

**JEALOUSY AND TRANSFORMATION
IN POLYAMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS**

**A Dissertation
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Leanna Phyllis Wolfe, M.A.

**The Institute for Advanced Study
of
Human Sexuality**

**San Francisco, California
June 24, 2003**

Dissertation Committee

**James W. Herriot, Ph.D.
Chairperson**

David S. Hall, Ph.D.

William R. Jankowiak, Ph.D.

Copyright Leanna Wolfe © 2003

ABSTRACT

Polyamorous relationships, where one's other lovers are openly engaged, deeply challenge the Western paradigm of the-one-and-only. Typically Westerners so fear the jealous and transformative repercussions of taking additional lovers that they either avoid such temptations or keep them very hidden. This way they preserve the status and station of social and legal monogamy. Practicing polyamory can be an enormously rebellious act in that it can shift the structure and function of Western marriage. Thus, marriage transforms from being the singular bastion for sexual intimacy, companionate love and pair-bonded identity. This project explores how poly people construct their emotional, social and sexual lives. Central to the study is a questionnaire that investigates demographic, sexological, behavioral and emotional issues. Additional information was gathered through in-depth interviews, ethnographic field work in East Africa and Papua New Guinea, and upwards of 10 years of participant-observation in the worlds of polyamory and swinging. The mean age for my sample were peak baby boomers who face unique demographic challenges in that their highly populous cohort would preclude the actualization of traditional mating patterns. With females unable to all find sufficient older male partners and males unable to all find sufficient younger female partners, alternative social and sexual strategies such as polyamory would be an expected response. Primary attention was focussed on how poly-identified respondents engaged jealousy provoking situations. These included being witness to their partner(s) having sex with other lovers and being left home alone while their partner(s) spends the night with other lovers. The extent to which those who had responded to this study had become enculturated into poly values, particularly "compersion" (positive feelings in regards to the love and erotic attention that one's partner receives from other lovers) was measured. Ultimately an index was devised which established higher levels of compersion for men and for those who reported that they love each of their partners equally. These included reporting little or no anxiety associated with having their partner engage the affections of others as well as a strong desire to retain the polyamorous dynamics and structure of their home relationships. Over 70% reported that engaging in polyamory had increased their self esteem and their love for their home partner, while upwards of 90% contended polyamory had contributed to their gaining a better perspective both on themselves and their partners.

DEDICATION

To Don and Jim
In thanks for the inspiration, enthusiasm and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While this dissertation only carries my name it could not have been completed without the help of many people. First and foremost was my partner Don Byrd. He read armloads of books on evolutionary psychology, wrestled countless computer viruses and loaded great software into my laptop. He joined me in many of my field research forays and enthusiastically critiqued sections that needed help. During the weeks that I holed myself up in our home office to write and write and write, he'd call every couple of hours to check in and cause me to engage a bit of the world beyond my computer. On many nights he'd heat up our hot tub, rub my computer-sore muscles, and crack some of the best jokes.

Jim Herriot, my committee chair, proved to be the most delightful one-man cheering squad. Every time I'd finish a section or dream up some potentially cool theory, he'd enthusiastically engage me. He deconstructed dissertation writing in such a way that I never once felt overwhelmed. Beyond listening to my ideas, he joined me in collecting data at Polyburn, the polyamory camp at Burning Man, as well as at several swing clubs and sex parties. With him DATA collection took on a whole other dimension, as we'd spend weeks processing the unique cultural worlds we'd encountered. In addition he joined me in creating presentations for the 2002 Loving More and Lifestyles Convention meetings. Jim is also responsible for inviting me to consider becoming a student in the IASHS doctoral program. For that I am especially grateful.

When I asked Dave Hall to join my dissertation committee, I had no idea how much help was in store. Dave distributed my questionnaire at the Institute for 21st Century Relationships convention in October 2002, provided me with a very useful bibliog-

raphy, created templates for coding my data, spent countless hours running potential correlations on my data, and proofread every word of the first draft of my dissertation. He joined me in presenting my preliminary findings at the 2002 Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality Western Regional Meeting and altogether was a total trooper.

I asked Bill Jankowiak to join my committee as a means to reflect my own background in anthropology and interest in studying emotions. In Bill I made the perfect choice. His research on swinging and Mormon polygyny had strong parallels to my own work and through that we had several fruitful conversations. Bill offered many excellent ideas for questions to ask as well as thoughtful approaches for looking at favoritism, novelty and romantic love. His thoughts for how to frame my findings in the context of cultural theory were a most valuable gift.

A very special thanks to all 229 people who filled out my questionnaires and the many others who allowed me to interview them about their poly histories and experiences. I'll be forever indebted to the Huli and Enga peoples of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea and the many East Africans who shared their lives and perspectives with me, especially the Luo people of Rusinga Island in Western Kenya.

My own home in Los Angeles was also extremely important. Apart from my partner Don Byrd, there was my stepdaughter Sierra who was there for me during some of the hardest parts of my journey. And then there was my family menagerie including Bacchus who models constant enthusiasm, passion and never loses touch with his inner wild dog and my sweet cat Poppy, who carefully positions herself on whatever stack of notes I need the most and is usually careful when walking across my keyboard. Toby is

to be commended for modeling exquisite intimacy and fiery aggressiveness all in one cat and Bonnie for being difficult and sweet all in one rather small dog.

While there was a cadre of swinging and alternative lifestyle researchers in the 1970s, I've been privileged to be part of this decade's wave of graduate students in sociology, anthropology and sexology who have set out to conduct original research on polyamory. Our informal group has shared literature searches and commented on each other's works in progress. They include Elisabeth Sheff, Sue Gautsch and Martha Moore.

Many people in the world of polyamory have shared their visions, their theories and their lives. My friend Deborah Taj Anapol's reflections on the home alone partner's dark night of the soul inspired the focus of my research. Deborah also published some of early writings on polyamory in her newsletter, *Floodtide*, and over the years has included me in a variety of her workshops. Terry Brussel Gibbons was the first to introduce me into poly culture through her Southern California organization, Live the Dream. Since then she's been an enthusiastic supporter, often inviting me to run workshops and give talks. Zahai Stewart enthusiastically shared his experiences and offered many useful reflections when he read through my chapter on poly culture. Many people assisted me in the distribution of my questionnaires. They include the Poly Paradise Camp at Burning Man, Maureen Marovitch, producer of *When Two Won't Do*, and Loving More co-founder Ryam Nearing.

Thanks finally to The Southern California Applied Anthropology Network, the Lifestyles Organization, Loving More, the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges, the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness, The Southwest Anthropology

Association, the American Anthropological Association and the Human Behavior and Evolution Society, for inviting me to give talks on my research over the last ten years.

PREFACE

My objective in studying jealousy and transformation in polyamorous relationships has been to uncover the degree to which poly-identified Westerners become enculturated in poly ideology. Ultimately, full enculturation would transform expectations of intimate relationships and marriage for no longer being the bastion for satisfaction of emotional, social and sexual needs. Such a transformation would value compersion and negate the power of jealousy. In that poly ideology often regards jealousy as something cultural (rather than innate and biological), it's considered something that can be transformed into compersion. People who are compersive are considered happy, loved and loving. They enjoy time alone and enjoy time with their lovers without trying to possess or control (any of) them. They may achieve an *inner peace* in that poly living can cause the external social world to be much too fluid to depend on. Conversely their social externals may become so encompassing, as in a co-residential triad or quad and/or work and family responsibilities, that few jealous "free radicals" exist to wreak havoc on their souls.

Through participant observation and interviews I've been able to witness this transformative process. Sometimes hot buttons simply get worn down. While initially the thought (and experience) of sharing one's lover with another person may be thoroughly revolting, eventually one has yelled and screamed and cried so much that the initial charge fades. The Luo co-wives I spoke to in Eastern Kenya told me it takes about two years to adjust to sharing one's husband with another wife. Sometimes the thought or actuality of violence may trigger a transformation. A husband in Northern California loaded bullets into his rifle after he walked into his wife's bedroom and saw her in bed

with her poly lover. Rather than pulling the trigger, he confessed his thoughts to his wife the next morning and they worked hard to reconcile unresolved feelings.

A new approach to relationships might need to be forged where one's identity is not hinged on possessing their partners body, time, energy or sexuality. This transformation can be so dramatic that the sexual synergy between the primary partners might be reduced or end completely. One Chicago Area husband reports intense passionate sexuality with his poly lovers and very limited eroticism with his wife of 25 years. Moreover, non-residential primary as well as secondary lovers must learn to keep passion on a low burner until socially appropriate moments. In that much of romantic love is about desire rather than full-blown day-in-day-out expression, some non-residential relationships may keep sexual heat going for years.

Finally, the creation and sharing of poly culture can be an important factor in enculturating successful polyamorous relationships. Internet e-lists, conferences, potlucks, magazines and support groups may function to vent (and effectively contain) frustrations as well as to model the benefits of being compersive. To examine the extent to which jealousy has been transformed into compersion in my data sample, I've measured a series of compound variables. My findings may be seen as a first step in forecasting the social, gender, and sexual components of compersiveness.

In researching this project I have employed a variety of methodologies that range from an anonymous questionnaire to in-depth interviews and participant-observation. My questionnaire probes for the emotional and sexological experience of sharing ones' partner with others. Is this comfortable? Exciting? Or does it take time to adjust to such an approach to love, sex, and relationship? My in-depth interviews focus on respondent's initial encounters with and attempts

to adopt a polyamorous lifestyle as well as their efforts to reframe their relationships and reinvent themselves. To be able to frame an appropriate questionnaire and conduct effective interviews, I've drawn from upwards of ten years of participant observation in the "world" of polyamory. My participant observation activities have included presenting lectures and workshops at regional gatherings as well as national polyamory conventions, writing articles for polyamory websites and publications including *Loving More Magazine*, joining a poly women's support group, participating in poly Internet e-list discussions, and personally engaging in polyamorous relationships.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Acknowledgements	vi-viii
Preface	ix-xi
Chapter I. The Invented Culture of Polyamory	1-17
Chapter II. Methodology	18-27
Chapter III. Data Processing	28-35
Chapter VI. Discussion of Results (with charts and graphs)	36-76
Chapter VII. Summary and Conclusions	77-81
Chapter XII. Areas for Further Research	82-84
Appendix Study Questionnaires	85
Appendix A: The Standard Sex Profile	86-97
Appendix B: Polysexuality Questionnaire	98-106

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 1 – Education Levels	38
Table 2 – Relationship Types	40
Table 3 – Current Religious Affiliation	44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2 – Ages in 2002	38
Figure 3 – Living Arrangements	41
Figure 4 – Children, Cats and Dogs	42
Figure 5 – Relationship History	43
Figure 6 – Religion and Sex	43
Figure 7 – Sexual Orientation – Poly	45
Figure 8 – Sexual Orientation – Swingers	45
Figure 9 – Kinsey Scale – Poly	46
Figure 10 – Kinsey Scale – Swingers	46
Figure 11 – Weekly Sexual Outlets	47
Figure 12 – Lifetime Number of Sexual Partners	48
Figure 13 – Sexual Aids	51
Figure 14 – Enjoyable Sexual Activities	51
Figure 15 – Favorite Sexual Activities	52
Figure 16 – Disliked Sexual Activities	53
Figure 17 – Exotic Fantasies	53
Figure 18 – Sex Party Attendance	54
Figure 19 – Popular Social Sex Activities	55
Figure 20 – Other Social Sex Activities	55
Figure 21 – Safer Sex Practices	56
Figure 22 – Sexual Activities	60
Figure 23 – Social Activities	61
Figure 24 – Practical Things	62
Figure 25 – Self Entertainment	63
Figure 26 – Stress Reduction Activities	64
Figure 27 – Stress Responses	65
Figure 28 – Favorite Partners?	67
Figure 29 – Compersion Total	68
Figure 30 – Voyeurism vs. Exhibitionism	69
Figure 31 – Compersion Measures	71
Figure 32 – Positive Impacts of Polyamory	71
Figure 33 – Negative Impacts of Polyamory	72
Figure 34 – Where More Time Was Desired	73

Chapter 1

THE INVENTED CULTURE OF POLYAMORY

Polyamory is the practice of openly and ethically sharing multiple loves. Unlike traditional forms of polygamy, polyamory is a rather recent cultural invention. People drawn to polyamory believe that natural human desires for more than one partner are best addressed by creating alternative, often utopian, forms of family. These can include open relationships, triads (threesomes) and quads (foursomes), group marriages, intentional communities and intimate networks. Seeking to be open and honest about their polysexual appetites, they often refer to people who have clandestine affairs as lacking in higher consciousness. Likewise, they may regard swingers as “sleazy” in that they do not necessarily seek an emotionally full and enduring intimacy with each of their partners.

Polyamory has always fascinated me. From the beginning of my research journey I was curious how a subculture of people could train themselves to not feel jealous, to find delight in a partner’s extra-relationship escapades and to comfortably love more than one person at a time. While I never doubted the appeal of more than one lover, the internal and external negotiations of polyamory made my skin wriggle. Nonetheless, beginning in the early 90s I pursued a fairly systematic study. I attended workshops, read books, joined support groups, interviewed many poly people, and eventually became an “expert” by presenting my findings and ideas at poly meetings and conferences. My difficulties in embracing “true polyamory” were rarely challenged; eventually I realized that for many, practicing polyamory was a bumpy process rather than a readily achievable goal.

As polyamory receives increased coverage by the mainstream media (Richardson,

1999; Cloud, 1999; Singh, 2001) insiders rarely feel that their story is accurately told. Sometimes the sexual aspects of the lifestyle are sensationalized, other times those willing to be spokespeople are seen as particularly eccentric and moreover there are probably as many ways to be “poly” and practice polyamory, as there are poly people.

Ten years ago people might find out about polyamory by seeing Deborah Anapol or Ryam Nearing on a television talk show. With the growth of the Internet, poly inclined people can now conduct a “polyamory” keyword search and find hundreds of links and sites. These can lead to regional potluck discussion groups, national conferences and a variety of online publications.

People are attracted to the poly world for diverse reasons. Some, inspired by books such as Robert Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land*, hope to actualize a gender and relationship utopia in their own lives. Others, frustrated by years of restrictive monogamous marriage / relationships agreements, endeavor to better address their attractions to multiple partners. Still others are independent idealists who believe that expressions of love should not be restricted by religion and the law. Some are dreamers and schemers whose passions seem to be occupied more by *searching* than by actually *having*. There are twosomes (who don’t consider themselves to be a couple) and even single people with virtual position papers, outlining very specific requirements for their utopian poly families. Finally, polyamory holds an appeal for those whose limited social skills have caused them difficulty in attracting and keeping partners in mainstream singles culture. They are drawn to the inclusive nature of the movement, seeking acceptance, engagement and certainly sex.

Poly Culture

While plenty of Americans may practice some form of open relationship, there is a unique culture amongst those who actively identify as poly. Typically, poly people, unlike many swingers, don't get together for the singular purpose of having sex. Gatherings often include potluck meals with perhaps a featured speaker or a discussion topic. One of the cornerstones of poly culture is sharing experiences and processing feelings. Often everyone sits in a circle and one-by-one each person in their own words and in their own way, shares. "Shares" may be filled with strong emotion and bring the room to tears. Through this sharing, a collective wisdom is created... Sometimes the sharing occurs on Internet discussion lists—burning problems may be raised and varying viewpoints abound.

Cultural Inventors and Inventions

The culture of polyamory is very much in the midst of being invented (and reinvented) by contributors to poly magazines, online lists and chat rooms and those who attend poly support groups and conferences. They invent language (including the word polyamory which was coined by Morning Glory Zell in the pagan magazine, *The Green Egg*). as well as notions about proper etiquette and proper ways to experience and channel emotional feelings. The most common poly relationship is the open couple. Sometimes these are described as "polyamorous with a primary partner," "polyamorous with multiple primary partners," or "polyamorous with primary and secondary partners."

While difficult to actualize, some poly people very much seek to be part of a triad (threesome) or quad (foursome). Probably the biggest barrier to creating such expanded families is the likelihood of being attracted to (and attractive for) one's partner's lovers.

And certainly the goal of three (or more way) polyfidelity increases this challenge many-fold. Without a social contract like that of the Kerista Commune, the possibility of a sustained polyfidelitous family based on true attraction is dubious. Being that there is no real precedence for triads or quads in our society, they vary considerably. Triads and quads can be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or asexual. Heterosexuals are likely to form V-triads or quads, where the two same sex partners each relate sexually to the opposite sex partner or partners, while bisexuals are more likely to create full triads or quads where everyone is lovers with everyone else. Legally, however, triads and quads are not sanctioned, requiring individual agreements to be drawn amongst the participating partners. Some triads all share the same bed. Others find multiple partner sex overwhelming and/or lacking in intimacy and prefer to rotate nights amongst partners. Some are *polyfidelitous*, meaning they have sex only with each other, while others are free to be intimate with those outside of their “families.” Some polyfidelitous triads report that they feel separate from poly culture in that they are essentially like monogamous couples except that they have three rather than two partners.

The founders of Loving More, the largest American polyamory organization, had regular contact with the Kerista Commune in the late 70s and 80s, which did much to fuel their group’s initial focus on polyfidelity. Following co-founder Ryam Nearing’s 1992 publication of *Loving More: The Polyfidelity Primer* the organization’s conferences, quarterly publications, web site (www.lovemore.com), and email list have taken on a decidedly less prescriptive focus. The Loving More mission simply supports “the many beautiful forms which loving relationships and families can take” and respects the “right of all people to choose intimate relationship forms which are appropriate for them.”

Many people who practice polyamory endeavor to keep it secret, fearing legal wringers as nasty as April Divilbiss went through after she appeared with her husband and lover on MTV's November 1998 "Sex in the 90s: It's a Group Thing." The show detailed Divilbiss' pagan V-triad including the ways her husbands were helping to raise her young daughter who was fathered by a former lover. Upon viewing the show, the child's paternal grandparents went to court contending the immorality of polyamory made Divilbiss' home an unfit place to raise a child. While Loving More, enthusiastically organized a legal defense fund, in the end, the grandparents retained custody. What might have been a glorious and righteous legal battle for polyamory in America collapsed when Divilbiss conceded she gave up the fight because her own impoverished living conditions were not an environment she wanted for her child.

Invented Words...Invented Ideas

As the more diffuse Polyamory Movement emerged, a new vocabulary was created. New Relationship Energy (NRE) was coined by Zahai Stewart in an Internet polyamory discussion group in 1993 to describe the overwhelming feelings of lust, emotional receptivity and easy connection that new lovers might experience. According to Stewart (2002), "people seem ever so much more compatible, interesting and clever while in the throes of NRE." In poly parlance one needs to be tolerant of ones' partners' sudden crash into NRE, trusting that as those love hormones wear off, the original partnership will survive. Likewise, poly people in the midst of succumbing to a spate of NRE are advised to be as civil as possible to their not-so-hormonally-charged partners. Of course NRE is the cornerstone of fear in the mainstream world in that if a spouse/partner were to fall head-over-heels-in-love with someone new, the stability of the marriage/union would truly be

up for grabs. Perhaps the biggest difference between mainstream culture and poly culture is that mainstream culture requires ending other loving/sexual relationships when falling in love with someone new while poly culture celebrates sustaining love with all of one's partners while in the throes of NRE.

Compersion, devised by the Kerista Commune, describes the feeling of loving empathy a poly person would have in seeing their partner with another lover. Ideally, this other lover would enhance their partner and generate more love and delight for everyone. With the goal of compersion, jealousy and possessiveness would be unnecessary reactions to a partner's temporary spate of NRE. In the most general sense compersion is a form of altruism where one wants the best for their friends and loved ones. Delighting in one's partner having a good romp with someone else demands a shift in consciousness both in sexual morality as well as inner security. Apart from finding it morally acceptable, if not openly desirable to have multiple partners, one's social identity and relationship security could no longer hinge upon being someone's one-and-only love.

This is perhaps the biggest emotional challenge in embracing polyamory in our Western one-and-only love culture. While the culture of swinging endorses recreational sex (and thus the withholding of deep romantic passion), polyamory invites its subscribers to *carefully* play with fire. Being careful and considerate to one's own partners and to a new lover's partners may not come naturally. Once smitten with someone new, most Westerners seek to become so compelling that their new beloved leaves all other entanglements in the dust. Moreover, there's little interest in respecting the in-place hierarchies of spouses and other long time lovers. Poly wisdom runs counter to this. It sees through the hormonally-enriched NRE fantasy and implores new lovers to remain con-

nected to their partners and families. Unlike mainstream lovers who crash and burn every time a new crush hits the dust, poly people land gently back into the loving arms of their long time families.

The Rules

Depending on each individual as well as who their partners are, the “rules” of polyamory may vary. Typically, there are safe sex agreements. These may include a candid sharing of sexual histories, testing of new partners for STDs and the use of condoms for all partners outside of the core relationship. Some agreements prescribe “lite sex” for all lovers outside the core relationship. “Lite sex” might limit erotic contact to activities that don’t involve the potential exchange of body fluids (e.g. no deep kissing, no oral sex, and no intercourse). For others, lite sex might forbid full body nudity and/or spending the night together.

Some poly couples endeavor to approve of their lover’s liaisons before they occur. Here, formal introductions might be required. Typically, the scrutinizing partner would want to insure that this potential new love has no intention of undermining the existent relationship. Issues of safety might be considered. Would this new love agree to rules regarding safe sex, privacy and honesty? Are they emotionally secure enough to not make overwhelming demands for time and attention? And finally, would their presence add good things to their poly family?

Some poly couples adhere to strict “date nights,” endeavoring to restrict visits with outside lovers to designated times. Others allow such visiting only when out of town—at conferences, on business, etc. Still, others contend that while you can restrict your partner’s activities, you can’t control their feelings—and thus time restrictions are a

charade. To them, true polyamory frees ones lover to fully engage who ever they choose, whenever they choose.

The Goals of Poly People

Certainly, not all poly people want the same things...but generally they want to be free to live in marital forms other than full time heterosexual monogamy. Some seek to be part of a triad. Very often this takes the form of a couple that is in search of the perfect bisexual woman. Some couples have been known to dedicate years to finding such a woman. Other couples seek a perfectly matched other couple which can be an even more difficult task. (Often such couple-pairings evolve into triads when one of the partners opts out.) Others seek an expanded family who might all live on the same patch of land and communally co-create their lives. This dream might include shared child rearing where multiple adults parent each of the family's children. Others might seek a more flexible intimate network—not residential, not an economic entity, just a “family” for sharing their hearts, souls and bodies. Many poly people have much less lofty communal goals, wanting to keep their homes and economies private. They simply want to openly and ethically have more than one lover.

While some poly people practice the lifestyle to please themselves, others seek to change our society's marriage laws. And certainly change is in the offing, Canada is headed towards sanctioning same sex marriage, and in a June 2003 landmark decision the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Texas anti-sodomy law paving the way for nationwide respect for the private lives of gay men and women. Meanwhile many public as well as private employers provide domestic partner benefits, which are often the means for gay partners to receive health insurance. In countries such as Kenya and Uganda, polygyny is

considered a legal form of marriage. While that may seem far-fetched for America, possibilities abound. American Mormons, not aligned with today's Church of Latter Day Saints, create written (but not legal) marriage agreements between polygynist husbands and their multiple wives. Some husbands, like Utah's Tom Green, legally divorce their last acquired wife to be able to legally marry their newest one. Meanwhile, Green and his wives maintain an understanding that these legal divorces have no reflection on their true connubial status.

More University

More University was founded in the 1960s by self-styled philosopher/ psychologist Victor Barranco and for some poly people has offered a prototype for negotiating multiple partner sex and love. Being sexual with more than one partner is *de riguer* at More and intimacy that has no marital direction is encouraged. Ultimately, sex and love are not necessarily linked. More training is often very technical, focusing on specific erotic zones and very particular styles of touch-communication. In the university's group houses "do days" may be organized where all interested women are sexually "done" by all the men. "Doing" involves a sensitive and sophisticated manual manipulation of a partner's genitals, e.g. a super hand job. Several of the More sensuality courses require homework with a "sexing partner." A wife may suggest that her husband and another female do homework together as a way of expanding her own intimate network. A sexing partnership might simply last the duration of the course and not necessarily lead to further intimacy. Full sexual intercourse is not widely or frequently practiced in that it is reserved for committed couples. For couples that are so inclined, very advanced "fuck-ing" classes are offered. Ultimately, More graduates might regard themselves as sexual

athletes in that their training prepares them to communicate sexually in ways that mainstream Americans might barely comprehend.

Students and community members are primarily recruited through weekly Mark Groups. These endeavor to introduce the More ideology through a game in which participants volunteer to be on the "hot seat" and answer the groups' questions. Veteran More players frequently ask questions that expose the divergence between mainstream thinking and More philosophy. These questions might include, "Do you think women are insatiable?" (More philosophy contends that women can be thoroughly satisfied), "Do you think that a man should give a woman everything she wants?" (More teaches that this is the cornerstone to a good man-woman relationship), and "Do you think it's okay to get jealous?" (More players openly invite jealousy-provoking dramas into their lives to increase sexual excitement.)

A Mark Group ends with the exchanging of "withholds," between those that have been provoked, inspired and/or made uncomfortable. This process can also be extended to any dyad, towards the ultimate goal of *making people right*. By sitting across from some initially unappealing person and sharing one objection at a time about why they have caused discomfort, eventually their humanity could shine through.

Making people right, if put into daily practice can ultimately cause a major shift from mainstream culture's search for the one-and-only. Rather than searching for a drop-dead-gorgeous body tingling soul mate, one could subscribe to this basic tenet, and *voila!* their life would be brimming with all the lovers they could ever want. In one way *making people right* is really very simple and in another way it is extremely profound. Under capitalism we struggle to get ahead, thus we embrace the search for one-and-only.

Meanwhile, in a communitarian regime one could make peace with who and what is available and live in a state of abundance.

Addressing Jealousy

Understandably, enlightened ways to address jealousy became a central concern of those inventing ways to be successfully polyamorous. Many people, who like the idea of polyamory, fear that they would be too jealous to actualize such a lifestyle. For them, jealousy is the emotional glue that shows us that we matter to each other. They fear they couldn't handle being witness to (or even being aware of) a partner's extra-relationship love life.

Disregard for the explicit as well as the unspoken hierarchies within polyamorous relationships is perhaps a central cause of jealousy. If a new lover attempts to displace an established husband or wife, emotional thunderstorms are likely to ensue. While mainstream Western culture celebrates finding one's true love and trashing all extraneous players, polyamory places high value on maintaining the hierarchy. Passionate-this-is-it-feelings are supposed to stew quietly on the back burner while established players keep center stage. While traditional polygamists ensure that first wives retain their senior status, poly people, due to their Western cultural baggage, may constantly battle with "fear of displacement" jealousy. Poly first wives can never really be sure that their husbands won't become romantically intoxicated with a monogamously inclined femme fatale. And thus jealousy and efforts to guard against it, can lie just below the surface.

Jealousy has both different levels and different reactions. And poly people have done much to codify (and dissect) the many conditions and circumstances that might cause jealousy. There is "time jealousy" when involvement with one partner makes time

demands that interfere with other partners' needs and desires. Some poly families have scheduling sessions where appropriate times for each dyad to visit are calendared. Because there's little room for spontaneously getting together when it feels good, practicing polyamory is often more about fairness and than unbridled passion.

“Situational jealousy” might occur by selecting one person over another to go dancing or see a movie, especially when the excluded partner would be left home alone. While some primary couples create “date nights” to insure that their secondary dyads gets “quality time” together, these agreements may also insure that unplanned exclusions don't occur. Full triads might endeavor to make last minute readjustments so that the partner with no plans gets included. And certainly many poly support group hours have been devoted to discussing ways to process the pain of exclusion. Finally, people who don't weather these exclusions easily may ultimately decide that being polyamorous is not for them.

“Extreme jealousy” can occur when one's relationship is threatened by their partner's love for someone else. And this is certainly the stuff murderous rages are made of. Here, one's primary status, or whole relationship for that matter may feel threatened by a real or imagined fears of loss. This is where the shift in consciousness that celebrates compersion would run absolutely counter to standard marital therapy where extra-marital sex/love relationships are routinely regarded as threatening to the remaining spouse's inner security. Nonetheless, respect for NRE and compersion don't necessarily inoculate poly people from the shifting winds of love. Primaries can become secondaries and ultimately less close or committed when a new connection grows stronger. Unlike the world outside where there's only replacement and displacement, poly people often seek to re-

main lovers with that “formerly most important, now still valued but not as important” person” (Stewart, 2002).

Changes: A Movement Comes of Age

The polyamory movement has changed considerably over the last ten years. Rather than the early 1990s bastion of utopian seekers and dreamers, those who haven't lost faith and reverted to the emotional comforts of monogamy are likely to be making peace with what is. Rather than designing the perfect triad or multi-dimensional commune, they're more likely to have separate lovers who know of each other's existence and may (or more likely do not) relate sexually. While they'll readily admit that this isn't what their original dreams were about, considering the vagaries of modern life, this may be all that is realistically possible.

Initially the movement was about naming itself (Anapol, 2001). It was about claiming a value system that acknowledged the non-monogamous nature of humans and designing a way to ethically and openly have multiple partners. Once named, others needed to be attracted. They came because they heard about it on radio or TV or perhaps through a newsletter or small publication. As poly people collected themselves together, they began to make distinctions between what was ethical polyamory and what wasn't. People who had secret affairs were definitely not, but then perhaps exceptions might need to be made for those in “don't ask, don't tell” relationships. Then swingers who just had recreational sex with strangers were not, but perhaps swingers who related to the same family of friends and lovers for many years would qualify.

Distinctions between who was and who wasn't poly gave way to seeking the perfect triad / utopian family. As these utopian searches gave way to generating here and

now relationships with “real people,” the quest for higher quality connection began. It was no longer enough to trade love for sex or sex for love, but rather questers sought to get the most they could out of sex and love. Western versions of ancient Indian tantric practices captured the imagination of many in the poly world. Western trained tantrikas fashioned sexual ceremonies or *pujas* to arouse and blend the sexual energies of poly groups and families. Here, a sensation of being one with the universe might be tasted.

The Rave Scene

While *tantric pujas* may be symbolic of the group love polyamory so endorses, probably a much more accessible venue for group love are raves. The young people who frequent all night/all weekend raves may access a parallel feeling of group love. While they may not be committed to the rules and goals of polyamory, certainly the rave credo of PLUR, Peace, Love, Unity and Respect creates an opening. Dance at raves as well as in much of today’s freeform dance movement doesn’t focus on partnering. While one might step out on the floor with a partner, more often than not, one connects briefly, or at times in a more sustained way, with others. Sometimes a line or circle forms, other times a playful triad emerges and certainly “old time” couple dancing can happen as well.

This dance world has spawned weekly dance jams, often alcohol and smoke free, as well as sleep away dance camps such as Dance New England and the Northern and Southern California Dance Camps. While polyamory isn’t an expectation or a presumption, much of what occurs, especially in the full-bodied intimacy of contact improvisation (where partners or groups roll their bodies over and through each other) is the physical dream of what a poly world could be like.

Often ravers report that after a serving of the “love drug,” ecstasy, and a several hours dancing their minds out of their bodies, that feeling of love for all (as well as no one in particular) becomes quite compelling. Certainly there’s little need to possess anyone in particular when the colors, smells, sounds and vibe all serve to bond everyone into a sensation of loving unity.

Are Some People More Poly Than Others?

Certainly one of the larger challenges today’s poly people confront is when one partner feels more monogamous than the other. The more-monogamous partner may feel that their poly lover avoids intimacy by directing their passions outside, while the poly partner may feel trapped by their partner’s time and emotional demands. There may be judgements about morality and commitment as well. And even when two purportedly poly people get together, one may feel the other is so focussed on adventuring with others that their investment in each other leaves much to be desired.

For however much we can establish that humans are not monogamous by nature, some of us tend to be more monogamous than others of us. Perhaps we resemble the mouse-like vole who but for one gene will either be intensely promiscuous or thoroughly monogamous. For humans, however, context may be very important with even the most polygamous amongst us occasionally seeking periods of intense monogamy.

The Oneida community struggled with members who had fallen in love with each other and lost interest in following the group’s agreements to not form enduring attachments. The Kerista commune also grappled with this conundrum when at one point kissing and fondling were banned for fear they could lead to pair bonding and favoritism that might weaken the group's unity. The challenge of finding each partner desirable caused

high levels of sexual dysfunction for some members. Several men recall that the group's sleeping schedule was like "soup kitchen sex" in that they were forced to sleep with women they had no attraction for. Following Kerista's dissolution in the mid-1990s, some Keristan's formed smaller families while others tried life on their own. Eva, a Kerista veteran, contends that she never knew love and intimacy during her many years in the commune the ways she has come to know it since then.

Conclusion

While *Open Marriage* became a 1970s best seller, few of today's books on polyamory reach large numbers of readers. Why hasn't polyamory captivated America? Probably because it takes something Americans consider exciting and dangerous (sex with someone other than their spouse) and demands a major shift in consciousness and lifestyle. Perhaps polyamory is best regarded as a religion. Followers of the "polyamory religion" believe that if one follows the rules then, jealousy will be circumvented and eternal bliss can be achieved in this life. It's a steep gamble for those Americans who savor the dark dangers of non-marital love.

Deciding to practice ethical polyamory involves a commitment to an ideology about how the non-monogamous nature of humans is best managed. This begins by embracing the concept of polyamory as something that's both desirable and achievable. Then, more specific goals may be defined: e.g. an open relationship, a free-standing triad, a balanced four-some or perhaps an intimate network. Goals aside, the handling of jealousy can become a central concern. This can take the form of accepting NRE (New Relationship Energy) as a "normal" transition that eventually leads to multiple loves rather than (as in mainstream America) replacement of the old partner with the new one. Com-

persion (feeling loving empathy for having ones partner being loved by others) might be embraced. Finally, capitalist-inspired ideals of being with the one-and-only (the perfect soul mate) might be replaced by *making people right*, through sexual ceremonies such as tantric pujas. As finding the means to generously love many are actualized, polyamory might be experienced not just as morally superior way to have non-marital sex, but rather as a full-blown religion.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Apart from the many years of participant observation that informed my understanding of polyamory, I created two questionnaires to explore the intricacies of poly culture. These probed for both sexual preferences and practices as well as the emotional effects of sharing ones lover with others.

Questionnaire Design

First Questionnaire

The basis of my first questionnaire (see Appendix A), “The Standard Sex Profile of the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality” was initially developed by the National Sex Forum (NSF) in 1970. The Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality revised it in 1977, 1980 and 1984. I maintained the questions from the 1984 survey and analyzed them in “Basic Research Project Report Featuring People With Multiple Partners” (Wolfe, 2002). An additional 21 questions related to this dissertation were featured at the end of that questionnaire. The Standard Sex Profile questions gather demographic information, experience with and exposure to sexual intercourse, masturbation, homosexuality, oral sex, group sex, pedophilia, sadomasochism, rape, prostitution, and the use of sexual aids/toys.

My additional questions focussed on the experience of consensual multiple partner sex. These probed for the range of extra-partner activities that might be pursued, the frequency in which one’s partner visited with other lovers, activities the partner left behind might engage in and feelings regarding one’s partner spending time with other lovers/partners. It also examined the incidence of favoritism, the return home experience,

satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the current relationship, typical activities pursued in the home/primary relationship, impact of dating others on self-esteem and the primary relationship and overall feelings of being in a multiple partner relationship.

Second Questionnaire

I revised my initial questionnaire to focus more on the compersion issues of polyamory and created the “Polysexuality Questionnaire” (see Appendix B). The demographic section of my original questionnaire was adjusted to reflect distinctions between marriage and living openly with both opposite sex and same sex partners. Noting the importance of pet dogs and cats in my own household, I included them as other beings that one might live with. I expanded the religious background section to include “current practice” and added Buddhism, Pagan/Wicca, Muslim, Baptist, and Mormon. Unfortunately, I neglected to add “Unitarian,” considering the growing appeal polyamory holds for some Unitarian Universalists. For some poly people, Western forms of Tantra can satisfy religious needs, unfortunately, I failed to include this option as well. Ultimately, Pagan/Wicca and Buddhism proved to be popular choices in this new questionnaire, often inviting the mention of high levels of participation in personal and group rituals.

To the list of sexual activities I created a “like the most” column and added deep kissing, created distinctions between giving and receiving oral sex and added G-spot stimulation. I created distinctions between adult child sex as a child and as an adult, and for rape as a perpetrator and a receiver. Finally, I added gang bangs (both receiver and participant) considering their current popularity at sex parties.

I added more up-to-date sex aids including lubricants, whips/restraints, G-spot wands, and ecstasy. In order to sound more current I dropped ben-wa balls and added

genital and nipple piercings. I deleted the queries about sexual rights in that they were not the concern of my current study. I added a question to describe one's current relationship status with options including polyamorous with a primary partner, polyamorous with multiple primary partners, polyamorous with primary and secondary partners, polyfidelitous triads and quads and polyfidelitous family/network. Despite my efforts to name everything there could be, still 6.6% claimed that their relationship configuration was "other."

In addition to querying whether my respondents had an agreement to engage in sexual activities with others (to which some responded negatively only because they didn't have a written explicit agreement), I also asked whether they engaged in such activities without their partners' knowledge. Despite that poly culture encourages explicitness and living in truthful integrity, I wanted to find out how often individuals might be functioning as silent free agents in a desire perhaps to reduce tensions at home. Interestingly, 18% admitted to such behavior.

To better understand the experience of sharing a partner, I queried about whether the respondents had witnessed this activity. Here I developed a series of questions that probed for comfort, discomfort, jealousy and excitement. Tandem with this series I created a question set that probed for how it felt to be watched, probing for pleasure, excitement as well as discomfort and anxiety. In analyzing these two series I created a comparison scale with the hope of being able to compare the sum of these reactions to demographic and partnering data.

Considering that poly people don't routinely engage in the kinds of sex parties that swingers might, I probed for whether my respondents have sex with complete strang-

ers. Those who answered affirmatively were then asked to rate their reactions including enjoyment and excitement as well as any reluctance they might feel about being physically intimate with a person they don't otherwise know.

Questionnaire Distribution

First Questionnaire

Altogether 90 respondents completed my first questionnaire. Two-thirds were completed by participants at the 29th Annual Lifestyles Convention, August 1-3, 2002, in Reno, Nevada. Being that Lifestyles typically attracts swingers (who might consider the emotional and time investment of polyamory to be dangerous and inappropriate) only 17% reported engaging in polyamory style visiting.

My questionnaires were primarily distributed during daytime workshops. While I had high hopes of handing them out at the pool while attendees were relaxing and doing nothing in particular, cool mornings and afternoon rain showers prohibited this venue. Being that I was scheduled to co-present two workshops, "Women Who Share Men...Men Who Share Women" and "Just Below the Surface: The Erotic Power of Jealousy," I used these venues to solicit participation in my survey. At the beginning of each presentation, I announced to the group that I'd very much appreciate their cooperation in filling out my questionnaire. Lifestyles Room Monitors graciously assisted in handing out and collecting the surveys. Fortunately, I forecast that few of my respondents would be carrying pens and I provided plenty of these as well. In addition to my own workshops, Robert Berend, an IASHS student colleague, allowed me to distribute surveys at his workshop, "How Flirtation and Body Language Successfully Lead to Bed." Being

that Mr. Berend's workshop participants had no opportunity to bond with me, few of them bothered to return my surveys.

Of the 150 surveys I brought to Lifestyles, 60 were returned. One of the artifacts of surveying workshop attendees rather than lifestyle veterans in the midst of late night orgies was that a fair number of my respondents were simply *exploring the possibility* of opening up their relationships to multiple partner sexuality. Their responses vis-a-vis lifetime numbers of sexual partners were far below those surveyed by Schubach (1995) and Caust (1983) (see figure 2).

In an effort to increase the numbers of participants in my research I printed up 50 more copies of my survey and brought them to three Los Angeles area parties and a brunch sponsored by Los Angeles Polyamory Support (LAPS). At the parties I queried attendees as to whether they were in open relationships and/or had participated in swinging. If they responded affirmatively I requested that they fill out my survey. Again, I provided pens. At a laid back pool party, my survey became the talk of the afternoon as additional respondents requested that they be included as well. At an active swing party I simply handed questionnaires to willing couples and requested that they return them to me by mail. (Several did.) Altogether 18 surveys were collected through Los Angeles area parties. At the polyamory brunch there was truly no agenda other than eating and so the organizers were delighted to incorporate my survey. Here 100% of the 13 attendees neatly filled out their surveys and promptly returned them to me. Rather than accessing poly people with rich sexual lives as Cavallero (2000) did through her Internet survey, the LAPS brunch largely attracted people who were *thinking about* opening up their mar-

riages / relationships. Nonetheless, these Southern Californians reported 37% participation in polyamory style visiting.

Second Questionnaire

Altogether 139 people completed my second survey, “The Polysexuality Questionnaire.” I began by distributing it at the 2002 Burning Man Festival in the Black Rock Desert in Northern Nevada. Between August 27 and September 1, 2002 I lived as a participant-observer at Poly Paradise, one of several polyamory theme camps featured that year. In addition to interfacing with the various camp members over everything from cooking, eating, recycling brown (used) water, applying sunscreen and assisting with the camp’s human carcass wash, I led discussions related to the dynamics of polyamory at three of the camp’s mid-afternoon high teas. At these teas I’d distribute questionnaires and pens to attendees who included camp members and Burning Man participants at large. Altogether over 60 questionnaires were completed during that period. A number of the camp participants took a special interest in my research and spoke with me at length about their own theories and viewpoints. Zahai Stewart who is known in the poly world for having coined the term, New Relationship Energy, was one camp member who was especially enthusiastic. Beyond sharing his ideas at the high tea discussions and in private conversations, afterwards he agreed to critique my chapter, “The Invented Culture of Polyamory.”

David Hall, one of my committee members, took copies of the Polysexuality Questionnaire with him to the Institute for 21st Century Relationships Conference in Washington D.C. During the conference, (October 11-13, 2002) ten questionnaires were

completed; following the conference an additional twelve were returned by mail including eight from a network of swingers in San Antonio, Texas.

During November and December 2002, announcements were placed in a variety of polyamory Internet discussion lists with the endorsement of Ryam Nearing, one of the founders of Loving More. Maureen Marovitch, the producer of the Canadian documentary, “When Two Won’t Do” offered her endorsements to several Canadian e-lists. Over 100 people expressed interest in the survey, which was sent to them by an e-mail attached file. Forty-five returned their surveys by email, often including elaborate comments and personal histories. Nine were printed out and returned by snail mail. People from all over the U.S., many Canadian provinces, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, England and Israel completed these Internet surveys. Finally, three people who came to my presentation of preliminary research findings at the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality Western Region Annual Conference on April 11, 2003 completed surveys as well.

Despite that I’m embedded in a community of Southern Californians who often participate in multiple partner sexuality, the 229 respondents to my two questionnaires reflect experiences from nearly every state in the U.S., most of Canada’s provinces, as well as England, Japan, Israel, New Zealand and Australia.

Limitations

Data Sample Limitations

There are many factors that would challenge the reliability of this data. One is that filling out a questionnaire in a 15 minute period of time offers only a brief emotional snap-shot of what it’s really like to share one’s partner with others. Generally the responses were positive – on the compersion scale I created, where the highest possible rat-

ing was 11 and the lowest rating was 0, the study median was 9.12. Participant observation through in-person and online support groups and my own relationship roller coasters would make it seem that these were quite high. When I rated my own responses, I came in with a 7.05 while the modal low was 5.43.

