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Expectations in committed relationships

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify trends in American expectations regarding commitment, marriage, monogamy, cohabitation, child rearing, and domestic responsibilities in committed relationships and explored the ways expectations differed based on gender, generation, income, and US region. A committed relationship was defined as an interpersonal romantic relationship based upon a mutually agreed-upon commitment to one another regarding certain behavior and lifestyle choices. The different generations that were compared fall into the following year brackets: Boomers (1943-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), and Millennials (1982-2004).

Two hundred and ninety-four participants completed an online, anonymous survey that collected basic demographic information including gender, sexual orientation, and generation, income level and geographic location. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and living in the United States in order to participate. Participants were then asked to rate various expectations on a Likert-like scale indicating if they agree or disagree with that expectation.

The findings identified a trend toward more egalitarian expectations in committed relationships as well as more openness toward non-monogamous relationships. The majority of participants did expect a life-long committed relationship and most expected that their life-long committed relationship would be a marriage.

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A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Relationships play an important role in people's lives. Whether people seek attachment relationships or avoid them, we cannot deny the impact our relationships have on our mental health. It is for this reason alone that expectations in committed relationships are relevant to social workers and those working in mental health. Clients come to us in times of distress and often that distress is due to discord in their primary relationships. For many people, their primary relationship is with their romantic partner.

Individual expectations in relationships are based on countless influences including personal values, family values, religious beliefs, and cultural norms. These expectations are unique to the individual and don't always align with the partner they find themselves romantically involved with. Differing expectations can lead to conflict and relational discord that necessitates counseling for one or both partners. This study sought to identify trends in American expectations regarding commitment, marriage, monogamy, cohabitation, child rearing, and domestic responsibilities in committed relationships and explored the ways expectations differed based on gender, generation, income, and US region. The study originally sought to explore how expectations differed based on sexual orientation as well, however the sample did not include enough participants that identified outside straight or heterosexual in order to assess these groups' differences.

For this study, a committed relationship was defined as an interpersonal romantic relationship based upon a mutually agreed-upon commitment to one another regarding certain

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behavior and lifestyle choices. The different generations that were compared fall into the following year brackets: Boomers (1943-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), and Millennials (1982-2004). Two hundred and ninety-four participants completed an online, anonymous survey that collected basic demographic information including gender, sexual orientation, and generation, income level and geographic location. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and living in the United States in order to participate. Participants were then asked to rate various expectations on a Likert-like scale indicating if they agree or disagree with that expectation. At the end of the survey participants were asked if they were currently in a committed relationship, if that relationship is meeting their expectations, and on a scale of 1 – 10 how satisfied they are in that relationship.

Much of the current research focused on the expectation for marriage, or on a specific group within the general population (ex. females). This study sought to look more broadly at expectations in committed relationships, whether they were marriages or not, and to identify expectation trends for the population as a whole as well as within identified groups. Through an anonymous survey I collected quantitative data from participants living in the United States to explore participant's expectations and discover how they differed.

This research is relevant to social work because what's often brought into sessions are relationship issues that cause our clients distress. These relationship issues can stem from individual's differing expectations regarding their committed relationship. Social workers are trained to check their own assumptions and biases regarding issues of race, gender, class, and disability, but assumptions about relationship expectations are rarely discussed. This study identified overall trends in the US population's expectations as well as highlighted the minority expectations that are important to acknowledge. It is important to recognize that individuals have

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these expectations, not only to help us social workers check our assumptions, but also consider what it's like for our client's to hold these minority expectations.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

In order to provide a framework for this study, I have reviewed literature that explores why people are motivated to be in committed romantic relationships and examines attitudes related to marriage, cohabitation, monogamy, child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. Ranging from quantitative studies investigating how marriage trends have changed since the 1960's to theoretical articles that discuss polyamory, this literature review sets the stage for my study and supports its value within the field of social work.

Why Commitment?

Not everyone wants to be in a committed relationship, but there are many people who do. What motivates us to seek out commitment? What is it about the characteristics of commitment that make it appealing? Pietromonaco and Beck (2015) suggest that our biologically driven innate system of attachment may be at the root. At a fundamental level, this attachment system serves to protect us by keeping us close to caregivers in the face of danger or threat (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). The caregiver helps us regulate affect. When we are infants this caregiver is most often a parent; as adults this caregiver may be our romantic partner. These caregivers help us regulate affect by providing reassurance, comfort, and support (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). This attachment figure not only serves as a comfort, through emotional and physical intimacy, they can also serve as a secure base allowing us to pursue independent goals,

seek out novel experiences, and explore new situations with a sense of security that our caregiver will be responsive if the need arises (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015).

