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Assessing Contributing Factors of Relationship Satisfaction in Polyamorous and Monogamous Relationships

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Abstract

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MA, Walden University 2013

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Polyamory is a relationship configuration where all partners involved agree to engage in romantic relationships with others. As polyamory has begun to gain public attention, it has sparked an interest in the mental health field. The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare factors contributing to relationship satisfaction in polyamorous and monogamous relationships, as measured by the Characteristics of Marriage Inventory (CHARISMA). Systems theory guided the conceptualization of how complex systems operate and are organized. This study builds on the hypothesis that relationship interaction processes influence the correlation between relationship characteristics and marital satisfaction, factoring in the influence of relationship interaction processes on satisfaction. This study analyzed the interaction between these factors in polyamorous individuals and monogamous individuals and examined how their experiences compare to each other. A total of 372 participants over the age of 18 who identified as being involved in either a long-term monogamous or polyamorous relationship completed the CHARISMA questionnaire. Two multivariate analyses of variance revealed 10 out of 18 importance ratings, and 4 out of the 18 satisfaction ratings were statistically significant between relationship types. However, an analysis of variance suggested no overall difference in satisfaction between the two groups. Past research had presented factors leading to relationship satisfaction, which used the interaction of these factors to predict the degree of satisfaction in monogamous relationships. This study highlights the need for the development of more comprehensive relationship assessment tools, as well as raises public awareness of the polyamorous lifestyle.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my supportive family. My parents, Igor Yanovskiy and Dr. Marina Margulis, who were my advisors, financial aid, moral support, and on-call babysitters, all rolled into one. To my in-laws Isaak and Galina Kushnir, who practically raised my firstborn while I was on this journey. To my husband, Gary Kushnir, who continued to love me even when I was sleep-deprived. To my beautiful boys, Joshua and Jacob, for bringing joy to my heart! I hope you grow up in a world without limits!

A special dedication to my grandparents Fredrikh Margulis and Sofiya Babinsky, who held me accountable from start to finish.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In recent years, polyamorous, or consensually nonmonogamous relationships have become quite common. Current estimates of individuals who practice polyamory, defined as a broad range of relationships in which all individuals in the relationship agree to engage in multiple sexual, romantic, and/or emotional relationships with others (Matsick, Conley, Ziegler, Moors, & Rubin, 2014,), range between 4% and 5% of the U.S. population (Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2012). Increasingly, there are mentions of polyamory in the news, political debates, popular self-help books, and television shows. This growing public interest has coincided with an increasing body of research in several areas such as law, counseling, health, philosophy, spirituality, sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Barker & Langdridge, 2010). Despite the demographic prevalence of polyamory, therapists are undereducated about the lives and needs of polyamorous people.

There is a long history of studying relationship satisfaction, which has led to the development of marital adjustment and satisfaction questionnaires such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI; Snyder, Wills, & Keiser, 1981). Subsequently, the development of assessments has also led to the development of empirically defensible interventions that can prevent or alleviate marital distress and divorce (Jose & Alfons, 2007). Empirical evidence that supports the success, stability, and longevity of polyamorous relationships exists (Buunk, 1980, Chin-Ortiz, 2009; Dixon, 1985: Knapp, 1976; Mitchell, Bartholomew & Cobb,

2013; Rubin & Adams, 1986; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015; Watson, 1981; Weitzman, 2006). Polyamorous and open relationships have been found to be similar to monogamous ones on several relationship dimensions (Seguin et al., 2017). Despite the accumulating knowledge of polyamorous relationships, there are still no assessments or interventions that have proven to be effective when working with nonmonogamous couple dynamics.

Background of the Problem

Monogamy is understood to be the accepted and optimal relationship arrangement within Western cultures (Kipnis, 2003). However, only 17% of the world is strictly monogamous (Murdock, 1967). Nonmonogamous forms of marriage are permitted in 84% of human societies. However, in most of these cultures, only a small percentage of the population (generally men) has many partners at one time (Tsapelas, Fisher & Aron, 2010). Moreover, monogamy is an exception for the nonhuman mammals, taking place in about 3% of all other species (Kleiman, 1977).

Marital or relationship satisfaction is very challenging to define for research. Hawkins (1968) defined marital satisfaction as "the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his/her marriage" (p. 647). The rationale for studying relationship satisfaction stems from concerns for the individual, family, and societal well-being (Al-Darmaki et al., 2016).

Historically, marriage researchers had studied the effects of marital characteristics, marital behaviors, effects of gender, and differences in marital satisfaction by life stage (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, & Hattie, 2004). More recent research efforts attempted to isolate factors leading to satisfaction and discover how these factors interact

to yield satisfaction. Rosen-Grandon et al.'s (2004) characteristics of marriage inventory (CHARISMA) determined factors critical to understanding marital satisfaction and explored the relationships among those factors. I compared the factors relevant to understanding and quantifying relationship satisfaction in polyamorous and monogamous individuals using the CHARISMA inventory.

Statement of the Problem

The unique issues and concerns of polyamorous clients is an emerging interest in the mental health field. For instance, therapists who work extensively with the bisexual community will often encounter clients who live a polyamorous lifestyle, given a significant proportion of bisexual individuals prefer polyamory (Page, 2004). The availability of resources has not kept pace with the increasing numbers of adults who find themselves dissatisfied with traditional relationship options and choose to explore consensual nonmonogamy in various ways. There is an insufficient amount of recent counseling-related research dedicated to this population.

Cook (2005) implied that frequently research on polyamory goes unsupported and unpublished because it puts institutions at risk for public scrutiny. As a result, the people who do research this area stand to gain from it due to their lifestyle preferences, which leads to biased research, qualitative exploration, and unpublished work that is inaccessible. The American Counseling Association, in a 2013 report, noted the need for research within the polyamorous population.

Recently, more therapists advertise their willingness to work with polyamorous clients. However, there is very little recent counseling-related research dedicated to this

population. There are few published works regarding counseling applications with polyamorous clients in relationship counseling settings (Johnson, 2013). Most graduate psychology textbooks, curricula, and internships do not include mention of polyamory at all (Weitzman, 2006). This lack of research leads to polyamorous clients finding it necessary to consume their valuable time on educating their therapists on polyamory (McCoy et al., 2015). My goal for this study was to provide therapists with the information to guide their assessments of polyamorous individuals' relationships and to guide them in choosing the right interventions for these clients.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1 (RQ1): Is there a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

Null Hypothesis ($H_0$1): There is no significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a1): There is a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals?

$H_0$2**.** There is no significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

H_a2**.** There is a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

$H_0$3**.** There is no significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

H_a3**.** There is a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the factors involved in relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. The objective was to determine factors critical to understanding the relationship satisfaction of polyamorous individuals and explore the relationship among these factors with the help of Rosen-Grandon et al.'s (2004) CHARISMA Inventory. I then compared these findings with the results of monogamous individuals to determine whether the assessment of these two populations

can be done using the same methods, or if the development of new assessment methods will be required for use with the polyamorous community.

Theoretical Framework

I grounded this research in systems theory (Sayin, 2016) because it offers a holistic framework for conceptualizing how domains of complex systems organize themselves and operate. Systems theory is often used in family psychology and continues to be the major theoretical framework surrounding relationship therapy/counseling (Magnavita, 2012). Systems theory looks at the complex dynamics of human bio-, psycho-, socio-, and cultural dynamics. The theory looks at circular or reciprocal influence rather than linear influence. Systems theory supports the research hypothesis of the previous research in marital satisfaction that was used for this study. Rosen-Grandon (2004) hypothesized that there was a connection between relationship characteristics and marital satisfaction and how relationship interaction processes influence it. Specifically, relationship interaction processes themselves influence relationship satisfaction (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004).

Operational Definitions

Dyadic containment: a therapist's tendency to look for a primary couple, and search for a way to define their relationships rules, thus making them enclosed and exclusive.

Dyadic relationship: the relationship between two people.

Long-term relationship: a relationship lasting a year or more.

Monogamy: a relationship arrangement in which partners commit to being sexually and romantically exclusive.

Polyamory: a relationship arrangement in which partners maintain multiple, concurrent romantic-sexual relationships with the full knowledge and consent of all parties involved.

Relationship satisfaction: is the subjective feelings of contentedness and pleasure experiences by partners when considering all current aspects of their relationship.

Systems Theory: A holistic and reciprocal theory that offers a framework for conceptualizing how spheres of complex systems organize themselves and operate (Sayin, 2016).

Assumptions

Because I disseminated the questionnaire through the Internet, and participants being solicited through Facebook groups, I assumed that participants were competent in using a computer to complete the survey. I assumed that the participants would have access to a stable Internet connection in order to complete the whole survey. I assumed that participants would understand the statements in the informed consent letter that described how their anonymity would be protected. Lastly, I assumed that participants would answer openly and honestly to the questions presented.

Scope and Delimitations

I limited the scope of this study to individuals who were over the age of 18, had access to the Internet, used Facebook, participated in polyamorous groups, or were

friends with polyamorous group members. I believed that access to polyamorous individuals in long-term relationships would be difficult to establish. Hudson and Bruckman (2004) observed that when researchers attempted to reach potential participants by posting invitations to participate in a survey within a discussion group, it was often perceived as rude or offensive behavior, as illegitimate, or spam. There was potential for a lower response rate due to participants' relative unfamiliarity with the Internet or technological variations such as the speed of the Internet, web browsers, and monitor configurations (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Sampling issues, such as generating a true sample size and self-selection bias, inhibit researchers' ability to make generalizations about study findings (Wright, 2005).

Limitations

There were limitations to this study. The threats to internal validity were: self-selection, which occurs due to individuals of specific demographics opting in or out of taking a survey at higher rates than other demographics; individuals' motivation to complete the survey. In this case, I did not incentivize the participants to complete the survey, which may have led to missing or incomplete data; and multiple entries, where participants may have attempted to complete more than one survey.

The tool I chose for this study has been shown to be reliable and valid. The CHARISMA inventory has high concurrent validity with other tests measuring relationship satisfaction. Rosen-Grandon (2004) found CHARISMA to have acceptable reliability and validity as well as clinical utility for helping couples examine their relationship.

The external validity of online survey research is weak due to sampling error, which cannot be estimated in a nonrandom sample. With a nonrandom sample it is impossible to be confident of its representativeness of the population. Therefore, results of the study cannot be generalized from the sample to the population.

Significance

This study provided insight into relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. Therapeutic relationships will become more meaningful when they are informed by the significant factors involved in relationship satisfaction. This study fills the gap in the current literature on polyamory by providing quantitative research into relationship satisfaction with multiple, committed partners. In the past, this type of research was not undertaken due to stigma and a lack of awareness (Cook, 2005). Results go unnoticed and unpublished because they are small-scale qualitative work and only give little insight and awareness into the polyamorous lifestyle. The results of this study will provide therapists with evidence-based information to ground their understanding of the needs of polyamorous clients.

This study may bring positive social change when the results are distributed to social, psychological, and medical providers, as well as community leaders, and members of the community to provide better understanding and further destigmatization of polyamory. Upon having this dissertation published, I will submit journal articles based on my research to various professional and social publications. The results of this study will be presented at educational, professional, and social conventions and conferences. By discussing the results of this study with the public, more awareness and understanding

will be made possible and may change individual perceptions of polyamorous relationships. The results of this study will facilitate the therapeutic relationships of polyamorous individuals by saving them time and money, as well as emotional effort by lowering the need to explain and justify their chosen relationship style. More and more people are choosing to be in consensually nonmonogamous relationships. Psychologists must educate themselves and prepare to serve the needs of these clients, and this study will provide them with some groundwork.

This study can provide opportunities for future research by serving as the basis of information. It can be narrowed down to researching specific polyamorous patterns of relationships, for example, studying relationships that have hierarchic or non-hierarchic configurations. Further variations may arise from closed (polyfidelitous) or open relationships and these variations need to be researched further. Specific therapy techniques still need to be tested for usefulness in multi partnered relationships to provide evidence-based help to address the various other concerns of this population that are currently coming to the forefront.

Summary

In this study, I used a quantitative comparative approach to investigate whether the factors leading to relationship satisfaction were similar for polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Polyamory has become a popular topic in the recent years appearing on the news, TV shows, in popular self-help books, and appearing in a body of mostly qualitative research in the areas of law, counseling, health, philosophy, spirituality, sociology, anthropology, and psychology (Barker & Langdridge, 2010).

More thorough psychological research and theory have only started to appear over the last few years, with many authors having personally close links with polyamory communities (Klesse, 2006; Barker, Langdridge, 2001). With polyamorous population estimates ranging from 4% to 5% of the U.S. population (Conley, Moors, Matsick & Ziegler, 2013), and increased public awareness and acceptance of the lifestyle, more individuals are "coming out of the closet."

Many therapists are claiming to be poly-friendly and affirming, but more research is needed to provide them with guidance on assessment and interventions to use within relationship counseling. The results of this study will allow for a better understanding of the similarities and differences in factors leading to relationship satisfaction in monogamous and polyamorous individuals. This will guide psychological providers in their choice of assessment tools and intervention techniques with this population.

Chapter 2 will include information on the history of the polyamorous community and explore the research of relationship satisfaction. I will discuss and analyze the literature on monogamous and polyamorous relationships. The presentation of findings from the previous research will validate the need and significance of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

My goal for this literature review was to explore research into polyamorous relationships and relationship satisfaction. Polyamory is defined as the practice of maintaining multiple, concurrent romantic-sexual relationships with the full knowledge and consent of all parties (Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014; Klesse 2006).

The mental health field has come to value diversity in such areas as culture, religion, and sexual orientation. This standard has not yet encompassed polyamory. Despite the demographic prevalence of polyamory, therapists are undereducated about the lives and needs of polyamorous people. Sheff (2013) estimated the number of polyamorous people in the United States to range from 1.2 million to 9.8 million. Weitzman (2006) reported that although the majority of polyamorous relationships are closeted due to stigma, there are at least 500,000 openly polyamorous families in the United States. Recent studies in the United States have found that approximately 4%–5% of the samples are currently involved in consensually nonmonogamous relationships (Conley et al., 2012; Moors et al., 2014). There are too few published works regarding counseling applications with polyamorous clients in relationship counseling settings (Johnson, 2013).

Literature Search Strategy

I began my multisource literature search in May 2015. The search included a broad scope of academic literature and peer-reviewed journal articles. For the purpose of

this dissertation, an exhaustive literature search included topics of marital and relationship satisfaction, relationship satisfaction in non-traditional relationships, and all research on polyamory and ethical nonmonogamy.

The initial search of psychological databases included ProQuest, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, PubMed, EBSCO host, JSTOR, and ResearchGate. The literature search included the following terms: *polyamory, ethical nonmonogamy, monogamy, relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, relationship quality, LGBTQ relationship satisfaction, nonbinary relationships,* and *open relationship*. The search yielded many non-peer-reviewed journal and book results, as well as an extensive number of articles on polyamorous relationships within the LGBTQ community. Many of peer-reviewed articles pertained to research done on homosexual men and lesbian women in the 1980's, so I narrowed my parameters to research done from 2000–2016. I also added the term quantitative study of marital satisfaction and quantitative research and polyamory.

I found several resources in the community-based database ResearchGate. I was able to request articles based on my research needs. Users provided articles and other suggestions. I was also able to contact the original researchers directly and request their entire paper. I had accomplished an exhaustive literature review once the searched articles on various databases, with the addition of Google Scholar, returned repeated studies that I had previously reviewed. I undertook consecutive searches periodically to check for new research published on the topic of polyamory.

Polyamory and Monogamy

For the purposes of this research, monogamy refers to a relationship agreement in which both partners commit to the idea of being sexually and relationally exclusive (Veaux, Rickert, & Hardy, 2014). Polyamory will be defined as the practice of maintaining multiple, concurrent romantic-sexual relationships with the full knowledge and consent of all parties (Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014).

Some form of monogamy first arose ten to fifteen thousand years ago with the advent of agriculture, because it likely allowed for more enduring bonds that insured the enhanced survival of offspring, as well as kinship networks preservations (Dunpanloup et al., 2003). As human populations grew, their social and economic organization became more complex, cultural forces gradually institutionalized pair bonding and marriage. The primary function of these norms, most often codified through laws, was to define lineage and to specify how authority and wealth should be transferred among heirs (Bell, 1995; Coontz, 2004).

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment movement arose, shifting the way society viewed monogamous marriage (Henrich et al., 2012). Individualism and romanticism gave credence to an emerging belief in Western societies that life was about the pursuit of happiness; marrying for love instead of wealth and status became commonplace (Coontz, 2004; Musselman, 2009). For the first time in human history, people could meet their needs for romance, friendship, and attachment in intimate relationships. Since love could not be forced and depended on mutual choice, it set the stage for a sense of equality between the sexes (Coontz, 2004).

The Industrial Revolution gave rise to the growth of the middle class, which enabled young people to select their own mates; the women's rights movement gained strength in the 20th century, and legal systems in Western societies began recognizing wives as equals rather than property. By the 21st century, the monogamous marriage had evolved to become a contract between two equals primarily in search of love and happiness (Giddens, 1992; Nussbaum, 2010).

One drawback of exclusive monogamy is that it limits sexual and romantic involvements to one lifetime partner (Balzarini et al., 2017), which frequently leads to incompatibility and infidelity; to accommodate, most modern societies permit marital dissolution and tolerate extradyadic involvements. The result is that most of these societies practice a kind of de facto serial monogamy where most adults form several pair bonds with a series of mates over their lifetimes (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Buss, 2005). In Western societies, serial monogamy has become the most prevalent form of pair bonding (Fisher, 2000).

Despite only 17% of the world being strictly monogamous (Murdock, 1967), monogamy is understood to be the accepted and optimal relationship arrangement within Western cultures (Kipnis, 2003). Nonmonogamous forms of marriage are permitted in 84% of human societies, although in most of these cultures, only a small percentage of the population (in most cases men) have many partners at one single time (Tsapelas, Fisher, & Aron, 2010). Moreover, monogamy is an exception for the nonhuman mammals, taking place in about 3% of all other species (Kleiman, 1977).

One early mention of open marriage as an alternative to monogamy is by Albert Ellis (1965) in *The Case for Sexual Liberty*. Ellis affirmed the phenomenon of an open marriage, and often advocated open marriage to his clients (Moore, 1974). Polyamory is a term that originated in the 1960s referring to the type of responsible nonmonogamy that was advocated for in Robert Heinlein's (1961) novel *Stranger in a Strange Land*. The rejection of the illness model of homosexuality in the 1970s opened the door to counsel clients living alternative lifestyles in a positive, affirmative way (Fox, 2004). On the other hand, Knapp (1975) highlighted the condemnation of open relationships amongst U.S. therapists and a preference for clients to adopt what the therapists believed to be a healthier form of coupledom.

Polyamory and Alternative Lifestyles

Heteronormativity is the presumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation (Utmasingh, Smart Richman, Martin, Lattanner, & Chaikind, 2015). An analogous term mononormativity was coined by Peiper and Bauer (2005) to refer to dominant assumptions of the normalcy and naturalness of monogamy. Similar to the way popular, political, and psychological discourse tended to present heterosexual relationships as the only natural and morally correct form of relating, nonmonogamous relationships are similarly represented. Mononormativity refers to the dominant assumptions of the normalcy and naturalness of monogamy (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Benson, 2017).

There is still no consideration of the possibility of consensual nonmonogamy within mainstream psychology (Barker, 2006) or relationship therapy (Finn, Tunariu,

Lee, 2012). Despite the demographic prevalence of polyamory, therapists are undereducated about the lives and needs of polyamorous people. Most graduate psychology textbooks, curricula, and internships do not include mention of polyamory (Weitzman, 2006). There are few published works regarding counseling applications with polyamorous clients in relationship counseling settings (Johnson, 2013).

In 2004, Page conducted a study with 217 bisexual male and female participants on their mental health services experiences. In this study, she discovered that 33% of her sample was involved in a polyamorous relationship. Furthermore, 54% considered this type of relationship ideal. Therefore, she had found that therapists who work extensively with the bisexual community will often encounter clients who live a polyamorous lifestyle, given the significant proportion of bisexual individuals in this population who prefer polyamory (Page, 2004). Research into bisexual relationship practices, mostly in the United States, suggests a relatively high frequency of nonmonogamous relationship arrangements among bisexual-identified men and women (Klesse, 2005). Popular thoughts on bisexuality assume a peculiar interrelation between bisexuality and nonmonogamy. It is often thought that authentic bisexuality is only possible in the context of a nonmonogamous life practice and that bisexuals are nonmonogamous by necessity (Klesse, 2005).

Studies have suggested that homosexual male couples report more open sexual agreements and less monogamous relationships as compared with lesbian and heterosexual couples (Bonello & Cross, 2010; Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Parsons, Starks, Dubois, Grov, & Golub, 2011). In the study of gay relationships in general, researchers

recognize that a large number of gay couples are in open relationships. Although not representative of all gay couples, the majority of informants used in previous studies were typically in some form of open arrangement (Adam, 2006; Blumstein & Swartz, 1983; Hickson & Davies, 1992, Parsons et al., 2013). Almost two-thirds of the gay couples interviewed by Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) were in open relationships. Twenty-six percent of the participants in Adam's (2006) study were sexually exclusive. According to Coelho (2011), the pragmatic reasons for gay men choosing nonmonogamy point to a natural male desire to explore sex. Monogamy has been rejected because it is contrary to human (male) nature. For these reasons, gay male couples have often been used to investigate the link between satisfaction and polyamory, given the widespread acceptance of extradyadic sexual activity within gay male communities (Blumstein & Schwartz, Hickson, et al., 1992). Consensual nonmonogamy rates are significantly higher in gay male couples than in either lesbian or heterosexual partnerships (Solomon, Rothblum & Balsam, 2005).

While lesbians have traditionally tended toward a belief in monogamy, in reality, lesbian relationships are very diverse (Larbriola, 1999). Lesbian and bisexual women often have tight-knit social circles that are likely to include former lovers. Therefore, the distinction between friendship and more romantic, emotional involvement is often fuzzy and open to interpretation, opening the door to polyamory (Halpern, 1999). Weitzman (2009) found that 88% of her 143 polyamorous lesbian participants' study sample reported considerable happiness in their relationships, and 80% would be willing to choose this relationship style again.

An interesting phenomenon of the likelihood of sexual fluidity has been observed by Manley, Diamond, and Van Anders (2015). Sexual fluidity refers to shifts over time in sexual identity and possibly sexual attraction (Manley et al., 2015). A sample of 55 polyamorous and 61 monogamous individuals completed online questionnaires regarding sexual identity, attractions, and partnering behaviors 7 months apart. Polyamorous individuals were more likely than monogamous participants to identify their sexuality in nonpolar and nontraditional ways. Polyamorous women shifted attraction rating overtime at a higher rate than polyamorous men or monogamous men or women.

Given the prevalence of nonmonogamous lifestyles within the LGBTQ community, it is no wonder that a lot of the research into polyamory favors using LGBTQ-identifying participants. Some people view polyamory not as a relationship pattern or identity (Barker, 2006) but as a sexual orientation and as such, is comparable with homosexuality, heterosexuality, or bisexuality (Klesse, 2014). Geri Weitzman (2006) outlined a model of identity formation parallel to that of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who used the term polyamorous orientation. In response to framing polyamory as a sexual orientation, Robinson (2013) conducted a qualitative study of 40 bisexual women and argued that polyamory and monogamy are better viewed as strategies of sexual expression rather than as immutable orientations.

Polyamory and Relationship Styles

Many successful models of polyamorous relationships exist. Despite the differences among the types of configurations of polyamorous relationships, they all share common themes of communication, honesty, negotiation, and consensus about the

terms of relationships (Aguilar, 2013; Barker, 2005; Klesse, 2006). The three most common ones are the primary/secondary model, multiple primary partners model, and multiple nonprimary relationships model. These models also have many variations.

The primary/secondary model is by far the most commonly practiced form of open relationship, and it is the most similar to monogamous marriage (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Labriola, 1999). In this model, the primary couple decides to open their relationship to other people but decides that their relationship will have precedence over any outside relationships. The couple often lives together and forms a primary family unit, while other relationships receive less time and priority. Some couples choose to date separately, while others date together, or pick up partners for casual sex.

Some couples allow each partner to independently have outside sexual and/or romantic relationships, either casual or long-term. These outside relationships are still considered secondary because if any conflict develops, the primary couple relationship takes precedence. (Rubin et al., 2014).Due to the primary couple often living together and sharing finances and sometimes children together, the outside lovers have little say in decisions and rulemaking in the relationship. Scheduling of dates, sleepovers, and time spent together all revolve around the rules that the primaries have for each other's relationships. Some couples give each other veto power and are allowed to decide for each other on who is acceptable to date, and impose any other restrictions on sexual and nonsexual activities that make the primary partners comfortable with a secondary.

The primary/secondary model is often the "starter" model for those exploring polyamory because it is most similar to traditional relationships, as it does not threaten

the primacy of the couple (Labriola, 1999). It does come with some significant drawbacks, such as feelings not being easy to predict or control. Having a sexual or emotional attachment to someone can grow into love and threaten the primary relationship. The secondary lovers often feel subjugated to the couple and may demand equality in the relationship (Balzarini et al., 2017). This type of model is often looked down upon and even considered abusive by other polyamorists.

The multiple primary partners' model's main features are that there are more than two people involved in a relationship where all members are equal partners (Rodrigues et al., 2016). All relationships are considered primary or have the potential of becoming primary. All partners have equal power to negotiate aspects of the relationship regarding time, commitment, living situation, financial arrangements, sex, and other issues (Rubel, 2015).

Sheff (2011) had written about polyamorous families and explored polyfidelity in her research. There are two variations of polyfidelity in a relationship, the closed and open model. In the closed model, multi-adult families are essentially married, except to more than one person. These families usually have three to six adults, all living together and sharing finances, children, and household responsibilities. Depending on sexual orientation and desire, some or all of the adults in the relationship may be sexual partners. This type of arrangement is closed to other sexual encounters, although some families are open to taking on new partners. However, this only occurs if all members of the family agree to accept a new person as a partner (Balzarini, 2017). The new person then moves into the household and becomes a new equal partner in the family. The most common

form of this type of arrangement is a triad of two women and one man, or two men and one woman, but many lesbian triads exist (Labriolla, 1999).

Polyfidelity can be a rich, rewarding experience for the participants. Pooling resources is economical and ecological, which can reduce the stress of child-rearing (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006). However, polyfidelity requires a very high level of compatibility among all partners. Decreased autonomy and privacy due to living together as a group often leads to conflict and stress (Weitzman et al., 2009).

The multiple primary partners' open model is quite different from polyfidelity because all partners can develop any relationships they chose. Partners may choose to live together, in groups, or alone, and do not have to get any other partners' approval to see other people whenever and however they wanted (Labriola, 1999). Each new relationship can be as casual or as committed as the individuals decide, and no one can veto partners. The multiple primary partners model is a more complicated model to practice because of the amount of thought and work that is required to negotiate time and resources in a manner sufficient to make partners feel comfortable.

The multiple nonprimary relationships model is practiced by people who prefer to be mainly single but participate in multiple relationships (Johnson, 2013). Individuals who do not look for committed relationships seek out other often likeminded individuals, or people who are in primary relationships and are looking for a secondary relationship to enjoy some of their time together without a serious commitment. These individuals often live alone and make relationships a low priority in their lives (Davidson, 2002). This type of relationship model works as long as the individuals are able to communicate their

desire for a less committed relationship, and both partners are satisfied by this arrangement and do not expect more from it (Labriola, 1999).

Relationship Satisfaction

There is a long history of studying marriage satisfaction. The topic of marital satisfaction came to the forefront with the publication of a landmark scientific study of the sex lives and problems of married people (Hamilton, 1929). The rationale for studying marital satisfaction stems from concerns for the individual, family, and societal well-being (Al-Darmaki et al., 2016). The studies in marital satisfaction attempt to develop empirically defensible interventions that can prevent or alleviate marital distress and divorce (Jose & Alfons, 2007). Historically, marriage researchers have studied either the effects of marital characteristics, marital behaviors, effects of gender, and differences in marital satisfaction by life stage (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). Three major marriage counseling institutes dedicated to marriage counseling were formed in the United States in the 1930s (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002).

The 1940s through the 1960s saw the rise of psychoanalytic and later psychodynamic approaches to couples' issues (Gurman & Fraenkel, 2002). Spouses were brought into sessions and treated conjointly with their spouses. Clinicians discovered that clients often had different stories from their spouses and found it beneficial for both parties to participate in therapy. In 1968, Hawkins described marital satisfaction as a spouse's experienced feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure while thinking about all current aspects of his/her marriage.

Marital and couple satisfaction has been measured through the use of self-report questionnaires. One example of earlier research was the DAS, a self-report questionnaire that assesses consensus in decision making together and the importance of shared values and affection, satisfaction in the relationship regarding stability and conflict regulation, and cohesion regarding activities and discussion (Spanier, 1976). Snyder developed the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) in 1979. It consisted of a 280- item measure of marital satisfaction with scales developed using a content-oriented approach with an additional item-analytic procedure to enhance internal consistency (Snyder, Wills, & Keiser, 1981).

The 1980's and 1990's saw an increase in the interest of studying nontraditional couples, such as those cohabitating but not married, as well as gay and lesbian couples. When research showcased that nontraditional couples experience similar relationships to traditional married couples, earlier questionnaires were revised to serve married, cohabitating, gay, and lesbian populations (Means-Christensen, Snyder, & Negy, 2003).

Assessing Relationship Satisfaction in Polyamorous Relationships

Researchers at Teachers College at Columbia University undertook a study of content analysis of scholarship on consensual nonmonogamy (Brewster et al., 2017). An extensive search of articles published from 1926 to 2016 revealed only 116 articles against the plethora of studies that assume and position monogamy as the default relational configuration for couples and families (Brewster et al., 2017). Such findings suggested that individuals practicing consensual nonmonogamy are being neglected by

academic research, and although scholarship in this area has increased in the past decade, more comprehensive work needs to be done to understand this group better.

An important issue that comes up when considering how to approach research on polyamory is whether there is an existing framework for addressing monogamy and if it is suitable for the study of polyamory. Because monogamy is the default in Western culture, it is commonly embedded in researchers' measures and procedures. These measures will need to be revisited to address alternative relationship configurations such as polyamory (Conley et al., 2012).

Dyadic adjustment scale. One of the most common ways for researchers to evaluate relationship quality among consensual non-monogamists is by administering the DAS (Spanier, 1976). The DAS provides a general score for relationship adjustment as well as scores for four subscales: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression (Rubel, Bogaert, 2015). The most common finding is that consensually nonmonogamous and monogamous couples do not differ on the DAS (Kurdek, Schmidt, 1986; Rubin, Adams, 1986). The DAS has a significant drawback when studying polyamorous relationships. Just as its name says, it is named for those relationships that are in dyads. Presenting the assessment, with its current language to a couple that is polyamorous, could feel invalidating and may not adequately asses all the working parts of the relationship (Girard & Brownlee, 2015).

Assessments that lend themselves well to translation and revision to serve non-married and non-traditional couples may have the potential, when revised further, to serve as valid clinical and research tools for assessing long-term polyamorous

relationships (Means-Christensen, Snyder, & Negy, 2003). More recent work attempted to isolate factors leading to satisfaction and tried to discover how these factors interact to yield satisfaction.

Polyamorous Relationship Stability and Satisfaction

There is empirical evidence to support the viability of polyamorous relationships and the stability of polyamorous individuals (Buunk, 1980; Chin-Ortiz, 2009; Dixon, 1985; Knapp, 1976, Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2013; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015; Rubin & Adams, 1986; Watson, 1981; Weitzman, 2009). One of the earlier psychological assessments with a sample of polyamorous couples was done in 1976 by Knapp. Knapp administered a battery of standardized psychological assessment measures to a sample of 17 polyamorous couples. She found no significant differences between her sample and the population norms. In 1981, Watson gave the California Psychological Inventory to 38 sexually open individuals. They also scored within normal bounds (Watson, 1981). Dixon (1985) interviewed 50 married women who had started swinging with other women. Swinger couples are committed couples who consensually engage in extra-relational sex for recreational purposes (Kimberly, Hans, 2017). She found that 76% of her sample reported their sexual satisfaction in their marriages to be good or excellent (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). In the gay community, marital satisfaction, relationship longevity, depth of intimacy, and the frequency of sex were also found to be comparable between polyamorous and monogamous couples (Chin-Ortiz, 2009). Buunk (1980) found that couples with open marriages in the Netherlands were average in terms of marital satisfaction, self-esteem, and neuroticism. Likewise, Weitzman (2009) found that a

majority of her polyamorous lesbian sample were satisfied in their relationships, and would choose this type of relationship arrangement again. Rubin and Adams (1986) compared sexually open couples with sexually exclusive ones using the DAS (Spanier, 1976), and found no differences between the groups, nor any difference in marital stability. Results of one study of need fulfillment in polyamorous relationships using over 1000 subjects suggest that polyamorous individuals' relationships with one partner tend to operate relatively independently of their relationships with another partner. Thus, having multiple partners in itself does not appear to have a strong positive or negative effect on dyadic relationships (Mitchell, Bartholomew, Cobb, 2013).

Rubin and Adams (1986) found that a similar number of their polyamorous and monogamous participants have ended their relationships. The reason for the breakup of the polyamorous group was not related to extramarital sex. Ramey (1975) found that polyamorous couples tend to end their relationships for similar reasons as monogamous couples, such as unequal attraction, a decrease in the number of common interests, and dealing with stresses of a long-distance relationship. Peabody (1982) examined polyamorous relationships in order to see whether polyamorous individuals were healthy or neurotic and looked for general information to be helpful to therapists dealing with these types of clients. Peabody (1982) found that most polyamorous respondents felt positive about their partner having sexual relations with others; although, it was found that polyamorous individuals had slightly less frequent sex than the national average. Peabody argued that although some polyamorous individuals may be neurotic or pathological, more are not participating in polyamory to fulfill their neurotic or

pathological needs. Research suggests that individuals in polyamorous relationships report relatively high levels of trust, honesty, intimacy, friendship, and satisfaction as well as relatively low levels of jealousy within their relationships (Barker, 2006; Bonello & Cross, 2010, Kurdek, 1988, Moors et al., 2014). The findings from these studies should reduce concerns related to the mental health of polyamorous people and the strength of their relationship.

The results of a study of relationship quality across three types of relationship agreements suggest that there are no significant differences between monogamous and nonmonogamous relationships regarding sexual communication and sexual and relationship satisfaction. Thus, polyamorous and open relationships are similar to monogamous ones on several relationship dimensions (Seguin et al., 2017).

Polyamorous Client in Therapy

Emerging field. Polyamory is an emerging field with limited research articles that are primarily instructional in nature rather than analytical or social (Noel, 2006). There is insufficient current counseling-related research dedicated to this population. The American Counseling Association suggested a need for additional research within the polyamorous population in the 2013 report (Johnson, 2013).

Mental health professionals are beginning to interact more with the polyamorous population in their practices. For instance, therapists who work extensively with the bisexual community will often encounter clients who live a polyamorous lifestyle, given the significant proportion of bisexual individuals in this population who prefer polyamory

(Page, 2004). Therapists who are uninformed about polyamory are unprepared to serve the polyamorous clients adequately (Henrich, Trawinski, 2016).

Therapists bias. Open nonmonogamy is an important, yet sensitive area for psychotherapists and counselors, as it can challenge the practitioner's personal values, and professional assumptions related to dyadic sexual relationships (Berry & Barker, 2014). Polyamorous clients have trouble finding therapists who are affirmative of their polyamory (Page, 2004). Many non-monogamists choose not to mention the fact of their polyamory to their therapists (Weitzman, 2009). Individuals in polyamorous relationships who seek psychological help are often met with judgment and hostility by therapists (Weitzman, 2006). When treating polyamorous clients, a therapist's monogamism can bias their work. In order to offer optimal care to polyamorous clients, it is advised to attend to one's own power and privileges (Blumer & VandenBosch, 2015), as well as potential power dynamics within the relationship (Klesse, 2014).

Polyamorous clients often report finding it necessary to use valuable, paid session time on educating their therapists on polyamory (Williams & Prior, 2015). Counselors and therapists are not well-informed about the lifestyles and needs of the polyamorous community due to the lack of research in this area (McCoy et al., 2015). A polyamorous client seeking relationship counseling often has to make a choice when seeking relationship counseling. The polyamorous client may choose to address the relationship with one partner and not mention others. Alternatively, the client can address the varying relationship dynamics among partners, but likely with an uneducated therapist who lacks

evidence-based practices for working with this population (Johnson, 2013, Weitzman, et al., 2009).

Fortunately, it is becoming more prevalent for clinical practices to claim competence in polyamory and to accept polyamorous clients. However, polyamory is still being described, defined, as well as treated by way of a prioritized dyadic containment (Finn & Malson, 2008). The term dyadic containment refers to a therapist's tendency to look for the main couple, and search for a way to define their relationship rules making that couple enclosed and exclusive. Thus the polyamorous client's relationship is treated like a monogamous couple.

