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A comparison of polyamorous and monoamorous persons: are there differences in indices of relationship well-being and sociosexuality?

Todd Graham Morrison^{a*}, Dylan Beaulieu^a, Melanie Brockman^a
and Cormac Ó Beaglaoich^b

^a*Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada;* ^b*School of Psychology, National University of Ireland Galway, Galway, Ireland*

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A convenience sample of 284 self-identified polyamorous and monoamorous men and women were compared on various psychometrically sound indices of relationship well-being (e.g. intimacy and trust) as well as sociosexuality. Results indicated that both polyamorous men and women evidenced greater levels of intimacy in comparison to their monoamorous counterparts. Polyamorous men also reported stronger attitudinal and behavioural sociosexuality (i.e. more favourable attitudes towards uncommitted/casual sexual activity and a greater number of casual sexual partners). These differences remained statistically significant, even when controlling for socio-demographic variables such as age, income, educational attainment and sexual orientation.

Keywords: polyamory; monoamory; monogamy; sexuality; relationships

Introduction

The term polyamory literally means ‘many loves’ (Chapman, 2010), although several more technical definitions have been developed to describe this form of non-monogamy as well as its practices. For example, Haritaworn, Lin, and Klesse (2006) contend that polyamory ‘stands for the assumption that it is possible, valid, and worthwhile to maintain intimate, sexual, and/or loving relationships with more than one person [simultaneously]’ (p. 518). How best to define this term remains a contentious issue among members of the polyamorist community (e.g. Ritchie & Barker, 2006); however, for the purposes of this article, we employ Sheff and Hammers’ (2011) definition: polyamory is ‘a form of association in which people openly maintain multiple romantic, sexual, and/or affective relationships’ (p. 4).

Discourse on polyamorous relationships tends to highlight an emphasis on emotional intimacy rather than sexual intimacy (e.g. Fierman & Poulsen, 2011). In addition, polyamory has been characterised as a relationship form that is centred on love, openness and honesty (e.g. Barker, 2005; Klesse, 2006). Another important feature of polyamory is that of compersion. According to Chapman (2010), compersion can be viewed as the opposite of jealousy; that is, while jealousy is based on the principle of scarcity, which can evoke feelings of fear of loss and competitiveness, the concept of

*Corresponding author. Email: Todd.Morrison@usask.ca

compersion rests on an assumption of abundance, ‘in which there is no need to compete for the supposedly scarce commodity of love’ (p. 11). Within the context of these themes, polyamorists believe that it is possible to love, and maintain relationships with more than one person at the same time (Barker, 2005; Chapman, 2010).

Societal misconceptions abound with respect to the practice of polyamory. For example, Klesse (2006) notes that polyamory can be distinguished from casual sex or swinging in that its primary focus is on love, resulting in a de-emphasis on sexuality. Chapman (2010) echoes this point by stating that while sex is a possible outcome in polyamorous relationships, polyamorists are primarily concerned with the development of emotional intimacy. In contrast, swinging revolves around the primacy of sexual pleasure and a deliberate attempt to avoid emotional involvement. Another common misconception is that polyamorists are promiscuous, which Chapman (2010) challenges by noting that ‘polyamory means *many loves*, not necessarily *many lovers*’ (p. 10). It also is important to note that while polyamorists may possess similar qualities and engage in similar relationship practices, there is a great deal of diversity within this community. For example, in the case of a bisexually identified polyamorous individual, it is possible to have multiple relationships with both men and women simultaneously (Barker, 2005).

Polyamorous individuals face many societal challenges. First, in Western cultures, polyamory may be seen as a violation of the dominant cultural ideal of monogamy (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). This mononormativity can serve to constrain polyamorous identities in that the stories of polyamorous individuals are largely omitted from mainstream representations of relationships. Second, polyamorists are often viewed as pathological, untrustworthy or dysfunctional (Haritaworn et al., 2006), and as previously discussed, promiscuous. With respect to promiscuity, Klesse (2005) suggests that women may be especially likely to face social punishment if they engage in polyamory, since anti-promiscuity discourse discourages female sexual autonomy. Third, language and cultural practices often exclude polyamorous individuals, resulting in institutional and social prejudice (Fierman & Poulsen, 2011). For instance, because monogamous couples form the basis of normative assumptions about relationships, institutions (e.g. legal, medical) assume the dyadic structure; parental rights cannot be established for more than two adults, and media predominantly depict couples in closed relationships.