Our early attachment relationships, beginning with primary caregivers then progressing to peers and dating partners, contribute to our internal working model of attachment (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). Our working model consciously and unconsciously influences our general expectations, beliefs, and feelings about the dependability, reliability, availability and responsiveness of attachment figures (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). In other words, our working model guides our expectations in attachment relationships.

In adult attachment theory there are three basic styles of attachment – secure, anxious, and avoidant:

Secure individuals are confident that their attachment figures will be available when they need them, and they are able to reestablish felt security and emotional well-being by turning to their partner. People high in anxiety desire excessive closeness, worry about their partner not being responsive or abandoning them, and often see themselves as unworthy of love. People high in avoidance are uncomfortable with closeness and reluctant to rely on others, preferring to maintain emotional distance and self-reliance. (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015)

These working models for attachment don't dictate whether or not individuals are biologically motivated to attach, but it is theorized that they influence how individuals react to attachment-related distress. In the same way that toddlers were observed under distress in the Strange Situation (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) to determine attachment style, adults have been studied under relationship distress and certain behavior patterns and physiological responses were associated with anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Davila, 2001; Eberhart

& Hammen, 2009; Pietromonaco & Barrett, 2000). Noteworthy are the goal-oriented processes of the three distinct adult attachment styles:

Avoidant individuals have chronic interpersonal goals to maintain independence and distance and to protect themselves from attachment-related distress. Anxious individuals chronically strive for intimacy and closeness and are most likely to turn to others for reassurance to regulate their negative feelings. People who are more secure may hold a variety of interpersonal goals (e.g., for support, independence, self-protection), but they apply these goals more flexibly and appropriately, depending on the demands of the situation. (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015)

Physiologically, heightened cortisol levels, indicating an activated hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis, in response to a discussion about relationship conflict were observed in anxiously attached men and avoidantly attached women (Powers et al., 2006 as discussed in Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). These reactions to attachment-related distress are significant because they no doubt have an effect on the way that individuals perceive attachment in committed relationships. Could individual attachment styles explain one’s expectations of life-long commitment to one partner? Could it explain why some may not want monogamy?

Even though my study will not provide any conclusive evidence of participants’ attachment style, it will be interesting to see if trends of expectation for a committed life-long romantic relationship coincide with other research. For example, Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh (2011) did a study to assess adult attachment styles of 388 people in dating or marital relationships. They used the Experience in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire which asked participants to rank statements on a scale of 1 – strongly disagree to 7

– strongly agree. Statements included attachment-related items such as *I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love* and *I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners* (Fraley et al., 2011). Results of relatively low average insecure attachment scores (anxiety score of 2.85 and avoidance score was 2.34) indicated that the average person in their study had a secure attachment style (Fraley et al., 2011). Results of my study finding that a majority of participants desire a life-long committed relationship would support the proposition that a majority of the population have a secure attachment style. This would be a leap, but it would be something worth exploring.

David Steele (2015), a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, writes not about *why* we commit, but what commitment is and why it's pivotal in relationship success. Steele sees commitment as fact, demonstrated by behaviors, and attitude, consisting of thoughts and beliefs (Steele, 2015). He also states that in his 30+ years of experience he has never been able to increase a client's level of commitment, but if clients are committed in "fact" or "attitude" they are more likely to overcome issues (Steele, 2015). Quoting Linda Waite (Waite, L. J., & Gallagher, M. 2000) Steele makes the point that commitment helps couples because they stubbornly outlasted the problems or issues that caused distress. This study will not only look at peoples' expectations about commitment, but specifically look at whether they expect their commitment to be life-long. According to Waite and Steele (2000, 2015) this commitment, which this study will capture in attitude and fact, will help couples persevere and endure conflict.

Why Marriage?

The Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends Project (2010) compiled data from 2,691 Americans who were 18 or older in 2008 with Census data from the 1960's to the present. The project sought to answer the following questions: Is marriage becoming obsolete?

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Why have marriage rates dropped more for some groups than others – and to what extent does the growing marriage gap align with a growing economic gap? How much have gender roles within marriage changed? When it comes to marriage, does love trump money? Are today's marriages closer than those of a generation ago? What does the public think about the decoupling of marriage from parenthood? How does it define family? (Cohn, D.; