clamp down on swingers whenever they perceive it to be in their interests, as they did in 1989,<sup>132</sup> 1994,<sup>133</sup> 1996 (when a threatened prosecution forced the cancellation of the Sex Maniacs’ Ball)<sup>134</sup> and 1998.<sup>135</sup>

For swingers the cumulative impact of these laws is devastating. Places where swingers congregate can attract prosecutions on seven different counts – two different definitions as a brothel under the Sexual Offences Act 1956; the Disorderly Houses Act 1751; at common law for keeping a disorderly house; under the Licensing Act for either allowing a brothel or for serving drinks without a licence (even free drinks are deemed to be included in the entrance price) and again under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 for living off immoral earnings.

These laws do not need to be applied with constant rigour. The legal uncertainty, the ever-present threat from a capricious state, destroys entrepreneurs’ ability to raise capital for swinging-related establishments and condemns British swingers to the shebeens. This violates the principle of certainty that enjoins a clear distinction between what is legal and what is criminal, what will be prosecuted and what

will not, that is integral to the Rule of Law.

In addition to headline repression there is a dense tangle of regulatory repression at local government level that has been created by statute. Although local authorities are allowed to licence “sex establishments”, a licence does not protect an establishment from prosecution as a brothel or disorderly house.<sup>136</sup> In addition, local authorities can and do set the appropriate number of sex establishments for their area at nil.<sup>137</sup>

Authorities are also at liberty to set their own application fees for sex establishment licences, a situation that leads to prohibitive charging. Some London boroughs charge £4,000. The London Borough of Sutton charges £8,400; Southwark £15,000;<sup>138</sup> Merton £18,615; while the City of Westminster demands £28,531.<sup>139</sup> And this is merely to consider an application.

A swinging club would also need an Entertainments Licence, probably a Change of Use certificate and an alcohol licence, all since the Licensing Act 2003 at the whim of its local authority.<sup>140</sup>

The Labour government’s much heralded sexual offences legislation covers a wide area. Among other things it legalises gay cottaging (sex in public lavatories) when it does not cause offence to others<sup>141</sup> and reduces the penalties for bestiality from life to two years.<sup>142</sup> In May 2003 the Bill was amended to allay nudists’ fears that it would restrict their lifestyle.<sup>143</sup>

The BBC reported that the Bill also legalised homosexual group sex.

“There’s nothing to stop heterosexual orgies, but take women out of the equation and you’ve currently got yourself a law suit... The new law takes a “gender neutral” approach to sex, granting equal rights to homosexuals and heterosexuals.”<sup>144</sup>

Unfortunately while it is true that gay group sex is indeed legalised, it is equally true that heterosexual orgies are not.<sup>145</sup> The new law merely repeals the old one that made gay sex legal in private only.<sup>146</sup> It does not, as the BBC suggests, positively create a level playing field between gays and heterosexuals. The position of heterosexuals is untouched and the existing impediments crystallised in the case law decisions *Winter v Woolfe* 1931 and *Kelly v Purvis* 1983 remain. (In *Winter v Woolfe* a woman was convicted of keeping a brothel for allowing Cambridge University students to frolic with local girls – who were not prostitutes – on her premises, without charging. *Kelly v Purvis* concerned masseurs masturbating clients).

Labour has set its face against any liberalisation of the law regarding swinging. On 20 June 2002 I wrote to the Home Secretary asking him to “unambiguously legalise” swinging in the forthcoming Bill. His official replied that the Review that preceded the Bill had not had prostitution within its remit and that therefore the offences relating to brothels had not been reviewed.<sup>147</sup> Thus an omnibus bill that was

liberalising towards favoured sexual minorities such as gays and zoophiles resolutely ignored the plight of swingers.

Consequently, although most of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 is repealed by the 2003 Act, the offences created by Sections 33 (keeping a brothel), 34 (landlord letting premises as brothel) and 35 (tenant letting premises as a brothel) remain on the statute book, as does the case law defining a brothel so widely it covers practically all swinging activity.<sup>148</sup>

### 3 SWINGERS AND THE PRESS

#### 3.1 Mahmood music

The *News of the World*, a racy Sunday tabloid, has for over half a century made a name for itself as Britain's foremost violator of sexual privacy. Other tabloids do it but even when they do, the public thinks of it as *News of the World*-type journalism. Thus, colloquially, it is called the '*News of the Screens*'.

Here is just one example of its coverage of swingers.

In June 2002 the *News of the World* exposed a man who had held a sex party in his house.<sup>149</sup> He had advertised for partygoers on the internet and that, 'investigative reporter' Mazher Mahmood crowed, "was his one crucial flaw". Why it was illegitimate or illegal to do this is not explained, although it is clear that this is how he drew Mahmood's malevolent attention.

There are four justifications that can be inferred from Mahmood's report of this private event. The first might be called the Class War Opening. The victim's wealth is laboured and exaggerated. The paper

"infiltrated a debauched millionaire's wife-swapping club held amid priceless works of art in a magnificent Home Counties mansion."

The host was "a multi-millionaire tycoon." His guests had to

"demonstrate either wealth or social standing...or bring a stunning woman prepared to indulge in group sex, lesbian and bisexual sex."

Thus the victim is identified as someone other, someone who is not one of us. We're not picking on an ordinary joe like you, Mahmood is telling his readers, this guy's a toff who thinks he can get away with things we can't. He thinks he's above the rules, he needs to be brought down a peg or two, he has it coming because he's a bumptious upper-class twit. Therefore, in some way, it's OK for us - on behalf of you, the public - to confidence trick entry to his house, steal photographs to print in a 3,000,000 circulation newspaper and hold his private doings at home up to public ridicule.

The second justification we can infer is a faux-moral

disapproval - there was much "depravity", people's bodies were "pawed", the host was "debauched". Tabloid newspaper journalists are now just about the only people in the country that pretend the 'traditional' pattern of sexual behaviour<sup>150</sup> is the social norm. The Royal Family has affairs, divorces, cohabits; the Church reaches out to gays, unmarried parents, the divorced and cohabitees. Very few people born in the last half century do not have some episode in their sexual past that they would prefer not to see in the Sunday newspapers. But for the *News of the World*, any sex that's not between a married couple, under the sheets, at night, in the missionary position and quiet is a potential focus for pantomime outrage - and a possible justification for dishonestly worming their way into an individual's confidence with the intention of traducing him or her in print.

Obviously this well-worn routine is hypocritical in that nobody who works at the *NOTW* lives in the way they pretend everyone else should. The real point however is that it is juvenile, cruel, ethically indefensible and calculatedly dishonest perhaps to the point of criminality.

The third self-justification is the 'Masonic Gambit'.

"The contacts made at these parties effectively extended the group's sphere of influence through the business world."

This hint of skulduggery and supposedly Masonic-type behind-the-scenes influence in high places is of course ludicrous, given the subject is an ad hoc group of people wanting to have sex. It is presumably included to imply that there is a 'public interest' justification for the article rather more substantial than "He's a toff. We're jealous. Let's get him!"

Finally we have the suggestion of illegality:

"Our dossier, including video evidence, is available to the authorities."

Thus we are expected to accept that the ambiguity of the law justifies the stripping of any degree of privacy and dignity from a citizen and his guests in his own home.

#### 3.2 The case of Dougie Smith

At the end of May 2003, the July edition of men's style magazine *Arena* was published including a long and detailed article about a visit to a party thrown by my own swinging organisation, Fever.<sup>151</sup> Along with descriptions of what went on that night and his reactions to it, the journalist extensively quoted "Dougie".

Three weeks later the *Sunday Times*,<sup>152</sup> the country's premier multi-sectioned Sunday broadsheet, ran a number of articles about Fever including a front page story in which Dougie Smith (for it was he), the employee of a Conservative-aligned think-tank, announced that he was one of the organisers. The *NOTW* ran a small half-column report drawn from the *Sunday Times*. The *Daily Record*, the main downmarket Scottish tabloid, ran a follow-on story on

Monday. Later in the week the Spectator ran the story on its cover, the *Sunday Express* and *Manchester Evening News* ran full pages while the *Daily Mail* gave it two.

Interestingly there was no follow-on story from the *NOTW*, despite the heady attraction of sex and politics. Dougie Smith has confessed what he does in his private life, despite his political role. *Arena* has published lurid accounts of what happens at Mr Smith's parties and these have been echoed in the mid-market press (and *The Spectator*). The authorities to which Mazher Mahmood offers so many dossiers are in full possession of the facts. What 'public interest' justification now remains for these known quantities to be discovered again by one of the *NOTW*'s undercover reporters? It remains to be seen.

### 3.3 Press, privacy and the law

I doubt that Mahmood and his newspaper have an anti-swinging agenda, despite the Lady Bracknell imitations they ham up whenever they report it. After all, why would they want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg?

A survey of his output in 2002 shows that Mahmood produced around 17 stories, only two of which were exposés of swingers.<sup>153</sup> No stories independently bylined to his sidekick Conrad Brown exposed swingers. Looking at the litany of petty crime revealed by most of Mahmood's output, I believe the most likely explanation is that he goes after swingers (which after all is so easy) on slow news months or while waiting for more serious investigations to bear fruit. In other words, it is a cynically utilitarian approach to space filling in the paper that motivates Mahmood and the *News of the World*, one that all but acknowledges by their infrequency that stories about swingers are the bottom draw of investigative journalism.

This of course in no way mitigates the horrific consequences for individual swingers when Mahmood has nothing better to offer his masters in Wapping that month and casually decides to destroy their lives. In January 2002 he exposed a couple living in rural Cambridgeshire because they ran a swingers club – the female partner was a teacher in a local school. At the end of this story too he public-spiritedly offered his dossier to the authorities.

One 'solution' posited to the problem of media malice against swingers is a privacy law. There are arguments for that and not just for these reasons. However, that would be introducing a law to curtail the effects of earlier laws. While the state maintains laws that can and are easily construed by the police and the courts to mean swinging is illegal, it is difficult to blame the press for going along with the pantomime if it nets them an easy and salacious story now and again. It is an amoral approach but the press is taking its lead from our elected government, which in turn is taking an oppressive approach.

If, as in other countries, swinging was legal, swinging clubs existed across the country to match demand and most people knew someone who admitted to visiting them, the marketability of *NOTW*-type stories would wither on the vine.

## 4 ANTI-SWINGERS AND THEIR ARGUMENTS

### 4.1 Bigots 'R' Us

In the UK there is currently only one group in civil society that is 'on a mission' against swingers.

Formerly the National Marriage Guidance Council, Relate<sup>154</sup> helps troubled partnerships by teaching the virtues of commitment and communication. It says it counsels anyone, including gays and lesbians.<sup>155</sup> It recognises the importance of sex in relationships and provides an apparently effective psychosexual therapy service.<sup>156</sup> The support it receives from the Army Benevolent Fund, the Army Central Fund and the RAF Benevolent Fund are presumably testament to the good work it is perceived to do among armed forces personnel.<sup>157</sup>

Unfortunately for an otherwise laudable organisation, Relate condemns swinging wherever it is given an opportunity. Its spokeswomen absolutely will not countenance that any good can ever, in any circumstances, come from two people in a relationship exploring their sexuality in the context of another human being.

Relate has used its good standing to frighten people - young women particularly - out of pursuing potentially enjoyable or even beneficial sexual experiences that do not conform to its ideology (two people alone in a committed long-term relationship). Its spokeswomen have done this using shameful techniques that include reciting their own opinions and professional anecdotes as if they are scientific fact, even stooping on occasion to abuse. They have done it without having produced a single scientific paper in support of their views and in the face of contrary findings by the research that really has been done on swinging. And they have done it in a tone that sometimes verges on the hysterical, as readers may judge for themselves from the six case studies below.

Relate denied to me in an email that it has a view on swinging.<sup>158</sup> Since then it has been quoted unambiguously as condemning the opening of a swingers hotel as "disturbing".<sup>159</sup> The precise extent to which Relate's spokeswomen are following orders in pathologising swingers is not clear. What is certain is that journalists who go to Relate for an opinion on swingers are furnished with comment that is unscientific, biased and hostile – and for hidden motives.

We will examine cases involving three of Relate's spokeswomen who between them have been responsible for almost all the public criticism of swingers in the UK in the C21st.

Julia Cole<sup>160</sup> (aka Coles) is a prominent sex therapist and relationship counsellor. One of the media's most-quoted sex experts, she has been agony aunt of the *Sunday Express*;<sup>161</sup> Development Director of the Pennell Initiative on Women's Health;<sup>162</sup> author of several books and many articles on relationships; and expert advisor on a number of

websites<sup>163</sup> including the BBC's<sup>164</sup> and her own,<sup>165</sup> where she sells vibrators designed by herself.<sup>166</sup> Trained by Relate which advertises her vibrators on its website,<sup>167</sup> she remains linked to the organisation and sometimes represents it in the media.<sup>168</sup>

Denise Knowles is a Relate counsellor and psychosexual therapist who has been practising since 1990 and works in Northampton. Another oft-quoted Relate spokeswoman she is an expert adviser on Mumsnet, a parental advice website.<sup>169</sup>

Paula Hall is another psychosexual therapist and relationship counsellor who works for Relate as well as running a private practice.<sup>170</sup> She is part of the Relate national media team.<sup>171</sup>

We shall examine 13 points made by Julia Cole over three media interviews, one by Denise Knowles in a single comment and nine by Paula Hall in two media appearances. For simplicity I have enumerated all the arguments sequentially.