In a recent review of the literature on non-monogamy, Barker and Langdridge (2010) contend that ‘academic work on consensual non-monogamies has tended to be rather polarised in the sense that it reads as overwhelmingly celebratory, or critical, of the [relationship patterns] it considers’ (pp. 753–754). For instance, with respect to the former, Klesse (2006) states that polyamory’s emphasis on love, honesty and emotional intimacy puts forth an ‘advanced ethical character of polyamory’ (p. 572), which may present polyamory as superior to other forms of non-monogamy and thereby create divisions. Further, much of the work in the area has been confined to first person narratives, activist writings and theoretical contributions (e.g. Anderlini-D’Onofrio, 2004; Lano & Parry, 1995; Munson & Stelboum, 1999), or falls within the genre of popular advice literature (Anapol, 1997; Easton & Hardy, 2009; Nearing, 1992). (A detailed critique of this work is provided by Noël (2006).) Therefore, the key aim of our study is to address the empirical question of whether polyamorous and monoamorous individuals differ on variables considered to be important with respect to the functioning of intimate relationships. Kurdek (1995, 2004, 2006) employed a similar rationale when investigating possible differences in relationship satisfaction and adjustment among gay, lesbian and heterosexual individuals. To avoid mononormativity bias as well as the depiction of monoamorous relationships as defective or inherently less ‘queer’ than polyamorous ones (see Shannon &

Willis, 2010), difference-based hypotheses were not formulated (i.e. we refrained from positing that one category of relationship is ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than the other).

Given the exploratory nature of this research, there are myriad variables that we might have elected to investigate. However, in the current study, we focused on attachment style, intimacy and passion – three variables that have been conceptualised as denotative of love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989) and, as such, presumably important to intimate relationships. Trust in romantic relationships and sociosexuality, both of which correlate with measures of romantic and passionate love (e.g. Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), also were assessed. Brief definitions of these constructs are provided below.

Attachment style

Using Bowlby’s theory of attachment, Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) contend that individuals can fall into one of four patterns of attachment. These are (1) *secure*, in which a person is comfortable with intimacy and is not concerned about being alone; (2) *dismissing*, which is characterised by restrictive emotionality and minimisation of the importance of intimate relationships; (3) *preoccupied*, whereby an individual over-invests in close relationships and is dependent on the acceptance of others; and (4) *fearful*, which reflects the avoidance of close relationships due to an exaggerated concern that one will be rejected or hurt (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Crowell & Treboux, 1995).

Intimacy

Baumeister and Bratslavsky (1999) propose that intimacy has three principal elements. These are (1) mutual disclosure of personal information, which results in empathic understanding and emotional interdependence; (2) strong positive affect towards the other person (or persons); and (3) the communication of affection.

Passion

This construct represents strong feelings of attraction for another individual or individuals (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999). Such feelings ‘are typically characterized by physiological arousal and the desire to be united with the other person [or persons] in multiple senses’ (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999, p. 52).

Sociosexuality

Coined by Alfred Kinsey, this term refers to ‘individual differences in the willingness to engage in uncommitted sexual relations’ (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008, p. 1113). Although originally conceptualised as a global construct, Penke and Asendorpf (2008) proposed and validated a three-dimensional model of sociosexuality consisting of (1) past behaviour (i.e. prior engagement in casual sexual relations); (2) attitudes towards casual sex; and (3) the desire to engage in casual/uncommitted sexual activity.

Trust

Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) maintain that relational trust consists of three elements: (1) predictability (i.e. the perceived consistency and stability of a partner’s

behaviour); (2) dependability (i.e. favourable evaluations of a partner's disposition); and (3) faith (i.e. the belief that, in future, the partner will remain responsive and caring).

Purpose

We are unaware of any published research that has examined whether self-identified polyamorous and monoamorous individuals differ on measures assessing attachment style, intimacy, passion or trust. van Anders, Hamilton, and Watson (2007) investigated sociosexuality among small samples of polyamorous and monoamorous women and men. No differences were noted for male participants; however, polyamorous females evidenced significantly greater levels of sociosexuality in comparison to their monoamorous counterparts. It should be noted that these researchers did not employ Penke and Asendorpf's (2008) three-factor model of sociosexuality nor did they examine the other variables measured in the current study (e.g. intimacy, passion, trust or attachment style). Given the absence of empirical work comparing self-identified polyamorous and monoamorous individuals, our findings will expand the knowledge of similarities and/or differences between these two populations and, potentially, have implications for the ways in which polyamorous individuals are understood.

Method

Participants

A survey was conducted with 390 individuals. Of this group, 47.9% ($n = 187$; 120 females, 50 males, 17 other) identified as polyamorous and 29.2% ($n = 114$; 83 females, 31 males) identified as monogamous.¹ The remainder perceived themselves as polyamorous with a monogamous partner (7.4%, $n = 29$; 16 females, 13 males), polyamorous in theory (6.9%, $n = 27$; 16 females, 10 males, 1 other), polyamorous in theory with a monogamous partner (5.1%, $n = 20$; 12 females, 7 males, 1 other) and monogamous with a polyamorous partner (3.3%, $n = 13$; 12 females, 1 male).

Table 1 provides demographic information,² stratified by polyamorous/monoamorous status and gender. Inspection of this table reveals that a majority of respondents self-identified as White; had at least some university, college and/or trade school exposure; and earned a minimum of 25,000 Canadian dollars per annum. In terms of sexual orientation, a majority of male participants self-identified as heterosexual; however, among female respondents, greater variability was observed (i.e. across the polyamorous categories, substantial proportions self-identified as bisexual whereas for the monoamorous categories, the majority self-identified as heterosexual).

Procedure

The polyamorous respondents were recruited from online polyamorous e-groups, fora, e-mail lists and message boards (e.g. www.polyamory.com and multiple polyamorous FacebookTM e-groups). To recruit monoamorous participants, chain-referral sampling was used; that is, information regarding the study and its weblink was given to associates of one of the researchers (Dylan Beaulieu) who, in turn, were asked to forward study details to others by word of mouth and by private messaging using resources offered by FacebookTM. Prior to starting the survey, respondents read an online consent form, which outlined the

Table 1. Demographic information for females, stratified by polyamorous/monogamous status.

	Poly	Poly+Mono	PolyTheory	PolyTheory+Mono	Mono	Mono+Poly
Age	35.87 (10.27)	34.25 (12.64)	29.67 (7.81)	25.42 (5.38)	26.03 (6.18)	38.67 (11.58)
Ethnicity						
Aboriginal	4 (3.3%)	—	1 (6.3%)	—	2 (2.4%)	—
Asian	1 (0.8%)	—	—	—	1 (1.2%)	1 (8.3%)
Black	1 (0.8%)	—	—	—	—	—
Hispanic	3 (2.5%)	—	—	—	—	—
Other	9 (7.5%)	—	—	1 (8.3%)	4 (4.9%)	1 (8.3%)
White	102 (85%)	16 (100%)	15 (93.8%)	11 (91.7%)	75 (91.5%)	10 (83.3%)
Education						
<HSG	—	—	—	—	1 (1.2%)	—
HSG	7 (5.8%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (8.3%)	4 (4.8%)	—
Some UCT	39 (32.5%)	7 (43.8%)	7 (43.8%)	9 (75%)	38 (45.8%)	2 (16.7%)
Coll. Grad.	23 (19.2%)	2 (12.5%)	3 (18.8%)	—	8 (9.6%)	3 (25%)
Univ. Grad.	13 (10.8%)	3 (18.8%)	4 (25%)	1 (8.3%)	24 (28.9%)	1 (8.3%)
Adv. Deg.	38 (31.7%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (8.3%)	8 (9.6%)	6 (50%)
Income						
<15,000	6 (5.1%)	3 (18.8%)	6 (42.9%)	2 (16.7%)	21 (25.6%)	2 (16.7%)
15,000–24,999	11 (9.3%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (7.1%)	—	9 (11%)	—
25,000–39,999	21 (17.8%)	1 (6.3%)	3 (21.4%)	5 (41.7%)	8 (9.8%)	6 (50%)
40,000–54,999	27 (22.9%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (7.1%)	3 (25%)	14 (17.1%)	1 (8.3%)
55,000–69,999	16 (13.6%)	3 (18.8%)	—	1 (8.3%)	7 (8.5%)	—
70,000–84,999	14 (11.9%)	2 (12.5%)	—	1 (8.3%)	7 (8.5%)	—
85,000+	23 (19.5%)	3 (18.8%)	3 (21.4%)	—	16 (19.5%)	3 (25%)
Sexual orientation						
Bisexual	80 (66.7%)	7 (43.8%)	7 (43.8%)	7 (58.3%)	6 (7.2%)	3 (25%)
Gay/lesbian	5 (4.2%)	—	3 (18.8%)	—	2 (2.4%)	—
Heterosexual	27 (22.5%)	7 (43.8%)	6 (37.5%)	4 (33.3%)	75 (90.4%)	8 (66.7%)
Other	8 (6.7%)	2 (12.5%)	—	1 (8.3%)	—	1 (8.3%)

(Continued)

Table 1. Demographic information for males, stratified by polyamorous/monogamous status.

	Poly	Poly+Mono	PolyTheory	PolyTheory+Mono	Mono
Age	42.38 (13.01)	48.46 (15.61)	36.90 (11.29)	28.17 (9.73)	26.35 (5.19)
Ethnicity					
Aboriginal	—	1 (8.3%)	—	—	1 (3.2%)
Asian	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
Black	1 (2%)	—	—	—	1 (3.2%)
Hispanic	—	—	—	—	1 (3.2%)
Other	2 (4%)	—	1 (10%)	—	2 (6.5%)
White	46 (92%)	11 (91.7%)	9 (90%)	7 (100%)	26 (83.9%)
Education					
<HSG	1 (2%)	—	—	—	—
HSG	—	1 (7.7%)	1 (10%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (3.2%)
Some UCT	20 (40%)	3 (23.1%)	4 (40%)	3 (42.9%)	14 (45.2%)
Coll. Grad.	5 (10%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (10%)	—	2 (6.5%)
Univ. Grad.	8 (16%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (20%)	2 (28.6%)	10 (32.3%)
Adv. Deg.	16 (32%)	5 (38.5%)	2 (20%)	1 (14.3%)	4 (12.9%)
Income					
<15,000	2 (4%)	3 (23.1%)	—	2 (28.6%)	7
15,000–24,999	3 (6%)	1 (7.7%)	—	2 (28.6%)	2 (6.5%)
25,000–39,999	5 (10%)	—	—	1 (14.3%)	(16.1%) 1 (3.2%)
40,000–54,999	7 (14%)	—	1 (10%)	1 (14.3%)	7 (22.6%)
55,000–69,999	6 (12%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (20%)	—	2 (6.5%)
70,000–84,999	11 (22%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (10%)	—	2 (6.5%)
85,000+	16 (32%)	4 (30.8%)	6 (60%)	1 (14.3%)	7 (22.6%)
Sexual orientation					
Bisexual	9 (18.4%)	1 (7.7%)	—	—	2 (6.5%)
Gay/lesbian	6 (12.2%)	—	—	—	2 (6.5%)
Heterosexual	32 (65.3%)	11 (84.6%)	10 (100%)	7 (100%)	27 (87.1%)
Other	2 (4.1%)	1 (7.7%)	—	—	—

Notes. Only one White heterosexual male, who was 28 years old and a college graduate, selected 'monogamous with a polyamorous partner'; thus, this column was omitted for male respondents. Poly, polyamorous; Poly+Mono, polyamorous with a monogamous partner; PolyTheory, polyamorous in theory; PolyTheory+Mono, polyamorous in theory with a monogamous partner; Mono, monogamous; Mono+Poly, monogamous with a polyamorous partner; HSG, high-school graduate; Some UCT, some university, college, trade instruction; Coll. Grad., college graduate; Univ. Grad., university graduate; Adv. Deg., advanced degree.

purpose of the study and reviewed key issues for conducting research with human participants (e.g. anonymity, confidentiality and freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty). Only participants agreeing to the terms and conditions specified on the consent form were directed to the survey proper. Following completion of the survey, respondents were instructed to click on a link that led to the debriefing form. This document outlined the purpose of the study and listed reading materials relevant to polyamory. No remuneration was given to any of the respondents.

Measures

Demographics

Details about respondents' age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, education and household income were gathered using Walston's (2001) survey as a template. Age was an open-ended question; all others were categorical (e.g. gender: male, female or other; sexual orientation: gay/lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual or other; etc.).

Polyamorous/monoamorous identity

Participants' self-identified relationship style was determined using the single-item measure employed by Walston (2001). This item begins with 'Do you consider yourself primarily ...' and asks participants to choose one option from the following: polyamorous; polyamorous with a monogamous partner; polyamorous in theory; polyamorous in theory with a monogamous partner; monogamous; or monogamous with a polyamorous partner. Prior to this item, participants received brief definitions of the two key terms: (1) polyamory may be defined as involvement in or openness to multiple intimate relationships with the knowledge and consent of all partners and (2) monogamy may be defined as adherence to the belief and practice of being in an intimate relationship with one and only one partner.

Intimacy Attitude Scale – Revised

Intimacy Attitude Scale – Revised (IAS-R; Amidon, Kumar, & Treadwell, 1983) measures feelings and attitudes concerning intimacy and closeness that people have towards others and relationships. The IAS-R is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 50 items, which, in the current study, were answered using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Twenty-four items are positively worded (e.g. 'It is important to me to form close relationships') and 26 items are negatively worded (e.g. 'I do not need to share my feelings and thoughts with others'). Item responses are summed, with total scores ranging from 50 to 350. Higher scores indicate more favourable attitudes towards intimacy. Amidon et al. (1983) provide evidence attesting to the measure's reliability and construct validity. For instance, across various samples, Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0.78 to 0.87 and test-retest reliability for a small subsample was 0.84. In support of the measure's validity, a statistically significant association was observed between scores on the IAS-R and scores on a measure of behavioural intimacy. Ducharme, Koverola, and Battle (1997) also furnish evidence attesting to the measure's known-groups validity; specifically, individuals reporting abuse during childhood obtained lower scores on the IAS-R than their no-abuse counterparts.

Passionate Love Scale (short form)

Passionate Love Scale (PLS; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986) instructs respondents to ‘think of the person whom you love most passionately right now’ and then answer a series of questions designed to assess the cognitive and emotional components of passionate love. (If respondents are not currently in love, they are instructed to think of the last person that they have loved passionately.) The short form of the PLS contains 15 items which are answered on a 9-point scale (1 = not at all true; 9 = definitely true). A sample item is ‘I possess a powerful attraction for _____’ [name of person]. Total scores can range from 15 to 135, with higher scores representing a greater level of passionate love. There is substantial evidence suggesting that PLS scores are reliable and valid. For example, Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) reported that the scale score reliability coefficient for the short-form version was 0.91. Using samples of college students from Korea and the United States, Kim and Hatfield (2004) also furnished evidence suggesting that the measure exhibits construct validity (i.e. scores on the PLS correlated positively with scores on a measure of companionate love, which reflects the feelings of affection and tenderness that individuals experience for others with whom their lives are intertwined).

Relationship Questionnaire

Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) is a self-report measure consisting of four short paragraphs, each of which denotes a different attachment pattern (secure, fearful, preoccupied and dismissing). Respondents indicate how well each paragraph corresponds to them using a 7-point scale (1 = not at all like me; 7 = very much like me). As participants’ scores may be equal for two or more paragraphs, the second part of the measure instructs them to select the paragraph that *best* describes them whilst in close relationships. In their review of adult attachment measures, Crowell and Treboux (1995) outline the evidence that has accumulated in support of the RQ’s validity. For example, researchers have found that participants classified as fearful are more likely to have been victims of incest or to indicate that one of their parents is alcoholic.

