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Different Types of Love in Polyamory: Between Primary and Secondary

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Honors Psychology Thesis  
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### **Abstract**

Polyamory is a relationship model where every partner involved in the relationship practices or consents to the practice of multiple simultaneous relationships. Polyamory typically consists of at least two partners, and the most common model is the primary-secondary relationship.

Previous research found higher intimacy, commitment, and investment in primary relationships, while greater sexual frequency and satisfaction in secondary relationships (Mogilski, Memering, Welling, & Shackelford, 2015; Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2014; Balzarini, Campbell, Holmes, Lehmillier, Harman, Kohut, & Atkins, 2017). As these relationship outcomes are related to romantic attraction, passionate love, companionate love, and jealousy, the purpose of the study was to investigate the differences in feelings of love and jealousy towards primary partners compared to secondary partners. Two hundred and twenty-six self-identified polyamorists, who were above the age of majority and had at least two partners (one as primary and another as secondary) were included in the study. Participants completed a survey, which included a Romantic Attraction Scale, a Passionate Love Scale, a Companionate Love Scale, and a modified Jealousy Scale testing for emotional and sexual jealousy. Participants were recruited through online polyamorous groups and social media. Consistent with the hypotheses, results showed higher companionate love and emotional jealousy for primary partners than secondary partners. However, results for passionate love and romantic attraction were contrary to predictions, both resulting higher for primary partners than secondary partners.

### **Acknowledgment and Dedication**

I would like to thank Rhonda Balzarini for the inspiration, support, and encouragement throughout this project. There are no words to express my gratitude for your help and patience. You have been an incredible mentor. Thank you for the guidance over the course of this project.

### **Different Types of Love in Polyamory: Between Primary and Secondary**

Love is a popular topic that has been studied for a long time, therefore there is an extensive literature on love, including types of love, relationship outcomes, and jealousy (Masuda, 2003; Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, Choe, Lim, Hasegawa, Hasegawa, & Bennett, 1999). However, most research has focused on monogamous relationships and little has focused on Consensual Non-Monogamy (CNM), although more studies are slowly emerging. CNM is an umbrella term that refers to the explicit agreement between partners in a romantic relationship that they can enter romantic or sexual relationships with other people. Approximately four to five percent of Americans currently practice some form of CNM (Rubin, Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, and Conley, 2014). Forms include swinging (i.e. sexual encounters with other couples without emotional involvement), open relationships (i.e. casual sexual encounters), and polyamory. Polyamory is a model where individuals involved in a relationship can love multiple people, in a romantic sense, and can maintain multiple relationships simultaneously, if all partners involved agreed to do so (Barker, 2005). Some of the most common forms of polyamory are primary-secondary relationships, polyfidelity, v-structures, and poly “webs” or families. In primary-secondary relationships, the primary relationship is the main relationship and is prioritized over secondary relationships. In polyfidelity relationships, there are three or more partners in a relationship with all the partners involved, often is characterized by triads, three-partner relationships, or quads, four-partner relationships. In v-structures, one individual has equal involvement with two other partners who are not in a relationship with each other. And in poly “webs” or families, it is an involvement of extended relationships with other individuals, who are unspecified (Labriola, 2003; Barker, & Langdridge, 2010).

Amongst the various models, the most popular model of polyamory is the primary-

secondary model. More than one third of individuals self-identifying as polyamorous reported having a primary-secondary model as their current relationship status (Barker, 2005). Primary relationships are similar to monogamous relationships, and they are mostly practiced by married couples and couples in long-term relationships. Primary partners share a household, finances, and children. Primary partners dedicate more time to each other compared to secondary partners (Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2014; Labriola, 2003; Sheff, 2013). Additionally, polyamorists reported being in a relationship with their primary partner much longer than with their secondary partners (Mogilski, Memering, Welling, & Shackelford, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2014; Balzarini, Campbell, Holmes, Lehmilller, Harman, Kohut, & Atkins, 2016). Primary partners decide to make their main relationship a priority over other relationships. As a result, secondary partners do not have equal say in decisions or negotiations for their needs and wants if these conflict with those of a primary partner (Labriola, 2003).

Compared to primary partners, secondary partners do not share finances, do not share a household, receive less time compared to primary partners, have less authority in making decisions or defining relationship rules, and have to coordinate schedules depending on the needs of the primary relationship. Moreover, some primary partners hold veto power, meaning that they have the power to take away their primary partner's freedom to begin a relationship with a new person, regardless of the reason (Labriola, 2003; Sheff, 2013). The differences in time commitment, decision making, priority, and investment might create a hierarchical structure in a primary-secondary relationship, and previous research has shown that there is a distinction between primary and secondary relationships based on these hierarchies.