## 4.2 Julia Cole in *Cosmopolitan*

In an interview published in the December 2001 edition of *Cosmopolitan* magazine<sup>172</sup> Julia Cole issued a “warning” to young women against trying swinging. Countering research from the University of California proving that divorce among committed swingers is lower than the norm,<sup>173</sup> Cole anathematised swinging on no fewer than eight counts.

### i) Swinging will ruin your chances of marriage and children

Cole pointed out that, as they get older, young women may

“either want to start a family or long for more security with a stable partner”.

True of course, they may, though this sex counsellor seems unaware that not every young woman sees every lover as a potential husband (about 40% of women have had one-night stands and a third of women aged 25-34 have slept with someone whose name they did not know (ICM)<sup>174</sup>). She also discounts the possibility of a stable swinging relationship, whereas swinging is characterised by stable relationships.<sup>175</sup> Why a swinging episode in, say, a woman's middle twenties would inhibit her achieving either a family or a “more stable” partner if desired in, say, her early thirties is not explained. The implication is that by swinging a woman becomes in some way damaged goods and spoils her future prospects. I have not been able to find any research supporting this contention.

### ii) You should grow up and forget sex

Cole maintained that

“the pursuit of sex for its own sake is something people do at a certain stage in life, but often grow out of.”

So is reading *The Beano*, but that does not make it wrong at the time. Again we can only infer that Cole believes a swinging episode will do a young woman lasting harm in some unspecified (and unresearched) way and that, therefore, it should never be indulged in at all.

In isolation the statement would be a no more than a debatable observation. But that is not how Cole intends it. She is implying that pursuing sex is immature, even abnormal. Note the redefinition of sex as “sex for its own sake”.

“For its own sake” is a phrase used only in disparagement. Think of ‘cruelty for its own sake’, ‘killing for its own sake’. We can perhaps envisage these things might rarely, unfortunately, be necessary for a higher purpose. But for their own sake they are bestial, immoral, inhuman. Getting drunk for its own sake betokens someone who is at best socially dysfunctional, whereas everyone empathises with people getting merry for an understandable reason, such as celebrating some good fortune or one of life's milestones. Much of the opposition to hunting hinges on the belief that huntsmen don't need the quarry for food but enjoy the hunt ‘for its own sake’.

It appears that the only sex that Cole approves of is sex as a consequence of a loving relationship. Sex ‘for its own sake’ i.e. recreational sex, sex because it is fun, what most people just call ‘sex’, is something that Cole seems not to approve. Hence we begin to see that it is not just swinging to which Cole objects, it is any sex preceding a committed relationship. Strangely for a sex therapist there is no recognition that good sex can help create a committed relationship. Strange, because this is surely the way it happens for most couples?

In fact, of course, sex - irrespective of love - is a human need in the same way that love and affection are human needs. Not absolutely essential for physical health but very important for mental health and happiness. By demonising it in this way Cole seeks to frighten young women from following their harmless inclinations and to bring society into conformity with her ideology.

Parenthetically, given the levels of promiscuity among young people, the affairs endemic to the married state,<sup>176</sup> the sexual revival associated with mid-life crises and the prevalence in swingers circles of long-married couples whose children have left home, one wonders to which “certain age” Cole is referring.

### iii) If you want sex, there's something wrong with you

Cole asserted that

“Those who don't [grow out of the pursuit of sex for its own sake] may have issues over intimacy.”

Subliminally, Cole is telling women that if they or their boyfriends want to swing they are freaks. However, as with the last point this one applies to all recreational sex – from a one night stand through to regular sex with someone you

don't yet plan to marry.

Of course it is possible that among the individuals whose sex drives do not abate when they hit marriage or 30 there may be some who have emotional problems. But are the two conditions necessarily connected? Is sex-seeking a reliable indicator of mental disorder? Do sex-seeking and avoidance of intimacy characterise each other? Does swinging when you are younger increase the chances you will develop "issues over intimacy" when you are older?

The answers are no. Practically the whole unmarried male population and a large percentage of the unmarried female population are sex-seekers. Most of those whose primary goal is a committed relationship are often happy to settle for sex in the meantime. Some of those who seek a committed relationship do so because it is their preferred way of achieving sex, rather than with the intention of marrying their next long-term partner. Clearly such a huge proportion of the human race cannot be abnormal. And as for swinging spoiling your ability to form close emotional bonds, this simply contradicts the scientific evidence available to date.<sup>177</sup>

#### iv) One partner is always being selfishly manipulated by the other

Cole ventured that during her counselling of swinging partners it often becomes apparent

"after a little digging"

that

"one partner is less enamoured than the other with the practice".

It would be interesting to discover how many monogamous marriages would pass this test.

Let us leave aside (a) the possibility that Cole is getting the answer she is looking for after a bit of prompting. (b) the fact that "less enamoured" does not mean "against". (c) that Cole's claim is unverifiable given she has not authored a paper based on her research notes (immaculately documented though they no doubt are). (d) that Cole is in any case uncertain of her data, using imprecise terminology such as "*often*" instead of specifics. (e) that two individuals are always likely to have a slightly different perspective on any joint activity as they are not one organism.

The core problem with this statement is in fact the blatant partiality of the data. Only couples with problems in their relationship go to a counsellor. Cole's sample consists only of self-selecting troubled relationships. No account is taken of the numberless swingers who do not go to counsellors. To draw any general conclusions from such a patently skewed sample is not only completely unscientific, it is against common sense.

Cole offers no reason to believe the swingers with troubled relationships who seek her professional help are any more representative of swingers as a group than her other clients

typify non-swingers. Yet we do not hear Cole warning people about monogamy or marriage.

To illustrate how generally off-beam is Cole's supposition that manipulation within couples accounts for female participation in swinging, it is instructive to refer to the research on female bisexuality among swingers. Female bisexuality is extremely prevalent among swingers. It is an area where the question legitimately arises of whether female swingers are acting entirely of their own choice or subject to pressure from partners who want to have sex with them and another woman, or who would be stimulated by seeing them with another woman.

The research on female bisexuality among swingers is by Dr Joan Dixon and was undertaken in 1984 from a sample of 50 women. All had experienced their earliest female-female sex experience after the age of 30 and while swinging. None had even fantasised about women before their first experience.

"Her study found that 'the generally positive reactions of these subjects to their first sexual experience with other females after a lifetime of strict heterosexuality ... progressed through repeated experience to an overwhelming general rating of excellent,' that the 'percentage of those whose masturbatory fantasies at times included other females as erotic sex objects rose from 4.5% to 61%,' and that every one of the women in her study now self-identified as bisexual."<sup>178</sup>

The explanation for this may lie in research<sup>179</sup> conducted by Northwestern University (USA) in 2003 which suggested that although men tend to be straightforwardly either gay or straight, heterosexual women are capable of sexual arousal by either sex – in other words, women tend generally to be latently bisexual. Obviously the matter needs further study but Northwestern's research does further indicate that bisexuality among female swingers is not a product of male manipulation.

#### v) Meeting people through the Internet is dangerous

Cole cited

"the dangers of meeting people over the internet."

To a single teenage girl this would be wise advice. To a couple of adults it is extraordinarily patronising. No research justifies the imputation that swingers' assignments arranged through the Internet carry a risk of violence. Cole ignores the fact that a middle-class couple meeting another middle-class couple is the typical non-party swinging scenario. Instead she leads her female readers to believe that if they become swingers there is a chance they could end up like Suzy Lamplugh.

## vi) Swinging will give you an STD even if you practice safe sex

Cole also warned about

“issues of sexually transmitted diseases - even for those who practice safe sex”.

In one sense Cole has at last stumbled on a serious issue. The danger of spreading STDs will occur to everyone as a potential risk of recreational sex. In another sense, in claiming that STDs somehow vault prophylactics during swinging sex more than at other times Cole reduces her argument to farce.

There has only been one instance of HIV transmission related to swinging. It was in a Minneapolis swingers club in 1986<sup>180</sup> i.e. before AIDS was considered a problem for heterosexuals and before safe sex and universal condom use among swingers. All club members were tested for HIV and two female members were found to be positive. They had both repeatedly had unprotected anal sex with two bisexual men whose HIV status could not be determined later.<sup>181</sup> Neither woman had subsequently infected any of their other sexual partners.

As Plumley said in his 1994 paper to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, swingers

“provide in effect a made-to-order laboratory for the study of transmission of HIV through multiple sexual partnerships and unprotected sex. If in fact the swinging lifestyle did present an “increased risk” of HIV infection, by now there would have been many cases of HIV and AIDS among the various swing clubs (or, more likely, the clubs would have closed up because of the unacceptability of the high risk).”<sup>182</sup>

Agreeing that he had expected to find more evidence of infection, Plumley was forced to concede:

“Yet the facts are to the contrary. Robert McGinley, President of the North American Swing Club Association, is quoted...as stating categorically that “as far as we can tell, no person has ever contracted AIDS through heterosexual [i.e., penile-vaginal] swinging in North America”. His statement appears to be correct. This author has been unable to find any data which contradicts his statement or suggests anything to the contrary”.<sup>183</sup>

Of course there are STDs other than AIDS. Sexologist Ted McIlvenna, President of the Institute of Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, had studied swingers for 16 years and compiled sex histories of 6,000 of them when he said in 1999:

“I’m still amazed at how few women in the swinging lifestyle have any STDs at all.”<sup>184</sup>

McIlvenna is not a swinger himself. He is in fact a Methodist clergyman.<sup>185</sup>

Plumley asked “How can this be?” given the relatively large number of casual partners with whom swingers had (at that time) unprotected sex. He suggested the answer lay in the ethics of swinging and the type of people involved.<sup>186</sup> Usually middle-aged and middle class,

“they tend to be a generally healthier group than those most susceptible to HIV and AIDS.”<sup>187</sup>

He went on:

“Because swingers are potentially vulnerable to the spread of the more contagious STDs, they are careful to watch for the symptoms of any STDs, and to take appropriate steps to correct any problems as quickly as possible, on those rare occasions when they occur.”<sup>188</sup>

He also thought that swingers did not want their clubs to become the focus of public health concerns because that would provoke the authorities into shutting them down. They therefore exclude drug-users and prohibit the abuse of drugs at their events.<sup>189</sup> This is easily corroborated by the number of swingers websites that carry messages about drugs and how to avoid STDs.<sup>190</sup> Many American swingers clubs even exclude alcohol. Swinging is not in fact identified as a public health hazard in any country, including those where it is very popular, for example the Netherlands where there are half as many clubs as in the whole of France.

It is fair to examine swinging with a view to STD risk and instructive that all available evidence gives the lifestyle, as it is practised internationally today, a clean bill of health. Obviously, were practices within swinging to change then this conclusion might need to be reviewed.

However, Cole went further than this in her challenge on the subject. She asserted that safe sex will not protect couples from infection. The evidence, as we have seen, is that it does, at least to a high enough level of probability. Nevertheless, Cole plays on the fact that risk can never be reduced to zero and also treats STDs with excessive gravity, as if they are all terminal. What she is saying is that any sex outside a long-term mutually monogamous relationship carries a risk of infection greater than zero – and that any risk is too great a risk.

This is not a sensible strategy for dealing with the risks inherent in every aspect of daily life<sup>191</sup> and not an approach she advocates in other areas, for example, the risk of drowning in swimming pools. It does not appear that Cole is drawing her conclusion from the evidence in a rational and scientific way. Rather it seems that the significance of the risk is being overplayed in order to justify a conclusion (don’t swing) reached for other reasons. Young women used to be frightened off pre-marital sex by being told that malicious people stuck pin-holes through the ends of condoms before they were sold. Cole is deploying a

comparable old-wives' tale against swingers.

### vii) Your partner will leave you for another swinger

For only the second time, Cole touches on a legitimate concern that will occur to every couple considering swinging.

“it has been shown through research that it’s difficult for humans to separate sex and emotion. As a result, in some cases, it is possible for either spouse to become emotionally involved with a swinging partner and could feel the need to meet that person in secret - in other words start an actual affair.”

In fact research shows that swinging relationships are more durable than non-swinging ones.<sup>192</sup> As they have no scientific refutations of research showing the benefits of swinging, it is common<sup>193</sup> for anti-sex advocates to cite research on general sexuality instead and to extrapolate the findings as if they were iron laws. Here Cole cites the broadest possible conclusion to whatever research is being quoted, without giving us the percentage breakdowns. We can be certain that it was not 100% who said they cannot ever separate love and sex, yet Cole implies differing from the majority is bound to lead to disaster.

Of course there is a very marked tendency among humans to develop affection for people with whom they regularly have sex, even if they didn’t have such feelings before the sexual relationship developed. Given that, it is remarkable how many instances there are in life of the exact reverse, of people having casual sex, one night stands, using people while their true affections lie elsewhere or indeed while they are waiting to find a truer affection – as well as people having enjoyable recreational sex on a mutually agreed, non-emotional basis, as happens in swinging.

It is impossible to believe there are sentient adults in the UK who do not know it is possible for at least some people to have sex with A while loving B more, or to have sex with A while loving nobody. The prostitution industry that has been endemic to humanity since the beginning of time is predicated upon this simple fact.

So sociologically there is nothing extraordinary at all about swingers continuing to love their partners while ‘playing’ with other people. The difference is that swingers do it with the knowledge and permission and in the presence of their partner. How this can be a moral reverse from the usual pattern of the cheating husband, wife or partner is not self-evident.