Another limiting factor is that the people participating were familiar with the concept of polyamory, and often deeply embraced it. They were members of Internet discussion groups, were participating in a polyamory discussion activities at Burning Man and were otherwise embedded in poly culture. They were ideologically inclined to see polyamory as positive and to consider compersion to be a worthy goal. Certainly mainstream respondents would have rated extremely low on my compersion scale.

My sample attracted poly people who were motivated to devote 15 or more minutes to filling out a questionnaire often for someone they had no personal connection to. While nearly everyone who filled out the first questionnaire met me in person, over half of those answering the second questionnaire found an announcement through an Internet e-list or received it at / through the Conference for 21st Century Relationships that I did not attend. These people, especially, would have had to be attracted to the idea of such research enough to fill out a questionnaire for a complete stranger. While I created my survey to probe for the dark night of the soul experience of being left home alone by one's lover, I might have gotten a fuller picture of my respondents' poly lives if I had also probed for how often *they* spend the night with other lovers. As mentioned earlier I neglected to probe for important poly religious affiliations including Unitarian and Tantra. I might have reduced the number of things my respondents do during their partners' visits to those that have some kind of emotional, social or sexual content, omitting things

like taking care of children, working, answering routine e-mail, watching non-erotic movies and videos, reading, and sleeping.

My questionnaire was most coherent to those who were living with one partner who had one (or more) outside lovers. For those in other configurations like a co-residential triad or quad, comprehensive/abandonment feelings were more difficult to access. Also, those who don't live with a partner had less connection to the issues that my questionnaire explored. Finally, my questionnaire was not oriented to transgendered people (it only queried for male and female gender), causing my one transgendered respondent to have a hard time of things. This respondent also pointed out that I omitted female-female anal sex with a strap-on. While engaging in polyamory holds much charge for heterosexuals and lesbians, for most gay men, it's often a non-issue. While several gay men completed my survey none were so attracted to the idea that they offered to distribute it in their own communities.

Finally, there are large numbers of people who engage in some form of open relationship who have never heard of polyamory and have no idea about its literature, practices and goals. Because I largely accessed people through the web of organized polyamory the experiences and views of cultural outsiders were not available for consideration.

Methodological Limitations

Prior to becoming a student at IASHS I'd worked as an anthropologist, where my principal social research method had been participant-observation. When I went to East Africa and Papua New Guinea I'd participate as deeply as I could in the daily lives of the subjects of my study. To probe for data on how to manage poly living, I'd share the dilemmas I faced in my life back home and ask my informants for advice. And in my poly

women's support group I'd participate fully as a member who shares her personal dilemmas and seeks reflection from the others in the group.

When I was presented with the assignment of completing the IASHS Basic Research Project, I became intrigued with the idea of gathering usable quantitative data in the realm of emotions. I searched deep into the many poly experiences I'd absorbed and witnessed over the years to develop what I hoped would be a comprehensive questionnaire. While the responses to my two questionnaires are the basis for this project's findings, my analysis is certainly mediated by my own participation, reading the works of others, and the many interviews and conversations I've had over the last ten years.

Chapter 3

DATA PROCESSING

From my initial sample of 229 questionnaires that were completed, 140 were selected to be part of the group that would be further analyzed. These 140 were chosen because they included responses that appeared to reflect experience with or openness to having multiple love relationships. Those that were excluded from this sampling were typically from respondents engaged just in swinging wherein the only extra-relationship sex they participated in was in the context of sharing their partner at a sex party. My questionnaire gathered information on a variety of characteristics of poly people including demographic and sexological characteristics. These were coded on an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed using both Excel and SPSS software. In chapter 7, Discussion of Results I evaluate demographic considerations including age, education and career paths. Sexological findings that appeared to be unique to my cohort included:

- I. Bisexuality. My data would seem to support that there is a high incidence of bisexuality amongst poly women as well as poly men. While swinging very much endorses female bisexuality, poly ideology embraces male bisexual expression as well. Bisexuality may be so deeply accepted that Kinsey ones and twos may readily claim the bisexual label.
- II. Sex Not as Important as Relationship. Unlike swingers who relish sex with others for the fun of it, poly people often treat sex as something that is sacred. There is a high interest in tantra and limited interest and experience in sex with strangers. For those who do have sex with strangers, I'd presume a relatively high interest in getting to know such consorts as whole people. I would also presume my data

might reveal limited interest in sex parties, cyber dating and cyber sex as well as phone dating and phone sex.

- III. Acceptance of co-residential relationships where the partner/spouse is not the favorite lover. Since mainstream culture places intense value in finding a soul mate that might be quickly transformed into a life partner/spouse, polyamory's unique respect for the vagaries of New Relationship Energy would be extraordinary. This tolerance for retaining multiple bonds rather than going for broke with a new love, may be one of the cornerstones of poly culture and thinking. It may also engender a fear of intensity and of intimacy in concert with a wisdom about how much endorphinated sensations should be trusted.

How Compersion Was Measured

To measure the extent to which my respondents had become enculturated into poly culture, I devised a compersion index in which the answers to six different series of questions were combined. The net result was a scale that ranged from completely jealous (0) to highly compersive (11). Questions with Likert Scales were first converted to the following values:

(2) Most compersive answer, (1) Middle answer, (0) Least compersive answer.

The Yes/No questions were converted to these values:

(2) Most compersive answer, (0) Opposite answer.

The sum for each question was then divided by the number of parts of the question, normalizing each answer to a 0-2 range. Question 5 was normalized to 0-1, in that there were only two questions in this section it was given less weight.

Finally, the six questions were added together yielding a compersion index with a range of 0-11. However, not all participants answered all the questions. Within a given numbered question, if all sub-questions were not answered, that whole question was not used. This resulted in varying numbers of inputs to the final value. It was decided that if there were at least three complete questions, the values would be used by multiplying the sum by a correction factor based on the number of complete answers, i.e. if three questions were complete, the sum was multiplied by 2, if four were complete, the sum was multiplied by 1.5 and if five were complete the sum was multiplied by 1.2.

Below are the six series of questions with the most compersive answer indicated in parentheses.

1. Witnessing partner engaging in sexuality activity with others.
Rated on a three-point Likert Scale with Often, Sometimes, and Never.

- A. I enjoyed sharing him/her (Often)
- B. I felt anxious that I might lose him/her (Never)
- C. I enjoyed being witness to her/his pleasure (Often)
- D. I questioned our special connection when I saw him/her touch others the same way s/he touches me (Never)
- E. It made me jealous to watch (Never)
- F. I couldn't wait until it was over (Never)
- G. It got me very excited (Often)
- H. I was worried for his/her safety (Never)
- I. I don't mind that it happens, but I'd prefer not to watch. (Never)

2. Partner witnessing respondent engaging in sexual activity with others.
Rated on a three-point Likert Scale with Often, Sometimes, and Never.

- A. I enjoyed being watched by my partner (Often)
- B. I felt uneasy about really letting go (Never)

- C. I didn't like being watched by my partner (Never)
- D. I (briefly) considered never returning to my partner. (Never)
- E. I couldn't wait until it was over (Never)
- F. It made me excited about returning to my partner afterwards (Often)
- G. I hoped my partner might learn more about me by watching (Often)

3. Feelings about partner spend the night/visiting with other lovers/partners.
Rated on a Yes/No toggle.

- A. I appreciate time to be alone (Yes)
- B. I enjoy the opportunity socializing outside the relationship (Yes)
- C. It can get me very upset (No)
- D. I wish this didn't happen (No)
- E. I don't mind that it happens, but I'd prefer not to know who/when etc. (No)
- G. I enjoy the opportunity to be socially/sexually independent from my partner (Yes)
- H. I enjoy the thought of my partner having a good time with his/her lover(s) (Yes)

4. Reactions/activities when partner returns home from such visits.
Rated on a three-point Likert Scale with Often, Sometimes, and Never.

- A. We renew our sexual connection (Often)
- B. S/he seems emotionally distant (Never)
- C. We just go back to life as normal (Often)
- D. We discuss intimate details...these get us excited (Often)
- E. We avoid discussing intimate details (Never)
- F. My partner feels sexually polluted and I keep a distance (Never)

5. Desire for change in relationship practices and agreements.
Rated on a Yes/No toggle.

- E. End This Relationship (No)
- F. Renegotiate Our Agreement to Date Others Separately (No)

6. Impact of open dating on self, partner(s), and the primary relationship.
Rated on a Yes/No toggle.

- A. A Lack of Intimacy in Our Relationship (No)
- B. Greater Emotional Independence (Yes)
- C. Diminished Sacredness of Our Bond (No)
- D. Lower Self-Esteem (No)
- E. Greater Self-Esteem (Yes)
- F. Less Boredom (Yes)
- G. Greater Instability (No)
- H. Greater Love for Each Other (Yes)
- I. Better Perspective on Myself (Yes)
- J. Better Perspective on My Partner (Yes)
- K. More Turbulence/Fighting (No)

Correlating the Compersion Index to the Data

Next I hypothesized that the following factors might have an impact on how compersive a respondent might be. As much as possible correlations were drawn between these variables and my 11-point compersion scale.

- I. Number of nights a partner spends away from “home.” Very high numbers (e.g. lover/partner never spends the night) and very low numbers (away with other lovers less than four nights a year) might reveal high levels of compersion. Midlevels of spending the night might also have high levels of compersion IF the respondent was visiting with their own lovers during those nights. High levels of compersion might also occur if the respondent engages in absorbing social activities like seeing friends, going to parties and work during such visits. Low levels of compersion might be revealed by reports of engaging in crying, eating comfort

food, journal writing, and considering suicide during a partners' extra-relationship visits.

- II. Relationship History. Fewer years of stable relationships might reveal higher levels of compersion. Adding together the numbers of marriages and incidences of openly living with a partner over the respondents' age subtracted by 18 would assess this. Here, factors of 1/5 and higher might reveal higher levels of compersion.
- III. Social, emotional and sexual independence. Those who report being socially, emotionally and sexually independent prior to becoming polyamorous would have higher levels of compersion. Those who hadn't experienced such independence prior to becoming polyamorous could also report high levels of compersion if their poly experiences were positive.
- IV. Favoritism. Those who report they feel like they are their partner's favorite lover AND their partner is their favorite lover would experience high levels of compersion. Where there is a disparity in perceived favoritism, compersion might not be experienced. Those who report loving each of their partners "equally" might be more compersive than those reporting that one of their lovers was a "favorite."
- V. Sexual Aids. Those who report using four or more sexual aids/toys including vibrators, whips/restraints, dildos, lubricants, harnesses/swings, cock rings, G-spot wands, and ecstasy might be more compersive
- VI. Sexual Outlets. Those with more than five weekly sexual outlets including masturbation and heterosexual and homosexual activity might be more compersive.

- VII. Numbers of Sexual Partners. Those with more than 40 lifetime sexual partners and or those with more than five partners during the last year might be more compersive.
- VIII. Heterosexuals with a high incidence of same sex activity. Respondents who report 50 or more same sex lovers AND identify as heterosexuals might be more compersive.
- IX. Bisexuals with a low incidence of same sex activity. Respondents who report less than four lifetime incidents of same sex activity and claim that they are bisexual (revealing an active fantasy life) might be more compersive.
- X. Religion. Those who report having a personal relationship with God and participate at least monthly in personal or group rituals or worship might be more compersive. Those who make who make a distinction between their religious backgrounds and their current practice and/or selected Wicca/Pagan, Buddhism, or Other (Unitarian), as their current practice might be more compersive. Likewise, those reporting no religious involvement, no personal relationship with God, and no attendance at religious rituals AND that sex is very important are likely to be *less* compersive.
- XI. Residence. Those who have lived in four or more states or countries might be more compersive.
- XII. Importance of Sex. Those who report that sex is somewhat or only slightly important and live with their partner might be more compersive.
- XIII. Co-Residence. Those who live with their partner and at least one other being (including children, cats, dogs, and additional lovers) might be more compersive.

- XIV. Relationship Status. Those reporting statuses including “polyamorous with multiple primary partners,” “polyamorous with primary and secondary partners,” “triads” and “quads” might be more compersive than those in other relationship configurations.
- XV. Sexuality Variety Outside the Home Relationship. Those who report being open to 10 or more sexual activities with outside partners including cyber sex, phone sex, tantra, group sex, oral sex, BDSM, deep kissing, G-spot massage and vaginal and anal intercourse might be more compersive.
- XVI. Relationship history correlated with number of lovers. My hypothesis would be that those with a factor of 1/25 or higher would be more compersive. This would be computed by adding together numbers of marriages and incidences of openly living with a partner over numbers of opposite sex and same sex lovers.
- XVII. Sexual Fantasies. Those reporting a wide ranging fantasy life including activities like group sex, adult-child sex, BDSM, rape, and sex party gang bangs might be more compersive.
- XVIII. Enthusiasm for Sexual Activity. Those selecting four or more sexual activities (such as deep kissing, sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal intercourse, mutual masturbation, G-spot stimulation, group sex, and BDSM) that they “like the most” might be more compersive.
- XIX. Sexual Freedom Outside the Home Relationship. Those who report engaging in sexual activities without their partners’ knowledge and report that sex with strangers is enjoyable and exciting might be more compersive.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section reviews the responses from the two questionnaires that were distributed during 2002. Following discussion of demographic, relationship, religious, sexological and cultural aspects of my respondents, some responses are correlated to the 11 point compersion→jealousy index that I devised.

General Demographics

Sex and Age

My sample included 58 males and 82 females. The male median age was 45 while the female median age was 43. Males ranged in age from 21 to 62, while the female age range was between 21 and 60. More than half of the females and over 60% of the males were between 35 and 53 years of age. Largely my respondents were peak and late post-WWII baby boomers. Considering that the baby boom peaked in 1957, my male respondents' median age put them exactly at the peak, while my female median age was just a couple of years later. The baby boom demographic swell had a huge impact on marriage and mating trends in that those born close to the peak would not have been able to find sufficient age-mates older or younger than themselves. In that Westerners have traditionally sought a 5-10 year age differential between wives and husbands, those born close to the baby boom's peak would not have been able to find sufficient potential partners on either end. As a result non-monogamous sexualities would have been especially appealing (and appropriate) for both mid-baby boom males and females.

Schubach's 1994 study of swingers showed a mean age of 46, which though eight years earlier, was quite comparable to mine. Caust's 1983 swingers study showed a

mean age of 37, revealing that the very same cohort she studied in 1983 could have shown up 11 years later in 1994 and easily fit Schubach's profiles. Brian Gilmartin, who studied swingers in Southern California in the late 1970s, located a mean age of 30, which if converted to 1994 years, would have perfectly fit Schubach's cohort. Linda Wolfe's 1981 Cosmo report, detailing high levels of female sexual activity in the early 1980s had a mean age of 26; 21 years later these same women could have easily been in my cohort. Larsen found a mean age of 39 from her 1993 data; her cohort, too, could have easily been mine nine years later. Three years ago Cavallero who surveyed attendees at one of Loving More's national conferences, found a mean age of 43, which would have been close to my cohort today.

Gilmartin, Caust and Schubach tracked the first wave of baby boomers that were born in the late 1940s. If we were to convert those ages to 2002 years, the respondents from each of their studies would have a mean age of about 54. The Cosmo Report, Cavallero, Larsen and myself tracked the baby boom peak, born in the mid-late 1950s, and now in their mid 40s. Certainly, speculations could be made regarding the impact of the sexual revolution of the 1970s on baby boomers that were coming of age as it peaked. For many of them 1950s notions of marital monogamy never held much sway and as they've aged they've continually been drawn to alternative social and sexual lifestyles.

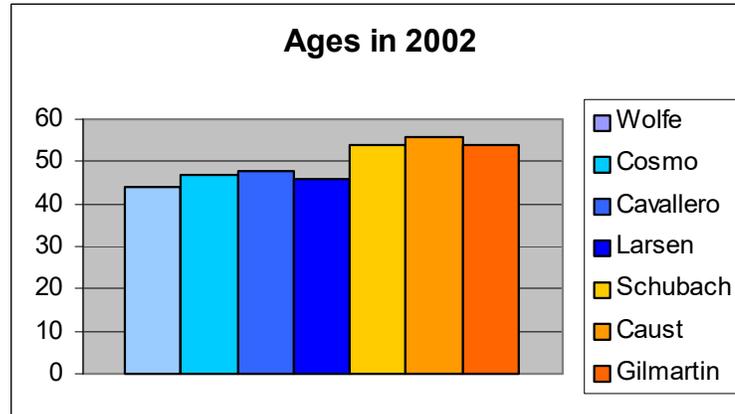


Figure 2: The first wave baby boomers are orange/yellow-hued, the second (peak) baby boomer wave is blue-hued.

Race, Residential Mobility and Education

My respondents were overwhelmingly white (94.3%). The remainder included two Blacks, two Hispanics, one Asian and three who reported “other.” They were also quite mobile with over 62% reporting that they had lived in two-to-four different states or countries. Just 27% reported having lived in just one state or country. They were also highly educated with 98.3% of the males and 100% of the females having attended

Table 1—Education Levels

	General Population	Loving More	Wolfe
High School Diploma or Less	50%	4%	2%
Some College	20%	26%	31%
College Degree	23%	30%	27%
Graduate Degree	8%	40%	40%

college. Moreover 39.7% of the males and 40.2% of the females had graduate degrees. My findings paralleled Loving More’s 2001 survey of 1000 poly people where 96% had attended college and 40% had graduate degrees (Weber, 2002, p. 4).

Occupation

Occupational possibilities have shifted from Kinsey's (1948, p. 77) time when stenographers, bootleggers, and blacksmiths were common. His nine ranked categories don't easily accommodate the massage and yoga therapists and the many high tech professions of today. Categorizing my sample as best as I could, the occupations of my respondents and their partners grouped around categories "six" and "seven" (Upper White Collar and Professional). I considered 24% of my respondents to be Upper White Collar and 59.1% to be Professional. Altogether 70.7% of the males reported that they work in a professional capacity while 50.7% of the females reported that their partners' (usually male) occupation was professional as well. More females reported being students (14.6%) and unemployed or housewives (7.3%). Males in turn were less represented in these categories with just 5.2% reporting being students and just 1.7% reporting being unemployed/retired. Paralleling this, the males reported that 18.4% of their (usually female) partners were students or worked in lower white collar occupations and 4.1% were unemployed or housewives. None of the females reported having a (male) partner who was unemployed or retired.

Business executives were rare with just one female claiming such distinction. Understandably polyamory would hold little appeal to wealthy powerful executives who might be more likely to keep mistresses or practice the Ted Turner / Johnny Carson version of serial monogamy where older wives are divorced (and paid handsome alimony settlements) and progressively younger women are married.

Relationships and Living Arrangements

Poly people often have intricate and exacting ways of describing the kind of relationship they're in as well as how they label and relate to others they are intimate with. The majority of my respondents (34.1%) reported that they are polyamorous with a primary partner, while 13.2% said they are polyamorous with multiple primary partners and 18.7% claimed they are polyamorous with primary and secondary partners. Triads (where all members share a primary relationship) were reported by 5.5%, while 14.3% claimed they were in an open monogamous relationship. My sample also included 4.4% who reported that they were single and dating, 2.2% who claimed they were monogamous, 1.1% who said they were part of a poly network, and 6.6% who reported being in some other family form.

Table 2 – Relationship Types

Open Monogamous	14.3%
Polyamorous with a Primary Partner	34.1%
Polyamorous with Multiple Primary Partners	13.2%
Polyamorous with Primary and Secondary Partners	18.7%
Polyfidelitous Triad	5.5%
Polyfidelitous Network	1.1%
Monogamous	2.2%
Single and Dating	4.4%
Other	6.6%

Considering that an open monogamous relationship is socially and sexually the same thing as being polyamorous with a primary partner, 48.4% of my sample were what we might consider “open couples.” Finally, despite the often-expressed desirability of being part of a polyfidelitous triad, quad or network, only 6.6% of my respondents reported having actualized such a configuration.

Residential Arrangements

Considering that many poly people do not live with all or for that matter most of their lovers, I queried whom they shared their homes with. They were most likely to be living with a spouse, with 41.4% of males and 40.2% of females reporting this arrangement. Living with one or more of ones lovers was also common with 25.6% of females and 15.5% of males reporting that they live with an opposite sex lover and 8.6% of males and 9.8% of females reporting they live with a same sex lover. Other arrangements included living with roommates (15%) and living alone (19% of males and 11% of females). Finally, one male and one female reported that they live with their parents. Relative to the 2000 U.S. census poly people are much more likely to report that they live with a lover (and it could be more than one) and less likely to be living with a spouse or living alone. In that I didn't count respondents who lived just with pets (and no other humans) as "living alone," my figures may be a bit low relative to the U.S. Census.

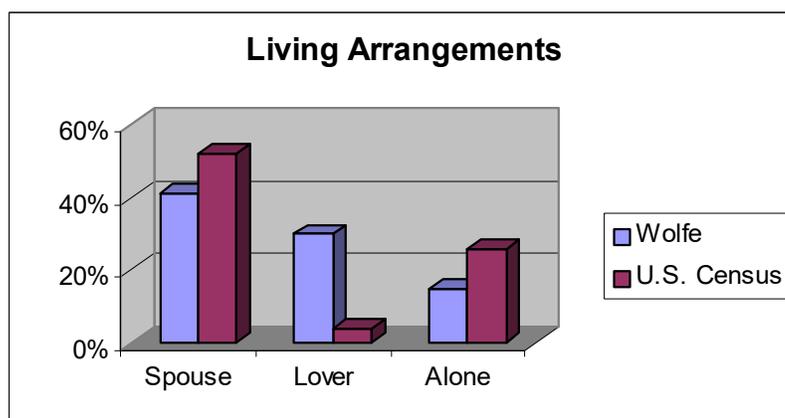


Figure 3: Poly residential patterns differ substantially from the 2000 U.S. Census

About a quarter of my respondents live with their children, including 22.4% of the males and 24.4% of the females which is about 12% below the U.S. average of 35.6% of households having children under 18. Pet ownership paralleled U.S. averages for women owning cats with 30.5% of poly women reporting cat ownership, relative to the

U.S. average of 33%. The ultimate poly average was thrown off in that just 19% of males had pet cats. Meanwhile the survey average for dog ownership was just 17%, far below the U.S. average of 40% of all households. To conclude, poly people are more likely to be living with lovers and less likely to be living with a spouse, alone or with children, dogs or cats than the U.S. average.

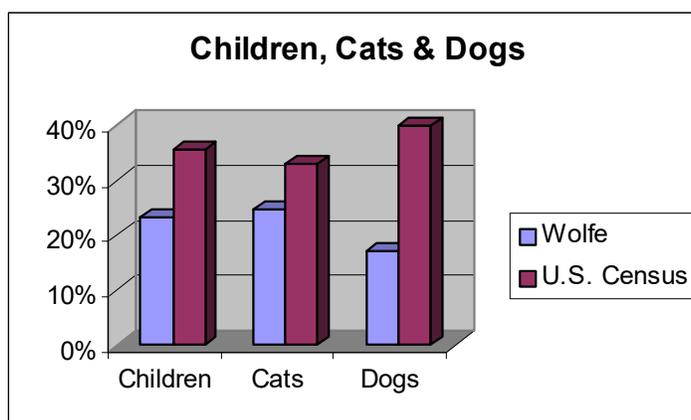


Figure 4: Poly people are less likely to share their homes with children, cats, or dogs than average Americans do.

Relationship and Divorce History

My respondents have been married an average of 1.31 times, with males having been married an average of 1.39 times and females an average of 1.24 times. About a quarter of my respondents had never been married, 24.1% of the males and 25.6% of the females. Nonetheless, 90% of the males and 87.3% of the females had lived at least once with an opposite sex lover. Sixty percent had been divorced at least once with 19.7% having been divorced two times and 9.6% having been divorced three or more times. Five of my male respondents and 18 of my female respondents had lived with same sex lovers. Altogether males had lived with opposite sex lovers an average of 2.1 times and same sex lovers .48 times, while females had lived with opposite sex lovers 2 times and same sex lovers .46 times.

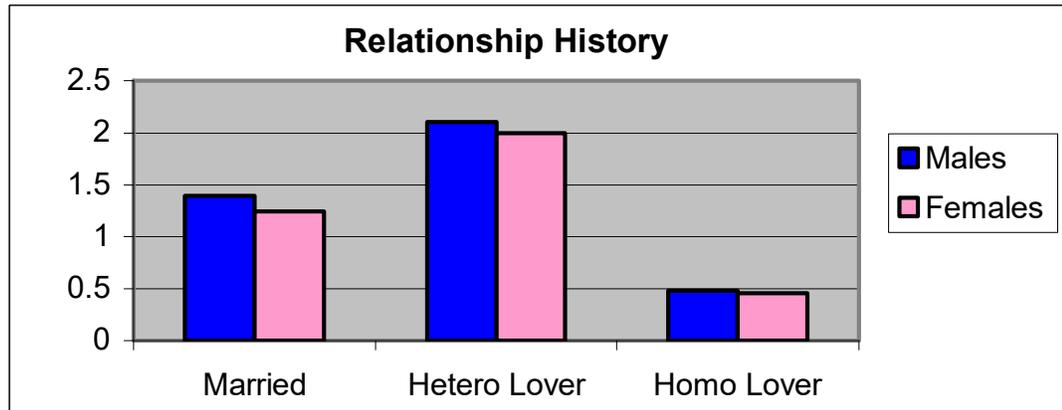


Figure 5: Poly people are mostly likely to have lived with at least two opposite sex lovers.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Poly women are more likely than poly men to report having a personal relationship with God, engage in regular (weekly or monthly) rituals or worship, and to report membership in Wiccan or Pagan practices, Buddhism or the Unitarian church. In contrast poly men (81%) are more likely to claim that sex is very important while just 62.2%

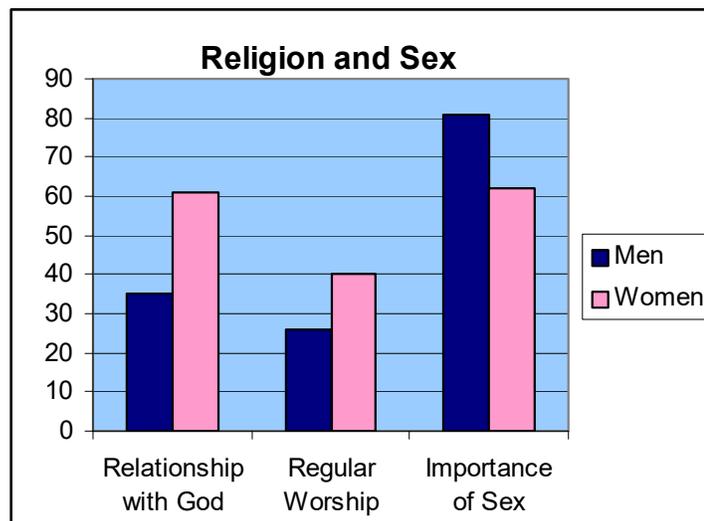


Figure 6: Poly women are more likely to report a personal relationship with God and participation in rituals or worship at least monthly, while poly men are more likely to claim that sex for them is very important.

of poly women put forward that claim. This very much parallels women in Western society who also have a long history of accessing ecstasy through religion rather than through sex (Lewis, 1993).

The current religious affiliations of my respondents paralleled Loving More's 2001 survey (Weber, 2002, p. 4) regarding participation in Pagan/Wicca and Buddhist worship at 29% and 8% respectively. A fair number of my respondents wrote in Unitarian under "other." Considering that the Unitarian Universalists are a generally Christian denomination (which has embraced relationship diversity e.g. gay marriage), this may explain my large number of "others" and relatively small number of Christians.

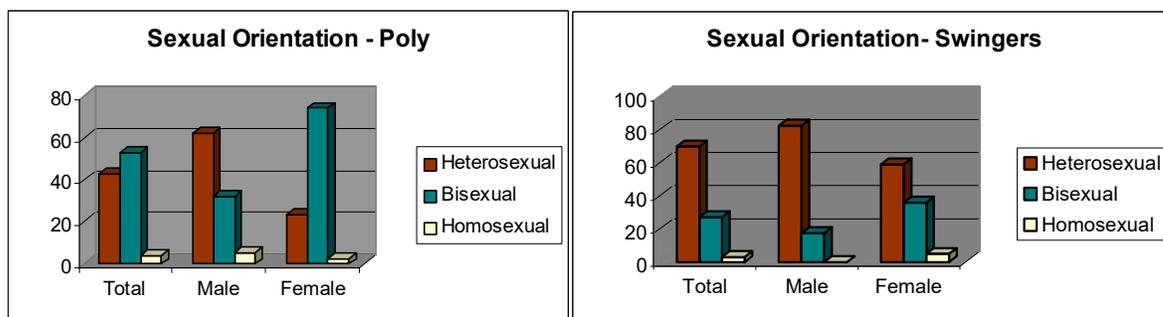
	Loving More	Wolfe
Pagan/Wicca	30%	29%
Buddhism	9%	8%
Christian	28%	12%
None/Atheist	29%	15%
Other	4%	19%

Several of my respondents distinguished between their religious backgrounds that were largely Catholic, Protestant, Baptist and Jewish and their current affiliations. Perhaps in reinventing themselves as poly, many have felt a need to practice new forms of ritual and worship. Gilmartin (1978) noted that 60% of his 1970s sample of swingers did not attend organized religious services. He assessed that his informants were no less spiritually inclined than non-swingers, but rather they viewed organized religion as a sham. Now nearly 40 years later, just 40% of my respondents report that they don't attend religious services or rituals, reflecting the popularization of poly-positive religious practices including Unitarianism, Pagan, Wicca and Tantra.

Sexological Overview

Sexual Orientation

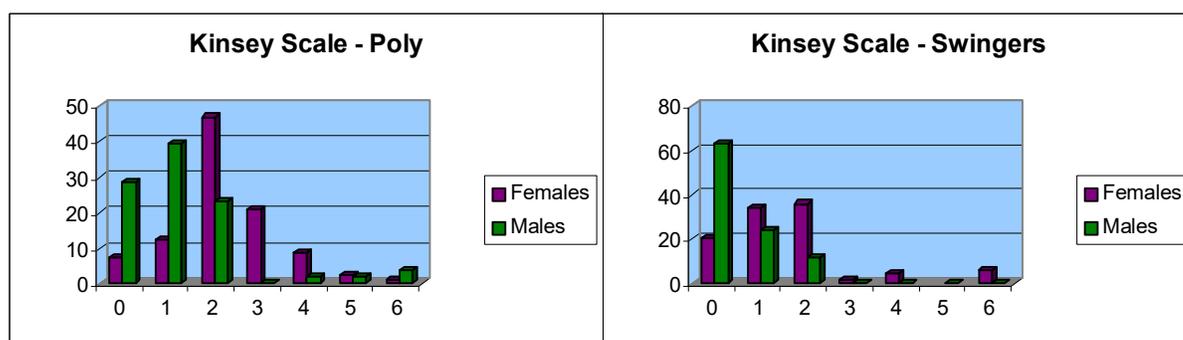
My female respondents overwhelmingly selected bisexuality (74.1%) as their sexual orientation, while my male respondents were more likely to select heterosexuality (62.5%). Just three men and two women considered themselves homosexuals. While polyamory has gained respect in the lesbian community via books like *The Lesbian Polyamory Reader* (Munson & Stelboun, 1999), for many gay men, there has been little need to embrace polyamory to simply validate what is very often standard dating and mating practice. Largely polyamory has become the darling of the bisexual world through articles like “Monogamy & Polyamory: Relationships issues for Bisexuals” (Rust, 1996), as well as bisexual networks that embrace polyamory, and through activities like the bisexual discussion groups at Loving More’s summer conferences.



Figures 7 & 8: The appeal of bisexuality amongst poly people is dramatically demonstrated when their responses are contrasted with those of the swingers who attended Lifestyles in August 2002.

As revealed in Figures 7 and 8, poly people are most likely to self-identify, as bisexual while swingers are most likely to identify as heterosexual. Nearly twice as many poly men (as compared to swinger men) consider themselves to be bisexual, while altogether three-quarters of poly women claim bisexuality in contrast to just over one-third of swinger women.

While poly women are most likely to consider themselves to be Kinsey Scale “twos,” a full 20% claimed they were in fact “threes” while swinger women were evenly distributed between “one” and “two” and rarely picked “three.” At the same time poly men were most likely to consider themselves to be “ones,” while the majority of swinger men claimed they were resolute “zeros.” Interestingly, for poly people these self-identifications may reflect fantasy much more than overt behavior in that 71.1% of the males and 52.8% of the females reported having same sex encounters two times or less during the last year.



Figures 9 & 10: Poly females are most likely to consider themselves to be Kinsey “twos” while poly males are most likely to see themselves as Kinsey “ones.” Meanwhile, swinger males are most likely to claim they are “zeros” and swinger women equally distribute themselves between “ones” and “twos.”

Sexual Outlets

Kinsey calculated that sexual expression (and for that matter satisfaction) could be assessed by the number and frequency of sexual outlets. The outlets he noted included masturbation, heterosexual intercourse, homosexual relations, heterosexual petting, wet dreams, and sex with animals. Considering these, he calculated that the mean average for a 45-year-old male was two orgasms per week. My questionnaire measured three of these outlets: masturbation, heterosexual intercourse, and homosexual activity. In this regard, my subjects more than doubled Kinsey’s average 45 year old male of the 1940s.

Sexual intercourse averaged 2 weekly outlets, masturbation averaged an additional weekly 2 outlets, and same sex activity added an extra .33 weekly outlets, leading to a weekly grand total of 4.33 sexual outlets.

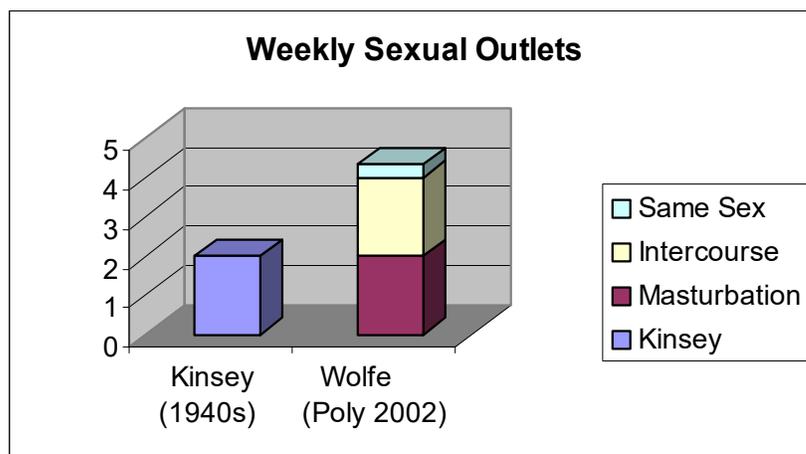


Figure 11: My 2002 poly people more than doubled Kinsey's 1940s sample.

Sexual Intercourse

The mean age my respondents first experienced sexual intercourse was 17.5 years. The males averaged in at 18 while the female average was 17. Males ranged from 13 through 25, while the female range was from 11 through 26. Ultimately, 85% of my females had had sex with a man by the time they were 21, causing them to run a close second to the 95% of their parallel cohort of Cosmo girls (Wolfe, 1981).

The number of lifetime partners my poly cohort had averaged was 17 with a range from 1 – 2000. Cavallero's 2000 poly survey reported a mean of 47.8 lifetime partners,

including a 55.3 mean for heterosexual men, a 40.3 for heterosexual women, and a 109 mean for bisexual women. Meanwhile the Janus Report calculated a lifetime average of 30 partners from comparably educated (non-poly) males and females in 1993. Still the 1993 Janus report on American sexual behavior revealed that 60% of men and 81% of women have had fewer than 30 partners, leaving my cohort to look like pretty average Americans.

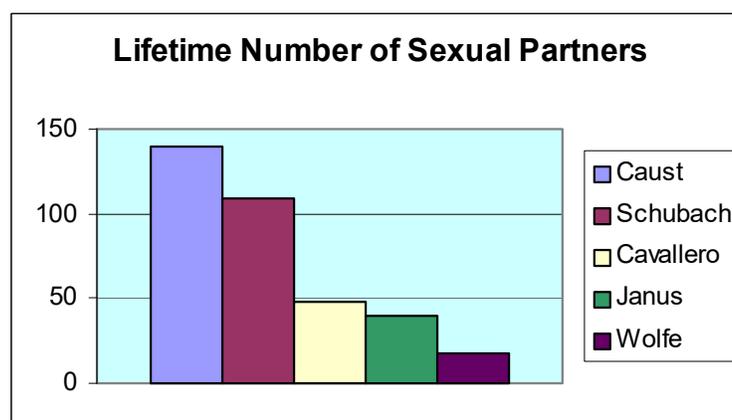


Figure 12: My respondents' lifetime totals are contrasted with Caust's and Schubach's swinger data, Cavallero's 2000 poly sample, and the 1993 Janus report.

The numbers of different partners my group had engaged in sexual intercourse this past year ranged from 0-130, with a median of 3. This parallels the 1995 survey done at Loving More's Summer Conferences (Kirsten, 1996, p. 27) which reported a yearly average of 3.4 partners as well as Cavallero's 2000 survey which reported 3.1 partners per year. Just over six percent of my respondents had had zero partners, while 21.1% of the males and 30.9% of the females had had just one partner. The mean for the males was 7.9; for the females it was 3.7.

Frequency of sexual intercourse could be reported by the week, month, or year. Ultimately only a yearly figure was calculated. A figure of 150 times per year might reflect an average of about three times a week, but it also might reflect multiple weeks with

almost no sex interspersed with sex filled weekends when geographically separated poly lovers might reunite. Certainly the experience of each of these patterns would be very different. The mean for my survey was 131 coital acts per year with the males averaging 145.6 and the females averaging 117.9. The male mode was 156, reflecting three times a week, while the female mode was 104 or two times a week.

Homosexuality

With bisexuality being embraced by poly people, the incidence of same sex erotic activity was relatively high with 87% of the females and 38% of the males reporting such behavior. The females reported their first experiences between ages 4 and 51, while the males reported theirs between ages 3 and 54. The mean age for the females was 21.9; for the males it was 20.4. Altogether my cohort's lifetime median number of same sex partners was 4.3. Males ranged between 0 and 300 partners, while the female range was 0 – 40 partners. Last year 111 of my respondents reported having same sex relations with an average of 3.6 partners. This occurred an average of 17.3 times with the males claiming an average of 5.1 partners during the year, while the females claimed 2.1 partners. The 72 females who engaged in same sex activity during the previous year had it an average of 19 times while the male average was 15.6. Considering that several of my respondents were gay, examining the median for my entire sample revealed that the overall incidence of same sex encounters was rather low. The female median number of same sex encounters was 2 while the male median was just 1.

Sexual Activities and Proclivities

Prostitution

My respondents were asked to recall whether they'd ever paid for or sold sexual services. Being that poly people typically engage in open consensual sex, I presumed that the incidence of exchanging sex for money would be low. Only one woman reported paying another woman for sex, while 36.8% of the males reported that at least one time they had paid a woman for sex. Altogether 18.3% of the females reported that they had been paid by a male for sex, reflecting perhaps the activities of tantrika priestess sex workers who identify as polyamorous. Just 5.3% of the males in my sample had experience as sex workers (for both male and female clients) and 2.4% of the females revealed that they'd been sex workers for female clients.

Sexual Aids

Using (and discussing the use of) sexual aids such as vibrators and dildos can bring sexual pleasure into a more public arena. When common "tools" are used, common sensations might be achieved and open discussions might then occur. Vibrators were widely used with 90.3% reporting usage, including 92.7% of the women. Dildos were popular, too, with 82% reporting usage including 83% of the females and 81% of the males. Lubricants were used by 72% including 69% of males and 74% of females, harnesses or swings had been used by 23.5%, whips and restraints by 46%, cock rings were used by 36%, G-spot wands by 21% of the females, ecstasy by 17%, 5.3% had secured genital or nipple piercings and "other" devices were in use by 49%. Fifty percent of the females and 66% of the males had used five or more sexual aids. Altogether, poly people actively use popular sexual aids such as vibrators, dildos and lubricants, have a relatively

high interest in sadomasochistic play involving whips and restraints and have been fairly tentative in adopting newer wave practices including the use of G-spot wands, taking ecstasy and securing erotic piercings.

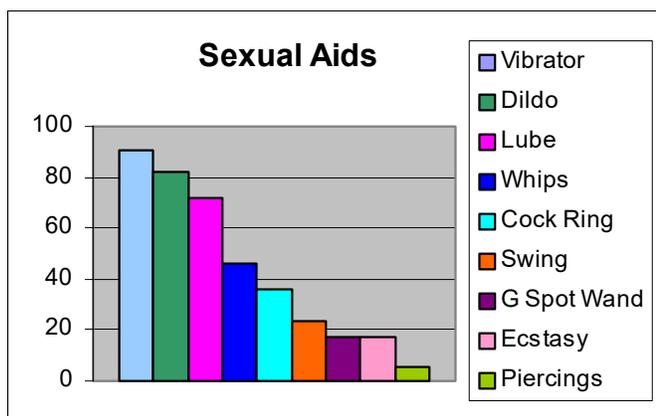


Figure 13: The most popular toys/sexual aids used by poly people are vibrators, dildos, and lubricants, while nearly half expressed an interest in sadomasochistic play that would involve whips and restraints.

Sexual Activities

Respondents were asked to rate a series of sexual activities as to whether they enjoyed them a lot, liked them somewhat, disliked them completely, fantasized about them, and if they liked them the most. Let's begin with what they considered enjoyable.

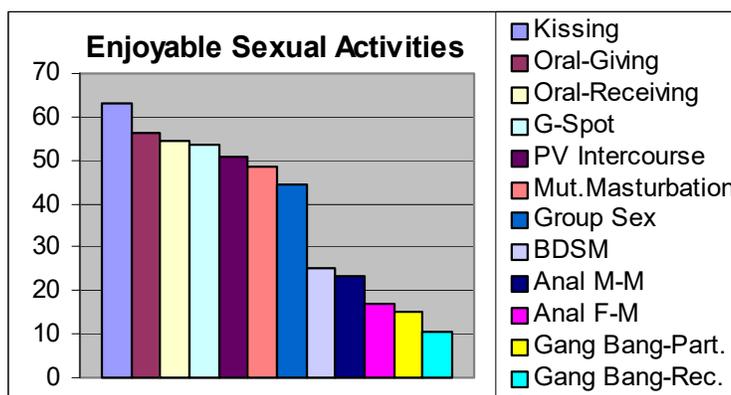


Figure 14: Kissing, oral sex, G-spot stimulation and sexual intercourse were considered to be enjoyable by over 50% of the respondents.

The most enjoyable activity was deep kissing, with 63.2% reflecting on perhaps the romantic sensations connected with kissing a loved one. Over 50% also named oral sex (both giving and receiving), G-spot stimulation and sexual intercourse as other enjoyable activities. Mutual masturbation and group sex received positive reviews by 48.7% and 44.5% respectively. BDSM garnered a thumbs-up from 25% and 23.5% of the bisexual and gay males reported that male-male anal sex was a very enjoyable activity.

When respondents were given an opportunity to name particular sexual activities that they liked the most, some selected just one, while others enthusiastically circled five or more. The highest-ranking (35.5%) favorite activity was sexual intercourse. Giving oral sex was a bit more popular (26.3%) than receiving oral sex (22.2%), while kissing and G-spot stimulation were named as favorite's by 25.2% and 14.8% respectively. Considering the often-lukewarm reception of swinging amongst many poly people, just 9.2% named group sex as a favorite activity.

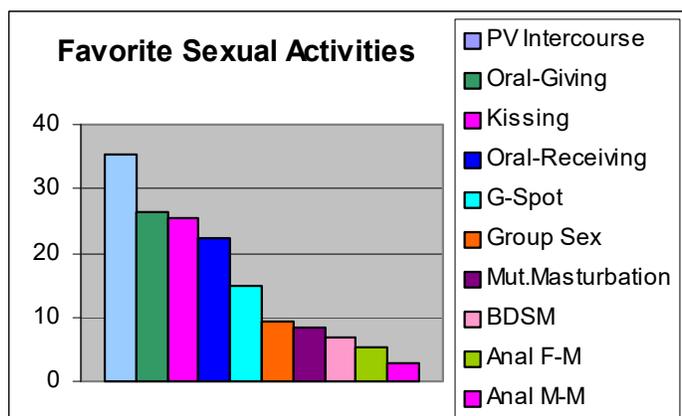


Figure 15: Sexual intercourse, oral sex, and kissing were most often named as the activities that respondents liked the most.

When respondents were asked to consider the sexual activities they most dislike, pedophilia (80%) and rape (71%) topped the list. Perpetrating such activities was seen as

more despicable than being on the receiving end. Lesser numbers of respondents named anal intercourse, sex party gang bangs, and BDSM as disliked activities.

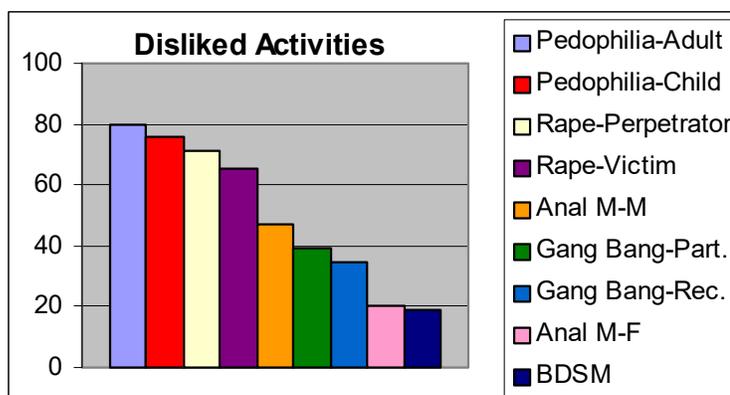


Figure 16: Adult-child sexuality and rape were the most disliked activities. Anal sex, gang bangs and BDSM drew lesser amounts of negative judgement.

While many considered pedophilia, rape and gangbangs as detestable, others were more inclined to convert such untoward feelings into exotic fantasies. Here, sex party gangbangs topped the charts for exotic erotic fantasies followed by rape where being a victim was considered more appealing than being a perpetrator. There was decidedly more fantasy interest in male-male anal sex than male-female anal intercourse while pedophilia and BDSM drew some interest as well. Despite that group sex is often not well regarded amongst poly people, 11.6% did name it as an exotic fantasy.

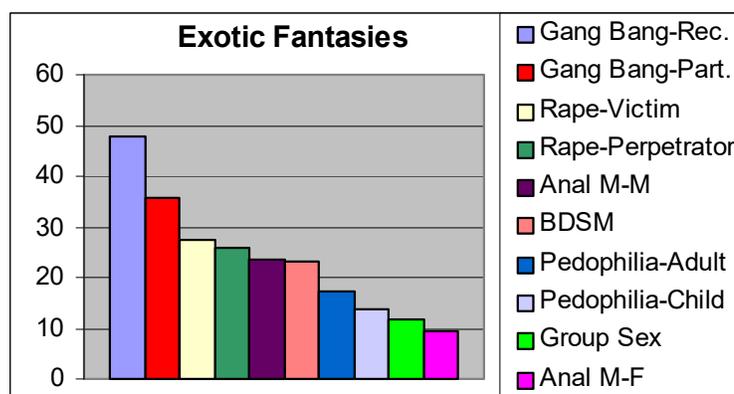


Figure 17: Being the subject of a gangbang was the top fantasy, others included rape, adult-child sex, BDSM, and anal intercourse.

Sex Parties

One of the hallmarks of swinging is attending sex parties wherein participants engage in erotic exchanges with casual lovers as well as people they may have never before met. Often poly people consider such appetites and behaviors as sleazy in that enduring heart connections are not likely to be forged. Nonetheless, 29.1% of the males and 22.2% of the females reported that they often attend sex parties with their partners. Still, 41.7% of the females and 29.1% of the males claim that they would never attend such events. For the 53.7% of the males and 37.1% of the females who do have sex with strangers, 50% of males and 35% of females claim that they often enjoy the raw unfettered exchange. Many females (85.7%) and many males (81%) sometimes or often feel uneasy about not knowing anything about a stranger/lover, with 95.2% of males and 85% of females seeking to know stranger/lovers as whole people. Nonetheless, 77.3% of the males and 40% of the females consider that sex with strangers is often exciting and no males and just 5% of females claim that they would never do it again.

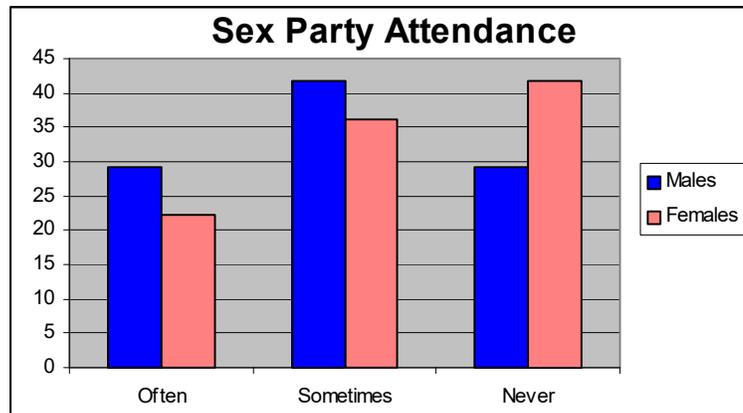


Figure 18: Males are more likely to frequent sex parties than females, with over 40% of females reporting that they would never attend.

Sex With Others

Considering that my respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they were open to erotic contact with others, they were asked to elaborate upon what activities they might

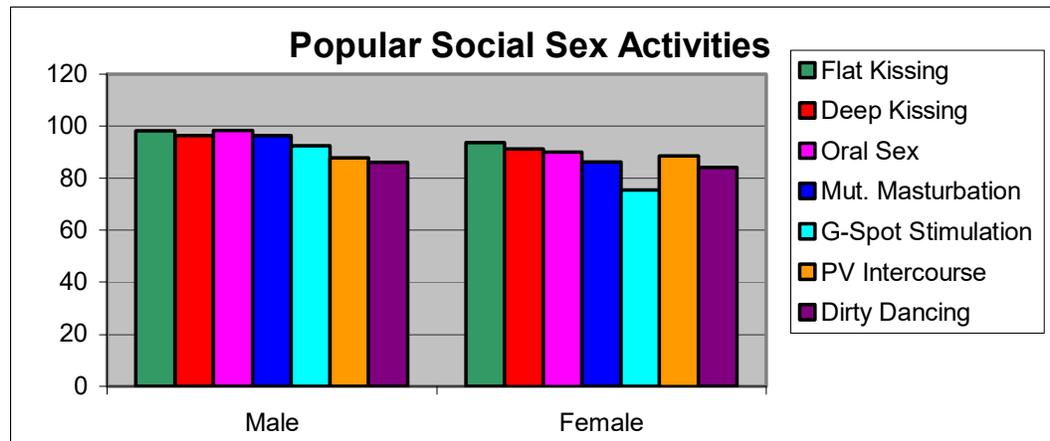


Figure 19: Males generally were more open to more social sex activities than females.

engage in with lovers beyond their primary relationship(s). Altogether the males were more open to all social sex activities than the females with the most popular ones including kissing, oral sex, mutual masturbation, G-spot stimulation, dirty dancing and sexual intercourse. Group sex ranked at fifth in popularity while females, especially, expressed

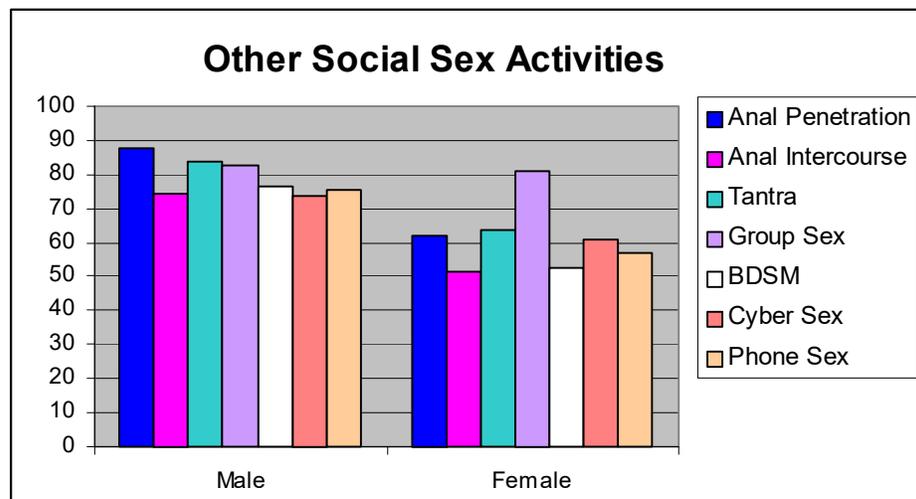


Figure 20: Due perhaps to their anonymity cyber sex and phone sex were some of the least popular social sex activities while anal intercourse and BDSM were decidedly less popular with women.

the deepest reticence about engaging in anal intercourse and BDSM with others. Cyber sex and phone sex were decidedly less popular, perhaps because of the potential for deception and in turn the reduced possibility for an enduring and loving connection.

Safer Sex Practices

Sexual practices beyond fidelitous monogamy and polyfidelity can involve risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases as well as emotional challenges in trusting that one's partner will not run off with a new lover. Poly people and swingers take a variety of precautions depending on their own assessment of what they believe to be safe for themselves and for their loved ones at home. Considering a variety of possible safer sex practices poly women were a bit more cautious than poly men were, while swingers surveyed at Lifestyles 2002 often had different priorities.

Condoms were widely used by upwards of 80% of both poly people and swingers. Reasons for not using them may have to do with “fluid bond” agreements between poly lovers—this may be perfectly logical in that poly people average just three lovers a year. Swingers may not feel the need to use condoms with certain long time “play” partners.

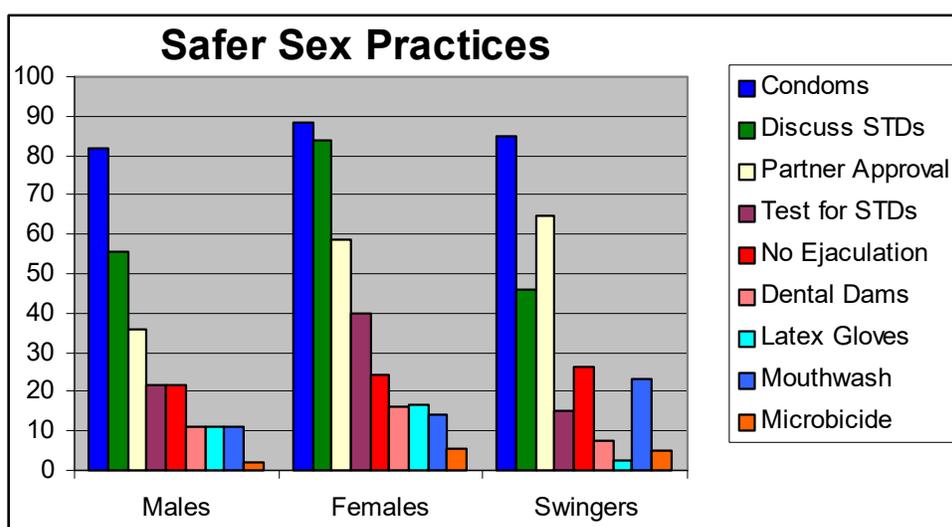


Figure 21: Poly women report a wider use of safer sex practices than poly men, while swinger practices vary relative to the nature of extra-relationship encounters.

Discussing a new lover's STD and birth control status was a much higher priority for poly women (84%) than for poly men (55.6%) and an even lower consideration for swingers (46.2%). Such discussion requires a level of comfort and sophistication with the vagaries of STD transmission and the potentiality of pregnancy. Poly men and swingers might be more likely to presume that such details have already been "handled" and don't require verbal affirmation.

Seeking the approval by one's partner for sexually engaging a new lover is often considered proper etiquette at swing parties and thus was selected by 64.4% of the swingers. In that poly people may function more like free agents in their social-sexual lives, with 22.5% of males and 14.8% of females reporting having sexual encounters without their partner's knowledge, partner approval was only expected by 35.7% of the poly men and 58.4% of the women. This rather dramatic discrepancy between males and females may again be indicative of women's higher verbal skills in regards to intimate communication. For some poly people, approving of a partner's new lover might have huge implications in terms of expanding one's family circle. If a new lover has had little exposure to the culture of polyamory and/or appears to be emotionally demanding, red flags may go up.

When new lovers agree to be tested for a panel of sexually transmitted diseases, this typically implies an interest in having a long-term fluid bonded relationship and thus was not that common amongst swingers (just 15%) or poly men (just 21.8%). Poly women, perhaps in their quest for permanent love connections were nearly twice as inclined to request such testing (39.7% of them did).

Agreeing not to ejaculate inside of a lover may presume that condoms are not being used—26.2% of swingers, 24.3% of poly women and 21.8% men noted this practice. For some males this practice may be connected to extended orgasm training, parallel to *coitus reservatus* as practiced by the 19th century Oneidans and offered by today’s East Indian-inspired practitioners of tantra.

Dental dams, for ensuring safer oral-genital contact, were relatively uncommon with just around 10% reporting using them. Poly women, with their added concerns about safety and communication used them a bit more (16.4%). Using latex gloves for mutual masturbation was very uncommon for swingers (2.6%), fairly uncommon for poly men (10.9%) and a bit more popular with poly women (16.9%). Interestingly, mouthwash was more common amongst swingers (23.1%) than either poly men (10.9%) or poly women (13.9%). In that swingers may engage a succession of people in kissing and oral sex at a party, using mouthwash may often be considered good social as well as anti-viral behavior. Finally, considering the bad press that topical microbicides such as nonoxynol 9 have received in the last couple of years, only around 5% of respondents reported using them.

Visiting Other Lovers

While some poly people only engage other lovers as a couple (and thus creating a threesome or perhaps a foursome), 85% of the females and 80.4% of the males reported that they have an “agreement” to spend the night with other lovers. Several answered this question in the negative in that despite that they and/or their partner do spend the night with other lovers; they don’t have a “*written* agreement” for doing so. Nonetheless, nights spent away from home were generally few and far between with half of the re-

spondents reporting that their partner spends 10 nights a year or less staying with other lovers. Several respondents were their partner's secondary lover and thus spent most if not all nights apart from their partner. For those whose partners engaged in regular visits to another lover these typically occurred between once a week and twice a month.

Only five respondents reported visiting patterns more typical of African polygyny where a spouse/partner visits other partner/lovers two to three times a week. While in Africa, adjusting to the addition of a new co-wife could be quite stressful due to the intense amount of time a husband might be spending away from "home" my sample was too small to measure parallel behaviors here. Interestingly, my few respondents who were secondaries and rarely if ever spent the night with their partners, appeared to very much accept the conditions of such poly relationships and rarely reported being jealous. Only one who was involved with a couple, reported being jealous when they went to swing parties because she was uncomfortable with them being sexual with others outside of *their* relationship. While secondaries involved with someone else's primary may initially enjoy the thrill of NRE, eventually (though not represented in my sample), they might grow tired of rarely or never spending the night with *their* one-and-only lover. One of my informants who is now happily part of a residential triad, bitterly recalls her poly life some ten years ago when her focal romantic involvement was with a man who shared a home with his primary/wife. Perhaps it is only in retrospect that being a secondary who spends all of her nights alone holds so little appeal.

Considering that even intermittent nights away from home might feel stressful, I queried about what sorts of things the left-behind-partner might engage in. I divided the activities into six categories: sexual, social, practical, self-entertainment, stress-reduction,

and stress response. Certainly my assessment of why one might engage in a certain activity, might be different from what a respondent's might be. For example I placed "eating comfort food" as a stress reducer, while some respondents might just consider it a practical/daily activity.

Sexual Activities

In a perfect poly world, when one's partner goes off to visit with a lover, one ought to have an equivalently social, emotional, and erotic thing to do like visiting

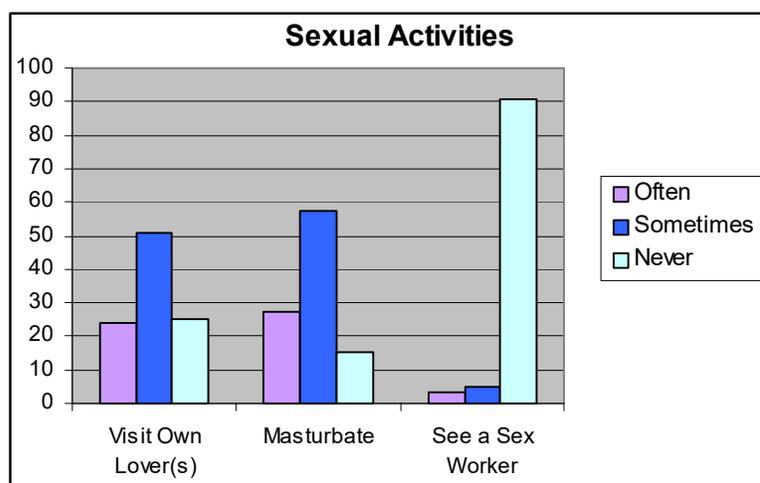


Figure 22: The most popular sexual approaches to being left home alone were visiting one's own lover(s) or masturbating.

one's own lover. For my respondents, 24% of the time this often happened. Visiting schedules can be difficult to coordinate in real peoples' lives and the possibility of an open couple each having equally available secondary lovers is quite rare. Ultimately, 51% of the time it sometimes happened and 25% of the time it never happened.

When a partner leaves it can be a good time to masturbate—with social and emotional spaces suddenly less fettered, sexual fantasies can fly free! Altogether, 88% of the women and 81.6% of the men revealed that they masturbate either sometimes or often

when they are left home alone. Visiting a sex worker was regarded as a poor third choice with over 90% of respondents claiming that they would never do that.

Social Approaches

Close to 30% of my respondents often engaged in social activities like visiting or calling friends, another 60% revealed that they visit friends sometimes and call friends 56% of the time. Considering that parties typically occur on weekends, they were

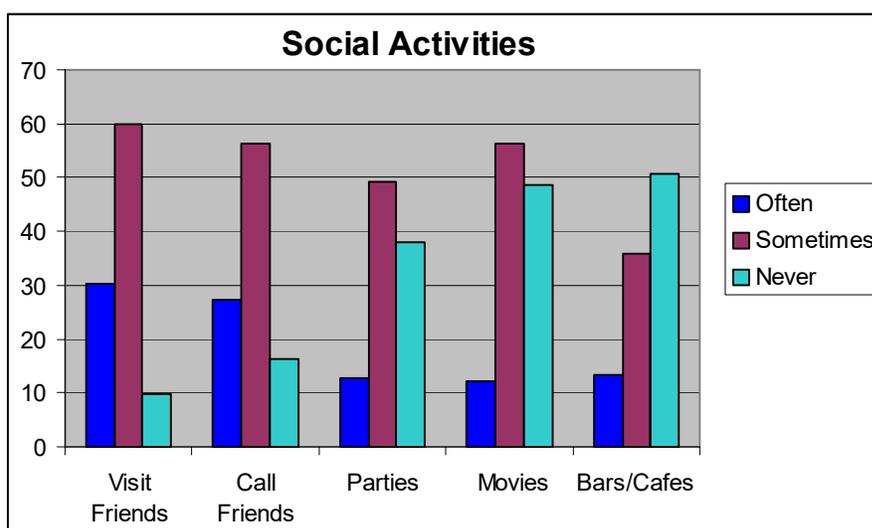


Figure 23: Visiting or calling friends was the most popular social activity pursued when a partner/spouse spends the night out; movies and parties were quite popular some of the time, while frequenting bars and cafes were the least commonly pursued social activity.

frequented sometimes by 49% and often by 13%. Going out to the movies alone may not *feel* as alone as going out to a bar or café alone and thus was more popular. Altogether 68.5% reported that they might often or sometimes go to movie while just under 50% felt as comfortable about dropping by a bar or café.

Practical Things.