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory – Revised

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory – Revised (SOI-R; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008) measures three dimensions of sociosexuality: past behaviour (i.e. engagement in casual sex), attitudes towards casual sex and desire (i.e. sexual interest in persons with whom one does not have a committed romantic relationship). Sample items are (in order) as follows: (1) With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months? (2) Is sex without love OK? (3) In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met? All questions employ a 9-point response scale. The end-points are 1 = ‘0’ and 9 = ‘20’ (past behaviour); 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree (attitudes); and 1 = never and 9 = at least once a day (desire). A total score may be computed for each dimension (possible range 3–27). As well, an overall score may be calculated (possible range 9–81). In all instances, a higher score reflects greater sociosexuality. Penke and Asendorpf (2008) provide various strands of evidence in support of the psychometric robustness of the SOI-R. For example, using data collected from a large online survey of German men and women, the authors reported that (1) scale score reliability coefficients were good (e.g. $\alpha = 0.83$); (2) confirmatory factor analysis supported the scale’s proposed three-factor model (i.e. past behaviour, attitudes and desire

emerged as distinct factors); and (3) as predicted, scores on the SOI-R correlated positively with scores on measures of sensation-seeking, masturbation frequency and sex drive.

Trust Scale

Trust Scale (TS; Rempel & Holmes, 1986) is an 18-item measure, which has equal numbers of positively and negatively keyed items, and uses a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). A sample item is 'I have found that my partner is a thoroughly dependable person, especially when it comes to things that are important.' Total scores can range from 18 to 126, with higher scores reflecting stronger trust. The authors reported that scale score reliability for the TS was good (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$), and the measure's construct validity was demonstrated by the confirmation of predicted positive associations between trust and variables such as love and happiness.

Results

Small numbers of respondents fell outside the two major groupings of polyamory and monoamory. Thus, we were confronted with different analytic choices. First, we could integrate all polyamorous groups into a single category. However, we felt it ill-advised to combine those identifying as polyamorous in theory with those who are polyamorous in practice. Second, we could create a separate 'polyamorous in theory' category; however, the number of participants in this group would be appreciably smaller than the number of polyamorist and monoamorist respondents thereby imposing limitations on our statistical analyses. Third, we could remove these respondents and, in so doing, maximise the 'categorical purity' of our polyamory/monoamory comparisons. Opting for this choice, we analysed the data provided by 284 respondents (170 self-identified polyamorous and 114 self-identified monoamorous men and women).³

Means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients and correlations among the scales are provided in Table 2. In most cases, Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from satisfactory to good, providing some evidence for the scale score reliability of the various measures when completed by self-identified polyamorists. The reliability coefficient for the Behaviour subscale of the SOI-R was low for both polyamorous men and women (i.e. $\alpha < 0.65$). Thus, due to heightened measurement error (i.e. the subscale's inability to reflect participants' 'true' sociosexual behaviour), the correlations between this variable and the other scales may be underestimated.

Table 2 reveals that, for polyamorous women, passionate love and trust were positively associated as were intimacy and trust. The three facets of sociosexuality also were intercorrelated. Interestingly, an inverse association was observed between trust and the attitudinal dimension of sociosexuality (i.e. individuals reporting more positive attitudes towards uncommitted sexual relations also evidenced lower levels of relational trust). Similar relationships emerged for monoamorous women. Of note, however, was that intimacy, passionate love and trust were intercorrelated for this group, whereas for polyamorous respondents, no statistically significant correlation was observed between passionate love and intimacy. Also, while polyamorous women's sociosexual desire did not correlate with their level of relational trust, a moderate association between these variables was evident for monoamorous respondents (i.e. as sociosexual desire increased, levels of trust diminished).

Among polyamorous men, the facets of sociosexuality were intercorrelated, and relational trust was positively associated with intimacy and negatively associated with total

Table 2. Descriptives, alpha coefficients and correlations among scales.

	<i>M</i> (SD)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Females (<i>n</i> = 203)							
1. IAS-R	258.91 (21.32) 0.82 (0.78–0.87) 0.78 (0.71–0.85)	0.12	0.06	0.20	0.15	0.18	0.35
2. PLS	98.28 (18.56) 100.27 (21.43)	0.77 (0.70–0.83) 0.89 (0.85–0.92)	-0.31	-0.09	0.05	-0.13	0.21
3. SOI-R A	15.28 (4.55) 11.64 (5.16)	0.13	0.77 (0.69–0.83) 0.85 (0.78–0.90)	0.45	0.49	0.79	-0.22
4. SOI-R B	11.84 (5.38) 8.51 (5.29)	0.06	0.66	0.63 (0.50–0.73) 0.71 (0.58–0.80)	0.37	0.77	0.01
5. SOI-R D	11.99 (5.76) 9.17 (5.09)	-0.26	0.43	0.25	0.83 (0.77–0.88) 0.80 (0.71–0.87)	0.80	-0.13
6. SOI-R T	39.17 (12.43) 29.45 (12.31)	-0.14	0.88	0.81	0.70	0.83 (0.77–0.88) 0.84 (0.78–0.89)	-0.14
7. TS	97.49 (18.56) 92.00 (21.29)	0.50	-0.28	-0.11	-0.52	-0.38	0.91 (0.89–0.94) 0.93 (0.91–0.95)

