

## *The More the Merrier: Satisfaction Among Polyamorous Relationships*

Charlotte Pursley, Lee Zipprich, and Peyton Spencer

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### Introduction

The demographic for adult marriages were at an all-time low for those between 25-50 years old in 2018 (Wang, 2018). This suggests that people are deferring to other models of relationships. Polyamory, a relationship model that is juxtaposed with monogamy, has been growing in popularity, mostly within the Millennials (Family Studies, 2019). Polyamorous partnerships are defined as relationships in which both partners have openly agreed that they and/or their partners will have other sexual and/or romantic partners (Mogilski, 2017). Mogilski (2017) also found in a study of sexual health and behavior across differing romantic groups, that polyamorous partnerships reported better communication of sexual health and boundaries than monogamous couples. This could be a result of their communication style which calls for open discussion of individual wants and needs, personal boundaries, and trust. The biggest demographic difference between polyamorous and monogamous relationships is that sexual orientation among participants in monogamous relationships were heterosexual, which was much lower among participants in polyamorous relationships. This suggests that being in a polyamorous relationship leads individuals to acknowledge same-sex attractions or to experience gender and/or sexual fluidity.

A reason why monogamy has been evolutionarily favored in humans is because of “partner scarcity”. An abundance of men is associated with higher rates of commitment in the form of monogamy. Due to menopause and long-life cycles, the sex ratio of reproductive-aged individuals is male-biased, meaning that “mate guarding” or monogamy has been favored over time. However, cooperative breeding, a social system in which others who are not the father provide care to offspring, has shown to be more beneficial as it increased fertility in mothers, decreased infant mortality rate and allowed for human life-history traits to evolve (Schact & Bell, 2017). Unfortunately, the positive outcomes of polyamorous relationships are clouded by social and legal discrimination. Housing policies, health insurance, taxes, and legally imposed penalties, such as felonies for “adultery” in some states, on top of the stigma that polyamorous partnerships are illegitimate are the biggest contributors to discrimination against polyamorous relationships (OfficialDanEC, 2015), (Malher, 2015), (The Infidelity Recovery Institute, 2020). The examination of satisfaction reported within polyamorous relationships versus monogamous relationships could create an understanding of how polyamorous relationships function and are viewed could lead to healthier relationships, even for monogamous couples. The data collected could also be used in the future to create a more inclusive environment for polyamorous relationships in general.

### Empirical Question

Do polyamorous partnerships report higher rates of relationship satisfaction and romantic attachment than monogamous couples?

### Participants

A projected sample size of 100 participants (a minimum of 25 polyamorous people, 75 or more monogamous people). Convenience, purposive, and snowball sampling will occur online from among both the Pacific University undergraduate and graduate populations, using email solicitation, list serves, fliers, and word-of-mouth. We anticipate the average age of the sample will be 24 years, with a greater proportion of monogamous to polyamorous.

### Proposed Method

The materials for this study included a **Demographic and Attitude Survey** that assesses the individual demographic variables of the participants in addition to their personal relationship boundaries and attitudes towards polyamory. The demographics portion is made of multiple-choice survey questions and one dichotomous question. The rest of the survey uses a 7-point Likert scale.

The materials for this study also included the following published, cited measures:

**Bringle’s Self Report Jealousy Scale** assesses differences in boundaries between polyamorous and non-polyamorous relationships on a 5- point Likert-like frequency scale. (Bringles, 1982).

**Couples Satisfaction Index** assesses differences in satisfaction between polyamorous and non-polyamorous relationships on a 7- point Likert-like frequency scale. (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

Participants will begin the survey with an informed consent protocol, afterward moving onto the demographics and attitude survey, the Bringle’s Self Report Jealousy Scale, and the Couples Satisfaction Index.

The questionnaire will be distributed with the help of Pacific University’s Center for Gender Equity and the Department of Psychology. Listservs, social media, snowball sampling, and fliers will be the methods used to distribute the survey.

Once the survey is administered SPSS and Qualtrics will be the programs used to process the data.

### Proposed Results

The results will be interpreted using a multivariate analysis of variance for all variables simultaneously, as well a partial  $\eta^2$ . Internal consistency will be assessed on the demographics survey.

### Conclusion

Conducting this research to gain a better understanding of the functionality and healthiness of polyamorous relationships could lead to fostering healthier relationships, for polyamorous and monogamous couples. In addition, this research could serve to relegate the discrimination and negative associations surrounding polyamory. The results of the Couples Satisfaction Index, the Bringle’s Self Report Jealousy Scale, and the questions made by the researchers would indicate how polyamorous partnerships function and affect people differently than the ways in which amatonormative relationships do. The data gathered on relationship satisfaction and emotional condition could help to destigmatize polyamorous partnerships and help to educate people, thus bringing more awareness to relationship diversity. The information provided in this study could also aid in creating healthier relationships in addition to educating people on the ways in which polyamorous people are faced with social, legal, and financial discrimination, thus paving the way for changes to be made towards creating a more inclusive environment for polyamorous relationships.

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