It is not uncommon to be occupied with work, 81.1% of respondents reported that were likely to be working often or sometimes when their sweetie was out visiting other lovers. Childcare, while a major concern for poly parents, occupied just 15.1% of my

sample most of the time and 9.6% some of the time. The remaining 75.3% of childfree respondents did not concern themselves with childcare when their partners were out vis-

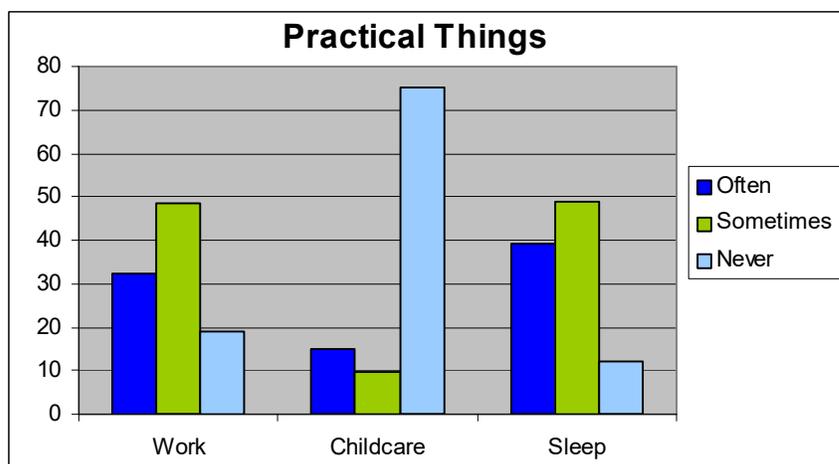


Figure 24: Work and sleep occupy large numbers of poly people whose partners are out visiting other lovers. For those with children, taking care of them may be the major focus of home alone time

iting. While 40% reported that they often slept when their partner's were out spending the night with another lover, 48.6% said they sometimes slept and 18.8% claimed they never slept. This may mean that the visiting partner might typically return home before bedtime. Possibly this was addressed as if it were a conscious activity, that one might *choose* to sleep all evening to better zone out from the stress of a partner being out and about. Alternately, it's possible that one might be so stressed that they cannot sleep and stay up all night. Without more detailed ethnographic data, it's difficult to surmise what these responses mean.

Self Entertainment

When a partner is out for the night, often it's a time to go on line to surf the web or catch up on e-mail. Surfing the web was clearly more popular as a regular activity for the males (46.2%) than the females (34.2%). Here, we don't know what sorts of web sites our poly surfers might be engaging. They could be doing anything from serious so-

cial and scientific research, to ordering books to looking over the huge melange of pornography that the Internet supplies. Sending and responding to e-mail was a bit more

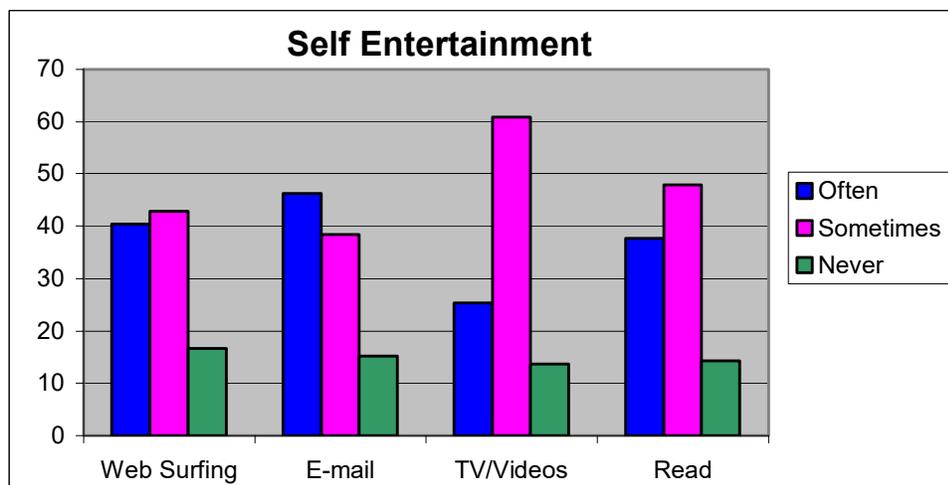


Figure 25: Sending and responding to e-mail was the most popular form of self entertainment, with web surfing and reading being close seconds. The favorite occasional activity was watching TV or videos.

popular with the females, with 90% of them partaking in it sometimes or often as opposed to just 80% of the males. Reading was also popular, with 85% reporting they did it sometimes or often. Watching TV or videos was most often named as a “sometimes” activity. Typically these activities would be engaged by someone who was happy to get some time alone, a fair number of respondents, however, reported engaging in activities that might function to help them relieve the stress of their partner being out with someone else.

Stress Reduction

Poly people who are left home alone and wish they weren't may engage in a range of stress reducing activities. Women were most inclined to write in their journals, with 58% reporting that it was a “sometimes” or “often” activity, while just 30.8% of the males reported such frequency. Eating comfort or junk foods were named as regular or

somewhat regular activities by about 52%. Here, we don't know if this is usual fare or something specifically to calm oneself down.

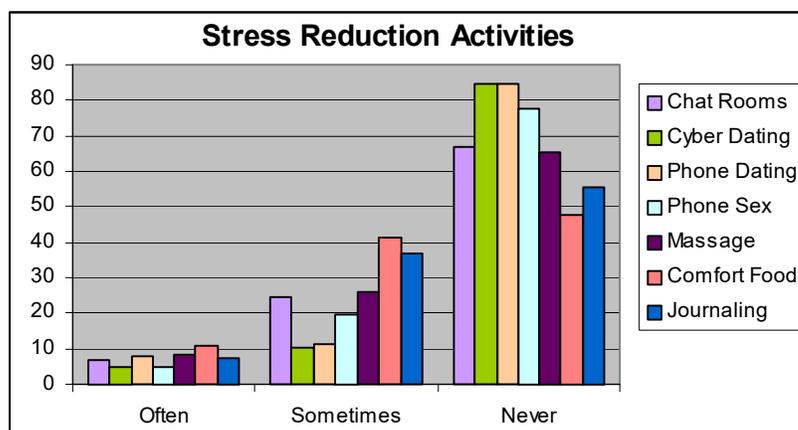


Figure 26: Stress reduction activities were infrequently engaged by most respondents. The most popular ones were eating comfort foods and journal writing and the least common were cyber and phone dating.

Engaging cyber friends and/or total strangers through Internet chat rooms was reported as an occasional or frequent activity by 31.6%. Meanwhile, cyber dating and phone dating (which facilitate anonymous connections amongst people who may not be representing themselves in an accurate way) were decidedly less popular with nearly 85% claiming they would never do such things. Considering the potential for deception (and the unlikeliness that an enduring connection might be forged), no poly women reported engaging in frequent phone dating and just one claimed she engaged in frequent cyber dating. In addition no poly women reported engaging in regular phone sex, while 18.8% of them did report doing it occasionally. Here, we don't know if the phone sex liaison is a known lover or an anonymous stranger. Nonetheless, phone sex was a bit more interesting to the males with 25.6% reporting it was at least an occasional activity. Finally, securing a massage was considered an "often" or "sometimes" activity by upwards of 30% of the respondents. Here, we don't know if it's a trade with a friend, a pro-

fessional treatment by a licensed therapist, or something with erotic elements. Nearly 13% of the males reported this was something they did often while just 4.3% of the females reported the same. Getting a massage was a more common occasional activity amongst the females with 34% reporting this in contrast to just 17.9% of the males.

Stress Responses

Polyamory as practiced by Westerners implies an intersection between an ideology of consensuality and sexual freedom with all of the emotions embedded in romantic notions of being the one-and-only. While most of my respondents appeared to be well adjusted to the vagaries of having their partners spend the night with other lovers, several were not. Three women reported that they often cry when their partner leaves to visit

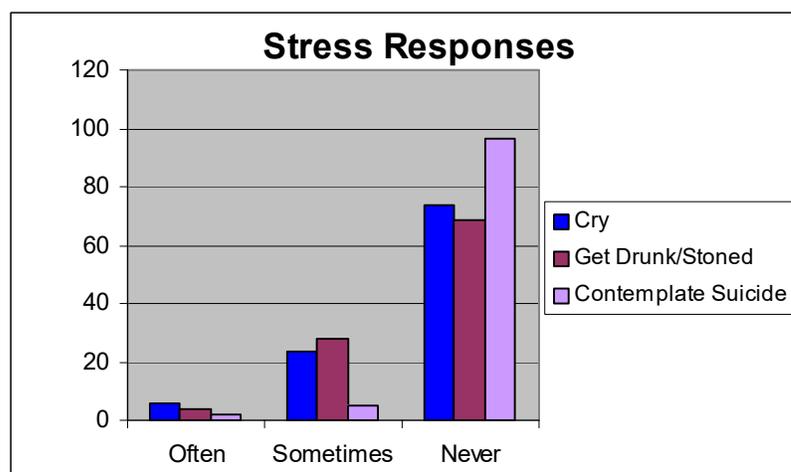


Figure 27: Few respondents revealed dramatic stress responses: crying and getting drunk or stoned were the most common ones.

other lovers, while 34% of the women and 12.8% of the men admitted to crying some of the time. Five percent of the males and 2% of the females revealed that they address the pain of such visits by often getting drunk or stoned. A fair number of males (33.3%) and females (22.2%) reported that they get drunk or stoned some of the time. Here, we don't

know if these practices are typical enjoyable activities or are in fact efforts to reduce emotional pain through self-medication.

While the poly documentary *When Two Won't Do* (Marovitch, 2001) features a suicide that possibly occurred as the result of trying to share lovers, in my sample the incidence of contemplated suicide was very low. One female revealed that she often feels suicidal when her partner leaves to visit other lovers, while two males reported that they sometimes feel suicidal during such visits. The remaining 96% of my respondents contended that they never harbor such feelings, several even commented that it was out of line with the spirit of polyamory to be probing for such behaviors.

Favoritism

In Africa, it's common knowledge that the newest wife is often the husband's favorite. Having been recently acquired, he experiences the pleasures of novelty in the time they spend together. While, he'll honor his marital obligations to his other wives, everyone knows she's the one he's most interested in. Poly people often explain this initial wave of intense passion as New Relationship Energy which may not necessarily reveal true favoritism. For those who reported loving more than one partner at the same time, half the women claimed they loved them equally, while half claimed one was their favorite. Four selected both options, revealing that they had felt both experiences. More males (65.2%) revealed that one was their hands down favorite.

Feelings towards a partner are rarely constant. All relationships have their ebbs and flows and certainly poly relationships are no exception. Considering the lure of new lovers, just 53% reported that their primary partner is always their favorite lover. Correspondingly, 50% felt that they are always their partner's favorite. More males (30.8%)

felt that they are often their partner's favorite, while lesser numbers of females (24.6%) felt this. Ultimately poly couples appear to have parallel feelings regarding how they feel about their partners and how they believe their partners feel about them. It would be more in the realm of people who have clandestine affairs for a spouse to believe that their partner very much loves them while they are actually completely smitten with someone else.

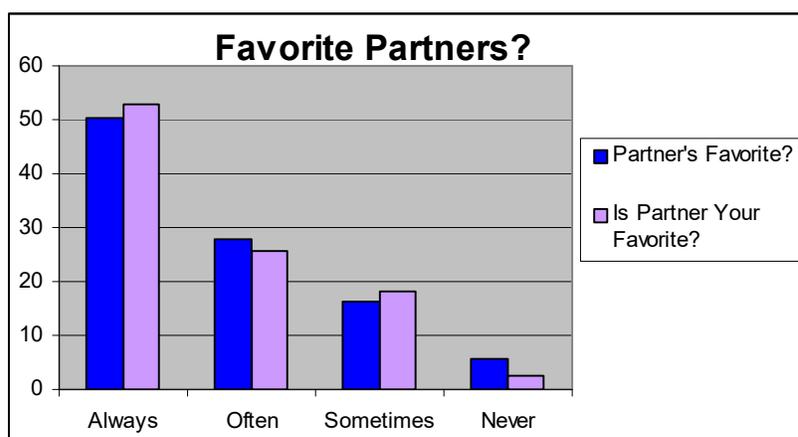


Figure 28: Regarding one's partner as a favorite lover largely parallels feeling like one is one's partner's favorite lover.

Despite the possibility of ego blows for not being a favorite, just 3.4% concluded that being in a relationship with more than one person should be altogether avoided. Interestingly the males were much more enthusiastic about poly relationships with 43.6% claiming they were wonderful and 54% saying that they are challenging but worth it. The women were a bit more skeptical, with 28.2% seeing them as wonderful and a realistic 62.8% saying that are challenging though worthwhile.

Jealousy and Compersion

One of the primary hurdles to actualizing poly relating is being able to handle jealous feelings. When psychologists Pines and Aronson studied the Kerista Community in the early 1980s they found no vestiges of sexual jealousy. Considering the high social

demands of the community and that the groups social-sexual units were not pair-bond-based, it is certainly possible that they had achieved this rarified state. Moreover the Keristans not only invented the word compersion; they wallowed in being able to actualize it so effortlessly. Generally, poly people are not able to make themselves as free from jealousy. When I devised six different sets of questions within which I might be able to measure the extent to which poly people had become compersive, on an 11-point scale, the median was 9.12. Moreover, only 7.9% were less than a 7. My population, in identifying as polyamorous had largely become enculturated into compersive thinking.

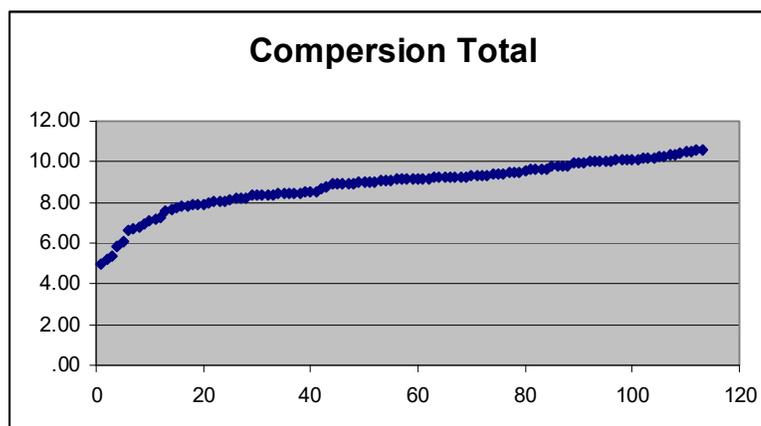


Figure 29: Compersive thinking is largely the norm for the poly people who participated in my survey.

Watching and Being Watched

While voyeurism and exhibitionism are celebrated activities amongst swingers, some poly people prefer to engage each of their partners separately. Nonetheless, 80.5% of the males and 84.1% of the females had witnessed their partner being sexual with others. Interestingly, more of the females (87.3%) than the males (68.3%) had experienced their partner watching them. Ultimately it was more comfortable watching than being watched in that the median on a 0-2 scale for watching was 1.75 while for being watched

it was 1.42. The most common observation was that sometimes it was difficult to really let go (and authentically connect to another lover) while one's partner was watching.

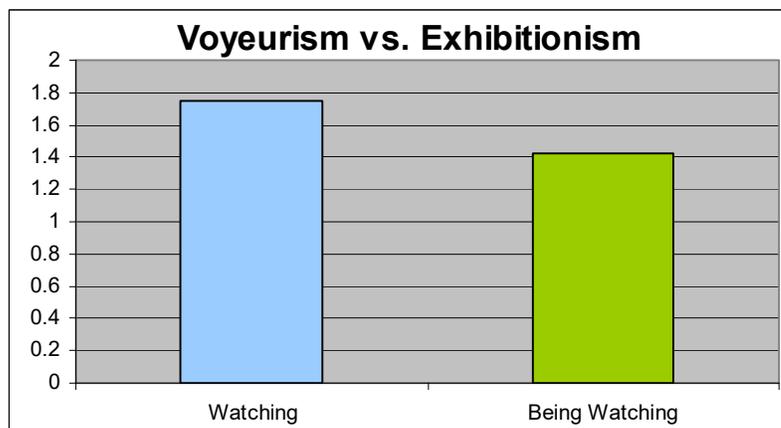


Figure 30: For most respondents it is more satisfying to watch one's partner with another lover than it is to be watched by a partner.

For men, watching may activate what evolutionary psychologists call the sperm competition syndrome (SCS) where a heightened interest in being sexual with one's partner occurs as a result of witnessing her being sexual with someone else. His ejaculate may increase production of killer and egg penetrator sperm, fueling his interest in being sexual with her. Alternatively, he may relish watching because his body knows he's already loaded her up with blocker and killer sperm and that he'll win any sperm war hands down.

One poly man, Seth, recalls creating a role for himself as documentary photographer while his wife made love with a new partner. Taking photographs enabled Seth to celebrate his wife's new erotic connection without feeling excluded or dismissed. In a presentation to *Lifestyles 2002* Jim Herriot and I (Wolfe & Herriot, 2002) proposed that partners witnessing each other having sex with someone new might find themselves engaged in a heroes journey micro-drama. There might a moment of adrenaline-laced anxiety where the voyeur would fear that his partner might run off with the new lover—she

would sense his anxiety which would fuel her own adrenaline production. The relief they would feel in returning to each other might be heightened by the adrenaline they both had generated, intensifying the drama of their own reconnection. The fear, anxiety and relief generated by such a micro-journey might become so appealing that additional new lovers might be readily engaged.

Spending the Night

In general my respondents were very positive about their partners visiting and/or spending the night with other lovers. Discomfort was largely expressed in not finding value in spending time alone. The vast majority affirmed that they enjoyed the thought of their partner having a good time with his/her lover(s). Some, however, did reveal that there were times that they did get very upset—and this can certainly be affirmed by some of the stress responses previously discussed. Considering that my respondents' partners spend an average of 10 nights a year visiting other lovers, the architecture of their home lives was not being seriously compromised by these forays.

Interestingly when a visiting partner returned home, a fair number experienced readjustment challenges. Rather than experiencing heightened sexual interest as a result of sperm competition syndrome or a heroes journey micro-drama, many did not readily renew their sexual connections. While rarely experiencing their partner as sexually polluted, there was some sense of emotional distance. Moreover, many had minimal interest in hearing intimate details of the time away. While not avoiding such details there was often the sense that each relationship deserves respect and privacy. The notion of offering each other access to inner lives generated elsewhere was uncommon. Several com-

mented that it's easier to discuss problems experienced with outside lovers than the “glorious bliss” experienced apart from the home relationship.

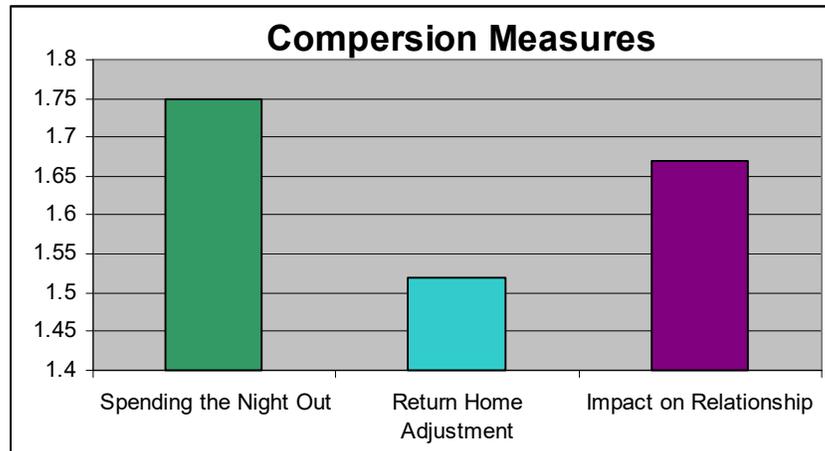


Figure 31: While positive feelings about the thought of a partner spending the night out were common, there were some bumps in returning to renew the home connection. Altogether poly dating was regarded as largely positive both for self-esteem and the health of the home relationship.

Impact on the Home Relationship

In many respects polyamory was seen as having a positive impact on home and primary relationships. Few contended that being poly had caused a lack of intimacy (9%) or had diminished the sacred bond (12%) in the primary relationship. Many reported that

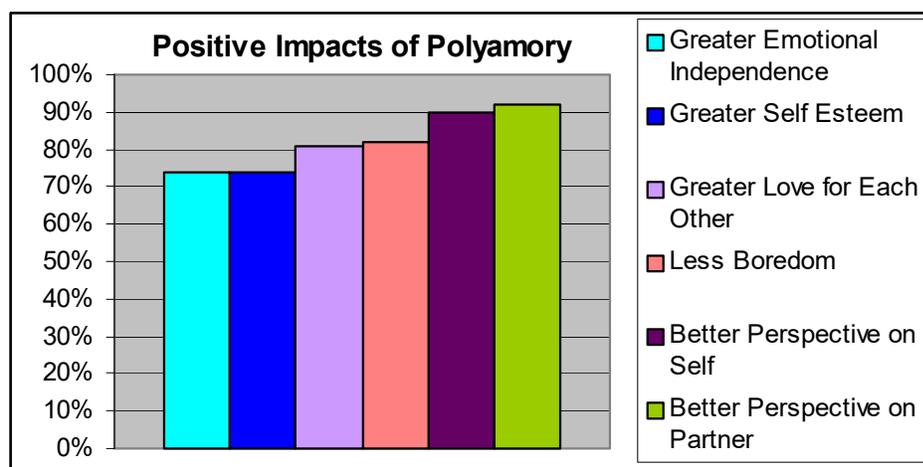


Figure 32: Polyamory is credited with causing partners to know themselves and each other better, for reducing boredom and for increasing pair bonded love. To a lesser extent it's regarded as increasing self-esteem and emotional independence.

practicing polyamory had afforded them a better perspective both on themselves (90%) and their partners (92%). Certainly, by engaging multiple partners, possibilities can abound for more ways to know oneself and ones partners through the lenses of additional relationships. Someone who feels emotionally controlled at home might find another poly relationship to be the perfect antidote for expressing pent up feelings. Moreover, 74% reported that it had afforded them greater emotional independence.

While mainstream Americans would be likely to experience a major drop in self-esteem if their partners became emotionally and sexually connected to someone else, just 10% of my respondents reported that being in polyamorous relationships had lowered their self-esteem while a compelling 74% claimed it had raised their self-esteem. A raised self-esteem could imply that one feels better about oneself as a result of having connected with other lovers who meet more of their needs and passions. It might also confirm a sense of security in that their partner continues to relate to them despite having connecting with someone else.

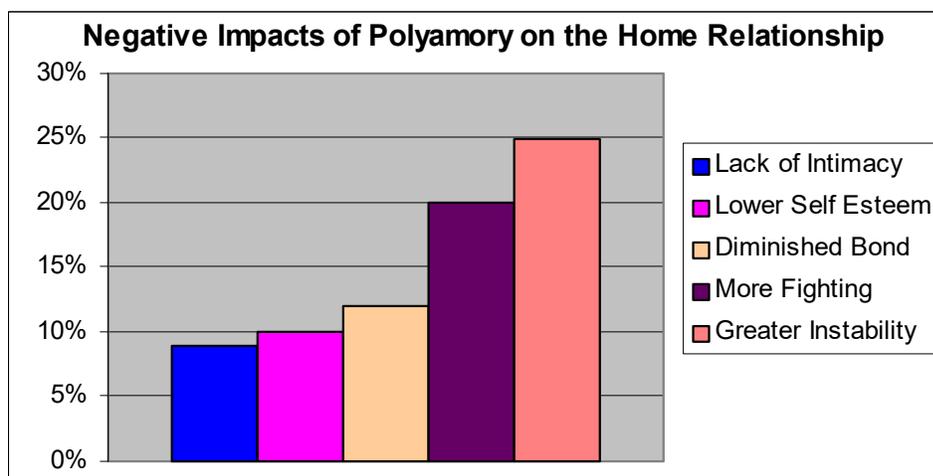


Figure 33: The most dramatic negative impact of polyamory on the home relationship was more fighting and a greater sense of instability. Few reported that it had contributed to a lack of intimacy or a lessening of the bond between primary partners.

Certainly being poly is not always easy as was attested by the 25% who reported they'd experienced more instability and the 20% who reported more turbulence and fighting. Nonetheless 82% reported that they were now less bored while 81% claimed that as result they now had greater love for their home/primary partner. Perhaps in granting each other the freedom to actualize more of their social, emotional and sexual selves, they'd accessed a deeper love rooted in both tolerance and joy.

Ultimately, 97% reported that they had no interest in ending their home relationship while just 13% expressed an interest in renegotiating their agreement to date others separately. About a third did have desires to apportion their time differently. Often these

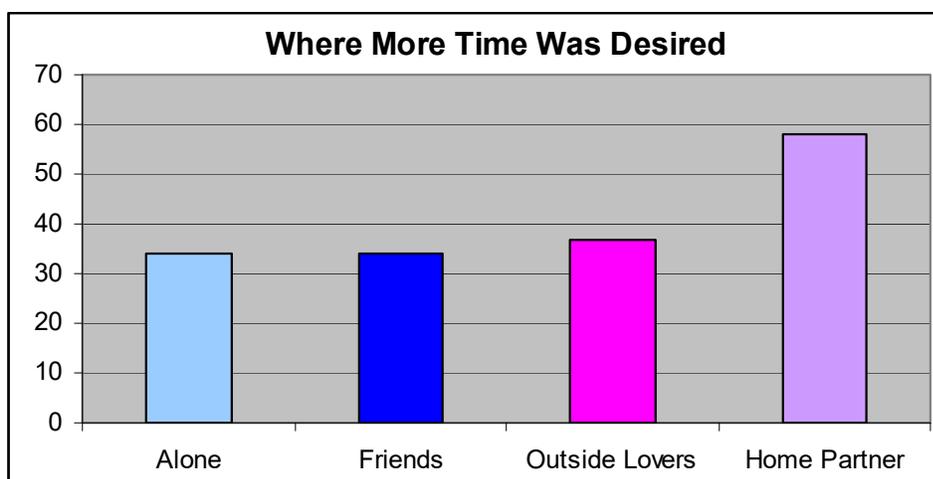


Figure 34: If time could be apportioned differently, the largest desire was to be able to spend more time with the home partner. About a third also expressed a desire to spend more time alone or with outside lovers and friends.

desires were to be able to have more alone time and more time to just socialize with non-lover friends. This would certainly reflect the experience of those in the centers of triads and intimate networks. Interestingly, the largest desire (58%) was to be able to spend more time with the home/primary partner.

Compersion Correlations

In devising my 11-point compersion index, I hypothesized that within my sample there would be a variety of correlations I might be able to draw that could explain why some poly people are more compersive than others are. Considering that polyamory is practiced amongst Westerners who were largely socialized to form enduring pair-bonded romantic relationships, I imagined that a variety of social conditions would effect how likely it was for someone to be able to actualize compersion. While 79% reported that they considered themselves to be socially, emotionally and sexually independent prior to *becoming* poly, this precursor appeared to have no impact on how compersive a respondent was. While such an inclination might imply that polyamory might be a good relationship strategy, the 21% who didn't originally consider themselves independent, were nonetheless equally compersive in relation to the others.

Largely what I found was that the respondents who participated in my study were a rarified sample. By the time they came upon my questionnaire, they were already actively practicing polyamory. Moreover, they typically regarded practices such as having ones partner spend the night with an outside lover as reasonable and reported very few stress reactions to this and other poly behaviors. Ultimately, I was unable to catch people in the midst of transforming themselves into being poly-positive. Despite my many questions that probed for tension and anxiety, few took the bait.

Areas where there were no statistically significant correlations included residence patterns, relationship status, and sexual independence. While I presumed that those that live alone (including having no pets or children) would be more prone to jealousy than those who were part of a rich social web, only 17 of my respondents fit this category.

Considering the size of my sample, their numbers were too small to say much of anything.

I thought that those with multiple primary partners, primary and secondary partners, or members of triads and intimate networks would be more compersive compared to those living with one partner as an open couple. Despite that Kerista had so actualized compersion in a large social sexual web; there were no statistically significant differences in compersion between these two groups.

My measures for sexual independence also proved to have no statistical significance vis-à-vis compersion. Those who engage in sexual activities without their partners' knowledge and/or enjoy having sex with strangers were no less jealous than those who don't. Moreover those who considered sex to be very important were no more or less compersive than those who regard it as only somewhat or just slightly important.

No correlations could be drawn between compersion and those who report regular attendance at religious worship / rituals as well as those who experience a personal relationship with god. What did stand out was that women were more likely to report higher attendance at rituals and a personal relationship with god than men, while men were more likely to regard sex as being very important. Moreover, men proved to be more compersive than women. What I believe this measures vis-à-vis differences in compersiveness was women's interest in building and sustaining a relationship as a result of a erotic connection as opposed to men's openness to letting sex just be sex. In this regard I would imagine that swinger women would be more compersive than poly women.

While I hypothesized that those engaging in a greater frequency of sexual intercourse and/or same sex activity would be more compersive this proved to be statistically

insignificant as well. We did locate statistically significant compersiveness amongst heterosexuals who masturbated more frequently. Here, masturbation may be a means of centering one's emotional and sexual self as well as engaging freeform fantasy. A passion for a masturbatory-inspired inner life may thus have an important calming affect.

The only other area where a significant correlation (95%) could be drawn was that those who report that they love each of their lovers equally would tend to be more compersive than those who consider one of their lovers to be a favorite. Thus where one lover is considered a favorite, one might come to feel possessive of that person and in turn more jealous of the times that person would spend with other lovers. Here, women were more inclined to report that they love their partners equally (50%) while men were more likely to experience one as a favorite (65.2%). Certainly amongst poly people favoritism can be heavily impacted by NRE, thus when a partner is new (and thus extremely interesting and exciting) they'll feel (at least temporarily) like the favorite. Considering that the males averaged 7.9 partners in year while the female average was just 3.7, it would be reasonable to presume that males would experience NRE more often and thus be more likely to report that they have a favorite partner. In this regard we might expect males in the throes of NRE to claim favoritism and thus be less compersive than those who do not. Considering that poly males average nearly twice as many partners per year as poly females, it's also possible that most of the time they're compersively experiencing low-commitment sex!

Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The invention of polyamory for Western society attempts to integrate two very opposite concepts: romantic love and emotional intimacy, (which often encumbers feelings of scarcity and possessiveness), with compersion and equality. The best example of compersion was the Kerista Commune where social-sexual units did not include pair bonds. The Oneida Community also celebrated a version of compersion and very much discouraged pair bonding. Nearly 50% of my sample reported being open couples (e.g. a pair bonded couple with additional lovers) which I believe engenders the struggle poly people grapple with today—trying to engage intense romantic love AND be fair to all new/old partners. Efforts to undercut dyadic romance and have all love be equal became central tenets of both Oneida and Kerista. Oneida couples did fall in love—some left voluntarily because they so wanted to have each other’s babies; their passions were too strong for the Noyesian vision.

Actualizing compersion has been a hard swallow for many poly people. Being that the “open couple” (more than the all-loving triad) is the basis of many polyamorous relationships, respect for hierarchy, rather than equal love for all, pose stiff challenges. Amongst polyamorists, primary couples often report that their new loves feel much more compelling (and favorite), but in respect for poly ideology, they don’t follow their innate serial monogamous drives and leave home, hearth and all that they entail in the dust.

Enculturation into the belief systems of polyamory may largely explain why the vast majority of my sample processed jealousy-provoking experiences in a compersive

way. On my 11-point compersion index, the median was more than 9 with only 10% being less than 7 revealing that my sample of 140 respondents had very much become enculturated into poly cultural beliefs. Still, few experienced having their live-in partners spend more than 10 nights a year away from home. Ultimately, being left home alone to potentially get angsty and depressed was a relatively rare experience.

Still finding ways to successfully weather being left home alone may be the cornerstone to poly enculturation. This process, which my East African informants reported took about two years, was difficult to witness through a snap shot quantitative survey. From participant observation I can attest that this is not easy stuff, despite that the rewards vis-a-vis self-esteem and psycho-emotional well being may be huge. Rather than being dependent on any one partner for feeling loved and valuable, these sensations can become self-generating. Herein those dark nights of the soul (Anapol, 2002) where inner demons quelled may be a veritable source of poly transformation.

Why the vagaries of a relatively small sample and an imperfect questionnaire produced few statistically significant correlations, those that did occur may hold meaning. Perhaps the most outstanding were the heterosexuals who engaged in frequent masturbation. This can reveal high levels of self-love and personal integration, ultimately the mark of emotional and sexual independence. As one of my informants explained her ability to weather time away from her husband, "I can handle this because over the years I've done so much work on myself."

Those who love each of their partners equally also revealed statistically significant levels of compersion. Here, I believe we're largely seeing the enculturation of poly ideology. As in Pines and Aronson's (1981) report on the complete absence of jealousy

in the Kerista Commune, which they hypothesized may have been a result of social pressure to conform to group norms, I believe my data is parallel in this regard. Considering the hormonal pulls of NRE, favoritism towards a new lover would only not be experienced if one had been enculturated into a belief system that told them not to.

Another significant finding was that men were more compersive than women. In evaluating compersiveness, much of what I measured was the interest/need to create/maintain attachment. In my study males had almost double the partners per year that females did, revealing that on average they would have had less reason to ferret out a long term attachment with each connection they made. Poly gender differences were also pronounced in the areas of sex and religion. Poly women were more likely to report high levels of participation in ritual and worship where ecstasy that can parallel orgasm may be experienced, while poly men reported greater interests in sex and lesser participation in worship. Perhaps this resembles our primordial mother-infant bond with women replicating this bond through relating to a higher power, while men replicate it through sex with women.

Ultimately, practicing polyamory proved to be highly adaptive to most of my respondents. Nearly 70% reported that it had improved their own self-esteem and as for the health of their home relationships, over 80% claimed that it increased their love for each other. Gaining a better perspective on oneself and one's partner were reported by upwards of 90% of my respondents. Moreover, a full 97% reported no interest in ending their home relationships.

Finally, to best understand the value of polyamory as a relationship strategy we need to consider it in the context of monogamy and swinging. Typically long term mo-

nogamous couples differentiate, which by all accounts is an expected normal process in which the nature of their sexual connection becomes less feverish, less interdependent, ultimately leading them to come to habit relatively separate emotional worlds. Their initial NRE subsides, causing them to have less need/interest in having sex with each other.

Polyamory addresses this vacancy with the NRE-enhanced new lover. Then there's the stability of home life and the juice of NRE. Poly culture tries to contain the NRE by giving it a name and looking at it as a moment in the relationship cycle rather than having the energy and impetus to cause the long-term couple to seek divorce. Some poly couples even discuss the intimate details of their new loves as a means of containing these additional relationships within the realm of their primary connection.

Swingers consider NRE too dangerous to access separately. Instead they have duo-experiences at parties, enabling mutual access to adventure and erotic charge. Participating in swinging may cause some couples to behave in socially and sexually more erotic ways than they otherwise would. For example, a long-term couple may typically make love in a perfunctory way for five minutes every couple of weeks, while when they engage in swinging they may perform like adrenalinated sexual acrobats.

Given that couples therapy for treatment of low sexual desire has at best a 15% success rate (Schwartz, 2003), long term couples might effectively engage compelling sensations such as NRE through swinging and/or polyamory. Here they can retain the comfort and security of home and family, while fixing what most of couples therapy cannot. Ultimately, mainstream society's version of polyamory is serial monogamy, which encumbers successive divorces, and remarriages that often prove to be highly stressful socially, emotionally, and financially. In this context the polyamory's infusion of full-

blown NRE-laced relationships into the family mix might be regarded as a thoroughly intelligent alternative.

Chapter 6

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This report is just a beginning for the kinds of research that might be undertaken in the area of jealousy, compersion and transformation in polyamorous relationships. Largely what predicts compersiveness remains a mystery. One area that might prove to be fruitful in this regard would be to examine respondents' polyamorous relationship histories. While my questionnaire probed for numbers of marriages and incidents of living with a lover, there was no information on whether there was a poly context to these relationships. I would hypothesize that those who have long histories of poly relating might be better equipped to handle emotional vagaries and thus would be more compersive. Certainly the East African co-wives I spoke with contend that it takes time to adjust to a new co-wife. Moreover, those senior wives who had weathered the additions of multiple wives would be likely to find it a less and less unnerving experience.

While my data set was too small to quantitatively measure the compersion differences between living alone and living with one or more lovers, it would be fruitful to gather data in this regard. Considering that Keristans, who lived in a compelling multi-dimensional group marriage, reported feeling no jealousy, I would very much posit that poly people who live alone and rarely if ever spend the night with their lover(s) would eventually be prone to competition and exclusion jealousy.

From having participated in several poly relationships and observed many others, often I've seen that the "full plate experience" is an excellent inoculation against jealousy. Here, those with busy social, work, and relationship lives tend to feel so full that they have no time (or reason) to feel jealous. This sensation is can be garnered in many

ways. In *Women Who May Never Marry* (Wolfe, 1993) I discussed creating an “extended family of choice” that might be composed of friends, neighbors, lovers and former lovers. Considering that so many people in the Western World live apart from their blood and natal kin, such families of choice can provide an important emotional/social life support that can very much contribute to “full plate” sensations. While, some people seem to naturally have a half-full cup, where few things rattle their hearts and their spines, others perhaps due to limited serotonin uptake capacity, feel perpetually slighted, empty and jealous. To study this in a complete way, periodic cortisol samples would need to be collected to segregate biological and environmental factors.

When I began to analyze my data I considered that participation in a religious practice that emphasized communal rituals and/or one in which there was little distance between clergy and laity (e.g. Wicca, Pagan, Tantra, Unitarian) might be a precursor to successfully engaging polyamory. Here, I encountered a which-came-first dilemma. Are poly people attracted to these religions or do practicing these religions create an opening for building poly relationships? I also considered the gullible-weird-beliefs hypothesis wherein people who are likely to convert to a new-age religion (and believe unconventional things) might also be inclined to convert to polyamory and contend that they were making that work as well. In that my questionnaire did not probe for “which-came-first,” I was unable to explore this topic in the detail it deserves.

I was also unable to thoroughly explore whether access to sexual partner variety affected compersion. Would people who are easily able to connect with (new) multiple partners be more compersive due their ease of access? While my questionnaire did col-

lect raw numbers related to the quantity of lifetime and previous year partners, we were unable to separate out sexual orientation and gender to make sense of our findings.

In that financial security/access holds tremendous sway in mainstream relationships it would be worth exploring this in the poly world as well. While poly ideology promotes egalitarianism and some multiple adult poly households participate in income and wealth sharing, I would imagine that open couples with secure nest eggs might be especially prone to jealousy. New lovers with lesser earning capacities might cause fear and possessive jealousy (e.g. a version of the first wives syndrome) on the parts of their lovers' primary partners/spouses.

Finally, one of the major problems with quantitative research based on a snapshot 15-minute questionnaire is that we don't gain access to the day-to-day emotional lives of our respondents. While a detailed interview may recap a series of ups and downs, ultimately time and reflection mediate those. One method that might be worth employing would be to enroll respondents into a keeping a jealousy→compersion journal where they would note the impact on contextual shifts on their moods. Over the course of several months, we might be able to gather highly usable data that would reflect the vagaries of real poly lives.

APPENDIX

A: The Standard Sex Profile of the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality
In addition to the first 34 questions of this standard survey, 21 additional questions were created towards researching this dissertation.

B: Polysexuality Questionnaire

This draws on information from the Standard Sex Profile survey, both updating it to current sexual practices and focussing more questions towards the emotional experience of being in multiple partner relationships. Responses to this questionnaire were very much be considered in preparing this dissertation.

APPENDIX A

The Standard Sex Profile of the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality

Thank you for your interest in participating in this survey. Please note that this questionnaire is designed to be completely anonymous. Please try to answer every question. If a word or phrase could have more than one meaning, please interpret it according to your own usage. Thank you, and have fun. Please give your best answers to the following questions:

1. Age at last birthday: _____

2. Sex (please circle correct number)

Male..... 1

Female 2

3. What is your race?

White 1

Black..... 2

Asian..... 3

Hispanic 4

Other 5

4. How many times have you been married to a person of the opposite sex or lived openly with a person of the opposite sex? _____

5. Are you currently living with:

Yes No

Spouse..... 1 2

Male lover..... 1 2

Female lover 1 2

Roommate..... 1 2

Self..... 1 2

Parents 1 2

Children 1 2

Other 1 2

6. List the states in which you have lived for a year or more since age 14:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. How much formal schooling have you had?

- 8th grade or less..... 1
- Some high school..... 2
- High school graduate 3
- Some college..... 4
- College graduate 5
- Graduate school 6

8. What is your occupation? (Be specific)

9. What is your spouse's/partner's occupation? (Be specific)

10. What is your religious background?

- Catholic..... 1
- Protestant 2
- Jewish 3
- Other 4
- None 5

11. How often do you attend religious services?

- One or more times weekly 1
- Approx. once a month 2
- One or two times yearly..... 3
- Never 4

12. For each topic listed below, how do you think your attitudes compare with those of most people? (Circle one answer for each topic)

<u>Topic</u>	I am:	More <u>Liberal</u>	<u>Same</u>	More <u>Conservative</u>
Politics		1	2	3
Religion		1	2	3
Sex		1	2	3

13. What was your age when you first knew about:

Age

- Pregnancy _____
- Menstruation..... _____
- Sexual intercourse..... _____
- Masturbation..... _____
- Orgasm..... _____
- Homosexuality..... _____
- Clitoris _____

14. Did you have a course in school that dealt with human sexuality?

- Yes.....1
- No2

A. If yes, was this course given in:

- Elementary school1
- High school.....2
- College.....3

B. If yes, was the information:

- Mostly new1
- Or did it clarify misunderstandings?.....2
- Or did you already know most of it3

15. How important is sex to you?

- Very important.....1
- Somewhat important.....2
- Slightly important.....3
- Not at all important.....4

16. In general, would you say your sexual satisfaction has been:

- Very much above average....1
- Somewhat above average.....2
- About average.....3
- Somewhat below average....4
- Very much below average....5

17. What was your age the first time you masturbated to orgasm?

Age _____

Never did...1

(If never, proceed to question 18)

If you have ever masturbated

During the past year, how often have you masturbated to orgasm?