It is often starvation of sexual variety that motivates affairs, despite other aspects of a relationship being happy. This is the great danger that swinging removes from relationships. A partner who hungers after experiences denied to him or her for years is far more likely to stray in this way than a partner who knows she or he can have what they like the next time they swing with their partner. As motivational guru Stephen R Covey epigrammizes in his seminal work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*,

“This is one of the greatest insights in the field of human motivation: Satisfied needs do not motivate.”<sup>194</sup>

Anecdotally, this is corroborated by the reporter who wrote in *Arena* magazine (July 2003) about his visit to a Fever party.

“Far from the event germinating mistrust or hurt, my feelings for Ms Arena [his girlfriend] have never been better. I am hugely proud of the beautiful, sophisticated and adventurous woman who was by my side. I am cleansed of any jealousy and laugh at the thought of myself ever being compelled to be “unfaithful”...I have completely ceased lechering at other girls in bars.”<sup>195</sup>

He also approvingly quotes Dougie Smith as saying

“You don’t stand there staring at a sandwich when you know you’ve got a gourmet meal coming.”<sup>196</sup>

The accusation that swinging makes affairs more likely is also borne of ignorance, not just of the research, but of the dynamics of swinging. Most two on two encounters are arranged in their details by the male partners. Contacting a person of the opposite sex from another swinging couple would be awkward and entail a high risk of discovery or failure. Couples who meet in swingers clubs often never know each others names let alone exchange contact details.

More than this, there is a strong ethic across swinging forbidding this behaviour – stronger, in fact, than the taboo against it among non-swingers, where such things are often treated with indulgence by third parties.

### viii) A swinging relationship isn’t worth having

“The idea of swinging paints a false picture of what sex within a relationship is all about. If a person isn’t satisfied by their partner, they should work together to improve their sex life. Or perhaps they should just concede that they aren’t suited - and move on...”

In this extraordinary quotation, more than any other, Cole gives her game away. She is conceited enough to pronounce on “what sex within a relationship is all about”, to define the purpose of sex for everyone. There is no conception that a different model may work better for some people, for even a part of their lives. Sex for Cole must have exactly the same function in every relationship, and that is as a concomitant by-product of a long-term committed relationship and not as a human need or enjoyable exercise “for its own sake”.

Cole misdefines the need for sexual variety as dissatisfaction with a partner – a dichotomy as false as rejecting tea forever because one fancies coffee occasionally. She prescribes what she believes to be the sole permissible way of dealing with the ‘problem’.

But most of all she says that if you cannot comply with her rules, you should split up. No individual route to happiness, no bending of the model rules can be considered. Better in her view to be single, lonely, even to have ditched the love of your life than to have found bliss together in a sexually unorthodox way. Bliss, in Cole's view, can ONLY be found through orthodoxy. Bliss, perhaps, IS Orthodoxy for Cole. She thinks like a character from the Ministry of Truth in Orwell's *1984*.

### 4.3 Julia Cole in *The Daily Telegraph*

When a hotel<sup>197</sup> at the French ski resort of Verbier decided to offer its chalets to swingers<sup>198</sup> in December 2002, *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

“Relate, formerly the National Marriage Guidance Council, said the concept was disturbing. Julia Cole, a counsellor, said: “People often imagine this is just a bit of fun but it can cause a great deal of damage.

“I have met many couples who have taken part in this sort of thing and very often it causes tremendous unhappiness, guilt, and feelings that the relationship will not survive, which often it doesn't.”<sup>199</sup>

From this the general reader is intended to infer that Cole knows what she is talking about, and that swinging causes misery and relationship break up too often to be risked. Cole is exaggerating her credibility as an authority as well as projecting the opposite of the truth about swingers.

One wonders wearily how many swinging couples Cole has in fact discussed the issue with and what statistically valid (but unpublished) analysis she possesses which shows the consequences of swinging are “very often” so negative. Unless she cruises swinging clubs herself, the swingers she has met – however many or few that is, and we are not told – will be those who have come to her for help, the self-selecting sample we encountered earlier. To presume to give people ‘authoritative’ advice on how to live their lives using this as a reference base is not just unprofessional, it is charlatanism.

#### ix) Swinging will split you up

Cole asserts that swingers' relationships often don't survive. In fact they are longer lasting than non-swinging partnerships.<sup>200</sup> There is simply no research that concludes to the contrary. Swingers' clubs are full to bursting point all over the western world every Saturday night and it is implausible to argue that these are always predominantly new swingers, the old ones having split up. If this was the case the ‘Lifestyle’ would have died out as a subculture.

As we have already seen, the latest research points to significant unhappiness caused by the lifestyle in a maximum of around only 6% of swinging relationships<sup>201</sup> (and it may be as low as 2%<sup>202</sup>). The unhappiness rate for conventional marriages is at least double that (one in five wives and one in seven husbands wished they could wake

up one morning and not be married any more (MORI)<sup>203</sup>. Even if we assumed all the couples in this 6% eventually split, that rate of relationship failure compares well with the failure rate for first-marriages, currently 70% and at a 20 year low!<sup>204</sup>

If we take a median figure for swingers relationships breaking up of 4%, this average would make swingers relationships 320% more durable than first marriages (i.e. a 96% as against a 30% survival rate). Taking into account that 100% of monogamous relationships that do not end in marriage (or cohabitation) end in failure, relationship breakdown can be said to be broadly speaking a monogamous phenomenon.

### 4.4 Julia Cole on *Emotionalbliss.com*

On 12 February 2003 my colleague Carl Morgan<sup>205</sup> wrote to Julia Cole via the message board on her vibrator-sales website *Emotionalbliss.com*.<sup>206</sup> At the time of writing the full exchange could still be read there.<sup>207</sup>

Carl outlined various ways that swinging can help relationships, confirmed this from the experience of our own group<sup>208</sup> and ended with a plea for tolerance:

“The conventional monogamous ideal will doubtless remain the most appropriate form of relationship for most couples. However, can you not accept that some people need to bend the model rules to find happiness and that it is good that they should do so? We feel that to deny this would be to ignore the evidence of hundreds of thousands of couples throughout the English-speaking world and Europe.”<sup>209</sup>

On 17 February Cole replied that she did not agree. Her experience led her to believe swinging

“has the potential to be harmful”<sup>210</sup>

and she cited four reasons. Though she did not have the courage of her convictions to assert a high likelihood of ‘harm’ from swinging (no research again), she was only interested in talking about the ‘harm’ that it may do. Note the weasel word “harm”, conflating connotations of physical and mental injury with, in reality and at worst, the discovery of deep sexual incompatibilities in a relationship.

#### x) Swinging will stop you having orgasms

“I have seen many men who suffer from erectile dysfunction and women with orgasm problems due to involvement in swinging. They described feeling that they were involved in a ‘sex olympics’ fearing that they would not live up to the standards of the group. Instead of sex being a loving expression of feeling, it became a competitive experience.”<sup>211</sup>

It is a pity that Cole will not publish her ‘research’ because

the credibility of this claim is thin indeed without scientifically verifiable corroboration. The problem is that to anyone with experience of swinging her story sounds like a guess as to what it is like, made by someone who has never experienced it. So much so that I simply don't believe Cole is telling the truth when she claims to have seen "many" men and women who have these problems for the reasons she gives.

Swinging is not like a porn film, a genre with which Cole is obviously familiar. No-one is counting the orgasms, timing the lovemaking, measuring the penises or assessing the cubic volume of ejaculate. Penises simply do not have the same central importance in swinging that they have in pornography. Orgies are not like school sports days where everyone is trying to do their hardest for longest.

It is just about believable that somewhere, sometime, some men have been fazed by other men's performances. It is utterly incredible that a woman could develop a difficulty achieving orgasm because she didn't come as often or scream as loudly as other women in a swinging scenario.

Step back for a moment and consider the headline impression Cole is giving with this line of argument – swinging stops you coming/makes you impotent – in the context of the impressions she has sought to convey with earlier ploys. According to Cole, so far, swinging stops you getting married, having children and having orgasms; gives you an STD, causes your partner to have an affair despite the impotence it will have inflicted on him, splits you up and gets you murdered.

Taken together the improbably severe litany of personal cataclysms attributed to swinging imparts an indefinable whiff of hysteria to Cole's case. It reminds me of an episode of *Casey Jones and the Cannonball Express* in which every piece of wood on the train, seats, floorboards etc. was chopped up and thrown in desperation into the furnace in order to keep the engine going and win a race.

Cole has no scientific backing for her claims, so she has to throw into the debate any argument her imagination can conjure up, however fanciful. Her increasingly dramatic assertions may have some impact on the credulous. However, taken as a whole and viewed in dispassionate perspective – each point being so marginally credible by itself, sometimes contradicting others and always scientifically unproven – each succeeding assertion undermines the credibility of those that have gone before. The whole corpus of Cole's argument amounts to less than the sum of its parts because although one or two far-fetched hypotheses may turn out to be right, the reader feels his or her intelligence insulted when asked to accept that a dozen will.

Interestingly, in seeing "many" men and women whose ability to orgasm has been destroyed by swinging, Cole may be unique among her peers, according to Relate itself. Relate's own recent client survey,<sup>212</sup> drawn from the case notes of 200 sexual therapists, showed that in only half of cases seen did the male have a problem and in only a third of these (16.6%) was the problem erectile dysfunction.

Overall 50% of cases were medical at root rather than psychological but erectile dysfunction was most likely to be related to medical problems. So we are looking at considerably less than half of 16.6%, perhaps around 4-5%, of men suffering from impotence from all non-physiological reasons – this in turn being from the usual skewed sample that excludes all the unambiguously healthy couples. The percentage of impotent men who contracted their ailment through swinging cannot be anything other than minute, that is if we believe it at all.

How remarkable it is that failed swingers should seek out Cole's help in such disproportionate numbers while so assiduously avoiding her many professional colleagues!

Research done in 1974 asked therapists in the USA if any of their patients were ex-swingers and if so why they had stopped. The author admits the study is flawed, being only a sample of couples in therapy and reported second hand. However, in this case the fact the subjects were in therapy makes the results more relevant.

The paper<sup>213</sup> found that jealousy was the reason given by 24% of couples in therapy who had failed at swinging; guilt was the reason for 15%; threat to the marriage for 15%; development of outside attachments 12%; boredom with swinging 11%; disappointment with swinging 7%; divorce or separation 6%; wife's inability to "take it" 6%; fear of discovery 3%.

Remarkably, in precisely 0% of cases were erectile dysfunction or orgasm problems cited. Cole's case notes may be the only evidence in the world that either has a causal connection with swinging. As such it seriously beholds upon her to publish in the interests of science.

#### xi) If they say they enjoy it, they are lying

"My experience suggests that members of couples are not equally keen on swinging. One partner may be much more interested than the other, pushing the less keen partner into sexual experiences they do not want. They often fear that if they do not take part, their partner will reject them. Others are told that if they do not join in they do not really love their partner. Most of this kind of manipulation goes on before the couple arrive at the swinging group, so nobody may know about it. If pressed, the unhappy partner may still say they want to join in for fear of losing their partner."

This is a more trenchant reprise of argument (iv). The twist this time is that even if both partners say they enjoy themselves while swinging, one of them will be lying. How Cole knows this given that both partners are maintaining they have a good time is not explained. We have here the sort of circular argument used by the Spanish Inquisition.

It is perfectly conceivable that a bullying partner may achieve such a psychological grip on an emotionally vulnerable spouse that he/she endures swinging though

preferring not to.

Several things can be said about this. First, there is no doubt that if Cole was able to demonstrate that this happened frequently from a scientifically balanced sample it would be significant. But don't hold your breath.

Second, in the absence of that, research has shown that fewer than 2% of swingers feel their relationship is less happy than before they began swinging and that was the same across both sexes. It cannot be said that the unhappy state of affairs posited by Cole characterises swingers. In fact it is the reverse.

Third, it may be that such a one-sided relationship would be in the process of disintegration anyway. Indeed perhaps ought to be. A swinging episode might help to bring into relief the differences in what the partners want from life. Clearly, if one partner wants group sex and the other does not, that is a fundamental abyss in the relationship that will remain whether they actually practice it or not. The partner who is frustrated can be expected to find outlets for that frustration behind the other partner's back, whether they are flings, affairs or the use of prostitutes. Swinging might be a catalyst but would not be the source of problems within the relationship.

Fourth, assuming that both partners are fully adult and not mentally defective, it is each person's own responsibility to extricate themselves from a relationship that goes badly awry – unless of course there is tacit or even explicit domination/submission edge to the bond between the two.

Finally, in some relationships it might be rational for a person who was less keen to go along with swinging if the other partner wanted it so much. Rather than being the result of a power imbalance it might be part of a wider exchange of give and take within the relationship. Even in the scenario Cole paints not all less-keen partners would necessarily be repulsed by swinging. They might have an I-can-take-it-or-leave-it attitude or have a good time just occasionally, for example when they meet someone who engages them. It is perfectly possible that such a partner might choose to take an utilitarian view of sex given the totality of the relationship. Only those who share Cole's horror at sex outside an exclusive, long term etc.etc.– a distinct minority among those born in the second half of the C20th – would regard such an arrangement in someone else's relationship as an abomination.

#### **xii) “Good sex” is sharing a life, not good sex**

“I believe that good sex is not all about physical sensation. Swinging is all about what the body feels and does. It pays little attention to emotions and the spiritual connection between partners. Love and care for someone you know intimately, share a life with and whom you feel you can trust completely, make good sex, not varieties of partners or sexual experimentation with strangers.”

This is the definitive statement of Cole's position, one that has been hinted at in her earlier remarks. It has two components. First, in beginning “I believe” Cole admits that she has no research to back her claims. Her position is a matter of faith.