### **Previous Research on Comparisons between Primary and Secondary Relationships**

Polyamory has been studied only in the last decade, therefore previous research is

minuscule compared to monogamy studies. CNM challenges the norm of a heterosexual monogamous relationship model that has been in practice for centuries and has been the only relationship model that most people know (Barker, 2005). This lack of knowledge might be difficult for the general population to accept, as they believe that monogamy is the only way to practice romantic relationships. Furthermore, the media has depicted any kind of non-monogamy as unfaithful individuals who face severe consequences, such as movies like *Unfaithful* and *Fatal Attraction* (Barker, 2005). This lack of knowledge and negative media depiction may have stigmatized polyamorists. In fact, 28% of the individuals being surveyed felt discrimination in the past 10 years (Fleckenstein, Bergstrand, & Cox, 2012). More exposure to polyamory will help the public understand its structure and dynamics, feel less discrimination towards polyamorists, and help polyamorists choose their relationship model more freely and do what is best for them. With more research, researchers can fill in this gap in the literature.

In the past two decades, polyamory was researched as a broad topic. Recently, researchers have begun to make direct comparisons between partners within a polyamorous relationship on various relationship outcomes. Precisely, they have addressed the differences between partners in primary-secondary relationships, the most common model in polyamory. The results of these studies were consistent; participants reported higher commitment, investment, intimacy, better communication, support, and need fulfillment with their primary partners compared to their secondary partners. Additionally, primary partners were viewed as more desirable long-term partners than secondary partners, as well as recipients of a higher number of partner retention behaviours than secondary partners (i.e. giving public signals their partner is already in a relationship; Mogilski et al., 2015). On the other hand, participants reported greater sexual frequency, and greater sexual need satisfaction with secondary partners

than with primary partners (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2014). These results suggest that secondary relationships might be more sexual in nature than primary relationships, and that primary and secondary partners might fulfill different roles in a polyamorist's love life.

Previous research has suggested that primary relationships follow similar trajectories to those of monogamous relationships in the amount of investment, commitment, and intimacy (Mogilski et al., 2015) that would increase over time but a likely decrease in passion (Wojciszke, 2002). This lack of passion could be possibly filled with the presence of the secondary relationships, since there was greater reported sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency with secondary partners compared to primary partners (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2014). The researchers want to examine whether there are differences in the type of love that people feel for each of their partners. Romantic attraction, passionate love, and companionate love will be compared between primary and secondary partners. Moreover, the researchers want to explore whether the different roles of their partners affect the type of jealousy, emotional or sexual, polyamorists feel for each partner depending on the type of their relationship involvement.

### **Passionate Love**

Passionate love refers to a state of intense desire for the union with another (Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986). It includes sexual desire, passion, excitement, and uncertainty (Berscheid, 2010). Other characteristics of passionate love are intense emotions, mutual attraction, sexual arousal, and engagement between two partners, as well as thought intrusion and jealousy (Acevedo, & Aron, 2009). According to Hatfield (1985), passionate love is comprised of three categories: cognitive, behavioural, and emotional. The cognitive components are referred to



thoughts intrusion exhibited as obsessive thinking of the other, idealization of the other, and the desire to know and to be known by sharing own experiences and wanting to know the other's experiences. The behavioural components include behaviours such as analyzing the other, determining the other's feelings, seeking physical closeness, and showing acts of devotion (e.g. helping the other). And the emotional components include sexual attraction, physiological arousal, seeking for reciprocity of feelings, desire for a long-lasting relationship, and feelings affected by the course of the relationship (e.g. feeling happy when getting along, while feeling sad/angry when fighting; Hatfield, 1985, Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986).

There has been evidence that passionate love is correlated with satisfaction in both short and long-term relationships, meaning that passionate love can be maintained over time (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Tucker, & Aron, 1993; Traupmann, & Hatfield, 1981). However, other research showed a declining trajectory of passion over time (Wojciszke, 2002; Blood, & Wolfe, 1960; Glenn, 1990, Locke, & Wallace, 1959; Tucker, & Aron, 1993). Those contradicting results might show that passionate love is not related to the length of the relationship.