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Males (<i>n</i> = 81)									
1. IAS-R	259.42 (16.17) 229.58 (22.12)	0.72 (0.59-0.82) 0.75 (0.59-0.86)	0.10	-0.02	-0.03	-0.22	-0.16	0.28	
2. PLS	89.08 (15.00) 91.10 (19.32)	0.13 -0.08	0.75 (0.63-0.84) 0.85 (0.75-0.92)	-0.21	-0.18	-0.15	-0.24	0.04	
3. SOI-R A	16.81 (3.94) 12.39 (5.76)	-0.08	-0.22	0.83 (0.72-0.90) 0.87 (0.76-0.93)	0.46	0.50	0.78	-0.24	
4. SOI-R B	13.27 (5.72) 7.57 (5.51)	0.15	0.16	0.42	0.62 (0.39-0.77) 0.83 (0.69-0.91)	0.34	0.78	-0.15	
5. SOI-R D	16.55 (6.06) 14.97 (6.43)	0.08	-0.35	0.65	0.20	0.80 (0.67-0.88) 0.82 (0.68-0.91)	0.80	-0.27	
6. SOI-R T	46.87 (12.55) 34.57 (13.93)	0.07	-0.22	0.88	0.66	0.81	0.82 (0.73-0.89) 0.86 (0.76-0.92)	-0.29	
7. TS	90.44 (15.49) 89.58 (18.16)	0.33	0.31	-0.24	0.16	-0.51	-0.28	0.85 (0.78-0.91) 0.90 (0.83-0.95)	

Notes: Correlations for monoamorous respondents appear below the diagonal; correlations above the diagonal are for polyamorous respondents. The values along the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha coefficients (95% confidence intervals). For the alphas, means and standard deviations, the first row is for polyamorous respondents; the second row is for monoamorous respondents. IAS-R, Intimacy Attitudes Scale - Revised; PLS, Passionate Love Scale; SOI-R A, B, D and T, Sociosexual Orientation Inventory - Revised Attitudes, Behaviour, Desire, and Total, respectively; TS, Trust Scale. Correlations in bold, *p* < 0.05.

sociosexuality. Correlations similar in direction and magnitude were obtained for the monoamorous group. However, stemming from the small number of monoamorous men recruited for this study, few of these associations were statistically significant.

With respect to attachment patterns, among the polyamorous respondents, 52.9% were categorised as securely attached (females = 53%; males = 52%), 17.1% as fearful (females = 18.3%; males = 14%), 20% as preoccupied (females = 20%; males = 20%) and 10% as dismissing (females = 8.3%, males = 14%). For monoamorous individuals, these proportions were 44.7% secure (females = 49.4%; males = 32.3%), 22.8% fearful (females = 24.1%; males = 19.4%), 13.2% preoccupied (females = 9.6%; males = 22.6%) and 19.3% dismissing (females = 16.9%; males = 25.8%).

Prior to comparing polyamorous and monoamorous respondents on the measures of passionate love, trust, intimacy and attachment style, we investigated whether their demographic profiles were similar. To ensure that cell size requirements were not violated, we collapsed several of the variables that had multiple categories (e.g. heterosexual = 0; non-heterosexual = 1; no advanced educational degree = 0; advanced educational degree = 1).

Comparisons among same-gender subsamples revealed that polyamorous men were significantly older than their monoamorous counterparts ($t(66.65) = 7.64, p < 0.001, d = 1.62$). Polyamorous men also were more likely than monoamorous men to (1) self-identify as non-heterosexual (i.e. bisexual, gay or 'other'): 34.7% versus 12.9%, respectively ($\chi^2(1) = 4.66, p < 0.05$, Cramer's $V = 0.24$); (2) report having advanced degrees (32% vs. 12.9% of monoamorous respondents) ($\chi^2(1) = 3.75, p = 0.05$, Cramer's $V = 0.22$); and (3) be categorised as earning a high income (i.e. \$70,000+ per annum): 54% versus 29%, respectively ($\chi^2(2) = 5.99, p = 0.05$, Cramer's $V = 0.27$). For females, the polyamorous group was significantly older than the monoamorous group ($t(194.37) = 8.41, p < 0.001, d = 1.16$) and more likely to self-identify as non-heterosexual (77.5% vs. 9.6% of monoamorous respondents) ($\chi^2(1) = 90.38, p < 0.001$, Cramer's $V = 0.67$). A greater proportion of polyamorous women also reported having advanced degrees: 31.7% (9.6% for the monoamorous group) ($\chi^2(1) = 13.58, p < 0.001$, Cramer's $V = 0.26$).