Second, she defines “good sex” to mean the sexual encounters that occur within a long, trusting and monogamous relationship. “Good sex” for Cole specifically is not to be judged by physical sensations but by the degree of trust in and the length of the relationship in which it is contextualised.

I see this as a tragedy. If Cole has to redefine “good sex” in a way that excludes physical sensations, sexual techniques etc. she is throwing away the argument. It is not part of the swingers' case that good sex (properly defined) is impossible in the sort of relationship described by Cole. Most swingers want to believe it is possible out of concern for the happiness of others, though not quite seeing that it would work for themselves. The swingers' case is merely that sex in such a relationship is not the only way of achieving good sex – that some couples can find happiness in other ways.

However in this response Cole, by redefining “good sex” so that sex is of tangential relevance, practically admits that sex after such long starvation of variety is not up to much in any physically stimulating sense. It is a very defensive and underconfident rhetorical posture. If individuals who thoroughly enjoy a varied and active sex life, including “varieties of partners and sexual experimentation with strangers” are not having “good sex” then Cole has to explain what “good” they are having.

#### **xiii) Do as I say, not as I do**

“I think it also concerns me that many swingers have an evangelical stance. They seek to convince that what they are doing is good for others. This suggests that at least some swingers are not only trying to convince other people, but themselves as well.”

It is certainly true that new swingers are often enraptured by their experiences. However I profoundly doubt that in many cases this amounts to admitting it to other people beyond a favoured friend or two. From my own experience an infinitesimal percentage of swingers want to be known as such among family, friends and workmates. In any case the ‘jointly having an affair’, secret life aspect of swinging is one of its attractions. So I would argue it is not accurate to describe swingers generally as evangelistic. They may on occasion try to sleep with people who are not yet swingers but as that is what the rest of the human race spends so much time trying to achieve it can hardly be held against them.

Among those who have articulated the swinger's case, I have not yet found one commentator who believes swinging is appropriate for everyone. However, given the suppression of swingers in the UK and the high degree of socialisation into the sexual monogamy model, it is certain to suit more couples than practice it in Britain at the

moment. Because the number of swingers is artificially held back from its natural level in the population, almost any exposure of it as a lifestyle option brings forward new recruits. Perhaps it is this to which Cole is alluding.

Cole and her colleagues' determination that not a word shall be printed about swinging without including a rebuttal from *Relate* fits with this interpretation. They try hard to suppress the number of swingers but this keeps the number of unfulfilled potential swingers unnaturally high. Consequently, when new audiences are exposed to swinging there are a disproportionate number of receptive ears listening - not because of evangelisation but because of oppression.

So much for the propagation of swinging. But evangelisation is a word with its roots in religion and, as we shall see, it is a rather more accurate description of the work of Cole and her colleagues.

#### 4.5 Denise Knowles in the *Evening Standard*

##### xiv) Swingers are emotionally immature

Commenting in the *Evening Standard* on 10 May 2002 about an article on London's long established Toucan Club,<sup>214</sup> *Relate* spokeswoman Denise Knowles said:

"Swingers sometimes say that their relationship is strengthened by having the freedom to experiment and share. They say they never get bored with their own partner and infidelity is never an issue. But the reality in many cases is that they are simply emotionally immature. They want the stability of a home and family but they also want the thrill of an adolescent lifestyle."<sup>215</sup>

I have pondered long on what exactly is being said here and why and have come to the conclusion that Knowles is simply being abusive.

'Emotional immaturity' is clearly something Knowles regards as bad. But even if it were true that emotional immaturity is bad and that swingers are emotionally immature, I don't see that this refutes the benefits that these ('emotionally immature') individuals feel they gain from swinging. As Knowles does not claim to have a cure for emotional immaturity, she seems to be saying that emotionally immature people should just suffer rather than behave in a way - harmless to others - that makes their emotionally immature lives more enjoyable. In other words, they don't fit into her plan for the world so they can go to hell.

Knowles' purpose in using this phrase, it seems to me, is to label swingers with undesirable associations in the same way that Cole in point (iii) above sought to convince young women that there is something wrong with them if they want a varied sex life.

In reality, of course, seasoned swingers are among the most emotionally mature and sophisticated people you could

meet. These are couples who hide no feelings from each other; whose high degree of sexual satisfaction, self-esteem and mutual understanding immunises them from the unfulfilled crushes, suppressed passions and bottled-up yearnings that characterise other long-term relationships; and who frequently see their partner in flagrante with others without it denting their confidence in their mutual love and commitment.

#### 4.6 Paula Hall on *Woman's Hour*

On 6 February 2003 sex therapist and swinger Dee McDonald appeared on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* to discuss swinging with *Relate* spokeswoman Paula Hall. You can listen to the recording of the programme on the BBC website.<sup>216</sup> Hall made eight points in her efforts to discourage listeners from considering swinging as a lifestyle option.

##### xv) Swinging plays Russian roulette with your relationship

Hall's first point was that swinging is 'risky' in terms of provoking jealousy.

"You're not quite sure what's going to trigger it and it's not until it happens that you have a problem and in that respect, that's why it's like Russian roulette. You don't know when that bullet will fly and damage your relationship. And for me and I think for an awful lot of couples you need to seriously challenge whether it's worth the risk".

Asked if she accepted swinging might strengthen trust in a relationship, she would only concede that it does because

"taking and surviving risks is one way of proving trust".

The implication was that if you become swingers disaster could strike unforeseen at any moment. True, but then so it can for ordinary relationships and marriages, both of which have higher break up rates than swinging couples.<sup>217</sup>

Even if we ignored the statistical evidence proving the greater endurance of swinging relationships, Hall's point takes no account of what would happen to a relationship if a couple who felt the need to become swingers repressed that urge. It seems to me that the chances of affairs, deceit or simple break up would be very high. But as we saw earlier in point (viii) by Julia Cole, *Relate* believes it is better for others to die lonely and unloved than to engage in swinging relationships.

Note the pre-feminist implication in several of the *Relate* team's arguments that losing her current partner is the worst thing that could happen to a woman. Note also the otherworldly assumption that the alternative to swinging is monogamous bliss. Sadly perhaps this is far from the case, relationship break-ups being apparently a function of monogamy.<sup>218</sup> For a sexually conventional person, the problem of a sexually adventurous partner is not solved by

refusing to swing with them. If a person hankers strongly after sexual variety, and his or her partner is not interested in swinging, the chances are that he or she will achieve it behind the back of their partner with prostitutes, lovers or flings.

Paula Hall speaks only about the “risks” of swinging without considering the “risks” of not swinging. It is not the case that for their relationship to survive, a couple need only not be swingers. There is a lot more to it than that. It is easy to conceive of situations in which a little sexual elasticity militates for the long term health of a relationship. Swinging to an extent institutionalises physical infidelity while emplacing firmer boundaries against emotional infidelity. For many couples, monogamy is riskier than swinging.

#### **xvi) The feasibility of monogamy is a different question**

Hall proceeded to get her wires well and truly crossed. She defined her opposition to swinging as not being based on support for monogamy. Responding to McDonald’s point that human beings are not naturally monogamous, she said:

“I think there’s an argument for serial monogamy and whether or not we are able to be monogamous our entire lifetime is a different argument”

This is a deeply disingenuous position. Hall criticises swingers but declines the difficulty of arguing for the alternative, thus trying to have her cake and eat it. The problem with her fudge – serial monogamy – comes when children are involved. If we take her comment at face value it appears that for Hall, keeping your family together if it involves privately letting off a little sexual steam by swinging with your partner occasionally, is the big no-no. But the disruption of dragging your children through repeated divorces and school relocations as you traipse from short-term partner to short-term-partner is OK.

I wonder if she was speaking for Relate when she said this?

The most obvious explanation for Hall tying herself into such awful knots is that she wimped out of arguing monogamy with McDonald, because she has too much sense to stick to her Relate brief. But having departed from the script, she was lost in the woods and had to make things up on the hoof. Having abandoned one indefensible position she found herself in one even worse, as at least monogamy has a weight of supposition behind it. Nobody, however, favours serial divorce as the optimum nurturing environment for children.

#### **xvii) Forget about instinct, you have free will**

Having like Red Riding Hood allowed herself to be deflected from the set path, and found herself with the wolf, Hall fled back from all argument to the absolute certainty of “morality”. It took only 4 minutes and 36 seconds of the mildest debate with McDonald to reduce her to this.

“But we are not like animals. We do have morality. We do have a neo-cortex that has developed and I think not to bring morality into it reduces making love to mating like animals.”

Here we are, back with Cole’s belief that recreational sex (i. e. “sex for its own sake”) is bestial and immoral. Funny, because seconds earlier it was moral to make your kids’ lives hell just so you could get your rocks off left, right and centre.

The problem with this, as we discussed earlier, is that it is an argument against all sex outside long-term relationships. Something of a minority position as almost all the women listening will have indulged in sexual activity that would be immoral by this definition. And of course Relate knows that morality as an argument is not going to convince many people – that’s why it is the argument of last resort and why so much imagination goes into thinking up more practical (but unproven) reasons why women should not become swingers.

To digress only slightly, I suspect that a naive virgin on her wedding night with a nervous and bumbling bridegroom about to attempt something he has never even tried let alone mastered, will feel rather more ‘mated like an animal’ than a sophisticated female swinger with one of her experienced lovers who takes a pride in his performance. Yet Relate smiles on the former scenario and frowns on the latter.

#### **xviii) Abuse**

Rattled by her disaster on monogamy, Hall appears to have felt a surge of most untherapist-like aggression. The discussion continued thus:

Jenni Murray: “Isn’t it all rather smutty?”

Dee McDonald: “Not at all. It can be and that’s what some people like. But some people don’t like the smuttiness and for that reason there is a huge variety of types of connection...”

Paula Hall(interrupting): “But it’s still sleeping around!”

Dee McDonald: “It’s not sleeping around it’s about sharing an intimate experience and it’s about the couple. The primary reason for swinging. And some people do choose not to have intercourse...”

On one level this exchange speaks for itself. Having humiliated herself in argument and been forced back to crude ‘morality’ (contradicting her collapsed position on monogamy), Hall regresses even further to playground abuse. This is the sort of woman Relate puts up to the media as arbiter over the sexuality of the British public.

What, though, is the mindset of a woman who uses the

phrase “sleeping around” with the pejorative connotations clearly intended here. “Sleeping around”, it would seem to Hall, is its own condemnation.

Once again, one of Relate’s spokeswomen has let slip that it is not just swingers that she condemns. For it is not only swingers who ‘sleep around’ just as it is not only swingers who enjoy “sex for its own sake”. If these are bad things than almost the whole unmarried population and the huge chunk of the married population who are or have been unfaithful are bad too.

#### **xix) Ersatz alternatives are better**

Next, Hall weakly offered non-swinging alternative means of achieving a comparable effect, such as - wait for it - reading *Sons & Lovers*. Following on from the excerpt above:

Dee McDonald: “It’s not sleeping around it’s about sharing an intimate experience and it’s about the couple. The primary reason for swinging. And some people do choose not to have intercourse, but titillate each other in the environment.”

Paula Hall: “But aren’t there safer alternative ways of doing that?”

Dee McDonald: “Like what?”

Paula Hall: “Reading books, sharing books, reading other titillating material be that *Sons & Lovers* or something from the top shelf of the local newsagent. Just communicating. I’m strongly in favour of couples communicating as a psychosexual therapist most certainly talking about their fantasies, talking about their sexual experience and expanding that together with each other whilst maintaining the boundaries around the couple’s relationship...”

One feels that with Hall there is a candle struggling somewhere out there in the darkness, some glimmer of human sensuality, however feeble and refracted. Alas her compromise with reality is a less internally coherent ideological position than Julia Cole’s extremism.

For Cole, sex seems to be a by-product of other more important factors in a very long term relationship and has no legitimate standing as a human need in itself. I believe Cole sees sex as most people see decorating. If you own a house you need to paint, and that can be fulfilling in a way - you can have fun with pattern books, colour charts and kitchen diagrams - but it’s pretty small part of owning a house and certainly not something anyone would miss if they didn’t own a property.

#### **xx) Belief trumps science**

The quotation above continues:

“...which I believe needs to be unique.”

“I believe” again, not “my research shows” or “the evidence suggests”. In place of science Relate offers mysticism and mandates these personal revelations as the only acceptable forms of human sexual behaviour – or non-behaviour, mostly. The fundamental charlatanism of the organisation rests here. People expect therapists to have a non-judgemental, humanist approach to their problems. Behind the mask of therapy, Relate may be simply be applying its mystical-religious ideology. That is certainly what its spokeswomen do when commenting on swingers in the media.

For swingers, there does not need to be an unique thread in their relationship. It is the matrix of all the threads in their relationship that is unique, although most of them are shared with others at times and by mutual consent. The research on swingers shows this works for them.<sup>219</sup> Why cannot Relate live with this?

#### **xxi) Forget about free will, you have instinct**

Later, asked if swinging was empowering of women, Hall warned against defining empowerment as becoming like men. Women are different, she argued:

“Men’s sexual desire is generally stronger and more persistent. Men enjoy a greater variety of sexual activities and men fantasise about more sexual partners. And even research that was done only about 6-8 months ago still reinforces that. I think what swinging does, it gives the opportunity for women to act like men.”

In other words, women whose actions vary from this Relate-preferred lower-libido norm are operating under false-consciousness at best and being manipulated at worst.

The very latest research indicates that women grossly under-report the extent of their sexual desires and experiences for fear of being labelled ‘sluts’ or ‘whores’<sup>220</sup> but this was published after Hall made this contribution.

The essential point is that Hall is happy to quote an atavistic predisposition approvingly when it suits her argument, whereas seconds earlier (in her argument (xvii) ‘Forget about instinct, you have free will’) women were exhorted to rise above their inner-animal and adhere to her version of ‘morality’. Genetic programming is OK when it equals sexual minimalism but needs to be overridden by ‘morality’ when it equals ‘sleeping around’.

This is a contradiction. One can either believe man has free will to be ‘moral’ or not, or that he is fundamentally programmed by genes in which case there is no morality other than survival and reproduction. Whatever the answer, you cannot coherently argue from both perspectives in the same debate.

## xxii) Using people

The final exchange in this programme was:

Jenni Murray: “Paula, is it [the Lifestyle] an euphemism or is it still wife-swapping for you?”

Paula Hall: “It’s using other people for titillation.”

Dee McDonald: “Sure. Absolutely. By mutual consent.”

So for Hall it is somehow wrong or immoral to be titillated by the presence of other people, even when they are being titillated in return. It is not, however, wrong to buy pornography (“something from the top shelf of your local newsagent”) and be titillated by that, as Hall advocates in point (xix) above. Why the interposition of a cameraman makes a difference to the morality of the situation; and why being titillated by another educated middle-class couple doing it for fun is less moral than being titillated by a teenage working class girl doing it to scrape a living, is not explained.

## 4.7 Paula Hall in *Eve*

The September 2003 issue of the BBC’s women’s magazine *Eve* carried an article on swinging by Pamela Whitby, which quotes Hall attacking swingers as dysfunctional.

## xxiii) Swingers are trying to prove they are attractive

“Paula Hall, psycho-sexual therapist at Relate, points out that, though all the swingers I’ve met seem confident, happy people, often the desire to swing hides an underlying problem whereby either party needs to prove they are still attractive. ‘What happens when you are 80 and nobody wants to swing with you?’ she asks.”<sup>221</sup>

Well, your head doesn’t fall off. So what does happen?

When you are eighty there are a lot of things you may have done when younger that you cannot do any more – like being a sportsman for example, or a quack psychologist. The answer to Hall is that such people led much happier and more fulfilled lives, have a much greater stock of happy memories and fewer resentments and regrets about things they wished they had done, than if they had lived their lives as she would prefer.

Hall’s argument is fundamentally one about the futility of life and the inevitability of death, not something that will maximise your enjoyment of anything while you are on this Earth - including monogamy - if you muse upon it too deeply.

Even if some swingers do manifest this “problem”, how is it a problem? What would be its symptoms? People wanting to be considered attractive presumably look after

themselves, take care to present themselves well in terms of dress and manners and generally respect their bodies and appearance more than is usual. Perhaps they cultivate being amusing company, witty conversationalists, good lovers.

In terms of problems facing humanity it’s not exactly third world poverty or Weapons of Mass Destruction is it? Hall is offering just another tawdry attempt to pathologise swingers, albeit one more conspicuously vacuous than most.

## 4.8 Secret agenda

To reprise, the scientific evidence about swinging shows it benefits those who enjoy it enough to do it regularly. Relate’s spokeswomen contradict the scientific evidence without being able to point to any scholarly studies supporting their arguments. They themselves make unscientific and unsubstantiable claims - some quite hysterical - and all three of them are transparently motivated by something other than a dispassionate analysis of the facts about swinging. They seem to harbour pre-feminist concepts of womanhood whereby women who engage in sex “for its own sake” are considered ‘damaged goods’ and condemned for “sleeping around”.

Cole, Knowles and Hall’s comments cast more light on themselves and their prejudices than they do on swingers. In the cases of Paula Hall and Julia Cole, enough information is in the public domain to explain their hidden motivation against swingers. Not only are they ‘on a mission’ against swingers, as I suggested in 4.1. Like *The Blues Brothers*, they are on a mission from God.

Hall and Cole are both people of strong religious conviction married to equally religious spouses. Hall believes she has been chosen by God for a special purpose while Cole is a damaged personality who has only ever had one sexual partner.

*Woman Alive*,<sup>222</sup> Christian Media’s monthly magazine for Christian women, ran an interview with Paula Hall in September 2002<sup>223</sup>. At that time Hall ran a Church youth group while her husband worked part-time for the local Church diocese. Hall has her own counselling practice, launched - she told the magazine - after seeking

“higher guidance”.<sup>224</sup>

Many of her private clients are Christians too.<sup>225</sup>

“The only time I’ll ever say I’m a Christian is if I’m asked. Occasionally if a client is struggling with a Christian issue I would say: ‘As a matter of fact, as well as being a counsellor, I’m a Christian’ and then I might ask them if they mind me taking off my Relate hat so I can help them address those issues.”<sup>226</sup>

However, in another way, Hall’s religion intrudes into her client sessions without their knowledge.

“I do pray for my clients and for my working

environment. During counselling sessions I frequently send up ‘arrow prayers’ for insight”.<sup>227</sup>

Very professional.

Hall has difficulty keeping her religious views firmly in check during her therapy sessions because she meets so many people whose behaviour she abhors.

“She meets couples where disability is an issue, adult survivors of sexual abuse, couples on the verge of divorce and those within gay and lesbian relationships. ‘It’s hard at times! I do have personal views on issues like divorce, sexuality, abortion but I can’t let those into my counselling’.”<sup>228</sup>

Hopefully this means Hall keeps her abusive outbursts for the radio studio and her patients, coping with abortions and worse traumas, are not lambasted for ‘sleeping around’ as they settle on her couch.

Hall is candid enough to confess, though without irony, that

“One of the common problems of the Christian sex life is the lack of fun. Somehow, it’s a sin if you enjoy it, any sense of experimentation and having fun is seen as rude, naughty, and focusing on sexual problems is a sin. It’s greedy to want a good sex life – it’s carnal desire!”

Hall concludes the interview by confiding she thinks

“God has got something up his sleeve”

for her. She says that one of the great things about being a Christian is

“It’s like living permanently in Christmas Eve because you’re not sure what you’re going to get tomorrow, but whatever it is, it’s going to be good!”

I wonder what proportion of the adult population would regard that as a well-balanced outlook? Aware of the stunningly grievous tomorrows that so many people endure – relatives of Lockerbie, Omagh and 9/11 atrocity victims for example – my own reaction is to feel that Hall is being offensively glib.

Julia Cole was interviewed by Catherine O’Brien of *The Times* for her “What does life tell us about love” column published on 12 February 2003.

In it Cole reveals that her father and elder brother died when she was in her early teens and that the resulting psychological damage had an enormous effect on her view of sex.

“having been bereaved, I couldn’t cope with the hurt involved in casual relationships”

Cole says she had no boyfriends until she met her future husband at 18, while they were both training as Sunday school teachers in a local church.

“It was six months before Peter asked me out because he was so shy. I have never forgotten the moment when he first put his arms around me and kissed me...He is the love of my life.”

Cole admits that her husband is the only sexual partner she has ever had.

“To me, monogamy is crucial – the trust and security that Peter and I share is what gives us a good sex life.”

Let us hope and accept that Cole’s marriage is as blissful as she maintains – a courtesy she does not return to swingers (see her argument (xi) ‘If they say they enjoy it they are lying’).

Cole is aware of the anomaly of being a sex therapist while her own sexual experience is so narrow.

“There are those who find it strange that I work as a psychosexual therapist and yet have had only one sexual partner.”

she confesses but feels the sex films she was shown during therapy training make up for it.

“In terms of understanding sexual experiences, I have probably seen more than 90% of the population.”

It is not a very convincing argument. Would Cole, upon seeing *Saving Private Ryan*, imagine she understood what it was like to land on D-Day better than 90% of the people who did it? The conceit implicit in Cole’s self-justification is breathtaking.

Lay aside for a moment the spurious notion that watching a film about something qualifies you as an authority rather better than practising it. Even by Cole’s own admission her “understanding” is better only than 90% of the population, leaving some 6 million people in the UK rather wiser about sex than her – including presumably the swingers, who feature among the segment of the population with the greatest breadth of sexual experience.

It is worth being clear quite how different from normal Cole’s sexual life has been. Most people want to have full relationships, including sex, with nice boyfriends or girlfriends at every stage of their post-pubescent, premarital lives. Most people have had several romantic partners or a relatively long-term relationship before 18, certainly before marriage. Many have had one or more sexual relationship before 18 and anything up to several dozen before marriage. Most young people never see the inside of a church apart from the odd carol service and are caught up in secular matters.

Cole had no sexual or even romantic activity at all until after she met her future husband through church training – six months after, although Cole admits they fell for each other on sight.

I am not suggesting that the way Cole has conducted her sex life is wrong. Clearly it was appropriate for her, bearing in mind the distress of early bereavement from which she has never recovered. It is no part of the swinger's argument to sneer at anyone's religious beliefs or chosen path through life – advocating tolerance for diversity implies accepting that most will almost certainly choose a lifestyle different from one's own.

Julia Cole's life has been characterised by a comparatively extreme lack of romantic and sexual variety; an extreme lack that is profoundly atypical of most people's experience of life; and an extreme lack that is profoundly atypical of what most people desire for their lives. Cole preaches her own extreme autobiography as the proper lifestyle choice for other people, including swingers, and Relate provides her the platform from which to do this.

With less personal breadth of sexual experience than the average teenager, Cole scolds the rest of humanity about the true meaning of sex in their relationships and tells swingers that a relationship not based on monogamy is not worth having. How would she know? It is a bit like the Vulcan Mr Spock or the android Data from *Star Trek* lecturing human beings that humour is illogical – it is something of which they have no experience and with which they cannot empathise.

Both Cole and Hall have sought under the Relate banner to pathologise swingers, to label them as sexually deviant manifestations of psychological disorders, as abnormal people in need of treatment. Yet the truth is that seasoned swingers are extraordinarily mature, well-adjusted individuals with exceptionally deep and strong emotional bonds with their spouses. The record shows that with their shrill and hectoring tone, warped personality on the one hand and belief in divine mission on the other, repressive sexual dogma, astonishing conceit and lack of self-consciousness, in reality it is Cole and Hall who are the freaks.

#### 4.9 Thou shalt not

Cole's religious perspective – in that it goes further than condemning swingers to looking askance at all recreational sex outside long-term relationships - is a throwback to a much more rigorous age of Christian chastity. It was widely accepted in the early C20th as discussed in 2.2 above but now, a hundred years later, large swathes of religious opinion - not just Christian swingers themselves<sup>229</sup> - are much more liberal on the issue.

The late Seward Hilter, Professor at Chicago University Divinity School and later of Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, the legendary pastoral care movement pioneer, discussed swinging in *Theology Today* as far back as 1971:

“Some of my pastor-students have been consulted by persons involved in swinging. Do we say to them, “Quit it or don't come to church?” Especially if they say it has improved their marriage, what do you say or do? Crazy as I believe the whole thing is, we must rethink our principles.”<sup>230</sup>

Re-examining Cole and Hall's arguments against swinging, their religious bias provides the convincing rationale missing from their otherwise inexplicable positions.

Relate's frequent use of “I believe” in exculpation of an inability to offer proof is not only to adopt an usage that is definitively religious. It also does so for ends that manifestly coincide with religious dogma on lifestyle choices.

The deprecation of sex as a recreational activity and the refusal to recognise it as a human need unrelated to child-rearing are congruent with religious strictures on sex whether marital, pre-marital or extra-marital. The assertions that “good” sex cannot happen before the third or fourth decade of a relationship and that sexually adventurous relationships are spiritually worthless, downplay the importance of sex in human life to its canonically ordained position as the precursor of childbirth and no more.

The religious superstition that good times have to be ‘paid for’ later, as if happiness is a zero sum game, emerges again and again in Relate's approach to swingers. For example the belief that a period of promiscuity in one's youth has knock-on negative effects in later life (such as making ‘stable’ relationships difficult). Other examples of Relate trying to provoke moral panic on swinging are the suggestion that using the Internet to meet people for sex will bring violent just deserts; that swinging leads to relationship break-up; to contraction of terrible diseases; and to miraculous loss of the orgasm function. Every one of these notions is counter-scientific.

The baffling condemnation of swingers for wanting to be attractive makes sense only with the knowledge that, for the ascetically religious, vanity is a sin both *per se* and for provoking temptation in others. The pre-feminist inference that women are sexually docile and are tricked into swinging by voraciously priapic males mirrors extreme and outdated religious precepts about male and female sexuality.

The belief that women become spiritually ‘damaged goods’ through swinging has no derivation other than religious notions of female chastity and of the Virgin Mary as the ultimate role model for women. The fairytale notion that sex is appropriate only with one's spouse after marriage, and never with anyone else if it can be helped, is in surprisingly good health at Relate.

#### 4.10 Cash for cant

Relate's Memorandum of Association includes in its objects:

“To promote research into all aspects of couple relationships and marriage and to

make the results available to the public”.<sup>231</sup>

Yet despite the repeated interventions of its spokeswomen in public debate about swinging, Relate has published no proper scientific research - not a single page - that justifies its opinions on this subject. That is, no research on a subject upon which Relate seeks to be regarded as an authority, despite its opinions contradicting the consensus of scientific evidence.

Relate further describes its role as:

“To help relationships and marriage withstand the pressures leading to breakdown.”<sup>232</sup>

Yet it is clear that Relate comes to this role blinkered with prejudice as to how “pressures leading to breakdown” may be withstood. If its spokeswomen accurately reflect its position, Relate believes it is better for relationships to be destroyed than that to be saved through any form of swinging (see 4.2 above, argument (viii) ‘A swinging relationship isn’t worth having’).

Relate aims to deliver its services

“with cultural sensitivity and without discrimination.”<sup>233</sup>

Yet, despite the scientific evidence of the benefits of swinging, Relate does discriminate against swinging as a lifestyle choice and swingers as successful relationship models.

Relate believes that

“people gain from an understanding of their sexuality.”<sup>234</sup>

Yet the honesty of this must be questioned. It employs as its spokeswomen two religious individuals who harbour abiding prejudices as to the permissible forms of human sexuality, prejudices that inform the advice these spokeswomen give to young women through the media in the name of Relate.

It might be more accurate to conclude that despite its protestations, Relate’s agenda is to persuade people against recreational sex, to minimise the number of sexual partners individuals have and to restrict sexual contact to within long-established relationships - and that there seems to be an undeclared religious motive for this.

Relate received a grant-in-aid of £2,103,900 from the government in 2001-02, 97.6% of its unrestricted donor income.<sup>235</sup> It received further project finance amounting to £357,517 of which the government provided 78.5%.<sup>236</sup> The money Relate raised itself (£133,467), it did so at a cost (£87,081) of 65p in every pound given.<sup>237</sup> The taxpayer’s proportion of Relate’s net donor income was thus 98.3%.<sup>238</sup> Relate has been receiving similar grants-in-aid, adjusted upwards slightly each year, at least as far back as 1994-1995.<sup>239</sup>

Despite the existence of established churches in England and Scotland, the British Government has a long tradition of subsidising science but not belief. Given Relate’s insistence on giving advice contrary to the published scientific evidence in the area of swinging; the hidden role religion may play in motivating this; Relate’s willingness to campaign against a segment of the electorate (swingers) that finances it and to discriminate against them on the basis of their sexuality; and the various ways that Relate breaches its self-set objectives and benchmarks,<sup>240</sup> the question arises of whether Relate is violating the conditions of its charitable status and whether it is a fitting recipient of such generous public funding.

Austerity is the antidote to hubris. A period of three to five years - perhaps one whole parliament - as a self-financing charity would force Relate to concentrate on its core competencies and greatly inhibit its appetite and capacity for freelance repression of parts of the British public. It would refocus the organisation on its universally admired strengths but send an unmistakable signal that the public refuses to finance a hidden religious agenda, discrimination against sexual minorities or prejudiced advice contrary to the findings of science. If Relate had cleaned up its act after three years, consideration could be given to restoring a level of public subsidy.

## 5 DOUBLE STANDARDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### 5.1 Pc PC

The following review appears on the *londonfetishscene.com* website

FIST, WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY 2002<sup>241</sup>

A dark alleyway leads the way to the club’s entrance in Imperial Gardens, setting the scene perfectly. Inside, Fist is a labyrinth of dark corridors lined with rubber and leather clad bodies.

The corridors lead into a dance room playing hard house music, a porn cinema, and a chill out room playing an eclectic mix of music where you can easily hold a group conversation without having to shout yourself hoarse! (You could also get your boots shined free of charge by the boot shine boy!) Above the cinema is a small gallery which I heard is used for orgies but we didn’t spend enough time there to find out.

The play room is located in a large gravel floored tent. Pitch black with just the sound of boots scraping on gravel, the only visible décor are the multiple rolls of kitchen paper hanging from the ceiling. Fist is pure sleaze.

Officially Fist is open to people of all genders and sexualities although in reality the clubbers are 95% gay male. However, the club which is owned and run by a woman openly welcomes women and I found it to be very friendly.

There were about 15-20 women there overall, pretty much all lesbian as far as I could tell. The small numbers meant that we banded together and soon had a group for socialising and sex alike. The men I spoke to were also friendly towards us. However, if large numbers of men, either partially or completely naked will seriously put you off then you might consider staying at home!

Fist is essentially about fucking. The equipment – three slings, is designed for sex rather than SM play. The fetish element of the club is in the strict dress code – rubber, leather, PVC, military or ‘just boots’. My friend was initially told she couldn’t come in because of their ‘no jeans’ policy (even ripped black jeans are unacceptable apparently) but luckily the club owner allowed her in. I wore lingerie, which isn’t officially on the dress code and had no problems. They are quite strict though, so be warned.

The sex here is hardcore, with people fucking, sucking and wanking round every corner. The play room is packed and you have to be quick to get a sling. Condoms, lube and latex gloves are all on hand although we took our own for convenience. I was lucky enough to end up in a sling surrounded by about 12 dykes, lining up to take a turn and grabbing me from all angles! Even the gay boys enjoyed the show we put on!

There’s plenty of action to watch just from the people around, but Fist also hosts a live performance at 1am. This time it was provided by Spike and Arlene who performed an amazing and intense cutting and branding scene. Arlene cut the words ‘Bitch’ ‘Slut’ and ‘Fist’ into Spike’s body, pressed a paper towel to each word and hung the words spelt in blood on the back wall before pressing a red hot branding iron into Spike’s belly three times over. Not for the faint hearted!

The upside to Fist, is the ‘anything goes’ atmosphere and low down dirty sleaze. The down side is the filth and there’s plenty of it. The toilets are a hot-spot for watersports and scat play [i.e. urination and excreta play] and before long they STINK! The sawdust on the floor quickly turns brown/green and you need a pretty strong stomach just to empty your bladder!

Similarly in the playroom, despite the rolls of paper the slings get covered in grease lube and so will anything else you leave lying around. I can’t even begin to describe the state of my friend’s waistcoat after it had been kicked around on the floor for a bit. Suffice to say she was embarrassed to take it to the dry cleaners! With body fluids a plenty you can’t expect it to smell alpine fresh but it can get a bit much after a while.

All in all I really enjoyed the night and I’d definitely go back. You can dance, chill, watch or fuck and each room caters ideally to its purpose. Despite being mainly men it seemed women friendly although I’d definitely advocate getting a group together. A fabulous night if you can stomach it!

The FIST<sup>242</sup> party described above took place in licensed premises and at the time this review was written FIST had been holding such events for eight years. As it consists entirely of gay men and women, the police and courts allow them to enjoy themselves in ways that would lead to prosecution and conviction for heterosexuals.

FIST of course is not alone. Although the FIST aesthetic is a significant but minority genre within gay culture, the occurrence of sex is nearly universal wherever gay men gather. According to Nicholas Boles, the Conservative councillor and gay man who directs the think-tank Policy Exchange, writing in *The Times* Thunderer column

“London has more gay bars and pubs than any city in the world. There are probably more than a hundred gay club nights every week.”<sup>243</sup>

He might have added that they usually take place in licensed premises; that public and group sex happen somewhere on the premises in almost all of them; that many of them have rooms specifically intended as places for sex; and that some such as gay saunas are simply sex clubs.

One website<sup>244</sup> lists eight gay hotels, 14 gay saunas, 26 gay clubs and 128 gay bars in London alone. Saunas are advertised as possessing “loads of rest areas”<sup>245</sup> “a giant communal cruise room; a host of private rooms with video lounge”<sup>246</sup> “huge maze of private rest rooms”<sup>247</sup> Rest areas and private rooms contain beds or couches and together with cruise rooms are provided to facilitate sexual encounters. The Saunabar in Covent Garden has “a suite of seven rest rooms” and “fully licensed bar”<sup>248</sup> In some gay pubs and bars the sex spills out from the back room or toilets into the saloon. According to one website review,<sup>249</sup> at a gay pub in Bermondsey you can

“Watch men spill their beer as they order at the bar with a cock up their ass.”<sup>250</sup>

There is every reason to believe that gay saunas would be prosecuted as ‘brothels’ if used by heterosexual men and

women for exactly the same activities. FIST would likely be prosecuted for 'allowing a brothel on licensed premises'<sup>251</sup> and the owner for 'living off immoral earnings'<sup>252</sup> if patronised by heterosexuals, because two heterosexual women offering themselves for lewdness with men creates a 'brothel'.<sup>253</sup>

1994, the year of the Club Whiplash arrests, was coincidentally the year FIST began its scatological gay orgies - with impunity.

Two years later the annual (pansexual but primarily heterosexual) Sex Maniacs' Ball had to be cancelled after being threatened with prosecution by the Metropolitan Police - because its theme was to be a celebration of John Major's then recent legalisation of heterosexual anal sex (gay anal sex had been legalised almost 30 years earlier in 1967). Meanwhile FIST was sailing through its third unmolested year.

Two years after that again, in 1998 by which time Tony Blair was in power, the proprietor of a swingers' club in Nevern, Pembrokeshire - a former major in the Army - was convicted and fined £2000 for keeping a brothel and living off immoral earnings<sup>254</sup> because he allowed ordinary swingers activities. There was no suggestion of prostitution. He pleaded guilty

"because he had not wanted to embarrass friends by asking them to give evidence".<sup>255</sup>

The chairman of the magistrates had said

"We regard this as a very serious case"<sup>256</sup>

but took into consideration that he had co-operated. The victim closed the business and went elsewhere. Dyfed-Powys Police had succeeded in running swingers off their patch. Meanwhile, FIST was enjoying its 5<sup>th</sup> year of coprophile orgies.

'Living off immoral earnings' is a particularly cruel charge to use in suppressing swingers. The imputation of actual prostitution is particularly humiliating especially for female swingers, who tend to be respectable married or professional women. It was the charge used to pass a nine month sentence on the husband of Liverpoolian porn actress Sabrina Johnson<sup>257</sup> in 1996 (even though her films were made in the USA).<sup>258</sup> Mrs Johnson commented

"It's illegal for my husband to live off my earnings, because technically, if I do films, I'm classed as a prostitute, and my husband is a pimp...I can live off my work, but if I bought Graham a drink in a pub, he could be done again for living off immoral earnings."<sup>259</sup>

In June 2003 a photographer's model in Warrington was raided and her husband cautioned for living off immoral earnings<sup>260</sup> because the police considered his wife's adult modelling to be prostitution.<sup>261</sup> After the case the police handed back commercial porn videos taken in raids but the

victim's videos of his wife were never returned. It appears that in the UK it is legal for a husband to possess videos of other people having sex but not his own wife.

In its 9<sup>th</sup> year a complaint was eventually made against FIST which led to them seeking new premises. Thankfully there have never been any prosecutions, despite frenetic group anal sex regularly occurring within yards of a licensed bar from which alcohol was easily available. This provides an exemplary level of legal tolerance of sex, the FIST standard. Unfortunately it is a standard that the British government applies only to gays.

## 5.2 Human Rights and wrongs

The British government is obliged by the European Convention on Human rights not only to respect the privacy of women's and swingers private lives (Article 8)<sup>262</sup> but also to grant women and swingers the same rights as gays (Article 14).<sup>263</sup>

Clearly in applying the FIST standard to one sex and sexual persuasion but not the other, the government is violating its human rights obligations and discriminating against some of its citizens.

There are five arguments the government might use to defend the status quo.

*Article 8.2:* First, they could argue that Clause 2 of Article 8 of the Convention<sup>264</sup> allows the state to legislate in the area of private morality for the protection of morals. But under Article 14 they would have to legislate equally harshly for gays and luckily there is not the remotest possibility of that happening (or of it being enforced).

*Glib assertion:* Second, they could (and do) assert glibly that the law is non-discriminatory between gays and heterosexuals. In her letter to me of 9 August 2002 the Home Secretary's Advisor Lesley Dix pointed out that s6 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 extended the definition of a brothel to include premises used for lewd homosexual practices.

That's the theory. The practice is that swingers clubs get busted but none of the thousands of gay pubs and clubs ever do, despite the same activities that swingers practice being undertaken on an unimaginable scale in gay establishments. In consequence there is a huge gay leisure industry but the swingers scene is forced to remain underground.

It is emphatically not an adequate defence of the current state of affairs to point to equally illiberal laws against gays when those laws are a complete dead letter but the laws against heterosexuals engaging in the same activities are enforced relatively frequently. Discriminatory enforcement of the law is merely a more insidious breach of human rights than discriminatory legislation. Not that discriminatory enforcement is the UK's only violation of the Convention - as we have seen the government's Sexual Offences Act 2003 actually makes discrimination worse by legalising gay orgies but not heterosexual ones.<sup>265</sup>

*Reacting to complaints:* A third defence could be that the police live and let live and are only forced to take action when complaints are made. This would be disingenuous and would not fit the facts. The police act on complaints against swingers but do not and would not act on complaints against gays because after centuries of brutal discrimination they are now a politically favoured minority.

When a complaint was made about FIST the result was a gentle word of advice more in sorrow than in anger and no talk of charges. And rightly so – how could someone visit such a place without knowing what to expect? The idea that the unwary would have their sensibilities shocked is ludicrous.

Compare this with what happened at the Garden of Eden swingers club in Nevern. A woman, having heard tales of orgies, decided to visit the club after enquiring and being told that ‘anything goes’ with couples, lesbians, homosexuals and transvestites meeting there. She and her sister were collected from their home 60 miles away by a driver employed by the club. However, she was supposedly so shocked at finding 20 people having group sex in the swimming pool that she reported the matter to police and the owner was fined £2000. The difference between what happened to the Garden of Eden and what happened to FIST when complaints were made is the measure of how swingers are oppressed in Britain.

If a religious or otherwise anti-gay group ran a campaign of visiting gay clubs and bars and making complaints about what they found, nobody in their right mind could believe the police would initiate a huge closure operation against Britain’s gay culture. In contrast swingers are treated harshly in response to complaints about milder behaviour (no excreta) when by their human rights they should be treated the same.

*Plausible deniability:* The government’s fourth line of defence could be to claim that gay clubs and pubs are not explicitly fitted out for sex (and that they therefore do not breach any laws or regulations) whereas proper on-premises swingers clubs are flagrant, can have no other purpose and make it impossible for officialdom to turn a blind eye. In other worlds, legality hinges on how plausibly it can be denied that premises are sex clubs not on the actual fact of them being sex clubs.

It may be true that gay sex clubs could in theory function simply as saunas. But to see them as such requires considerable disingenuity. Firstly as regards the way they are designed (“giant communal cruise room”<sup>266</sup> “40 man steam room”<sup>267</sup> “Cinema room”<sup>268</sup>); the way they are advertised (in gay magazines illustrated with pictures of naked and attractive men using ambiguous adjectives such as ‘friendly’ ‘steamy’ etc); the way they are operated (condoms and lubricating creams are often available free; disposal bins are provided in ‘rest rooms’); and of course what happens in them. Officialdom has to pretend to be blind to general social knowledge as well as to easily available print and Internet media to maintain these are not sex clubs.

But in addition this approach demonstrates a profound cultural and sexual bias. The fact is that many men (and not just gay men) actually enjoy sex in unromantic, uncomfortable, even sleazy environments. A light perusal of both heterosexual and gay male pornography establishes this very quickly. The casual encounter somewhere other than a bedroom is an integral component - even partly definitive - of the gay lifestyle. In particular, anonymous encounters (up to and including penetrative sex) in ‘groping groups’ of standing men in darkened rooms (and woods such as Hampstead West Heath in London) is a gay staple. This is what ‘cruise rooms’ in gay saunas are for.

In this important sense British gay sex clubs suit the predilections of their clientele at least as well if not better than would somewhere configured with lots of easily-soiled soft furnishings and king-sized beds. Needless to say that such a comfortable environment would be even further from the requirements of FIST’s clientele, happy as they are in a gravel floored tent with loo rolls hanging from the ceiling.

The contrast with the preferred environment of the female swinger could not be more pronounced. Female swingers demand uplifting premises with soft and inviting play spaces, flattering lighting and proper beds instead of clinical couches, mattresses or empty rooms. In short, something approximating to the standard continental swingers club.

So the current state of the law, approving sex clubs configured as sauna clubs while prohibiting sex clubs configured as swinging clubs, amounts in reality to sexist discrimination against women. The legal ‘sauna’ format is close to ideal for most gay sex club clientele while the illegal ‘swinger club’ format is close to necessary for most female and heterosexual sex club clientele. It is a clear case of discrimination whether intended or not and a violation of the human rights of women.

*Community feeling:* Fifth and finally, it could be argued that swinging is a grey area that, de facto, permits local communities to allow a level of provision they feel appropriate. There are after all a large number of swingers organisations. Thousands of swingers successfully pursue their hobby unbothered by the law as occasional persecutions and exposés affect relatively few. Some swingers clubs, notably La Chambre in Sheffield, are so open that they appear frequently in the media.

The European Convention on Human Rights applies to local government and the police as they and their powers are created by Act of Parliament. These public bodies are no more entitled to discriminate against swingers than is the British Government. There must be gay pubs or clubs in every single local government area of Great Britain. At the very least sex will take place regularly in the loos of these places, that is if they do not have a purposely designated ‘back room’ for encounters. Yet I am not aware that there has ever been a single prosecution under the Disorderly Houses Act 1751 or for ‘keeping a brothel’ or ‘living off immoral earnings’, or ‘allowing a brothel on licensed premises’ of anyone managing gay premises.

Under the Human Rights Convention a municipality that permits licensed premises for gays to congregate and have sex must treat swingers equally.

The appeal to 'community feeling' is in any case bogus. The government would not tolerate 'communities' discriminating against gays if that was the genuine 'community feeling' (as it was in some places when gay premises were new and before local residents discovered they are trouble-free neighbours that do not corrupt their children). Swingers are entitled to the same protection.

The argument that the hand of repression is light and should be borne with equanimity invites comparison with the law relating to gays before 1967. Gay culture existed, there were meeting places, discreet events. But also sordid lives twisted by shame and the terror of discovery. Gays were, generally, a ridiculed minority in the country at large.

Now in the fourth decade of gay liberation the situation is transformed. Gays are big business. Gay culture has become a positive feature of all the world's cosmopolitan cities, an international standard of civilisation, affluence and fun. In London the annual Gay Pride festival is led by gay policemen in uniform. It can hardly be said that gays were better off lying low and getting on with it as best they could, as they had to before 1967. Given their human rights there is no reason to expect swingers to aspire to anything less - and no reason to withhold it from them.

La Chambre<sup>269</sup> is a swingers club in Sheffield that appears to benefit from complete tolerance from the city council and South Yorkshire Police. It has featured in numerous broadcast and print media features about swingers. It is to the credit of the officials in Sheffield and the local constabulary that they are interpreting the law in the way that they do.

However, this issue throws up unacceptable vagaries in the application of the law, given the conviction of the Garden of Eden in Nevern, Pembrokeshire for being a swinging club. There is also the question of how, why and by what procedure the Government permits one businessman to become a monopoly supplier of legal swinging premises and how this affects the human rights of other businesspeople and his competitors and the government's obligations under the EU single market.

The argument that South Yorkshire is a metropolitan area where it is natural to expect greater tolerance of sexual heterodoxy than in rural Pembrokeshire does not hold water. As we have seen, in London, the most cosmopolitan city in the country, the Metropolitan Police forced the cancellation of the Sex Maniacs Ball only two years before the Pembrokeshire prosecution.

England and Wales is one jurisdiction. The criminal law is the same everywhere and local authorities and the police have no role in deciding what the law is. How is it that a man in Sheffield can be feted on television for running an above-board swingers club, while a man in Pembrokeshire can be convicted for living off immoral earnings and

keeping a brothel - for doing exactly the same thing? What does this say about the certainty of the law? How is a citizen to know where she can legally make love without being branded a prostitute?

### 5.3 Conclusion

Swinging is a safe, international, middle class and increasingly popular leisure choice for married and courting couples.

Research has shown clear benefits in terms of personal happiness and relationship stability among regular swingers and suggests that the rate of relationship failure in swinging is several orders less than for monogamous relationships.

Current criticism of swinging appears to be based on religious prejudice rather than study.

The government subsidises an organisation which breaches the spirit if not the letter of its charitable status in pathologising swingers.

The law as regards swingers is an utter disgrace. Though not applied severely enough to suppress all swinging activity, it is repressive enough to keep swinging underground and prevent businesses meeting the growing demand for swingers' facilities.

The law is enforced with extreme inconsistency. While in most of the country including London swingers clubs and events are prosecuted and closed down if they stick their heads above the parapet, in one city a swinging club is protected from the injustice of the law and has become famous in the media.

Women swingers who engage in group sex are treated as prostitutes whereas men both gay and straight who do the same things are not. Gays are allowed to do all the things prohibited to swingers on a vast scale including having group sex, sex clubs, sex on licensed premises as well as holding public festivals.

The government's maintenance of the laws against swingers and its refusal to implement a privacy law invites the gutter press to harass and persecute swingers even in their own homes.

The implications of the Human Rights Act 1998, with its requirements for respect and equal treatment for women and sexual minorities, have not been realised for swingers. The government's similar but higher obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights are ignored.

In each of these respects the UK has fallen significantly and unacceptably behind Western and European norms.

### 5.4 Recommendations

1. The government should recognise its responsibilities under the European Convention on Human Rights and apply the same standards of tolerance towards women and swingers as it does to gays - the FIST

standard.

2. The government should cease to fund Relate for an initial period of three to five years until it can demonstrate an internal culture change that accepts the scientific evidence on the benefits of swinging and swingers as successful relationship models; and abandons all discrimination against sexual minorities and prejudiced advice contrary to the findings of science.
3. The government should inquire into whether Relate has breached its Memorandum of Association and its charitable status in its campaign of discrimination against swingers.
4. In order to bring the law into compliance with human rights, swingers activities should be legalised in a comprehensive and complete way. To achieve this while making clear the new legal boundaries, the government should bring forward two Acts of Parliament. The first should be a Sexual Relations Act that would explicitly place women, heterosexuals (including swingers) and gays on an absolutely level playing field as regards their recreational sex; legalise heterosexual group sex; end the confusion between female swingers, sexual models and porn actresses on the one hand and prostitutes on the other; and repeal the statutory and common law offences that currently violate human rights in this area.
5. The second should be a sexuality-neutral Sex Clubs Act that would legalise sex clubs both gay and swinger; subject them to the same light regulatory regime; permit them to sell alcohol; clarify the planning and licensing roles of local authorities on sex clubs in such a way that does not permit them to veto sex clubs altogether; and repeal all existing laws that may be construed in conflict with the new act.



## 6 SOURCES

### 6.1 Endnotes

- 1 It has been suggested that it “had something to do with the music vernacular of the ‘40s and the loose, free-form dances of that era.” (Gould quoted in Marino 1999) [www.sfweekly.com/extra/beyond/swingers1.html](http://www.sfweekly.com/extra/beyond/swingers1.html). Another claimed origin is a minister denouncing “weird people swinging back and fro from bed to bed.” (Sez) [www.loveplay.com/frmopnmar.htm](http://www.loveplay.com/frmopnmar.htm).
- 2 “The discovery of bisexual enjoyment is not at all uncommon among female swingers...Whatever the reason or prevailing cultural forces, swinging is one of the only outlets that allows women in modern society to explore all aspects of their sexuality in a safe and comfortable setting.” (Terrien 2002), [www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm).
- 3 “There are those who like to watch and those who like to be watched. There are “soft swingers” who engage in petting, foreplay and maybe even oral sex, but draw the line at intercourse. There are couples who only swap girl-on-girl, others who go for the whole enchilada. With some couples, only the woman swings and the man watches, or vice versa. Some enjoy threesomes with selected friends, others prefer anonymous group sex.” (Marino 1999) [www.sfweekly.com/extra/beyond/swingers1.html](http://www.sfweekly.com/extra/beyond/swingers1.html).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 “However welcoming the Lifestyle can seem to a couple’s peculiarities and perversions, there is one unwritten rule: Most women are bi/curious, but all the men are straight. A couple who swings in all directions would be politely asked to leave most clubs.” (Henry 2001). Also ““Girls are expected, certainly preferred, to be bisexual, but male-male contact is not only frowned upon, the mere request can get a guy hurt.” (Jade) [www.lippyimp.com/junglegym.htm](http://www.lippyimp.com/junglegym.htm). See also [www.sexuality.org/swinging.html](http://www.sexuality.org/swinging.html).
- 6 e.g. seeking a girl-girl experience for the female partner.
- 7 e.g. only one partner may have full penetrative sex.
- 8 Such as couples who do not mind being in separate rooms during sexual activity.
- 9 Premier swingers contact magazines are *Desire Contacts* ([www.desire.co.uk/](http://www.desire.co.uk/)) in the UK; *Happy Weekend* in Germany ([www.happyweekend.de/start.eos](http://www.happyweekend.de/start.eos)); *Interconnexion* in France ([www.connexline.com](http://www.connexline.com)).
- 10 A Times article about contact ads in local newspapers concludes “the truly shocking thing was the plethora of messages from couples. Ream after ream of local ads are from “imaginative”, “carnal”, “curious”, or “juicy” married twosomes yearning to add that certain sparkle to their bedroom activity.” (Haran 2003).
- 11 British examples are (free) <http://dirty-david.com>, [www.swing2us.com](http://www.swing2us.com), [www.sharers.co.uk/newframe.htm](http://www.sharers.co.uk/newframe.htm) and (membership) [www.photo-personals.co.uk/guest](http://www.photo-personals.co.uk/guest), [www.swapscene.com](http://www.swapscene.com), [www.ukswingers.co.uk](http://www.ukswingers.co.uk).
- 12 Florida-based Swingers Europe ([www.swingerseurope.com](http://www.swingerseurope.com)) is currently the premier contacts and chatroom site for northern Europe and the UK.
- 13 Usually international e.g. [www.whosoncam.com](http://www.whosoncam.com), [www.anywebcam.com](http://www.anywebcam.com).
- 14 Houseparties are the origin of swinging ([www.chezlouis.com/eng/history.htm](http://www.chezlouis.com/eng/history.htm), [www.eroticguide.com/eu/classes/online/Swing/HISTORY.htm](http://www.eroticguide.com/eu/classes/online/Swing/HISTORY.htm)) and the practice is still strong, for example the one brilliantly portrayed by Natasha

Carlish in her documentary *The Orgy* broadcast on Channel 5 4/1/01. British contact clubs such as Club Aphrodite ([www.club-aphrodite.com/frame.htm](http://www.club-aphrodite.com/frame.htm)) encourage their members to hold house parties. However there are also specialist party-throwing clubs. The most distinguished of these in the USA are Toga Joe's in New York ([www.togajoe.com](http://www.togajoe.com)) and Fling ([www.flingevents.com/home.html](http://www.flingevents.com/home.html)) in California. UK examples are the long-running Toucan Club ([www.btinternet.com/~ECB/toucan](http://www.btinternet.com/~ECB/toucan)), the new Club Champagne ([www.clubchampagne.com](http://www.clubchampagne.com)) and the select Fever ([www.feverparties.com](http://www.feverparties.com)).