In other research relating to passion, researchers found a positive correlation between sexual frequency and passion (Costa, & Brody, 2007), as well as a positive correlation between relationship passion and fun during sex (Rubin, & Campbell, 2012). As previously mentioned, secondary relationships typically consist of relationships with higher sexual frequency and higher sexual need satisfaction than primary partners. Based on previous findings we predict that passionate love will be higher for secondary than primary partners (H1; Appel, & Shmuel, 2015; Acevedo, & Aron, 2009).

### **Romantic Attraction**

Passionate love and romantic attraction share similar characteristics; they both induce

increased physiological arousal, sexual desire, desire for union, and attention focused on the partner (Fisher, 2004; Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li, & Brown, 2002; Berscheid, 2010). Additionally, Appel and Shmuel (2015) found a positive correlation between passionate love and romantic attraction. However, different from passionate love, romantic attraction seems to be short lived as the same study showed that high romantic attraction was correlated with shorter relationship length. Furthermore, romantic attraction was related to downplaying and overlooking disagreement, as the combination of the two reported shorter relationships (Appel, & Shmuel, 2015). Romantic attraction might fulfill sexual needs, but if couples ignore their conflicts, they will not be able to develop emotional intimacy, meaning romantic attraction might not keep them together over the long term.

In a study conducted by Rubin and Campbell (2012), it was also found a positive correlation between relationship passion and passionate attraction during sex, which implies that if an individual feels high passionate love for one partner, he or she would also feel high romantic attraction towards the same partner. Since romantic attraction and passionate love display similar characteristics, and because secondary relationships are shorter than primary relationships (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016, Mitchell et al., 2014), our prediction for romantic attraction is similar to the passionate love prediction. We predict that romantic attraction will be higher for secondary than primary partners (H2; Appel, & Shmuel, 2015; Acevedo, & Aron, 2009).

### **Companionate Love**

Compared to passionate love and romantic attraction, companionate love is much more stable, it develops over time, and it typically persists over time (Hatfield, 1985; Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986; Kim, & Hatfield, 2004). Companionate love is characterized by intimacy and

commitment, and is correlated with relationship satisfaction in the long term (Acevedo, & Aron, 2009). Companionate love is comprised of cognitive components, emotional components, and behavioural components. The cognitive components are displayed by deep friendship, and disclosure of intimate information such as hopes and values. The emotional components are characterized by mutual care, love for each other, and intimacy. And the behavioural components consist of behaviours such as being comfortable when physically close, and usually maintain physical proximity to each other (Hatfield, 1985).

Passionate love, over time, develops into companionate love (Hatfield, & Walster, 1978). Hence, it is more likely that primary partners feel more companionate love towards each other rather than secondary partners because of the much longer relationship length (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2014). Additionally, previous studies on polyamory reported higher commitment, investment, support, intimacy, closeness, as well as frequent and good quality communication with primary partners compared to with secondary partners (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016). These results are suggestive of companionate love (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Moreover, primary partners were considered more desirable long term partner than secondary partners (Mogilski et al., 2015). For these reasons, we predict that companionate love for primary partners would be higher than for secondary partners (H3).

### **Jealousy**

Jealousy is referred to the emotional state of fear, insecurity, and anxiety over potential loss of intimate relationships. There are two types of jealousy in romantic relationships: sexual jealousy and emotional jealousy (Buss, Larsen, Western, & Semmelroth, 1992; Buss et al., 1999). A previous study has found a sex difference in jealousy. Majority of women were more jealous of emotional infidelity than men were, and most men were more jealous of sexual

infidelity than women were. The sex differences were explained by the different resources that each gender invests into a relationship (Buss et al., 1992). Although these results were based on monogamous relationship, there is reason to believe that individuals in polyamorous relationships could report similar feelings of jealousy. However, the distinction would be drawn by the type of involvement rather than the sex of the participants. Polyamorists differ in their involvement with their primary compared to their secondary relationships. Specifically, there is greater emotional involvement with primary partners and greater sexual involvement with secondary partners (Mogilski et al., 2015; Balzarini et al., 2016; Mitchell et al., 2014). Therefore, we hypothesized that there will be greater emotional jealousy for primary partners compared to secondary partners (H4), and there will be greater sexual jealousy for secondary partners compared to primary partners (H5).