For therapists, there is a lack of literature about nonmonogamous couple dynamics and assessment. Traditionally, therapists receive training to work with monogamous couples. Nonmonogamous consensual relationships are either challenged or overlooked in both clinical and scholarly communities. Due to the lack of research and scholarly writing addressed to assist therapists, there is a lack of understanding about what differentiates varying nonmonogamous relationships. A problem arises due to the power of monogamous discourse having the ability to subjugate other relational orientations, creating feelings of shame and isolation (Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, Rubin, & Conley, 2013).

Current literature on nonmonogamous relationships provides little information regarding the clinical assessment and treatment of the population. Clinicians lack the necessary tools to work with polyamorous couples. They are also a further disadvantage because of insufficient resources on clinical considerations for polyamorous couples

(Girard & Brownlee, 2015). Clinicians do not have adequate training about common concerns and relationship dynamics of the polyamorous population. Mental health practitioners are less likely to have empirically validated assessments or treatment guidelines; thus, they are left with limited options. The lack of information on the polyamorous lifestyle is detrimental to the clients because the clinicians do not have any guidelines or evidence-based approaches upon which to conduct their work (Barker & Langdrige, 2010).

Research exploring the efficacy and confidence of providers in addressing sexual issues or disorders indicates that a lack of exposure to and comfort with variations in sexuality is correlated with reduced treatment efficacy, as was demonstrated by Miller and Byers' (2012) study with practicing psychologists. A lack of awareness or an appreciation for non-traditional relationship patterns can lead to damaged therapeutic alliances, resulting in treatment non-adherence, and some of the most unsatisfactory patient outcomes (Graham, 2014).

Common issues in therapy. Common issues that present in treatment of polyamorous clients include: Jealousy, social discrimination, disapproval from social supports, rejection, issues with child-rearing, emotional ties, time management, commitment, honesty and boundaries (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Benson, 2017; Conley, 2012; Cook, 2005; Finn, 2012; Girard, 2015). In his 2011 thesis, Henrich found several issues that polyamorous individuals in therapy wanted to address: marginalization, stigma, and social obstacles, the challenges polyamorists often experience when considering their own identities, disclosing to others. All previously

mentioned studies noted that polyamorous clients had a tough time finding a compassionate and effective therapy.

One type of therapy proposed to suit polyamorous clients is existential therapy. The reason that existential therapy may appeal to a polyamorous individual is due to its being grounded in a non-pathologizing model of sexuality, which views human sexual behaviors as existing within a broad and diverse spectrum (Berry & Barker, 2014). An underlying objective of the existential approach is to confront and problematize the non-reflexive assumptions that may be reflected in socially conventional scripts of sexual health and normality (Kleinplatz, 2012).

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review synthesized the research into the nature of polyamorous relationships and relationship satisfaction. Western cultures accept monogamy as an optimal relationship arrangement. However, only 17% of the world is strictly monogamous, suggesting that current research only supports a minority.

This literature review showed that polyamory is often studied with the LGBTQ population. Homosexual males often have open sexual arrangements. Lesbian women have tight-knit communities that often include current and former lovers. Polyamory is often practiced in the bisexual community. Some studies have shown that roughly half of the population considers polyamory to be the ideal form of relationship. Polyamorous individuals were also found to be more sexually fluid than monogamous individuals. Polyamorous individuals are more likely than their monogamous counterparts to shift their sexual identity and sexual attraction over time.

Polyamorous relationships have been found to be as stable and satisfying as monogamous relationships. When assessed, polyamorous relationships have been found to be comparable to monogamous relationships in measures of marriage satisfaction, relationship longevity, depth of intimacy, and frequency of sex. Standardized psychological assessments showed no significant differences between polyamorous samples and population norms.

Historically, research focused on qualitative studies and or self-perceptions of people who identify as polyamorous. Cook's (2005) thesis implies that frequently, research on polyamory goes unsupported and unpublished because it puts institutions at risk for public scrutiny. As a result, the people that do conduct research in this area do so because they may benefit from it due to their own lifestyle preferences. Standing to gain from the results of the research leads to bias, qualitative exploration and unpublished work that is hard to find.

There is still very little consideration of consensual nonmonogamy within mainstream psychology, either in training or in practice. Therapists are undereducated about the needs of polyamorous clients and are left to navigate treatment without the help of supporting literature or evidence-based research. The burden is then placed on the client to educate their therapist or sacrifice disclosure of their relationship preference or status altogether (Williams & Prior, 2015).

Scholars speculate that individuals are increasingly likely to turn to nonmonogamous relationship styles in the face of high divorce and infidelity rates (Griebling, 2012). With longer human life spans, sexual exclusivity seems unrealistic,

and people increasingly experience dissatisfaction with serial monogamy (Brewster et al., 2017). The expansion of the Internet and smartphone app memberships that facilitate connection to sexual partners coupled with the growing economic and social equality of women makes consensual nonmonogamy a more accessible choice. It is time for scholar-practitioners to accommodate and provide support for this population adequately.

Although nontraditional relationship styles and families have recently become visible with the help of mainstream media outlets, researchers and academic sources have not kept pace. This lack of information negatively impacts counseling and family care professionals by limiting access to comprehensive information and training in order to support their practices adequately. Despite the advances in recognizing the legitimacy of such a lifestyle, and many self-help books on nonmonogamy coming onto the market, nonmonogamous relationships such as polyamory are still in need of clinical attention (Jordan, Grogan, Muruthi, & Bermudez, 2017).

Chapter 3 will identify and describe a research design to address this gap in the literature. The following chapter will outline the methodology for research, which will begin to close the gap identified within this literature review. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, and the implications of the results are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of this study's design, sample, instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical considerations. An overview of the study's design will include a rationale for why this particular research design was selected. I will present the sample characteristics and size as well as a description of the instrumentation. The will also be a discussion of the data collection process and analysis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the factors involved in relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. Estimates of the number of polyamorous people in the United States range from 1.2 million to 9.8 million (Sheff, 2011). Weitzman (2006) reported that although most polyamorous relationships are closeted, there are at least 500,000 openly polyamorous families in the United States. In 2004, Page found that 33% of her bisexual participants were engaged in polyamorous relationships, and 54% considered this type of relationship to be ideal. Despite the prevalence of polyamory, there is a lack of research available to therapists. Polyamorous clients have trouble finding a therapist who is affirming of their polyamory (Page, 2004), with many choosing not to mention the fact of their polyamory to their therapists (Weitzman, 2009). When an open-minded therapist is found, clients often have to spend time from their paid session to educate their therapist (Williams & Prior, 2015). When polyamorous clients seek relationship counseling, they are provided with minimal options for competent, unbiased counselors. They often have to choose between addressing the

relationship with one partner, and not mentioning the others, or having an uneducated therapist who lacks research support for their practice with this client base.

My intent for this study was to assess factors that are significant to relationship satisfaction in committed polyamorous relationships, with expected moderating variables being gender and length of the relationship. I had then compared my results to the same data for monogamous couples using the multivariable analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Research Design and Approach

I chose to use the quantitative comparative approach for this study. A quantitative design is beneficial when a researcher wants to examine the relationship between at least two variables (Creswell, 2013; Sousa, Driessnack, & Mendes, 2007). This study involved gathering information about marital satisfaction among polyamorous individuals in long term relationships and comparing those results to those of monogamous individuals. Using a comparison research design allows researchers to understand the differences between the two groups (Mills, van de Bunt, & de Bruijn, 2006). I asked the participants within this study to fill out questionnaires regarding relationship satisfaction, including the questions of the importance of each characteristic and degree of satisfaction with each relationship characteristic in their relationship. I gathered additional information regarding gender, age, race, education, marital status, employment, income, and years in the relationship with a demographics questionnaire. Creswell (2013) stated that the quantitative comparative approach is appropriate when it allows the researcher to search for similarity and variance of one or more variables, thus I used it to design my study.

MANOVA is simply an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with several dependent variables. Specifically, ANOVA tests for the difference in means between two or more groups, while MANOVA tests for the difference in two or more vectors of means (French, Pouslen, 2002). In MANOVA, the goal is to maximally discriminate between two or more distinct groups on a linear combination of quantitative variables (Grice, Iwasaki, 2009). The independent variables in this study were relationship characteristics as presented by the CHARISMA inventory: lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, spouses are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, faith in God, religious commitment, romance, companionship, forgiveness, trust, respect, sensitivity and supportiveness, male-female equality, physical attraction, agreement on roles, and sexual faithfulness. The characteristics were measured on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from Extremely Unimportant (1) to Extremely Important (6). The dependent variables in this study were satisfaction in perceived experience of each characteristic in a current relationship, and overall relationship satisfaction. Demographic variables include gender, age, race, education, marital status, employment, income, and duration of the relationship.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The CHARISMA Inventory has two scales that measure importance of relationship characteristics, and satisfaction within said relationship characteristics. There is one other question regarding a global self-assessment of relationship satisfaction. I proposed three research questions.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

H_a1: There is a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals?

$H_0$2**.** There is no significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

H_a2**.** There is a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

$H_0$3**.** There is no significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

H_a3**.** There is a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

Setting and Sample

Participants

For this study, the target population was adults over the age of 18, who were involved in long-term polyamorous or monogamous relationships. For the purpose of this study, the long-term has been defined as lasting a year or more. I used Cohen's d effect size table to calculate sample size, based on small effect size, and standard alpha and power (P=0.8, $\alpha = 0.05$, d=0.4), which gave us n=100 (Cohen, 1988). In order to have a comparable and statistically significant sample, I sought out 100 monogamous and 100 polyamorous participants.

I recruited a convenience sample through Facebook. I provided a shareable post about the study (Appendix A) from my Facebook page in polyamorous Facebook groups, as well as on my personal page. Due to the size and reach of Facebook, it offered the opportunity to acquire large and diverse samples of participants. The sample was nonrandom, and the probability of sampling error is unknown. The participants were self-selected based on the criteria presented in the invitation. The post included a link to a Survey Monkey webpage, which contained the Informed Consent Agreement.

If the participant agreed to participate, by clicking on the "I agree" link, they were taken to the survey questions. Each participant filled out a demographic questionnaire, and the survey, CHARISMA. Participants were able to exit the survey at any time. Once the participants finished the survey they clicked "done." I used Survey Monkey to store each person's anonymous data in a password-protected .cvs file. There was no follow-up with the participants by the researcher for this study. Participants were able to request the results from the study by contacting the researcher. The contact information was located in the Informed Consent Agreement.

Online Survey

Survey Monkey is an online survey tool. There are many advantages to using web-based surveys (Singh, Taneia, & Mangalari, 2009). They can be implemented quickly with readily available output data (Griffis, Goldsby, & Cooper, 2003). Soliciting responses to online surveys is relatively easy through social media. It is more efficient to administer surveys via an online survey tool to a large number of respondents than using paper-based surveys. With online surveys, the researcher is able to access individuals from distant locations. Paper-based surveys require access to respondents' physical addresses or identity; in the case of online surveys, only access to the internet is needed, which is less likely to threaten the privacy of the respondents. Conducting a study online has another advantage: it provides anonymity by eliminating personal contact between the researcher and participants (Denissen et al., 2010). Finally, the most significant advantage of online survey research is that it takes advantage of the ability of the Internet to provide access to groups and individuals who

would be challenging to reach through other channels, such as groups only existing in cyberspace (Wright, 2005).

There are several disadvantages to online survey research. In a study, Hudson and Bruckman (2004) found that individuals are likely to react with hostility when invited to participate in a survey in a discussion group. Some people may view solicitation for research participants as intrusive, offensive, or rude behavior. Others mistrust invitations to participate in survey research as illegitimate, or spam.

A lowered response rate can be due to participants' relative unfamiliarity with the Internet, technological variations, such as the speed of the Internet, web browsers, and monitor configurations (Evans &Mathur, 2005). Sampling issues, such as generating an accurate sample size and self-selection bias, inhibit researchers' ability to make generalizations about study findings (Wright, 2005). Overall, the ease of collecting data from a large participant pool, from groups only existing in cyberspace is offset by threats to internal and external validity. Threats to validity will be discussed later in the chapter.

Procedures

Instrumentation: CHARISMA. Rosen-Grandon et al.'s (2004) characteristics of marriage inventory (CHARISMA) determines factors critical to understanding marital satisfaction and explores the relationships among those factors. CHARISMA was developed to assess both the importance of marital characteristics to married individuals and their satisfaction with those characteristics in their marriages. CHARISMA was administered to 201 married individuals and found to have acceptable reliability and

validity as well as clinical utility for helping couples examine their relationship values and priorities.