15 'Swingers club' is an imprecise term. As well as party clubs and contacts clubs there are off-premises clubs where sex is not allowed and on-premises clubs where sex can actually take place. On-premises clubs are what swingers clubs are popularly imagined to be and is the sense in which the term is used here. On-premises clubs are usually either in nightclub/bar/lounge format (e.g. [www.skinnydippersuk.com](http://www.skinnydippersuk.com), [www.velvetcurtain.net](http://www.velvetcurtain.net)) or spa format (e.g. [www.rios.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.rios.co.uk/index.htm), [www.club-paradise.nl](http://www.club-paradise.nl)). See [www.nasca.com/states/nasca\\_faq.html](http://www.nasca.com/states/nasca_faq.html).

16 e.g. [www.bukkake.org.uk](http://www.bukkake.org.uk), <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/midlandsukbukkake>, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/londonbukkakeparties>.

17 e.g. [www.bi-bar.com](http://www.bi-bar.com), [www.bisexualplayground.com/bisexual.html](http://www.bisexualplayground.com/bisexual.html), [www.alternativeconnections.com/bisexual-personals.htm](http://www.alternativeconnections.com/bisexual-personals.htm).

18 e.g. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sexatthemovies>.

19 e.g. [www.londonfetishscene.com/Default.asp](http://www.londonfetishscene.com/Default.asp), [www.clubwicked.org](http://www.clubwicked.org), [www.torturegarden.com](http://www.torturegarden.com), [www.kinky-kiwi.com/index1.html](http://www.kinky-kiwi.com/index1.html), [www.cakelondon.com](http://www.cakelondon.com), [www.hubbies.com](http://www.hubbies.com), [www.dpf.com](http://www.dpf.com), [www.adult-babies.com](http://www.adult-babies.com), [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/human\\_equine](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/human_equine), [www.thehumanequine.com/the1.html](http://www.thehumanequine.com/the1.html), [www.fetishlink.net/Pony](http://www.fetishlink.net/Pony).

20 i.e. couples and singles, in practice nearly always single men.

21 women who enjoy many men. The editor of French literary magazine Art Press published an account of her lifetime of gang-bangs (Millet 2002).

22 [www.feverparties.com](http://www.feverparties.com).

23 exhibitionism or swinging in public car parks (Lambert 2002).

24 [www.libchrist.com](http://www.libchrist.com).

25 [www.libchrist.com/poly/polyvsswing.html](http://www.libchrist.com/poly/polyvsswing.html).

26 [www.swingworld.net/swinfo/priest.htm](http://www.swingworld.net/swinfo/priest.htm).

27 [www.nasca.com/states/nasca\\_faq.html](http://www.nasca.com/states/nasca_faq.html) – whoare.

28 see for example [www.voy.com/7895/108.html](http://www.voy.com/7895/108.html), an exchange of anecdotes about sex in church.

29 Bergstrand & Williams (2000) para 7 [www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm](http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm).

30 Ibid. para 7 citing Friendship Express 1994 & Miller 1994.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid. para 21

34 Ibid. para 23

35 Ibid. para 14

36 Ibid. para 25

37 Kate Finnigan "Welcome to the pleasure dome" *Elle* May 2003 quoted in full at <http://www.feverparties.com/media.htm>.

38 *Desire Contacts*, Issue 5, August 2003 pp15-37.

39 Chrisafis, Angélique "What's love got to do with it?" *The*

*Guardian* G2 29 August 2003.

40 "The swinger takes it all" *Cosmopolitan* December 2001 quoted in full *ibid*.

41 *Ibid.* para 9

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 "Some swingers feel that a weak marriage probably will not survive swinging and that perhaps in such cases couples shouldn't swing... Most swingers believe swinging is not for all married couples. They do believe that swinging is better than sneaking around corners and lying to the partner about an outside relationship." Butler (1979).

45 Bergstrand & Williams (2000) para 6 [www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm](http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm).

46 *Ibid.* para 2 also Butler (1979) [http://www.feverparties.com/First\\_timers\\_pages.htm](http://www.feverparties.com/First_timers_pages.htm).

47 Terrien 2002 [www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm).

48 [www.sexuality.org](http://www.sexuality.org).

49 [www.sexuality.org/swinging.html](http://www.sexuality.org/swinging.html).

50 Filmmaker David Schisgall, who directed *The Lifestyle: Group Sex in the Suburbs* ([www.7thart.com/current/lifestyle/thelife.html](http://www.7thart.com/current/lifestyle/thelife.html)), quoted in Carina Chocano "Swap Meat" Salon People, online, 21/4/00 p2. <http://cobrand.salon.com/people/feature/2000/04/21/lifestyle/index.html>.

51 [www.feverparties.com](http://www.feverparties.com).

52 *Ibid.* (see First-Time Swingers Pages/ The joy of swinging).

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.* (see First-Time Swingers Pages/ Who should swing).

56 *Ibid.* ( see First-Time Swingers Pages/ The joy of swinging).

57 *Ibid.* (see First-Time Swingers Pages/ Who should swing).

58 Terrien 2002 [www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm](http://www.gwu.edu/~english/ccsc/2002/Pages/Terrien.htm).

59 [www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm](http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm).

60 78.5% against 64% very happy compared with respondents to the University of Michigan General Social Survey, the standard demographic model of the US population (Bergstrand & Williams Table 14) [www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm](http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm).

61 Bergstrand & Williams Table 15.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.* Table 17.

65 In answer to the question "At this point in your life would you say you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" swingers responded 58.8% against 32.2% very happy and 41.2% against 67.9% pretty or not too happy; (Bergstrand & Williams Table 20). Comparison with GSS.

66 In answer to the question "Is life exciting or dull?" swingers answered 75.9% against 54.4% exciting and 23.8% against 54.4% dull (Bergstrand & Williams Table 21). Comparison with GSS. [www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm](http://www.ejhs.org/volume3/swing/body.htm).

67 *Ibid.* Table 16.

68 The most negative findings have been two contentious papers from the early seventies, Henshel (1973) & Varni (1974), that suggested men initiated most swinging. Henshel found men initiated swinging in 68% of cases from

a sample of only 25 women in Toronto. Neither study considered whether the women habitually took a lead from their partners in other aspects of their relationship.

69 Henry (2001) <http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com/2001-06-13/cover.html>.

70 Whitby (2003) p96.

71 [www.drpetra.co.uk/press/index.html](http://www.drpetra.co.uk/press/index.html).

72 [www.drpetra.co.uk/research/index.html](http://www.drpetra.co.uk/research/index.html).

73 [www.the-sensual-magazine.com/pages/features/food.htm](http://www.the-sensual-magazine.com/pages/features/food.htm).

74 [www.the-sensual-magazine.com/pages/features/girltalk.htm](http://www.the-sensual-magazine.com/pages/features/girltalk.htm).

75 Whitby (2003) p96.

76 Butler (1979) quoted on [http://feverparties.com/First\\_timers\\_pages.htm](http://feverparties.com/First_timers_pages.htm).

77 Honorary Professor at the Roehampton Institute of Surrey University and visiting professor at several other universities in the UK and abroad. She has authored more than 150 publications in 21 languages including *Everything You Wanted To Know About Extraordinary Sex* and is currently working on her fourth doctorate. [www.upso.co.uk/petruska.htm](http://www.upso.co.uk/petruska.htm), [www.physis.co.uk/pc/plclark.htm](http://www.physis.co.uk/pc/plclark.htm), [www.upso.co.uk/Everything\\_you.htm](http://www.upso.co.uk/Everything_you.htm).

78 Clarkson, Petruska quoted in "Come together" *Arena* magazine, London, July 2003, p77.

79 p270.

80 Sometime President of the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis, Director of the Scottish Refugee Council, President of the Indian Association of Strathclyde.

81 [http://216.239.51.100/search?q=cache:LgxeDezQzAcJ:members.madasafish.com/~cj\\_whitehound/Theatre\\_of\\_Cruelty/police.htm+%22prem+misra%22&hl=en&ie=UTF-8](http://216.239.51.100/search?q=cache:LgxeDezQzAcJ:members.madasafish.com/~cj_whitehound/Theatre_of_Cruelty/police.htm+%22prem+misra%22&hl=en&ie=UTF-8).

82 [www.scottishmediamonitor.com/articles2.cfm?ID=108](http://www.scottishmediamonitor.com/articles2.cfm?ID=108).

83 [www.newsfilter.org/paris.htm](http://www.newsfilter.org/paris.htm).

84 [web.inter.nl.net/users/N.Leeuwis/club\\_uk.htm](http://web.inter.nl.net/users/N.Leeuwis/club_uk.htm).

85 For example Fun4two [www.fun4two.nl](http://www.fun4two.nl), <http://feverparties.com/fun4two.htm>.

86 [www.capdagde.com/en/activities/naturism.html](http://www.capdagde.com/en/activities/naturism.html).

87 [www.naturist.org.uk/other.htm](http://www.naturist.org.uk/other.htm).

88 <http://feverparties.com/capdagde.htm>.

89 [www.nasca.com/states/nasca\\_clubs.html](http://www.nasca.com/states/nasca_clubs.html), [www.swingersboard.com/clubs/index.html](http://www.swingersboard.com/clubs/index.html).

90 <http://clubsandparties.com/index1.htm>.

91 [www.nasca.com/states/nasca\\_convention.html](http://www.nasca.com/states/nasca_convention.html).

92 Seminars at the "Lifestyles East" convention in the 465 room Radisson Deauville Hotel, Miami Beach in March 2003 included (among others): Aids & STDs; *How to strip for your man*; *The art of entering a new lover*; *Gender preference: A historical look at the social constructions of heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual*; *The fun of hypnosis*; *Erotic and easy techniques to manually stimulate your guy*; *Using meditation to enhance your BDSM relationship style*; *Sex as a sacred and healing art*; and *How to meet new friends on the Internet* together with several Q&A sessions and a couples' massage workshop <http://lifestyles-east.com/seminars.html>.

93 <http://clubsandparties.com/index1.htm>.

94 Ibid.

95 [www.swingersboard.com/clubs/clubs/foreign.html](http://www.swingersboard.com/clubs/clubs/foreign.html).

96 Clubsandparties.com (<http://clubsandparties.com/>) is an adjunct to Dirty-David (<http://dirty-david.com/>) the most popular free British swingers contact website.

97 <http://clubsandparties.com/index1.htm>.

98 Ibid.

99 [www.les-chandelles.com/index2.php3](http://www.les-chandelles.com/index2.php3), [www.overside.fr/english/presentation/start.htm](http://www.overside.fr/english/presentation/start.htm).

100 [www.ccsida.com](http://www.ccsida.com).

101 See 3 below.

102 <http://clubsandparties.com/index1.htm>.

103 Rapture, Endorphine Visions, Dreamworld, Penthouse swingers.

104 Capers=ClubAphrodite. FantasyFood=UKLiasons. LoveSwingers=Raptures. Scorpio.net=Scorpio. Censored, Desire & Passion and Limelight=Mystique. Members=Toucan Club.

105 L'amour, Club Rub, Torture Garden, Fringe.

106 Pleasuredome, FIST.

107 Club Aphrodite, Hedonism, Scorpio.

108 Rude Food.

109 Loungeparties, Paradise Club.

110 Fever.

111 Toucan Club.

112 Skinnydippers, Radlett, UKLiasons, Charles, Kent Castle.

113 Eureka, Silverleigh.

114 Rio's, City Spa.

115 Cockatoo, CouplesZone.

116 Couples Club.

117 Mystique (<http://themystiqueclub.com>).

118 *Halsbury's Statutes* 4th Edition Vol 12 p248.

119 *Winter v Woolfe* [1931] 1 KB 549, considered in *Kelly v Purvis* [1983] 1 All ER 525, [1983] 2 WLR 299.

120 *Halsbury's Statutes* 4th edition Vol 12 p249.

121 Ibid.

122 [www.black-rose.com/cuiru/archive/2-6/briefs2-6.html](http://www.black-rose.com/cuiru/archive/2-6/briefs2-6.html), [www.urban75.com/Mag/sexual.html](http://www.urban75.com/Mag/sexual.html), [www.sfc.org.uk/about.htm](http://www.sfc.org.uk/about.htm).

123 "...under section 33 of the 1956 Act of keeping or managing a brothel, as an element of reward is not necessarily required (*Kelly v Purvis* [1983] 1 All ER 525)". *House of Commons Research Paper* 00/15 7/2/00. [www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2000/rp00-015.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2000/rp00-015.pdf).

124 *Kelly v Purvis* [1983] 1 All ER 525, [1983] 2 WLR 299.

125 25 Geo 2 c36.

126 Section 8.

127 [www.sfc.org.uk/bill.htm](http://www.sfc.org.uk/bill.htm). Keeping a Disorderly House was the charge used in the failed prosecution of Club Whiplash, a fetish club, in 1994. It was also one of the charges in the successful Operation Spanner prosecution of the consenting S&M practitioners arrested in 1989. [www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/span/sp-timel.html](http://www.barnsdle.demon.co.uk/span/sp-timel.html).

128 Licensing Act 1964, Section 176.

129 Section 138.

130 Sexual Offences Act 1956 s30 & 31.

131 See 18 September on [www.melonfarmers.co.uk/news0998.htm](http://www.melonfarmers.co.uk/news0998.htm), and 29 November on [www.melonfarmers.co.uk/news1198.htm](http://www.melonfarmers.co.uk/news1198.htm).

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133 The Club Whiplash case.

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- 188 *Ibid.*
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- 238 Relate has other income from the sale of services, investments etc.giving it a total income from all sources of £4,696,342 in 2001-02.
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- 264 Article 8.2 “There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”
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