

Study finds consensual nonmonogamy a 'healthy' option

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Credit: Scott Woods

Consensual nonmonogamy within a relationship showed only positive outcomes on life satisfaction and relationship quality for the primary partners in a romantically involved couple—leading researchers to believe it to be healthy, viable relationship option.

"Consensual nonmonogamy relationships and those who practice them are often stigmatized," Psychology professor Samantha Joel said.

"Monogamous relationships are generally assumed to be of higher quality than non-monogamous ones, even among consensually nonmonogamous individuals."

Not so, according to Joel and her collaborators at York University and the University of Utah.

For the first-of-its-kind study, the team recruited people interested in consensual nonmonogamy but had not yet engaged in it and observed them over a two-month period as they 'opened up' their relationships.

"We found no differences in [relationship quality](#) or well-being before versus after people opened up," said Joel, who serves as director of Western's Relationships Decisions Lab. "There were also no differences found when we compared people who did versus those who did not open up their [relationship](#) over the course of the study."

According to the study, those who engaged in consensual nonmonogamy experienced significant increases in sexual satisfaction, particularly if they did so with the explicit goal of addressing sexual incompatibilities within their relationships.

The study, "A Prospective Investigation of the Decision to Open Up a Romantic Relationship," was recently published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

More information: Annelise Parkes Murphy et al. A Prospective Investigation of the Decision to Open Up a Romantic Relationship, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/1948550619897157](#)

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