Given these differences, analyses of covariance were conducted with age, sexual orientation, receipt of an advanced degree and income (men only) treated as covariates. Due to the number of tests performed, a conservative probability value ($p < 0.008$) was used. Finally, as the measure of attachment style involved proportional data, chi-square analysis was employed to test for group differences.

For women, polyamorous respondents evidenced significantly greater intimacy than their monoamorous counterparts ($F(1, 193) = 9.49, p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$). No other statistically significant differences emerged (i.e. polyamorous and monoamorous women did not differ in levels of passionate love, trust, sociosexuality or type of attachment style). Among men, polyamorous respondents had significantly higher scores on the measure of intimacy ($F(1, 72) = 25.35, p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.26$) and on two of the three facets of sociosexuality: attitudes ($F(1, 71) = 10.81, p = 0.002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$) and behaviour ($F(1, 71) = 8.88, p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.11$). No other comparisons were statistically significant.

Discussion

The current study evaluated whether self-identified polyamorous and monoamorous individuals differed on various indicants of relationship quality (i.e. intimacy, passion, trust and attachment). Penke and Asendorpf's (2008) three facets of sociosexuality were also

measured. Few group differences were identified. However, polyamorous men and women evidenced greater levels of intimacy, and polyamorous men obtained higher scores on two of the three subscales assessing sociosexual orientation, suggesting greater involvement in casual/uncommitted sexual activity and more positive attitudes towards casual sex. Polyamorous women's scores on the Behaviour and Desire subscales of the measure of sociosexuality also exceeded the scores for monoamorous women; however, these differences did not meet our conservative probability value of 0.008.

We noted that polyamorous individuals evidenced greater levels of intimacy, but did not differ in their levels of passionate love, trust or predominant attachment pattern. Due to the absence of normative data, we cannot determine whether the polyamorous respondents' mean level of intimacy, for example, should be conceptualised as high, moderate or low. In an effort to contextualise our findings, we reviewed the available literature to identify studies that had employed the measures distributed to participants (i.e. IAS-R, PLS, TS, SOI-R and/or the RQ). For each indicant, we aimed to highlight at least two studies that provided basic descriptive statistics to which we could compare our findings.⁵ Unfortunately, we were unable to meet these criteria for the TS. As a result, although polyamorous and monoamorous participants scored well above the scale mid-point, it is unclear whether these scores denote especially high levels of trust.

Amidon et al. (1983) distributed the IAS-R to five different American samples comprised of undergraduate students, graduate students and persons employed in mental health professions, business and education. Mean scores on the IAS-R ranged from approximately 171 to 188. All of these values are significantly⁶ lower than the mean scores obtained by the polyamorous and monoamorous respondents recruited for the current study. Among a sample of psychology undergraduate men and women attending a university in Western Canada, Ducharme et al. (1997) reported mean IAS-R scores ranging from 164 to 170; again, these values are appreciably lower than the ones obtained by our participants.

With respect to passionate love, Cyranowski and Andersen (1998) surveyed 318 female undergraduates attending a university in Ohio. Mean PLS scores ranged from 85 to 98 across participants grouped into four categories on the basis of their sexual schemata. These categories were aschematic (i.e. neither positive nor negative attitudes towards the self as a sexual being); co-schematic (i.e. both positive and negative attitudes towards the self as a sexual being); positive schema; and negative schema. The polyamorous and monoamorous women in our study evidenced significantly higher scores on the PLS than did the aschematic and negative schematic women surveyed by Cyranowski and Andersen (1998). Using cross-sectional samples of male and female adolescents, young adults, middle-aged adults and elderly individuals, Wang and Nguyen (2005) investigated potential cohort differences in passionate love. None of the values they reported, ranging from 6.63 to 6.70 (i.e. total PLS score/number of scale items), differed significantly from the values obtained in the current study.

In terms of sociosexuality, Swami, Miller, Furnham, Penke, and Tovée (2008) administered the SOI-R to 50 self-identified heterosexual men attending a university in Greater London. The mean score for this group was significantly lower than the mean scores obtained by the polyamorous and monoamorous men participating in our study. We also compared participants' scores to those provided by Penke and Asendorpf (2008), the researchers that developed and validated the SOI-R. These comparisons suggest that the monoamorous men and women in our sample obtained significantly lower scores than the German men and women recruited by Penke and Asendorpf. No differences were noted between the polyamorous and German male samples whereas polyamorous women

evidenced significantly higher scores than their German counterparts. On the basis of Cohen's d , however, the latter difference was of limited practical significance.

Finally, Roberts and Pistle (2009) examined attachment patterns among American university students engaged in long-distance or proximal romantic relationships. Based on the RQ, 42% of their respondents were securely attached, 26% fearful, 20% dismissing and 10% preoccupied. These proportions differed significantly from those obtained by the polyamorous respondents in our study; specifically, a larger proportion of the polyamorous group reported secure attachment, with smaller proportions evidencing dismissing, preoccupied and fearful attachment. No significant differences were noted for the monoamorous participants. Using a sample of community residents from the mid-western United States, Zhang and Labouvie-Vief (2004) found that 53% of their participants reported a secure attachment pattern. The proportions of dismissing, preoccupied and fearful attachment were (in order) 24%, 8.4% and 15.4%. No consistent pattern of differences was noted (i.e. our polyamorous group was less likely to be classified as dismissing, but more likely to be classified as preoccupied, whereas for the monoamorous respondents a larger proportion evidenced a fearful attachment pattern).