_____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

18. What was your age the first time you had sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex?

Age _____

Never did...1

(If never, proceed to question 19)

If you have ever had sexual intercourse

A. Counting your first partner, with how many different people have you had heterosexual intercourse? _____

B. During the **past year**, with how many different people have you had heterosexual intercourse? _____

C. During the past year, how often have you had heterosexual intercourse?

_____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

19. What was your age the first time you had sexual contact with someone of the **same sex**?

Age _____

Never did.....1

(If never, proceed to question 20)

If you ever had sexual activity with someone of the same sex

A. Counting your first partner, with how many different people of the **same sex** have you had sexual contact? _____

B. During the past year, with how many different people of the **same sex** have you had sexual contact? _____

C. During the past year, how often have you had sexual contact with someone of the **same sex**?
_____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

20. Where would you rate yourself on the “Kinsey Scale?” Combine both overt **behavior** and **fantasy**.

Exclusively heterosexual 0

Only incidental homosexuality 1

Both homosexual and heterosexual, but more heterosexual 2

Equally homosexual and heterosexual 3

Both heterosexual and homosexual, but more homosexual 4

Only incidental heterosexuality 5

Exclusively homosexual 6

21. Please choose one of the following to define yourself:

Heterosexual 1

Bisexual 2

Homosexual 3

22A. Have you ever read about, or seen pictures or films of:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Self-masturbation	1	2
Intercourse (penis-in-vagina)	1	2
Oral-genital contact, male-female	1	2
Anal intercourse, male-female	1	2
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	1	2
Oral-genital contact, male-male	1	2
Anal intercourse, male-male	1	2
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	1	2
Oral-genital contact, female-female	1	2
Group sex	1	2
Sadomasochism	1	2
Adult sexual contact with children	1	2
Rape	1	2

22B. If yes to any of the previous:

Circle the number of the one word that best describes your reaction to reading about or seeing the following activities:

Self-masturbation

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Intercourse (penis-in-vagina)

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Oral-genital contact, male-female

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Anal intercourse, male-female

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Oral-genital contact, male-male

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Anal intercourse, male-male

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Oral-genital contact, female-female

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Group sex

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Sadomasochism

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Aroused | 3. Disinterested | 5. Disgusted |
| 2. Interested | 4. Uncomfortable | |

Adult sexual contact with children

- 1. Aroused 3. Disinterested 5. Disgusted
- 2. Interested 4. Uncomfortable

Rape

- 1. Aroused 3. Disinterested 5. Disgusted
- 2. Interested 4. Uncomfortable

23. Have you ever fantasized or participated in any of the following activities:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Have Fantasized it</u>	<u>Have participated in it</u>
Intercourse (penis-vagina)	1	2
Oral-genital contact, male-female.....	1	2
Anal intercourse, male-female	1	2
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male.....	1	2
Oral-genital contact, male-male	1	2
Anal intercourse, male-male	1	2
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female.....	1	2
Oral-genital contact, female-female.....	1	2
Group sex.....	1	2
Sadomasochism.....	1	2
Adult sexual contact with children	1	2
Rape	1	2

24. If you have participated in it, did you enjoy it?

	<u>Very Much</u>	<u>Some- what</u>	<u>Not Too Much</u>	<u>Not at All</u>
Intercourse (penis-vagina)	1	2	3	4
Oral-genital contact, male-female	1	2	3	4
Anal intercourse, male-female	1	2	3	4
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	1	2	3	4
Oral genital contact, male-male	1	2	3	4
Anal intercourse, male-male	1	2	3	4
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	1	2	3	4
Oral-genital contact, female-female	1	2	3	4
Group sex	1	2	3	4
Sadomasochism	1	2	3	4
Adult sexual contact with children	1	2	3	4
Rape	1	2	3	4

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
25. Have you ever paid a woman for sex?	1	2
26. Have you ever paid a man for sex?	1	2
27. Have you ever been paid by a woman for sex?	1	2
28. Have you ever been paid by a man for sex?	1	2
29. Which of the following sex aids have you used?		
Vibrator.....1		Cock Ring.....4
Dildo.....2		Other..... 5
Ben-Wa Balls.....3		

30. If you have used any of the above, would you say they were:

Very helpful 1
 Somewhat helpful 2
 Of no help 3
 Detrimental 4

31. Did you use sex aids:

Alone 1
 With a partner 2
 Both 3

32. Do you think the average person has a morbid or shameful interest in sex, nudity or excretion?

Yes 1
 No 2

33. Do you have a morbid or shameful interest in sex, nudity or excretion?

Yes 1
 No 2

34. The following is a list of basic sexual rights. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree that each right should be extended to all people:

	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>
The freedom of any sexual thought, fantasy or desire.....	1	2
The right to sexual entertainment, freely available in the market place, including sexually explicit materials dealing with the full range of sexual behavior.....	1	2
The right not to be exposed to sexual material or behavior....	1	2
The right to sexual self-determination.....	1	2
The right to seek out & engage in consensual sexual activity.....	1	2
The right to engage in sexual acts or activities of any kind whatsoever, providing they do not involve non-consensual acts, violence, constraint, coercion or fraud.....	1	2
The right to be free of persecution or societal intervention in private sexual behavior.....	1	2

The recognition by society that every person, partnered or not, has the right to the pursuit of a satisfying consensual social-sexual life free from political, legal or religious interference and that there need to be mechanisms in society where the opportunities of social-sexual activities are available to the following: disabled persons; chronically ill persons; those incarcerated in prisons, hospitals or institutions; those disadvantaged because of age, lack of physical attractiveness or social skills; the poor and the lonely.....1 2

The basic right of all persons who are sexually dysfunctional to have available non-judgmental sexual health care..... 1 2

The right to control conception..... 1 2

© The Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 1984

The following additional questions were designed by me (Leanna Wolfe) towards my dissertation, "Jealousy and Transformation in Polyamorous Relationships."

35. Do you have a regular sexual partner/spouse?
 Yes.....1
 No.....2

If "Yes" go to question #36, if "No" go to question #50.

36. Do you and your partner have an agreement to engage in sexual activities with others?
 Yes.....1
 No.....2

If "Yes" go to question #37, if "No" go to question #50

37. What sexual activities are you free to engage in with others?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cyber Sex.....	1	2
Phone Sex.....	1	2
Tantric Postures/Breathing (non-genital).....	1	2
Dirty Dancing.....	1	2
Kissing (flat).....	1	2
Kissing (deep).....	1	2
Mutual Masturbation.....	1	2
Intercourse (penis-vagina).....	1	2
Oral-Genital Contact.....	1	2
Anal Penetration (fingers/dildos).....	1	2
Anal Intercourse.....	1	2
Group Sex.....	1	2
Sadomasochism/Bondage & Discipline.....	1	2

38. What are your safer sex agreements?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Partner must approve of new lovers.....	1	2
Must be tested for AIDS/STDS before engaging in sexual contact.....	1	2
Must use condoms.....	1	2
Must not ejaculate inside of partner.....	1	2
Must use dental dams.....	1	2
Must use latex gloves.....	1	2
Must use mouth wash.....	1	2
Must use a topical microbicide (e.g. nonoxynol 9).....	1	2
Must discuss birth control / STD status before engaging in sexual contact...	1	2

39. Do you and your partner have children that require childcare?

Yes.....1
No.....2

40. Do you have an agreement with your partner to spend the night and/or visit with other lovers?

Yes.....1
No.....2

If “Yes” go to question #41, if “No” go to question #50.

41. How often does your partner spend the night or visit with other lovers/partners?

_____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

42. Which of these things have you done during your partner’s visits?

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Visit With One of My Own Lovers.....	1	2	3
See Friends.....	1	2	3
Take Care of Our Child/ren.....	1	2	3
Work.....	1	2	3
Go to Bars / Cafes.....	1	2	3
Masturbate.....	1	2	3
Surf the Web.....	1	2	3
Send/Answer e-mail.....	1	2	3
Chat Rooms.....	1	2	3
Cyber Dating.....	1	2	3
Phone Dating.....	1	2	3
Phone Sex.....	1	2	3
Watch TV/Rent a Video.....	1	2	3
Go Out to a Movie.....	1	2	3
Read.....	1	2	3
Visit a Sex Worker/Prostitute.....	1	2	3
Get a Massage.....	1	2	3
Call Friends.....	1	2	3
Go to Parties.....	1	2	3
Sleep.....	1	2	3
Eat Junk Food / Comfort Food.....	1	2	3
Write in Journal.....	1	2	3
Cry.....	1	2	3

Get Drunk/Stoned.....	1	2	3
Contemplate Suicide.....	1	2	3

43. In general how do you feel about your partner spending the night/visiting with other lovers/partners?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
I appreciate time to be alone.....	1	2
I enjoy the opportunity socializing outside the relationship.....	1	2
It can get me very upset.....	1	2
I wish this didn't happen.....	1	2
I don't mind that it happens, but I'd prefer not to know who/when etc.....	1	2
Not a problem; this only happens on mutually scheduled "date nights".....	1	2
I enjoy the opportunity to be socially/sexually independent from my partner.....	1	2
I enjoy the thought of my partner having a good time with his/her lover(s).....	1	2

44. What happens when your partner returns home?

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
We renew our sexual connection.....	1	2	3
S/he seems emotionally distant.....	1	2	3
We just go back to life as normal.....	1	2	3
We discuss intimate details...these get us excited.....	1	2	3
We avoid discussing intimate details.....	1	2	3
My partner feels sexually polluted and I keep a distance.....	1	2	3

	<u>Always</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
45. Do you feel like you are your partner's favorite lover?	1	2	3	4

46. Is your partner your favorite lover?	1	2	3	4
------------------------------------------	---	---	---	---

47. What things do you and your partner engage in?

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Parallel Activities (reading, work on projects).....	1	2	3
Simultaneous Activities..... (napping together, cooking, eating, TV, games, talking)	1	2	3
Socializing with Others.....	1	2	3
Sex Parties.....	1	2	3
Couple-Focussed Visiting..... (Making Love, Dancing, Massage)	1	2	3

48. What would you change about your relationship?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
More Alone Time.....	1	2
More Time to Socialize with Friends.....	1	2
More Couple-Focussed Visiting with Partner.....	1	2
More Time With Outside Lover/s.....	1	2
End This Relationship.....	1	2

Renegotiate Our Agreement to Date Others Separately.....	1	2
Nothing, Everything is Fine.....	1	2

49. Our agreement to date others causes...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
A Lack of Intimacy in Our Relationship.....	1	2
Greater Emotional Independence.....	1	2
Diminished Sacredness of Our Bond.....	1	2
Lower Self-Esteem.....	1	2
Greater Self-Esteem.....	1	2
Less Boredom.....	1	2
Greater Instability.....	1	2
Greater Love for Each Other.....	1	2
Better Perspective on Myself.....	1	2
Better Perspective on My Partner.....	1	2
More Turbulence/Fighting.....	1	2

50. Prior to agreeing to have an open relationship did you consider yourself to be an independent (socially/emotionally/sexually) person?

Yes.....	1
No.....	2

51. How many times have you been divorced?

Never.....	1
Once.....	2
Twice.....	3
More than three times.....	4

52. How old were you at the time of your last divorce? _____

53. Have you loved more than one partner at the same time?

Yes.....	1
No.....	2

54. Did you love them equally or was one a favorite?

Equally.....	1
A Favorite.....	2

55. Are you in such a relationship right now?

Yes.....	1
No.....	2

56. What are your overall feelings about being in relationship with more than one person?

Wonderful.....	1
Challenging but worth it.....	2
I would never let this happen again.....	3

APPENDIX B

Polysexuality Questionnaire

Towards my dissertation research at the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality I would appreciate you completing the following survey. Do note that this questionnaire is designed to be completely anonymous; your personal answers will be disclosed to no one. Please try to answer every question as best as you can. If a word or phrase could have more than one meaning, please interpret it according to your own usage. Thank you, and have fun.

1. Age at last birthday: _____

2. Sex:

Male..... 1

Female 2

3. What is your race?

White 1

Black..... 2

Asian..... 3

Hispanic..... 4

Other 5

4. How many times have you been married to a partner of the opposite sex? _____

5. How many times have you lived openly with a partner(s) of the opposite sex? _____

6. How many times have you lived openly with a partner(s) of the same sex? _____

7. How many times have you been divorced? _____

8. How old were you at the time of your last divorce? _____

9. Who are you currently living with?

Yes No

Spouse.....	1.....	2
Male lover (s)	1.....	2
Female lover (s)	1.....	2
Roommate (s)	1.....	2
Only Self.....	1.....	2
Parents	1.....	2
Children	1.....	2
Dog (s).....	1.....	2
Cats (s).....	1.....	2
Other	1.....	2

10. Which states/countries have you lived in for a year or more since age 14?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

11. How much formal schooling have you had?

- 8th grade or less..... 1
- Some high school..... 2
- High school graduate 3
- Some college..... 4
- College graduate 5
- Graduate school 6

12. What is your occupation? (Be specific)

13. What is/are your spouse's/partners' occupation(s)? (Be specific)

14. What is your religious background and/or current practice?

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Catholic.....1 | Pagan/Wicca.....5 | Other.....9 |
| Protestant.....2 | Muslim.....6 | None.....10 |
| Jewish.....3 | Baptist7 | |
| Buddhist.....4 | Mormon.....8 | |

15. Do you have a personal relationship with your God(s)?

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

16. How often do you attend religious services/rituals?

- One or more times weekly1
- Approx. once a month2
- One or two times yearly.....3
- Never4

17. How important is sex to you?

- Very important.....1
- Somewhat important.....2
- Slightly important.....3
- Not at all important.....4

18. How old were you the first time you masturbated to orgasm?

Age _____
Never have...1

If you have ever masturbated (If never, proceed to question #19)

During the past year, how often have you masturbated to orgasm?
 _____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

19. What was your age the first time you had sexual intercourse with someone of the opposite sex?

Age _____
 Never did... 1

If you have ever had sexual intercourse (If never, proceed to question #20)

- A. Counting your first partner, with how many different people have you had heterosexual intercourse? _____ (Please estimate if you don't have an exact number.)
- B. During the **past year**, with how many different people have you had heterosexual contact/intercourse? _____
- C. During the past year, how often have you had heterosexual/contact intercourse?
 _____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

20. What was your age the first time you had sexual contact with someone of the **same sex**?

Age _____
 Never did..... 1

If you ever had sexual activity with someone of the same sex (If never, proceed to question #21)

- A. Counting your first partner, with how many different people of the **same sex** have you had sexual contact? _____
- B. During the past year, with how many different people of the **same sex** have you had sexual contact? _____
- C. During the past year, how often have you had sexual contact with someone of the **same sex**?
 _____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

21. Where would you rate yourself on the "Kinsey Scale?" Combine both overt **behavior** and **fantasy**.

- Exclusively heterosexual 0
- Only incidental homosexuality 1
- Both homosexual and heterosexual, but more heterosexual 2
- Equally homosexual and heterosexual 3
- Both heterosexual and homosexual, but more homosexual 4
- Only incidental heterosexuality 5
- Exclusively homosexual 6

22. Please choose one of the following to define yourself:

- Heterosexual 1
- Bisexual 2
- Homosexual 3

23. Have you ever fantasized and/or participated in any of the following activities:

<u>Activity</u>	Have	Enjoy	Like	Dislike	
Like	<u>Fantasized it</u>	<u>A Lot</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	<u>Completely</u>	<u>The Most</u>
Deep Kissing.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Intercourse (penis-vagina.....)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Oral-genital contact, receiving....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Oral-genital contact, giving.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Anal Intercourse, male-female	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Anal Intercourse, male-male....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Mutual Masturbation	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
G- (Sacred) Spot Stimulation.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Group Sex.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
BDSM.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Adult Sexual Contact with Children. (as a child)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Adult Sexual Contact with Children (as an adult)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Rape/Date Rape..... (as a victim)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Rape/Date Rape..... (as a perpetrator)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Gang Bang (consensual) (as receiver)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
Gang Bang (consensual) (as participant)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
24. Have you ever paid a woman for sex?	1	2
25. Have you ever paid a man for sex?	1	2
26. Have you ever been paid by a woman for sex?	1	2
27. Have you ever been paid by a man for sex?	1	2

28. Which of the following sex aids have you used?

Vibrator.....1	Dildo.....2	G-spot Wand.....5
Harness/Swing.....3	Whip/Restraints.....4	Ecstasy.....6
Lubricants.....7	Cock Ring.....8	Other.....9

29. Do you have genital and/or nipple piercings?

Yes.....1
No.....2

30. Have you loved more than one partner at the same time?

Yes.....1
No.....2

31. Did you love them equally or was one a favorite?

Equally.....1
A Favorite.....2

32. Are you in such a relationship right now?

Yes.....1
No.....2

33. What are your overall feelings about being in relationship with more than one person?

Wonderful.....1
Challenging but worth it.....2
I would never let this happen3

34. What best describes your current relationship status?

Monogamous.....1
Monogamous with secret affairs.....2
Single and Dating.....3
Open Monogamous Relationship.....4
Polyamorous with a primary partner.....5
Polyamorous with multiple primary partners.....6
Polyamorous with primary and secondary partners...7
Polyfidelitous Triad.....8
Polyfidelitous Quad.....9
Polyfidelitous Family/Network.....10
Other _____.....11

35. Do you and your partner(s) have an agreement to engage in sexual activities with others?

Yes.....1
No.....2

36. Do you engage in extra-relationships sexual activities without your partner(s) knowledge?

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

37. Have you witnessed your partner engaging in sexual activity with others?

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

What kinds of reactions have you had? (If “No,” continue on to #38)

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
I enjoyed sharing him/her.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I felt anxious that I might lose him/her.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I enjoyed being witness to her/his pleasure.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I questioned our special connection when I saw him/her touch others the same way s/he touches me	1.....	2.....	3.....
It made me jealous to watch.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I couldn’t wait until it was over.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
It got me very excited.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I was worried for his/her safety.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I don’t mind that it happens, but I’d prefer not to watch.....	1.....	2.....	3.....

38. Has your partner witnessed **you** engaging in sexual activity with others?

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

What kinds of reactions have you had? (If “No,” continue on to #39)

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
I enjoyed being watched by my partner.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I felt uneasy about really letting go.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I didn’t like being watched by my partner.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I (briefly) considered never returning to my partner.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I couldn’t wait until it was over.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
It made me excited about returning to my partner afterwards... ..	1.....	2.....	3.....
I hoped my partner might learn more about me by watching	1.....	2.....	3.....

39. Do you ever have sex with complete strangers?

- Yes.....1
- No.....2

40. What kinds of reactions have you had? (If “No,” continue on to #41)

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
I enjoyed the raw unfettered exchange.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I felt uneasy not knowing anything about him/her.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I couldn’t wait until it was over.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I wanted to get to know him/her as whole person.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
It was very exciting.....	1.....	2.....	3.....
I would never do it again.....	1.....	2.....	3.....

41. What sexual activities might you engage in with people outside of your primary relationship(s)?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Cyber Sex.....	1	2
Phone Sex.....	1	2
Tantric Postures/Breathing (non-genital).....	1	2
Dirty Dancing.....	1	2
Kissing (flat).....	1	2
Kissing (deep).....	1	2
Mutual Masturbation.....	1	2
Intercourse (penis-vagina).....	1	2
Oral-Genital Contact.....	1	2
G-(Sacred) Spot Stimulation.....	1	2
Anal Penetration (fingers/dildos).....	1	2
Anal Intercourse.....	1	2
Group Sex.....	1	2
Sadomasochism/Bondage & Discipline.....	1	2

42. What are your safer sex practices?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Partner must approve of new lovers.....	1	2
Must be tested for AIDS/STDS before engaging in sexual contact.....	1	2
Must use condoms.....	1	2
Must not ejaculate inside of partner.....	1	2
Must use dental dams.....	1	2
Must use latex gloves.....	1	2
Must use mouth wash.....	1	2
Must use a topical microbicide (e.g. nonoxynol 9).....	1	2
Must discuss birth control / STD status before engaging in sexual contact... 1	1	2

43. Do you have an agreement with your partner(s) to spend the night and/or visit with other lovers?

Yes.....1
No.....2

If “Yes” go to question #44, if “No” return this questionnaire now.

44. How often does your partner spend the night or visit with other lovers/partners?
_____ times per week OR _____ times per month OR _____ times per year

45. Which of these things have you done during your partner’s visits?

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Visit With One of My Own Lovers.....	1	2	3
See Friends.....	1	2	3
Take Care of Our Child/ren.....	1	2	3
Work.....	1	2	3
Go to Bars / Cafes.....	1	2	3
Masturbate.....	1	2	3

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Surf the Web.....1	2	3	
Send/Answer e-mail.....1	2	3	
Chat Rooms.....1	2	3	
Cyber Dating.....1	2	3	
Phone Dating.....1	2	3	
Phone Sex.....1	2	3	
Watch TV/Rent a Video.....1	2	3	
Go Out to a Movie.....1	2	3	
Read.....1	2	3	
Visit a Sex Worker/Prostitute.....1	2	3	
Get a Massage.....1	2	3	
Call Friends.....1	2	3	
Go to Parties.....1	2	3	
Sleep.....1	2	3	
Eat Junk Food / Comfort Food.....1	2	3	
Write in Journal.....1	2	3	
Cry.....1	2	3	
Get Drunk/Stoned.....1	2	3	
Contemplate Suicide.....1	2	3	

46. In general how do you feel about your partner spending the night/visiting with other lovers/partners?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
I appreciate time to be alone.....1	2	
I enjoy the opportunity socializing outside the relationship.....1	2	
It can get me very upset.....1	2	
I wish this didn't happen.....1	2	
I don't mind that it happens, but I'd prefer not to know who/when etc.....1	2	
Not a problem; this only happens on mutually scheduled "date nights".....1	2	
I enjoy the opportunity to be socially/sexually independent from my partner.....1	2	
I enjoy the thought of my partner having a good time with his/her lover(s).....1	2	

47. What happens when your partner returns home?

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
We renew our sexual connection.....1	2	3	
S/he seems emotionally distant.....1	2	3	
We just go back to life as normal.....1	2	3	
We discuss intimate details—these get us excited..... 1	2	3	
We avoid discussing intimate details..... 1	2	3	
My partner feels sexually polluted and I keep a distance.....1	2	3	

	<u>Always</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
48. Do you feel like you are your partner's favorite lover?	1	2	3	4
49. Is your partner your favorite lover?	1	2	3	4

50. What things do you and your partner(s) engage in?

	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Parallel Activities (reading, work on projects).....	1	2	3	4
Simultaneous Activities..... (napping together, cooking, eating, TV, games, talking)	1	2	3	4
Socializing with Others.....	1	2	3	4
Sex Parties.....	1	2	3	4
Couple-Focussed Visiting..... (Making Love, Dancing, Massage)	1	2	3	4

51. What would you change about your relationship?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
More Alone Time.....	1	2
More Time to Socialize with Friends.....	1	2
More Couple-Focussed Visiting with Partner.....	1	2
More Time With Outside Lover/s.....	1	2
End This Relationship.....	1	2
Renegotiate Our Agreement to Date Others Separately.....	1	2
Nothing, Everything is Fine.....	1	2

52. Our agreement to date others causes...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
A Lack of Intimacy in Our Relationship.....	1	2
Greater Emotional Independence.....	1	2
Diminished Sacredness of Our Bond.....	1	2
Lower Self-Esteem.....	1	2
Greater Self-Esteem.....	1	2
Less Boredom.....	1	2
Greater Instability.....	1	2
Greater Love for Each Other.....	1	2
Better Perspective on Myself.....	1	2
Better Perspective on My Partner.....	1	2
More Turbulence/Fighting.....	1	2

53. Prior to agreeing to have an open relationship did you consider yourself to be an independent (socially/emotionally/sexually) person?

Yes.....	1
No.....	2

54. If you would like to share more about your experience with and perspectives on multiple partner relationships, please tell me how to contact you.