CHARISMA consists of 37 items. Participants rate each of the 18 marital characteristics using a 6-point Likert-scale twice; first, to measure the importance of marital characteristics and second, to measure one's satisfaction with those characteristics. A final question asks for a global rating of one's marital satisfaction. CHARISMA utilizes two scales to assess the unique viewpoints of partners: Importance and Satisfaction. A difference score is computed by subtracting each satisfaction score from its counterpart importance rating. Any negative difference scores suggest that an individual is not as satisfied as they would prefer.

The CHARISMA inventory was developed to identify and measure distinct factors, where inter-factor correlations are low. The inter-factor correlations for the importance factors were .42 and below. The highest correlation between any two satisfaction factors was .44. As such, it was determined that the factors chosen to be measured by the CHARISMA inventory were sufficiently distinct, identified, and suitable for the measurement model (Rosen-Grandon et al., 2004). The internal consistency of each subscale was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha for the importance scale was 0.83. The alpha for the satisfaction scale was 0.94 (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005). Concurrent validity of CHARISMA was established with the Spanier's DAS (1976) and ENRICH (Olson & Fowers, 1993). Both instruments have been widely used in research and clinical work related to marital satisfaction.

The CHARISMA inventory lends itself well to research due to its verbal simplicity allowing it to be translated into other languages; being useful to all couples (married and unmarried), being able to evaluate present and past relationships, even clarifying desired characteristics for future relationships, as well as using the term spouse lending itself to use by individuals who subscribe to different lifestyles or gender roles; its ease of administration and scoring, it can be completed in 5 minutes and scored in 5 minutes (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, Hattie, 2001). I obtained written consent to use the CHARISMA inventory from its author (Appendix B) for this study.

Demographics. I used a demographic questionnaire to assess basic information regarding the participants' age, gender, education, current relationship status, and preferred relationship style (monogamous or polyamorous). I collected these data points to look for correlations or interactions of demographic variables as advised by Fernandez (2016). See Appendix C for the Demographic Questionnaire.

Analysis. I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.0 software for Windows for analysis. SPSS is a program developed and published by IBM. SPSS enables the user to complete statistical manipulations and computations quickly and efficiently. Using the MANOVA, I conducted a comparison of the means, in order to determine whether there were any differences in the mean of each factor between the polyamorous and monogamous participants.

Threats to Validity

Internal Validity

There are potential factors that may offer alternative reasons as to what may influence variables within a study. These are known as threats to internal validity (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). One threat to internal validity in this study was self-selection, which occurred due to individuals of specific demographics opting in or out of taking a survey at higher rates than other demographics. Another threat to internal validity was individuals' motivation to complete the survey. In the case of this study, the researcher did not incentivize the participants to complete the survey, which may have lead to missing or incomplete data; and multiple entries, where participants may have attempted to complete more than one survey.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is the degree to which a measure reflects what it is reportedly measuring. The researcher chose the CHARISMA inventory due to its high concurrent validity with other tests measuring relationship satisfaction. CHARISMA has shown to be reliable and valid.

External Validity

Quantitative research attempts to fragment and delimit phenomena into measurable categories in order to apply them to all of the subjects or similar situations (Winter, 2000). The external validity of online survey research is weak due to sampling error, which cannot be estimated in a nonrandom sample. With a nonrandom sample,

we cannot be confident of its representativeness of the population; therefore, we cannot generalize from the sample to the population.

This study used the Facebook population for recruitment of participants. The Facebook population is not perfectly representative; its users tend to be younger, with higher levels of education. Therefore, some groups may be entirely excluded. However, the size of Facebook's population implies that even the underrepresented populations are relatively large (Kosinski, et al., 2015).

Ethical Considerations

An application to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted and found to be in compliance. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study, the approval # is 04-17-19-0180726 and it expires on April 16th, 2020.

The informed consent form was used to inform the participants of the following guidelines that protected their interests:

1. The participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. There was minimal physical, psychological, and emotional risk in participating in this study. If the participants felt any stress or discomfort they were able to discontinue the questionnaire. Participants were provided with a list of psychologists that work with their population, upon request.
3. Personal information was kept separate from survey data. Participants were not being identified in the data file.
4. Study results were and will continue to be available upon request.
5. All files were password protected on the researcher's home hard drive.

6. Each participant received the researcher's contact information along with the supervisor contact information should any questions or concerns arise.
7. The participants were informed there would be no financial gain from participating in this study.
8. The results of this study will be stored electronically for five years. After five years, the original data and associated files for this study will be destroyed.

Summary

This chapter described how the study was executed, including the research background and purpose, questions, and hypotheses. This chapter addressed the research design and rationale, methodology, population, sample size, and procedures for recruitment. Besides, variables, data analysis plan, instrumentation, data collection, threats to validity, and ethical concerns were explained.

This study used online survey research methods to collect data in order to answer the proposed research questions. The questions were as follows: Research Question 1: Is there a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals? Research Question 2: Is there a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals? Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals? Research Question 4: Is

there a significant difference between predicted relationship success, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

This study's target population was adults over the age of 18 who are involved in long-term polyamorous or monogamous relationships. For the purpose of this study, the long-term is defined as lasting a year or more. Survey Monkey contained the Informed Consent agreement along with a demographics questionnaire and the CHARISMA inventory. The CHARISMA inventory has acceptable reliability, validity, internal consistency, and concurrent validity with other established instruments in measuring relationship satisfaction.

The ethical procedures followed the Walden University Institutional Review Board guidelines, and the research received IRB approval. The results of this study were analyzed by SPSS 24.0 software. The results were published and shared with other professionals in the field of psychology. In Chapter 4, the results of this study will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare factors contributing to relationship satisfaction in polyamorous and monogamous relationships, as measured by the Characteristics of Marriage Inventory (CHARISMA). I designed this study to answer the following research questions and corresponding hypothesis:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

H_a1: There is a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

RQ2: Is there a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals?

$H_0$2**.** There is no significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

H_a2**.** There is a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

RQ3. Is there a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals?

$H_0$3**.** There is no significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

H_a3**.** There is a significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

In this chapter, I present the findings from the statistical analyses conducted to examine the research question and hypothesis. This chapter includes details of the data collection and descriptive statistics of the sample, as well as the results and data analysis. The chapter ends with a brief summary.

Data Collection

Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this research on April 17, 2019. The survey was hosted on Survey Monkey. An invitation to participate was posted on my personal Facebook page, as well as several polyamory related Facebook groups. The data were collected between May 1st and May 27th of 2019. A total of 419 participants responded to the survey, and met the necessary requirement of

100 monogamous and 100 polyamorous participants. There were only 372 (88.8%) out of the 419 total responses were used as the final sample. I eliminated the rest of the responses due to not meeting the length of relationship criteria, or being incomplete.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the 372 participants. A majority of the 372 participants are involved in monogamous relationships, which consisted of 72.8% of the sample. More than half of the 372 participants have indicated currently being in relationships that are notably long term, lasting 5 to 10 years (104; 28%) or 10 to 25 years (127; 34.1%). A majority of the 372 adults in the sample are 27 to 35 years old (160; 43%), and 36 to 46 years old (117; 31.5%). A majority of the sample indicated being White/Caucasian (335; 90.1). A majority of the 372 adults were female (294; 79%). A majority of the sample reportedly holds a bachelor's degree (131; 35.2%), and 149 (40.1%) of the participants hold a graduate degree (149; 40.1%). More than half of the sample are married (260; 69.9%). 229 (61.6%) of the participants have reported being employed full-time (229; 61.6%). More than half of the 372 participants have household income range of $91,000 - $120,000 (90; 24.2%) and above $120,000 (1119; 32%).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable Name	Category	Frequency	Percent
Do you identify as monogamous or ethically nonmonogamous (polyamorous)?	Monogamous	271	72.8
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	101	27.2
Length of the current relationship	12 months - 18 months	30	8.1
	2-5 years	71	19.1
	5-10 years	104	28.0
	10-25 years	127	34.1
	25 +	40	10.8
Age	18-26	31	8.3
	27-35	160	43.0
	36-46	117	31.5
	47-60	39	10.5
	61-75	22	5.9
	75 and over	1	0.3
	Missing	2	0.5
Race/ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	0.5
	Asian / Pacific Islander	4	1.1
	Black or African American	13	3.5
	Hispanic	10	2.7
	White / Caucasian	335	90.1
	Multiple ethnicity / Other	6	1.6
	Asian and White	1	0.3
	Caucasian Black and Native American	1	0.3
	Jewish	1	0.3
	Mediterranean	1	0.3
	Mixed	1	0.3
	A registered decedent of Kootenai tribe, Filipino, white	1	0.3
	Missing	2	0.5
Gender	Male	57	15.3
	Female	294	79.0
	Gender nonconforming	10	2.7

(table continues)

	Gender fluid	5	1.3
	Other	4	1.1
	Missing	2	0.5
	High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)	14	3.8
Highest level of school completed or the highest degree received	Some college but no degree	48	12.9
	Associate degree	29	7.8
	Bachelor degree	131	35.2
	Graduate degree	149	40.1
	Missing	1	0.3
Marital status	Married	260	69.9
	Separated	10	2.7
	Divorced	19	5.1
	Widowed	2	0.5
	Unmarried	80	21.5
	Missing	1	0.3
Current employment status	Employed full-time	229	61.6
	Employed part-time	41	11.0
	Unemployed	10	2.7
	Self-Employed	34	9.1
	Homemaker	22	5.9
	Student	21	5.6
	Retired	14	3.8
	Missing	1	0.3
Household income group	Less than $30,000	29	7.8
	$31,000 - $60,000	62	16.7
	$61,000 - $90,000	71	19.1
	$91,000 - $120,000	90	24.2
	Above $120,000	119	32.0
	Missing	1	0.3

MANOVA Results of Research Question One

I conducted a MANOVA to assess the significance of differences in the importance ratings of 18 relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. The importance ratings of the 18 relationship characteristic were measured using the CHARISMA Inventory. A level of significance of 0.05 was used in the MANOVA. MANOVA results show that there are significant differences in importance

ratings of the 10 out of the 18 relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. These include the following relationship characteristics:

- Lifetime commitment ($F(1, 355) = 7.94$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$)
- Loyalty ($F(1, 355) = 26.45$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$)
- Strong moral values ($F(1, 355) = 4.83$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$)
- Partners are best friends ($F(1, 355) = 9.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$)
- Sexual intimacy ($F(1, 355) = 4.58$, $p = 0.03$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$)
- Good parenting ($F(1, 355) = 60.68$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.15$)
- Faith in God ($F(1, 355) = 28.87$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$)
- Religious commitment ($F(1, 355) = 25.72$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$)
- Physical attraction ($F(1, 355) = 6.83$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$)
- Sexual faithfulness ($F(1, 355) = 234.63$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.40$).

There are significant differences since the *p*-values are less than the level of significance value. All the multivariate effect sizes have low effect sizes. My $H_0 1$, is that "There no a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals". I rejected $H_0 1$ based on the results of the MANOVA. The $H_a 1$ is that “There is a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals” is supported by the MANOVA results.