The overall picture emanating from these inter-study comparisons suggests that both polyamorous and monoamorous respondents reported high levels of intimacy, with values exceeding those obtained by other researchers. Intimacy was especially pronounced among the polyamorous group. No coherent differences emerged with respect to passionate love or sociosexuality. Finally, a secure attachment pattern was predominant among the polyamorous and monoamorous men and women we surveyed, a finding that is echoed in other works.

Our study has several limitations that should be noted. First, we used an online survey methodology to collect the data. While researchers have found that web- and paper-based methods of administration do not appear to affect scales' reliability estimates (Fouladi, McCarthy, & Moller, 2002; Hardré, Crowson, & Xie, 2010), mean scores (Fouladi et al. 2002) or factor structure (Riva, Teruzzi, & Anolli, 2003), differences in scale variance have been identified (e.g. Fouladi et al., 2002), with online participants providing less response variability which, in turn, may serve to truncate correlations among variables. Hardré et al. (2010) also found that the proportion of missing data was significantly greater among participants completing a web-based survey than its paper equivalent. Second, the circumstances under which participants completed the survey were not monitored (Hardré et al. 2010). As a result, we do not know how many participants completed the questionnaire alone or with one or more individuals or whether they were simultaneously engaging in other activities such as listening to music, watching television and so forth. Third, although a majority of the scales used in this study had satisfactory scale score reliability and statistically significant correlations emerged denotative of construct validity, none of the measures were designed specifically for polyamorous individuals. This limitation may be more relevant for some scales than for others. We used indicators of intimacy and attachment pattern that focus on relationships with *others*, rather than with a specific target; thus, these measures would appear suitable for use with polyamorous individuals. We also distributed a measure of sociosexuality that was similar to the one employed by van Anders et al. (2007) in their investigation of hormonal differences between polyamorous and monoamorous men and women. However, the measures of trust and passionate love focused on a single partner and, thus, were not optimal. For these two scales, it is unclear whether polyamorous respondents answered the items by creating a composite partner, focusing on their 'best' relationship or on the relationship that was most salient whilst completing the survey. If so, the absence of statistically significant differences between polyamorous and monoamorous respondents on these dimensions may be attributable to a response artefact.

In conclusion, there is a dearth of published quantitative research on polyamory. The purpose of the current study was to address this omission by investigating indicators of relationship quality among self-identified polyamorous and monoamorous persons. Few group-based differences were noted; however, polyamorous respondents evidenced greater levels of intimacy and, for the men only, were more likely to engage in, and express positive attitudes towards, casual/uncommitted sex. It is recommended that researchers address the limitations delineated earlier by employing heterogeneous methods of data collection (i.e. online and offline) and developing measures that are content valid when distributed to polyamorous samples.

Notes

1. Throughout this article, we employ the neologism ‘monoamorous’ to serve as a more accurate counterpart to the term ‘polyamory’. However, in the survey proper, the word ‘monogamy’ was employed as it was presumed this term would be more intelligible to those functioning outside the polyamorous community.
2. Respondents’ geographic location was not solicited. Therefore, given the diverse methods used to recruit participants, it is impossible to estimate how many individuals are Canadian, American and so forth. However, based on the sites used to recruit participants and the second author’s use of chain-referral sampling, we contend that most participants would be situated in North America or the United Kingdom.
3. Descriptive statistics for the remaining categories (e.g. polyamorous in theory and polyamorous in theory with a monogamous partner) as well as those selecting ‘other’ in response to the gender item are available upon request.
4. The differences noted between polyamorous and monoamorous men in terms of income and educational attainment may be attributable to the former being significantly older than the latter.
5. When researchers provided means and standard deviations for their measures, statistical comparisons could be made using an independent group *t*-test calculator: <http://www.dimensionresearch.com/resources/calculators/ttest.html>
6. As these post hoc comparisons do not involve matched samples, the presence or absence of differences cannot be attributed to one’s status as polyamorous or monoamorous.

Notes on contributors

Todd G. Morrison is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. His research interests include the following: homonegativity; male body image; gay pornography and psychometrics. Dr. Morrison’s recent publications have appeared in *Body Image*, *Pain*, *Journal of Men’s Studies* and the *Journal of Bisexuality*. He serves on a number of editorial boards including the *Journal of Homosexuality* and *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* and is Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Sciences*.

Dylan Beaulieu received his undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Saskatchewan. His research interests are polyamory and the politics of monogamy.

Melanie Brockman is a Master’s student in the Applied Social Psychology programme at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research interests include the contextual determinants of nonheterosexuality, and Aboriginal issues.

Cormac Ó Beaglaioich is a doctoral student in the School of Psychology at the National University of Ireland Galway. His research interests include gender role conflict and masculinity among adolescent boys. Mr. Ó Beaglaioich’s work on this study was made possible by doctoral funding provided by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

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