## **Methods**

### **Procedure**

The data collection took part between February and March 2017. The online recruitment flyers contained a survey link that directed participants to the survey. The survey was hosted on Qualtrics, an online survey program. Participants first saw a letter of information and were asked to give digital consent at the end of the letter by clicking the “I have read the letter of information and I AGREE to participate” button. If they chose “I have read the letter of information and I DO NOT agree to participate”, they were directed to the end of the survey. Participants who agreed to participate were asked to answer several questionnaires including a participant-demographic questionnaire, partner-demographic questionnaires, and questions about the relationship arrangements between the participant’s partners. Then, participants were asked to provide their partners’ initials, which were piped into subsequent questions to avoid

confusions about which partner they were answering the questions for. After that, they answered questions on passionate love, romantic attraction, companionate love, and jealousy for both partners. When participants completed the survey, they were shown a debriefing form that explained the purpose of the study. Finally, participants were directed to the end of the survey where they were thanked for their participation.

### **Participants**

Approximately 740 participants took part in this study. However, only 226 participants met our criteria as well as completed the entire survey. Participants were recruited based on a few criteria. They had to be at least 18 years old, English speaking, self-identify as polyamorous, and have at least two partners. Participants were primarily from United States and Canada, and they were recruited from different polyamorous forums, dating websites, Facebook groups, twitter, and contact lists from previous studies.

Participants' age ranged from 18 to 74 ( $M = 34.29$  years,  $SD = 9.44$  years). They were predominantly White/Caucasians ( $n = 206$ ), with a minority of participants being Black/African American ( $n = 4$ ), Asian ( $n = 5$ ), Hispanic/ Latino ( $n = 1$ ), Native American/Native Alaskan ( $n = 1$ ), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ( $n = 1$ ), a bi-racial ( $n = 2$ ), and other ( $n = 6$ ). The majority of participants' sex was reported to be female by 158 participants, followed by 62 male participants, one intersex participant, two participants classified as other, and three participants who did not respond. The sexual orientation of the participants was composed by 38.5% heterosexual participants ( $n = 87$ ), 1.3% lesbian/gay participants ( $n = 3$ ), 43.8% bisexual participants ( $n = 99$ ), .4% asexual participants ( $n = 1$ ), and 15.9% participants who classified as other. The "other" category included participants who self identified as "pansexual", "heteroflexible", "queer", "non-binary", and "grey-sexual".

Participants were asked to indicate if a partner was the primary or secondary partner. Only participants who explicitly reported to have a primary and a secondary partner were included in the analysis. The shortest relationship length reported with a primary partner was three weeks, whereas the shortest with a secondary partner was less than a few days. The longest relationship length with a primary partner was 46 years and 7 months, while the longest with a secondary was 38 years and 3 months. The results showed that, on average, primary partners ( $M = 8$  years and 4 months,  $SD = 7$  and 4 months) have been together much longer than secondary partners ( $M = 1$  year and 6 months,  $SD = 3$  years and 4 months).

## Materials

**Participant Demographics.** This questionnaire contains 10 items. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers to identify participants' characteristics (Appendix A).

**Partner Demographics.** This questionnaire contains 16 item, including a question asking for partner's initials. The questionnaire was constructed by the researchers to identify participants' partners' characteristics as well as determine the type of relationship practised with the participants (Appendix B).

**Romantic Attraction Scale (RAS).** This eight-item measure assesses the intensity of romantic attraction on a 7-point unipolar Likert scale from 1 - not at all to 7 - strongly agrees. Sample items are "I spend much of the day thinking about moments with \_\_\_\_\_." And "My feelings for \_\_\_\_\_preoccupy me all the time." The scale was created by Appel and Shulman (2015) using items from the Passionate Love Scale (Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986) and in Fisher Being in Love Questionnaire (Fisher, 2004) that measured romantic attraction and romantic preoccupation. RAS demonstrated discriminate and convergent validity, with an internal

reliability of the scale .86 (Appel, & Shulman, 2015). In the current study, the Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$  for primary partners, and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  for secondary partners.

**Passionate Love Scale (PLS).** A 30-item measure that assesses the intensity of passionate love (Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986). This 9-point unipolar Likert-type scale anchored at 1 - not true at all, to 9 - definitely true, can be broken down into emotional components (e.g. “\_\_\_ is the person who can make me feel the happiest”), cognitive components (e.g. “Sometimes I feel I can't control my thoughts; they are obsessively on \_\_\_”), and behavioural components (e.g. “I eagerly look for signs indicating \_\_\_' desire for me”). This scale has demonstrated test re-test reliability, and construct validity (Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986). In the current study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$  for primary partners, and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .97$  for secondary partners.