I used a comparison of means in table 2 to further analyze the differences in importance ratings of relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous

individuals. Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance rating for lifetime commitment (M = 5.23, SD = 1.22) in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 3.94, SD = 1.47). Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 5.53, SD = 1.04) have significantly higher importance rating for loyalty in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 4.85, SD = 1.30). Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 5.09, SD = 1.12) have significantly higher importance rating for strong moral values in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 4.78, SD = 1.28). Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 4.90, SD = 1.18) have significantly higher importance rating for partners are best friends in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 4.44, SD = 1.37). Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 4.85, SD = 1.16) have significantly higher importance rating for sexual intimacy in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 4.54, SD = 1.45). Monogamous individuals (M = 5.20, SD = 1.16) have significantly higher importance rating for good parenting in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 3.89, SD = 1.94). Monogamous individuals (M = 2.90, SD = 1.71) have significantly higher importance rating for Faith in God in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 1.87, SD = 1.35). For Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 2.63, SD = 1.56) have significantly higher importance rating for religious commitment in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 1.73, SD = 1.28). Monogamous individuals (M = 4.70, SD = 1.00) have significantly higher importance rating for physical attraction in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (M = 4.37, SD = 1.21). Mean comparison shows that monogamous individuals (M = 5.39,

SD = 1.11) have significantly higher importance rating for sexual faithfulness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals (*M* = 3.00, *SD* = 1.73).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistic Summaries of Importance Ratings of 18 Relationship Characteristics Between Polyamorous and Monogamous Individuals

Relationship Characteristics	Do you identify as monogamous or ethically nonmonogamous (polyamorous)?	*M*	*SD*	N
a. Lifetime Commitment	Monogamous	5.23	1.22	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	3.94	1.47	97
b. Loyalty	Monogamous	5.53	1.04	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.85	1.30	97
c. Strong Moral Values	Monogamous	5.09	1.12	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.78	1.28	97
d. Partners are Best friends	Monogamous	4.90	1.18	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.44	1.37	97
e. Sexual intimacy	Monogamous	4.85	1.16	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.54	1.45	97
f. Good parenting	Monogamous	5.20	1.16	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	3.89	1.94	97
g. Faith in God	Monogamous	2.90	1.71	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	1.87	1.35	97
h. Religious Commitment	Monogamous	2.63	1.56	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	1.73	1.28	97
i. Romance	Monogamous	4.58	1.10	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.49	1.10	97

(table continues)

j. Companionship	Monogamous	5.18	1.04	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.03	1.09	97
k. Forgiveness	Monogamous	5.08	1.00	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.85	1.18	97
l. Trust	Monogamous	5.62	0.95	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.53	0.99	97
m. Respect	Monogamous	5.55	0.96	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.54	0.95	97
n. Sensitivity, Supportiveness	Monogamous	5.18	0.99	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.16	1.08	97
o. Male-female Equality	Monogamous	4.71	1.21	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.68	1.49	97
p. Physical Attraction	Monogamous	4.70	1.00	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.37	1.21	97
q. Agreements on Roles	Monogamous	4.50	1.15	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.26	1.28	97
r. Sexual Faithfulness	Monogamous	5.39	1.11	260
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	3.00	1.73	97

MANOVA Results of Research Question Two

I conducted a MANOVA to assess the significance of differences in the satisfaction ratings for 18 relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. The satisfaction ratings of the 18 relationship characteristics were measured using the CHARISMA Inventory. A level of significance of 0.05 is used in the MANOVA. MANOVA results show that there are significant differences in satisfaction

ratings for only four out of the 18 relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. These include the following:

- Sexual intimacy ($F(1, 347) = 5.63$, $p = 0.02$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$)
- Romance ($F(1, 347) = 15.74$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$)
- Sensitivity, supportiveness ($F(1, 347) = 6.05$, $p = 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$)
- Sexual faithfulness ($F(1, 347) = 4.08$, $p = 0.04$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$).

There are significant differences since the *p*-values are less than the level of significance value. All the multivariate effect sizes have low effect sizes. The null hypothesis two which states that "There is no significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals" is rejected based on the results of the MANOVA. The alternative hypothesis two which states that "There is a significant difference in satisfaction ratings for each relationship characteristic, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between monogamous and polyamorous individuals" is supported instead by the MANOVA results.

Mean comparisons in Table 3 are used to further analyze the differences in satisfaction ratings of relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Polyamorous individuals ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.25$) have significantly higher satisfaction rating in sexual intimacy in their relationship than monogamous individuals ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.33$). Polyamorous individuals ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.15$) have significantly higher satisfaction rating in romance in their relationship than monogamous individuals ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.26$). Mean comparison shows that polyamorous individuals ($M = 4.85$,

SD = 1.21) have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sensitivity, supportiveness in their relationship than monogamous individuals (*M* = 4.47, *SD* = 1.33). Monogamous individuals (*M* = 5.29, *SD* = 1.03) have significantly higher satisfaction rating in sexual faithfulness in their relationship than polyamorous individuals (*M* = 5.03, *SD* = 1.12).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistic Summaries of Satisfaction Ratings for 18 Relationship Characteristics Between Polyamorous and Monogamous Individuals

Relationship Characteristics	Do you identify as monogamous or ethically nonmonogamous (polyamorous)?	*M*	*SD*	N
a. Lifetime Commitment	Monogamous	5.18	1.08	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.95	1.11	95
b. Loyalty	Monogamous	5.28	1.02	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.13	1.02	95
c. Strong Moral Values	Monogamous	5.02	1.02	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.98	1.04	95
d. Partners are Best friends	Monogamous	4.97	1.14	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.97	1.12	95
e. Sexual intimacy	Monogamous	4.32	1.33	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.69	1.24	95
f. Good parenting	Monogamous	4.71	1.11	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.74	1.26	95
g. Faith in God	Monogamous	4.70	1.24	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.80	1.32	95

(table continues)

h. Religious Commitment	Monogamous	4.64	1.32	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.81	1.35	95
i. Romance	Monogamous	4.06	1.26	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.64	1.15	95
j. Companionship	Monogamous	4.85	1.22	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.98	1.07	95
k. Forgiveness	Monogamous	4.86	1.07	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.01	1.08	95
l. Trust	Monogamous	5.08	1.22	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.12	1.16	95
m. Respect	Monogamous	4.80	1.30	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.08	1.10	95
n. Sensitivity, Supportiveness	Monogamous	4.47	1.33	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.85	1.21	95
o. Male-female Equality	Monogamous	4.78	1.17	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.94	1.13	95
p. Physical Attraction	Monogamous	4.86	1.07	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.97	1.06	95
q. Agreements on Roles	Monogamous	4.63	1.18	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.78	1.20	95
r. Sexual Faithfulness	Monogamous	5.29	1.03	254
	Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	5.03	1.12	95

ANOVA Results for Research Question Three

An ANOVA was conducted to assess the significance of differences in overall relationship satisfaction rating, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. A level of significance of 0.05 was used in the ANOVA. ANOVA results show that there was no significant difference in the overall relationship satisfaction rating (F (1, 359) = 2.13, p = 0.15, η_p^2 = 0.01). There is an insignificant difference since the p-value is less than the level of significance value. The null hypothesis three which states that "There is no significant difference between overall relationship satisfaction, as measured by the CHARISMA Inventory, between polyamorous and monogamous individuals" is not rejected based on the results of the ANOVA.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistic Summaries of Overall Relationship Satisfaction Rating Between Polyamorous and Monogamous Individuals

Do you identify as monogamous or ethically nonmonogamous (polyamorous)?	*M*	*SD*	N
Monogamous	4.80	1.12	261
Polyamorous/ ethically nonmonogamous	4.99	1.05	100

Summary

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative study was to provide insight into the factors involved in relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. Descriptive statistics, MANOVA, and ANOVA, were conducted to address the objectives of the study. For research question one, results of the MANOVA showed that there were significant differences in importance ratings of 10 out of the 18 relationship

characteristics of lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, partners are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, faith in God, religious commitment, physical attraction, and sexual faithfulness between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Specifically, monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings in each of these 10 relationship characteristics than polyamorous individuals.

For research question two, results of the MANOVA showed that there were significant differences in satisfaction ratings of 4 out of the 18 relationship characteristics of sexual intimacy, romance, sensitivity, supportiveness, and sexual faithfulness between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Specifically, polyamorous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual intimacy, romance, and sensitivity, supportiveness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. On the other hand, monogamous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual faithfulness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals.

The next chapter will elaborate on the findings of the study presented in this chapter. Implications of the data analysis based on the information gleaned from the results are discussed in Chapter 5. A summary of recommendations for future research is also discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The unique issues and concerns of polyamorous individuals are an emerging interest in the mental health field. Recently, therapists began advertising their services to polyamorous clients. However, there is limited information about consensual nonmonogamous relationships; thus, polyamorous clients find themselves with a therapist who lacks research support for their practice with this client base. Research interest into counseling of ethically nonmonogamous individuals has not increased in proportion with the number of adults dissatisfied with traditional monogamy and exploring consensual nonmonogamy. Specifically, there is a dearth of studies regarding counseling-related research dedicated to individuals who engage in polyamorous relationships. As a result, when polyamorous clients choose to undergo therapy, they must spend their valuable time teaching their therapist about consensual nonmonogamy (McCoy et al., 2015). Unfortunately, polyamorous clients tend to refrain from disclosing all the information to their therapists due to shame or fear of stigma. Therapists need information about these types of relationships as it will be able to help them provide appropriate interventions to their clients. The results of this study can inform therapeutic relationships between therapists and polyamorous clients.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to provide insight into the factors involved in relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. The objective was to determine factors critical to understanding relationship satisfaction of polyamorous individuals and explore the relationship among these factors with the help of Rosen-

Grandon, Myers, and Hattie's (2004) characteristics of marriage inventory (CHARISMA). The dependent variables were the importance and satisfaction of 18 relationship characteristics which include lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, spouses are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, faith in God, religious commitment, romance, companionship, forgiveness, trust, respect, sensitivity and supportiveness, male-female equality, physical attraction, agreement on roles, and sexual faithfulness. The independent variable was the grouping of the relationships, either monogamous or polyamorous. A convenience sample of adults (n= 372) who identified as over the age of 18 and were involved in long-term polyamorous or monogamous relationship were recruited through Facebook. I conducted a thorough descriptive statistics analysis, MANOVA, and ANOVA to address the objectives of this current study.

The results revealed that monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings in 10 out of the 18 relationship characteristics including lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, partners are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, faith in God, religious commitment, physical attraction, and sexual faithfulness than polyamorous individuals. Polyamorous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual intimacy, romance, as well as sensitivity and supportiveness in their relationships than monogamous individuals. On the other hand, monogamous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual faithfulness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. Finally, the results

revealed that there were no significant differences in the overall relationship satisfaction rating between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

In this Chapter I will present my interpretation and implication of the findings. I will then discuss the limitations of the work and recommendations for further research. The chapter will end with a conclusion to summarize the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of the MANOVA analysis revealed that there were significant differences between the variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the MANOVA results support the alternative hypothesis suggesting a significant difference in importance ratings of relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Monogamous individuals reported having significantly higher importance ratings for lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, partners are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, and faith in God, religious commitment, physical attraction, and sexual faithfulness than polyamorous individuals. These findings are important because they showcase that relationship therapy geared toward monogamous relationships may not be valid when used with polyamorous clientele. The goals for a successful polyamorous relationship may not be staying together for life or raising a family together. Polyamorous individuals seek partners that fulfill a different set of romantic and/or sexual needs (Mogilski et al., 2015). Partner retention is more contingent on fulfilling evolving needs, unlike the monogamous individuals who retain partners based on a shared history and a commitment that they have made. These findings elaborate on the findings of Mitchel

et al. (2013) who conducted a study on need fulfillment in polyamorous relationships and found that due to having different partners fulfilling different needs, polyamorous relationships with partners operate independently of their other relationships. Mitchel et al. (2013) also found that having multiple partners did not have a positive or negative effect on each individual relationship.

Monogamous individuals have a significantly higher importance rating for a lifetime commitment and loyalty in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. One way to interpret this result stems from the nature of monogamy and polyamory. Polyamory is the practice of maintaining multiple, concurrent, romantic-sexual relationships with the full knowledge and consent of all parties (Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014). On the other hand, monogamy refers to a relationship agreement in which both partners commit to the idea of being sexually and relationally exclusive (Veaux, Rickert, & Hardy, 2014). Since individuals in monogamous relationships agree to commit to each other exclusively, it would be understandable that they think that lifetime commitment and loyalty are essential. The social norm for loyalty is that individuals in a relationship do not engage in other relationships with other people.

The definition and displaying of loyalty in polyamorous relationships might not be as clear as to how it appears to be in monogamous relationships. Sheff (2011) explored the concept polyamorous relationships and concluded that there are two types: A closed and an open model. A closed model has a number of individuals in a relationship with each other, and no one else. Although some polyamorous couples are open to taking on new partners, they only do so if all members of the family agree to

accept a new person as a partner (Balzarini et al., 2017). Closed relationships can vary in their configurations. These include the "vee," which comprises three individuals, two of whom are in a relationship with the third person at the same time, but not each other (Antalffy, 2016). The most common type of form of this arrangement is a triad, of two women and one man, or two men and one woman, but many gay and lesbian triads exist (Labriolla, 1999). Open model relationships do not restrict the number of additional relationships, and operate on an agreed upon set of rules and boundaries.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings for strong moral values in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. Moral values are often just a set of rules for commitment to each other, fidelity, child bearing and rearing, and gender roles. These moral values may be solely rooted in the norm of exclusive marriages as monogamy and are understood to be the accepted and optimal relationship arrangement within Western cultures (Kipnis, 2003). There is a perception that monogamy is morally acceptable in society, stemming from Judeo-Christian roots of social mores. As such, polyamorous individuals might have a lesser importance rating for strong moral values because the standards agreed upon by a society views their relationships as immoral. Moreover, there is also heteronormativity in society, which is the presumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation (Utmasingh, Smart Richman, Martin, Lattanner, & Chaikind, 2015). Some ultra-conservative or ultra-religious individuals consider homosexuality to be immoral or deviant because they believe that homosexuality goes against Judeo-Christian social mores. Polyamorous individuals might be perceived as deviants by the same

conservative population because they go against the norm of society. The negative perception of their lifestyle may make polyamorous individuals less likely to value the heteronormative, monocentric moral values, and rely on their personal moral compass and code of conduct.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings for partners are best friends in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. These findings support Nussbaums (2010) and Giddens (1992) assertion that monogamous relationships are primarily a contract between two equals seeking love and happiness. Researchers found that most societies practice a kind of de facto serial monogamy where most adults form several pair bonds with a series of mates over their lifetimes (Buss, 2005; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In a recent study of relationship satisfaction, Ariyo and Mgbeokwii (2019) found that 95.9% of their 240 married individual sample agreed that couples who are each other's best friend are always happy with their marriage, and 95% agreed that companionship is vital in marital satisfaction. Monogamous individuals place such high value on friendship and companionship because they choose to stay with one person for life. In the case of polyamorous individuals, if they have the consent of their partners, then they can engage in multiple relationships. Polyamorous individuals do not rely on one person to fulfill all of their emotional, romantic, safety, and sexual needs.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings for sexual intimacy in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. The value of sexual intimacy is related to how society conceptualizes sexual intimacy. The norm is that an

individual may only have sexual intimacy with one person. Although nonmonogamous forms of marriage are permitted in many human societies, only a small percentage of the population has multiple partners at one time (Tsapelas et al., 2010). However, polyamorous individuals may engage in sexual intimacy with multiple partners, which could explain why monogamous individuals would have a higher rating for sexual intimacy.

It is important to note that although monogamous individuals in this study found sexual intimacy to be more important to relationship satisfaction than polyamorous individuals, the findings do not contradict previous studies of sexual intimacy in polyamorous relationships. Chin-Ortiz (2009) found the depth of intimacy between monogamous and polyamorous homosexual men to be comparable. Previous literature confirms that polyamorous relationships have relatively high levels of intimacy and sexual satisfaction (Barker, 2006; Bonello & Cross, 2010; Kurdek, 1988; Moors et al., 2014). A higher ranking of the importance of sexual intimacy reported by monogamous individuals does not mean that polyamorous individuals are somehow lacking or dissatisfied in this area. It is possible that they may place more value on other aspects of their relationships.

Having more than one partner to fulfill different needs has allowed for more inclusivity of individuals of various sexualities. A hypersexual individual can have many partners to satisfy their sexual drive. This allows their partner with a lower sex drive to feel comfortable and for all partners involved to feel satisfied and not pressured to perform in order to retain a relationship. Some polyamorous individuals

identify as asexual, or demisexual. These individuals participate in the social, and/or romantic aspects of a relationship, and do not always engage in sexual behavior. Sexual intimacy has less value in non-sexual relationships.

Researchers have found that the majority of gay couples were typically engaged within an open arrangement (Adam, 2006; Blumstein & Swartz, 1983; Hickson & Davies, 1992, Parsons et al., 2013). Gay couples may engage in an open relationship because they want to explore sex with different partners. Individuals in sexually open relationships may interpret sexual intimacy differently. They attach more significance to particular sexual acts, such as kissing, falling asleep together, or having barrier-less sex. These individuals select sexual acts more significant to them, which remain exclusive, while allowing for intercourse with others without having to share their couples' privileged intimacy. Monogamous individuals may consider the same acts to be intimate, but view them all as a part of their sexual experience to be shared with one partner exclusively.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings for good parenting in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. Parenting choices are more critical to cohabitating dyads with children. As mentioned previously, adults form several pair bonds with a series of mates over their lifetimes (Buss, 2005; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). After choosing a lifetime partner from a series of mates, the next step for many couples is to create a family and procreate. The societal pressures to build a family may influence individuals within monogamous relationships to choose partners based on shared parenting practices. Several Western societies have seen recent

increases in the incidence of voluntary childlessness (Agrillo & Nelini, 2008). If the decision to not become a parent is agreed upon by both partners, than parenting practices should not be a factor in relationship satisfaction for those couples.

Polyamorous individuals do not always form the type of traditional relationships that produce children; therefore, childrearing is sometimes a less critical factor in their overall relationship satisfaction. However, this does not mean that polyamorous individuals do not consider parenting as an essential characteristic of their relationships. There are many polyamorous individuals with children who consider their partners to be family. Therefore, multiple partners may be involved in a children's upbringing. Only scarce knowledge is available on poly parents, their families, children and child-rearing practices (Pallotta-Chiarolli et al. 2013). Sheff (2011) explored polyamorous families where multiple adults live together and share finances, children, and household responsibilities. Sheff (2011) and Weitzman et al. (2009) reported that individuals in multi-adult families stated that this type of arrangement is rewarding because it reduces the stress of childrearing. As with monogamous relationships, the choice whether to have children, how to raise them, who is responsible for them, and who gets to interact with them should be agreed upon by the partners involved, in order for this category to play a role in overall relationship satisfaction.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance rating for faith in God and religious commitment in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. The three Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, advocate for monogamy,

and are practiced by a large portion of the world's population. It could be that monogamous individuals value faith in God and religious commitment more than polyamorous individuals because their religious communities typically encourage a religious union between a man and a woman. The union is a lifelong commitment that is monogamous, and should ideally produce children.

However, some polyamorous families are also profoundly religious. Polygamy is one of the most known variations of polyamory and some religions support it. Islam does not view polygamy as immoral. Some polyamorous communities based their beliefs on their interpretation of the teachings in the Bible. For example, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and Church of Christ (RLDS) both support polygamy. Some Muslim countries, especially in West Africa also allow polygamy. Many Buddhist countries, such as Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Tibet also have polygamous and polyandrous marriages.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher importance ratings for physical attraction in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. Exclusive monogamy limits sexual and romantic involvements to a one-lifetime partner. As such, monogamous individuals may prioritize physical attraction because they commit to one person at a time (Buss, 2005; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). On the other hand, polyamorous individuals may not place high importance on physical attraction when they want to enter polyamorous relationships. Polyamorous relationships are not always sexual or romantic, so the physical attraction is not always a factor. Research has indicated that some individuals within polyamorous relationships are on the

asexual spectrum. Asexuality generally describes a sexual orientation in which an individual does not experience sexual attraction toward anyone; specific experiences of asexual people vary (Carrigan, 2011). Some individuals form relationships based on an emotional connection alone. Some choose to have a romantic but nonphysical relationship altogether.

Monogamous individuals have a significantly higher importance rating for sexual faithfulness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. Since monogamy promotes relationships with only one partner, they might tend to value sexual faithfulness more than polyamorous individuals (Veaux, Rickert, & Hardy, 2014). It is not necessarily that polyamorous individuals do not value faithfulness; it could be that the nature of monogamy puts pressure on both individuals to stay sexually faithful to each other and only with each other. Depending on the type of ethical nonmonogamy an individual may practice, there may be varying interpretations of fidelity. Monogamous individuals may view sexual contact of any sort as being unfaithful, where a polyamorous individual may view breaking an agreement regarding sexual activity to be the definition of unfaithfulness. Others are polyfidelitous, limiting sexual encounters to solely individuals in the relationship (Levine et al., 2018). The case of polyamorous individuals being loyal to only the individuals involved in their polyamorous relationship extends the notion of what sexual faithfulness is all about, which was limited to the context of monogamous individuals.

The MANOVA results revealed that there were significant differences between many of the variables. As a result, I rejected the null hypothesis. The results of the

MANOVA supported alternative hypothesis suggesting there is a significant difference in relationship characteristics between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Specifically, there were significant differences in satisfaction ratings of sexual intimacy, romance, sensitivity and supportiveness, and sexual faithfulness between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. These findings contribute new knowledge to the field of polyamorous relationships.

Polyamorous individuals reported having significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual intimacy in their relationship than monogamous individuals. This finding contradicts the results of previous research about satisfaction. A majority of previous research found no significant differences between a sample of polyamorous couples and the population norm (Chin-Ortiz, 2009; Knapp, 1976; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). One study analyzed relationship quality across three types of relationship agreements and suggested that there were no significant differences between monogamous and nonmonogamous relationships regarding sexual communication, as well as sexual and relationship satisfaction (Seguin et al., 2017). However, it is possible that polyamorous individuals are more open than monogamous individuals with their emotions and feelings regarding their sex life, which might result in a high level of sexual intimacy with their partners. It could also be the case that polyamorous individuals engage in sexual activities with multiple partners such that report higher satisfaction because they do not limit their sexual encounters to one partner. This finding is supported by Dixon (1985), who interviewed 50 married women who started

swinging with other women. The study founded that 76% of the sample reported their sexual satisfaction in their marriages to be good or excellent (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

The finding in RQ1 was that monogamous individuals place significantly higher importance ratings in sexual intimacy in their relationship than polygamous individuals. However, based on the satisfaction ratings within this study, polyamorous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual intimacy than monogamous individuals. There are categorically significant differences between monogamous individuals and polygamous individuals when it comes to what they are looking for in a relationship, and whether those needs are met.

Polyamorous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in romance, sensitivity, and supportiveness in their relationships than monogamous individuals. This finding supports the previous conclusion that individuals in polyamorous relationships report relatively high levels of trust, honesty, intimacy, friendship, and satisfaction as well as relatively low levels of jealousy within their relationships (Barker, 2006; Bonello & Cross, 2010, Kurdek, 1988, Moors et al., 2014). Polyamory is a consensual approach to nonmonogamy. Klesse (2006) writes that polyamory promotes an ethics based on honesty, respectful negotiation and decision making, integrity, reciprocity and equality. In order for a polyamorous relationship to work for all involved, it requires copious communication, which is likely to contribute to the success of their relationships.

Monogamous individuals have significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual faithfulness in their relationship than polyamorous individuals. Monogamy

promotes engaging in sexual activities with one partner (Veaux et al., 2014). As such, it seems that they would have higher satisfaction in sexual faithfulness compared to polyamorous individuals for whom this factor may be less important or not significant at all, depending on their relationship structure and agreements.

The ANOVA results showed that there were no significant differences in the overall relationship satisfaction rating. The null hypothesis for RQ3 was supported by the results of the ANOVA, and therefore it was not rejected. The finding that there were no significant differences between overall relationship satisfaction between polyamorous and monogamous individuals confirms previous research findings regarding relationship satisfaction in the polyamours population. For researchers who used the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), they found that those consensually nonmonogamous and monogamous couples do not differ on the DAS (Kurdek & Schmidt, 1986). Similarly, several researchers also confirmed that there were no significant differences between sexually open couples and sexually exclusive ones (Chin-Ortiz, 2009; Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2013; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

Limitations

There were several limitations to the study. The first limitation was the sampling method. A convenience sample was recruited through Facebook and the probability of sampling error is unknown. The limited representativeness of the participants in the study affected the generalizability of the results of the study. The participants were self-selected, and a large portion of the sample was Caucasian, and

female. However, the purpose was to compare the information about marital satisfaction between polyamorous individuals and monogamous individuals, which the study accomplished by having met and exceeded the number of participants required for a valid statistical analysis.

Another limitation of this study is that it recruited individuals in long-term polyamorous relationships, but did not specify any particular relationship configurations (e.g. primary/secondary, v-structured, quad relationships, or poly families). The study was presented in English, so non-English speakers could not participate. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized across cultures or relationship configurations.

The data collection procedure also limited the results of the study. Survey Monkey was used to solicit responses online. However, the researcher was not certain that the monogamous participants only answered the survey once. It might be possible that some participants answered twice. Also, since participation was voluntary and the researcher did not provide any incentives many participants may have chosen not to finish their survey. Thus, their data would not be considered. An additional concern was that the researcher had little control over the environment in which participants completed the survey. They may have been distracted by telephone calls, television programs, or other environmental disruptors, and thus may have rushed through the survey.

The research methodology also limited the study. The study involved gathering information about marital satisfaction among polyamorous individuals in long term

relationships and comparing those results to those of monogamous individuals. A disadvantage of using a quantitative method in an anonymous online study is that the researcher could not ask participants to elaborate on points, use follow-up questions, or adjust questions once the study had begun.

Finally, the overall scarcity of previous research on consensual nonmonogamy is a limitation of this study. Only recently has any information on the demographics of this population become available. The information is still not accurate due to the stigma and/or pressures of closeted life.

Theoretical Findings

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in systems theory. Systems theories purpose is to provide a framework by which one can investigate a complex group of factors in nature, society, and science, that work together in order to produce some result (Sayin, 2016). Relationships do not come in neat disciplinary packages. They involve biological, social, environmental, legal, multifaceted aspects that require a holistic approach when studied. Systems theory provides such an approach, by being a field of inquiry rather than a collection of specific disciplines (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998). Systems theory has been embraced by family psychology and continues to be the major theoretical framework surrounding relationship therapy/counseling (Magnavita, 2012).

The major hypothesis that the creators of the CHARISMA inventory used was that relationship between relationship characteristics and marital satisfaction is influenced by relationship interaction processes, and relationship interaction processes

themselves influence relationship satisfaction (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, & Hattie, 2004). This study's findings support this hypothesis. Participants rated unique characteristics of an ideal relationship in order of importance, when those needs were reported to be adequately met, regardless of individual differences in composition of needs; the participant rated their overall relationship satisfaction more favorably. By looking at the interaction between desires, circumstances, and reciprocity, a researcher can predict levels of satisfaction. When applied to therapeutic intervention, a psychologist can work backwards, from a complaint of a lack of relationship satisfaction, to exploring each relationship characteristic, or need, in order to provide clarity and guidance in achieving higher levels of satisfaction.

Recommendations

The findings of this study are that monogamous and polyamorous individuals report similar levels of relationship satisfaction, which supports previous findings of nonmonogamy research on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and open relationship populations (Barker, 2006; Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2013; Bonello & Cross, 2010; Buunk, 1980; Chin-Ortiz, 2009; Dixon, 1985; Klesse, 2005; Knapp, 1976; Kurdek & Schmidt, 1986; Mitchell et al.,2013; Page, 2004; Rubel & Bogaert, 2015; Rubin & Adams, 1986; Schmidt, 1986; Seguin et al., 2017; Watson, 1981; Weitzman, 2009). While polyamorous and monogamous individuals did not have significant difference in overall relationship satisfaction, significant differences in importance in individual characteristics were discovered. These findings make further research necessary.

The purpose of this study was to compare monogamous individuals to polyamorous individuals; however, polyamorous individuals form different types of polyamorous relationships. Future research should include separate and clear categories of non-monogamies rather than lumping them into a single category. Researchers can examine how open vs. closed polyamorous relationships differ in their satisfaction, and whether vee's and quads report similar results to primary/secondary geared relationships, and those formed by relationship anarchists. While past literature examined consensual nonmonogamous relationships as similar enough to belong in one category, their inherently different structural components may lead to distinctions and dimensions that were not considered in the preset study.

Past research focused on a few groups, such as swingers, homosexual men, bisexuals, and lesbians. Most of the participants in these studies were white. It is recommended that researchers should explore how the results of relationship satisfaction studies would differ with people of color. It is also recommended to focus on gender expression. Often trans, gender non-conforming, and gender non-binary individuals are put into one queer category. Yet, it is likely their experience is different from the rest of the LGB community.

Past research focused on highly stratified samples such as polyamorous students attending one university in Ireland, gay men in New York City, lesbian women from Alberta Canada. It is recommended to explore whether these samples all have similar results, and to see to what extent culture plays a role in the experience of polyamorous individuals. Stratified samples make it impossible to generalize results

across cultures. Future research should strive for a random sample, per region, and eventually globally, in order to be able to generalize their results cross-culturally.

The most important take away from conducting this study came from the participants. Some reached out during and after the data collection process to inform the researcher how the instrument did not adequately address their needs or lifestyles. Specifically, the participants reported feeling that many of the questions regarding parenting, gender roles, morals and belief in God did not have a place in their relationships due to their sexuality or gender. There is a need for new instruments addressing the needs of ethically nonmonogamous, gender nonconforming, asexual, and sexually fluid individuals. The construction of new instruments is crucial in furthering research in the area of relationship satisfaction for all populations.

Implications

The current study contributed to the growing body of research on polyamory as it addressed the gap in the literature. This type of research has not been undertaken in the past due to stigma and lack of awareness. Brewster et al. (2017) evaluated articles published from 1926 to 2016 regarding consensual nonmonogamy and found only 116 articles written about the topic. The scarcity of articles suggests that the academic research community is neglecting individuals practicing consensual nonmonogamy. The Brewster et al. (2017) study is one of the large-scale quantitative works that could provide insight and awareness into the polyamorous lifestyle. The insights from the current study will help improve scholars' and professionals' understanding of differences among monogamous and polyamorous individuals.

For scholars and researchers, the findings of the study as well as limitations, could serve as a foundation for further research about polyamorous individuals and families. Moreover, the response from participants, as well as the findings indicates that most of the measurements available are designed to be used by monogamous and often heterosexual individuals. The results of the study showcase the need for the development of an instrument in the context of polyamorous relationships.

There is a rich variability in gender identity and expression, sexuality, and relationship styles. As societal norms change, so do the mores and goals of formation of relationships. Monogamous relationships were once formed for financial reasons; the sole purpose of which was to combine resources and procreate (in order to create more workers and more income) (Bell, 1995; Coontz, 2004).

When romantic love became the accepted reason for partnering, it was often tied in with religious beliefs and often excluded the need for sexual satisfaction (Coontz, 2004) because sex was viewed as existing for the purpose of procreation. As times have changed, people have come to choose their own reasons for forming relationships. Procreation and marriage are not always the goal of relationships and sometimes are even rejected by monogamous and polyamorous individuals alike. Instruments created for measuring relationship satisfaction must also include the option for individuals who want to remain childless. Instruments should be calibrated to allow individuals to opt out of questions that do not apply to them without effecting the overall score or validity of the instrument.

Polyamorous individuals are likely to benefit from knowing the results of the study. It may be beneficial to know more about the attitudes and beliefs of individuals within the polyamory community. Families of polyamorous individuals may also find this information useful about the polyamorous lifestyle to better support their loved ones.

The current study provided insights about relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships and whether they are different compared to monogamous relationships. There were significant differences between what the two groups deemed important and perceived as satisfying in terms of the relationship characteristics as measured by CHARISMA inventory. Therapists could use the results of this study to ground their understanding of the needs of polyamorous clients. With more knowledge about the polyamorous lifestyle, they are more equipped to address issues and concerns of polyamorous individuals.

Positive Social Change

The current study's findings provide information regarding similarities and differences in self-reported relationship needs, and overall relationship satisfaction of polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Data from this study show that individuals in polyamorous relationship to not vary significantly in their relationship satisfaction rating from individuals in monogamous relationships. Data also show significant difference in factors, or needs that must be met, in order to be satisfied in a relationship between monogamous and polyamorous individuals. This information could be used to promote positive social change by helping educate individuals,

families, organizations, and clinicians about polyamory, and the various relationship needs of polyamorous individuals.

Sharing the findings with a wide audience would be beneficial to all. A brief overview of the study and findings will be posted, and made sharable on social media, on the researchers' personal page, and in the Facebook polyamory groups from which participants were recruited. The results of this study will also be shared in full with APA's Division 44, consensual nonmonogamy task force. Providing a better understanding of the lives of polyamorous will help to reduce the stigma attached this lifestyle. Increasing awareness about this lifestyle has potential to lead to a change in the perceptions of the public about this population.

Academic research has the power to show therapists, social services providers, psychologists, policy makers, and community leaders that ethical nonmonogamy is a valid, legitimate, and healthy choice for some people. Taking moral bias out of the equation, people can look at empirical evidence that shows that although the way people chose to live their lives may differ, in the end people have the need to be accepted, in order to feel connected to society at large and to be happy. When polyamory is seen in an academic light with sexual taboos removed, it becomes easier to see that these are just average people, deserving of the same respect, legal protections, and consideration by the medical/psychological professionals.

Research such as this can be helpful to individuals "coming out" to their friends and family. The results may empower individuals by giving them information about their lifestyle. Real social change should start with having a positive effect on

one life; it will then be shared and disseminated, thus having the potential to affect change in many areas that this researcher has not even anticipated.

Conclusion

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative study was to provide insight into the factors involved in relationship satisfaction in polyamorous relationships. The independent variables in this study were relationship characteristics as measured by CHARISMA. The dependent variable was relationship satisfaction as measured by CHARISMA. A total of 372 adults participated in the study. Descriptive statistics, MANOVA, and ANOVA, analyses were conducted.

Monogamous individuals reported significantly higher importance ratings in 10 out of the 18 relationship characteristics of a lifetime commitment, loyalty, strong moral values, partners are best friends, sexual intimacy, good parenting, and faith in God, religious commitment, physical attraction, and sexual faithfulness than polyamorous individuals. There were also significant differences in satisfaction ratings in 4 out of the 18 relationship characteristics of sexual intimacy, romance, sensitivity and supportiveness, and sexual faithfulness between polyamorous and monogamous individuals. Polyamorous individuals reported significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual intimacy, romance, and sensitivity and supportiveness in a relationship than monogamous individuals while monogamous individuals reported significantly higher satisfaction ratings in sexual faithfulness in a relationship than polyamorous individuals. The results also revealed that there was no significant difference in the

overall relationship satisfaction rating between polyamorous and monogamous individuals.

The current study provided insights that would clarify the polyamorous lifestyle, particularly on their relationship satisfaction. While there were significant differences in importance and satisfaction ratings between polyamorous and monogamous individuals, there was no significant difference in the overall relationship satisfaction. This study provided information which therapists can use as a framework to provide evidence-based interventions to their clients.

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Appendix A: Online Invitation to Participate

Hello everyone! My name is Irene Kushnir, and I am a doctoral student in clinical psychology at Walden University. I am conducting a study analyzing factors contributing to relationship satisfaction in polyamorous and monogamous relationships. The main focus of this study is to examine whether the factors that lead to relationship satisfaction are significantly similar or different from those found in monogamous relationships. I am being supervised by Dr. Chet Lesniak at Walden University. This study has been approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board.

You are eligible to participate in the study if you are an adult, 18 or older, who is currently in a long-term romantic relationship for at least a year. The study should take from 5-15 minutes to complete, should you accept. Your responses and identity will be kept strictly confidential. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to this research and findings could lead to greater public and clinical understanding of assessing polyamorous relationships, and will help guide clinicians and educators in working with polyamorous clients.

If you chose to participate, you will be taken to an informed consent form once you select the link to the survey. (surveymonkey.com). If you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Appendix B: Permission to Use CHARISMA Inventory

07/09/2017

Name: Irene Kushnir
Institution: Walden University
Department: Clinical Psychology

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am a doctoral student from Walden University writing my dissertation titled "An analysis of factors contributing to relationship satisfaction in polyamorous and monogamous relationships", under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Lesniak.

I would like your permission to use the CHARISMA survey/questionnaire instrument in my research study. I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest Information and Learning (ProQuest) through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation on demand and may make my dissertation available for free internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

Please contact me should you have any questions or need additional information. Thank you very much!

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through e-mail.

Sincerely,

Irene Kushnir

Doctoral Candidate

Dear Irene
I find the terms you enumerated to be reasonable and I'd be pleased for you to use this instrument in your research. Typically I request that researchers purchase the Charisma Handbook for $89. which will include your right to reproduce or utilize any/all parts of the inventory or handbook.
Please note my email address above. I look forward to hearing back from you.
Best wishes

Irene Kushnir

Thank you so much! I have just purchased the handbook.

Thank you. I will ship it out to you asap!
--Dr. J.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

_____Under 18

_____18-26

_____27-35

_____36-46

_____47-60

_____61-75

_____76 and Over

2. What would best describe you?

_____African American

_____Asian

_____Native American

_____White

_____Others

3. Which gender do you identify most with?

_____Male

_____Female

_____Intersex

_____Gender fluid

_____Prefer not to say

4. What is the highest level of education you have received?

_____Less than high school diploma

_____High school diploma or equivalent degree

_____Associate's degree

_____Bachelor's degree

_____Master's degree

_____Doctoral/Post Doctoral degree

5. What is your marital status?

_____Married

_____Divorced

_____Separated

_____Widowed

_____Unmarried

6. What is your current employment status?

_____Full-time employment

_____Part-time employment

_____Unemployed

_____Self-employed

_____Home-maker

_____Student

_____Retired

7. Which income group does your household fall under?

____Less than $30,000

_____$31,000 – $60,000

_____$61,000 to $90,000

_____$91,000 to $120,000

_____Above $120,000