**Companionate Love Scale (CLS).** The companionate love scale (Hatfield, & Rapson, 2013) is an eight-item measure that assesses the intensity of companionate love. This 9-point unipolar Likert-type scale anchored is at 1 - not at all true of me, to 9 - extremely true of me. CLS measures companionate love in two dimensions: commitment (e.g. “I expect my love for \_\_\_ to last for the rest of my life.”) and intimacy (e.g. “I feel emotionally close to \_\_\_.”). In the current study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$  for primary partners, and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$  for secondary partners.

**Jealousy Scale.** This scale was created by the researchers by modifying Buss et al. 's (1999) jealousy scale. The first question assesses whether someone has experienced jealousy from a partner being interested in someone else, if the answer was “yes,” questions about the experience of jealousy followed. If the answer was “no,” participants are asked to picture a hypothetical scenario of the same situation. The measures used in this study from this scale

consists of one item rating the level of emotional jealousy and one item rating the level of sexual jealousy towards the primary and secondary partners. The scale is anchored at 0 - "None" to 3- "A Lot" (see Appendix C for this scale).

### **Analytical plan**

To test the hypotheses, paired *t*-tests were used to compare primary to secondary partners on various outcome measures. As we sought to examine five comparisons, the Bonferroni correction was used to correct for experiment-wise error and decrease the probability that the type I error could occur. The commonly used significance value of  $p < .05$  was divided by five (the number of the hypotheses), resulting in a  $p < .01$ . This *p*-value was used as a threshold to test the significance of the *t*-test values from each scale. Then, Cohen's *d* was used to estimate the magnitude of the effect between differences found among primary and secondary partners. Cohen's *d* accounts for the sample size, *t*-values, and the correlation between primary and secondary partners reports to estimate the magnitude of the effect. Standard interpretations are that a Cohen's *d* of .20, is a small effect; if *d* is .50, there would be a medium effect; if *d* is .80, then the effect would be large.

### **Results**

Summary statistics and results for mean comparisons can be found in Table 1. Overall, we found support for two of the five hypotheses put forth. More specifically, results showed higher passionate love for primary ( $M = 6.65$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) than for secondary partners ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 1.71$ ),  $t(158) = 7.87$ ,  $p = .000$ , contrary to our prediction. Similarly, romantic attraction was higher for primary ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) compared to secondary partners ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ),  $t(151) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .011$ , also contrary to our prediction, however, it was only marginally significant. The results for companionate love indicate a significant difference between primary



( $M = 8.33$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and secondary partners ( $M = 6.01$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ),  $t(155) = 14.32$ ,  $p = .000$ , which is consistent with our prediction and over a two-point difference in the direction predicted.

Regarding the jealousy comparisons, we sought to assess distress over jealousy for primary and secondary partners among those who had experienced jealousy over a partner becoming interested in someone else (real condition) and those who had not (hypothetical condition). However, as there were not enough participants in this sample who had not experienced jealousy ( $n = 6$ ), we were unable to make comparisons in the hypothetical condition, thus only the results for reports of an actual incidence of jealousy are displayed and discussed. Results suggest that emotional jealousy is higher for primary partners ( $M = 2.06$ ,  $SD = .91$ ) compared to secondary partners ( $M = 1.50$ ,  $SD = .85$ ),  $t(101) = 5.33$ ,  $p = .000$ , as was predicted, however, there was no difference between reports for sexual jealousy for the primary ( $M = 1.64$ ,  $SD = .90$ ) and secondary partners ( $M = 1.42$ ,  $SD = .78$ ),  $t(101) = 1.869$ ,  $p = .065$ .

### **Discussion**

Based on previous findings, five predictions were made. The first and second predictions stated that passionate love and romantic attraction would be higher for secondary than primary partners. The third prediction stated that there would be higher companionate love for primary than secondary partners. The fourth and fifth predictions anticipated higher emotional jealousy for primary partners and higher sexual jealousy for secondary partners, respectively. However, only the third and fourth predictions were supported. Interestingly, the results for passionate love were statistically significant and romantic attraction were marginally significant, though in the opposite direction we predicted. Thus, these results are inconsistent with the idea that passion declines overtime (Wojciszke, 2002; Blood, & Wolfe, 1960; Glenn, 1990, Locke, & Wallace, 1959; Tucker, & Aron, 1993), as individuals reported being with their

**Table 1**

*Means, Standard Deviations, Tests of Mean Difference, Effect Sizes for Primary and Secondary Relationships for Romantic Attraction, Passionate Love, Companionate Love, and Jealousy.*

Variable	Primary Relationship		Secondary Relationship		Paired data			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	<i>r</i> <sup>b</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>D</i>
Passionate Love	6.65	1.41	5.42	1.71	159	.21	7.87**	.785
Romantic Attraction	3.51	1.50	3.11	1.66	152	.26	2.58	.255
Companionate Love	8.33	1.01	6.01	1.89	156	.136	14.32**	1.507
Emotional Jealousy	2.06	.91	1.5	.85	102	.28	5.33**	.633
Sexual Jealousy	1.64	.90	1.42	.78	102	.04	1.87	.247

<sup>a</sup> The number of participants appears to be different due to unfinished surveys and missing data points.

<sup>b</sup> Correlation scores between primary and secondary partner scores for each scale

\*\*  $p < .01$

primary partners much longer than with their secondary partners,  $M = 8$  years and 4 months,  $M = 1$  year and 6 months respectively. However, these results support the idea that passion and attraction can be maintained overtime (Acevedo, & Aron, 2009; Tucker, & Aron, 1993; Traupmann, & Hatfield, 1981).

Another potential explanation for these results is that polyamorous relationships can be radically different from monogamous relationships, as they have different values, structures, and dynamics. It is possible that having another partner other than their primary partner, makes them more passionate and attracted to their primary. In fact, in previous studies researchers have found evidence that some individuals carry the positive relationship outcomes experienced with their new partners over to the existing partner, so that the outcomes would be better overall for the aforementioned individuals (Cook, 2005; Wolfe, 2003). For example, if a polyamorist experienced an increase in sexual fulfillment and excitement with a new partner, those feelings could be carried over to the primary partner. Therefore, he or she would feel higher sexual satisfaction and excitement with their primary partner as well.

Previous research showed that primary partners were more committed, invested, and intimate (Mogilski et al. 2015; Mitchell et al., 2014; Balzarini et al., 2016). Those are all characteristics of companionate love, in fact, items such as “I am committed to maintain my relationship with my partner” and “I have a relationship of mutual understanding with my partner” directly test for commitment and intimacy. Therefore, it was no surprise the hypothesis was supported. Those results seem to suggest that there is a deeper friendship between primary partners compared to secondary partners. Additionally, they support the idea that primary partners are more desirable as a long-term partner (Mogilski et al., 2015) considering the longer relationship length they have compared to secondary partners.

The prediction for emotional jealousy was also supported. One explanation for the supported prediction can be that because primary partners exhibit mutual care for each other, and strong feelings to be close to one another, they might translate those strong feelings into pain if they were threatened by the loss of their partner (Hatfield, 1985; Hatfield, & Sprecher, 1986). Additionally, primary partners report higher investment and commitment to each other compared to secondary partners who are only involved sexually (Mogilski et al. 2015; Mitchell et al., 2014; Balzarini et al., 2016). This suggests that primary partners are more distressed and perceive greater loss when they feel that their position as a primary partner is threatened.

On the other hand, the prediction for sexual jealousy was not supported as there was no significant difference between primary and secondary partners. The explanation for those results could be that polyamorous individuals do not have a partner they are more sexual jealous than others. In primary-secondary models, polyamorists can start new secondary relationships as they wish with the consent of their other partners. Because starting new sexual relationships does not terminate relationships with existing partners, they would not have to give up their sexual relationship with existing partners. Therefore, there would be no reason to be jealous of. Additionally, polyamorists do not invest in secondary partners as much as they do with primary partners (Mogilski et al. 2015; Mitchell et al., 2014; Balzarini et al., 2016). Thus, they might perceive partners' sexual affairs to pose little threat to their own relationships.

### **Limitations**

There are a few limitations that need to be taken into consideration. The first limitation is that in the current study we asked participants to indicate whether their partner was primary or secondary prior to completing the scales. Asking participants to identify such could have primed participants to think about their relationship model and caused participants to respond the

questions in a biased way. Specifically, thinking about primary and secondary might have reinforced or reminded participants of the hierarchical nature of these relationships in participants' minds that might have favored their primary partner over their secondary. As one sees their primary partner as their main partner (Mogilski et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2014; Balzarini et al., 2016), the hierarchy might have also increased the need to be consistent with their primary assignment throughout the entire survey. We would hope that this issue was somewhat ameliorated by the fact that we had many demographic questions for participants to answer about themselves and their partner, thus perhaps this question was not noticeable among the plethora of the other questions. That said, future research should consider asking about the relationship model and partners primary status at the end of the survey and after all primary questionnaires are complete.

The second limitation involves the scope of the current study. In this study, we sought to examine differences between primary and secondary partners, however, there are other models within polyamory, such as considering partners to be co-primaries or identifying no partners as primary. It is possible that by restricting the analysis to a comparison of primary-secondary relationships only, we eliminated a large part of the polyamorous community and could find radically different results for the various configurations. This means that the results are not generalizable to the population as it is possible that the results will differ depending on one's relationship model, future research should assess what relationship models emerge using latent class analyses to identify the most common and meaningful arrangements and then systematically assessing differences among those models on important relationship outcomes.

The third limitation was the jealousy scale, as it was a one-item scale. However, the same item was used to rate two different partners by the same person, which slightly decreases the

error variance and it would have more power than if it were to be rated by different people. Future research should try to develop a more comprehensive scale to increase statistical power by increasing the number of items.

The last limitation is regarding the adequacy of the scales used in the current study. Recently, Conley and colleagues (2017) argued that most of the empirically validated love scales were specifically constructed for monogamous heterosexual couples (as cited by Werber, 2017). Conley questions the adequacy of those scales to be tested on polyamory individuals since monogamy and polyamory do not share similar values or structures, these scales might not be suitable to assess polyamorous relationships. For example, the Passionate Love Scale implies that greater jealousy results in greater passionate love. However, this might not be the case for polyamorous individuals who stress the presence of compersion, that is, being happy for your partner(s) who has found happiness with another person in a romantic or sexual sense (Deri, 2015). This is definitely not part of the monogamous culture and for many would cause immense jealousy and distress.

### **Future directions**

Future studies on polyamory related to similar topics, should focus on developing questionnaires more appropriate for polyamorous relationships. To begin with, researchers should administrate questionnaires prior to asking participants to identify the primary or secondary status of a partner to eliminate the hierarchy bias. Then, future research could compare the results in this study with results obtained from participants in other polyamory relationship models and determine whether the current results only apply for primary-secondary relationships. To be comparable, the same questionnaires would have to be administered. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare results from participants who are in a

relationship with each other to see whether the feelings of love are mutual. Lastly, future research should focus on developing questionnaires with language that is more appropriate to polyamory than monogamy. An example can be the jealousy scale developed for this study (see Appendix C), though researchers should limit the reliance on one-item scales. The best way to construct a new polyamory questionnaire would be to recruit focus groups to test for language biases that might imply monogamy and seek feedback for more appropriate wording. By developing a new survey with the help of polyamorous individuals it will increase the chances to obtain more accurate results, as polyamorists will better identify with the given statements, than when using monogamy biased scales.

### **Conclusion**

In the current study, results showed that romantic attraction, passionate love, companionate love, and emotional jealousy were significantly higher for primary partners than for secondary partners. Some of those results were unexpected, though informative as they show that polyamorous individuals can maintain passion and attraction over time, and that they are not particularly more sexually jealous of one partner than the other. This might have implications on societal views on CNM relationships, as well as on how monogamous couples might benefit from learning strategies that are used by polyamorous couples to maintain long-lasting and loving relationships. However, this is still a preliminary theory, and future research is needed to strengthen current results and explore other aspects of polyamory that might change the way we practice romantic relationships.

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## Appendix A

### Demographics

Instructions: Please provide some basic information about yourself. This information will be used for statistical purposes only and will be treated confidentially.

What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years (e.g. 18, 40, etc.)

Which of the following best describes your current gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- If you feel that your gender cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes we invite you to write in how you identify your gender in the space provided here:

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your race?

- Native American/Native Alaskan
- Asian
- Black or African American
- White or Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial
- If you feel that your race cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes we invite you to write in how you identify your race in the space provided here:

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you fluent in English?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes your current sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- If you feel that your sexual orientation cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes we invite you to write in how you identify your sexual orientation in the space provided here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your degree of heterosexuality and homosexuality using the scale below:

- Exclusively heterosexual
- Predominately heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
- Predominately heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual

- Equally heterosexual and homosexual
- Predominately homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
- Predominately homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
- Exclusively homosexual
- Asexual or nonsexual

Which relationship orientation do you identify with the most?

- Monogamous (exclusively dating one person, despite their relationship orientation)
- Polyamorous (dating multiple people with my partner(s) acknowledgement)
- Open relationship (only sexual and casual relationships with others)
- Swinging (having sexual interactions usually as a couple that *do not* involve emotional intimacy with people outside their relationship)
- If you feel that relationship status cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes, we invite you to write in how you it in the space provided here: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship status? Select all that apply.

- Single
- Casually dating
- Seriously dating
- Engaged
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- If you feel that your relationship status cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes we invite you to write in how you identify your relationship status in the space provided here: \_\_\_\_\_

\*If "single", sent to end of survey (skip logic)

Do you currently have 2 or more intimate or romantic partners?

- Yes
- No

\*If not, sent to end of survey (skip logic)

Including yourself, how many intimate or romantic partners live in your household (2 days a week or more)?

- 1
- 2
- 2
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8+

## Appendix B

### Partner Demographics

We are going to ask for some basic demographic information about your romantic partners, but this information will not be used for identification purposes. We are just trying to get a basic understanding of the people that you are involved with, but you are free to skip any questions that are uncomfortable with.

We will ask about your first and second partners only, but we do not intend to imply that these are ranked in any way. We are only asking in this way for data entry purposes.

#### Partner Demographics

What are the first and last initials of your partner (e.g., John Doe would be J.D.)

We are only collecting this information so that when we later ask about your partner, the initials you provide here will be inserted into the question to remind you who to think about as you answer questions later.

Which of the following best describes your partner's gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- If you feel that your partner's gender cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes we invite you to write in how your partner identifies their gender in the space provided here: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following best describes your partner's current sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- If you feel that your partner's sexual orientation cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes, we invite you to write in how your partner identifies their sexual orientation in the space provided here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your partner's degree of heterosexuality and homosexuality using the scale below:

- Exclusively heterosexual
- Predominately heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
- Predominately heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
- Equally heterosexual and homosexual
- Predominately homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
- Predominately homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual
- Exclusively homosexual
- Asexual or nonsexual

Which relationship orientation does your partner identify with the most?

- Monogamous (exclusively dating one person, despite your relationship orientation)
- Polyamorous (dating multiple people with each other(s) acknowledgement)
- Open relationship (only sexual and casual relationships with others)
- Swinging (having sexual interactions usually as a couple that *do not* involve emotional intimacy with people outside our relationship)
- If you feel that your partner's relationship orientation cannot be represented by one of the above check boxes, we invite you to write it in to the space provided here:

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in a relationship with your partner? (e.g., 2.5 years would be 2 Years, 6 Months):

\_\_\_\_\_ Years

\_\_\_\_\_ Months

Do you currently have a sexual relationship with your partner?

- Yes
- No

Do you currently live with your partner?

- Yes
- No

Are you and your partner married?

- Yes
- No

Do you and your partner have kids?

- Yes
- No

Which best characterizes your relationship with your partner:

- Open/Open network: We are free to add new partners as we choose
- Closed/Polyfidelous: Our relationship specifically excludes the possibility of sexual or romantic connections outside the agreed upon relationship(s)
- Neither (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider your relationship with your partner to be primary?

- Yes, your partner is my primary relationship
- Yes, your partner is my primary relationship, but I also have others that are considered primary
- No, your partner is not a primary relationship
- No, I do not believe in considering one relationship to be primary
- None of the above (please explain): \_\_\_\_\_



Do your close friends explicitly know about your relationship with your partner?

- Yes
- No

Does your immediate family (e.g., parents, siblings) explicitly know about your relationship with your partner?

- Yes
- No

Does your extended family (e.g., grandparents, aunts and uncles) explicitly know about your relationship with your partner?

- Yes
- No

Do your kids know about your relationship with your partner?

- Yes
- No
- I do not have kids

### Appendix C

#### Jealousy Scale

Has your partner ever had feelings or become interested in someone else?

- Yes
- No

*If yes:*

Please think of your romantic relationship with your partner. When your partner becomes interested in someone else, generally speaking, what distresses or upsets you more (please select one).

- Your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to the other
- Your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse with the other
- Neither of the above would be upsetting to me

How much would it distress or upset you if you were to imagine your your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to another person?

None	A Little	Some	A Lot

How much would it distress or upset you if you were to imagine your your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse to another person?

None	A Little	Some	A Lot

*If no:*

Please think of your romantic relationship with your partner. If your partner becomes interested in someone else, generally speaking, what would distress or upset you more (please select one).

- Your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to the other
- Your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse
- Neither of the above would be upsetting to me

How much would it distress or upset you if you were to imagine your partner forming a deep emotional attachment to another person?

None	A Little	Some	A Lot

How much would it distress or upset you if you were to imagine your partner enjoying passionate sexual intercourse to another person?

None	A Little	Some	A Lot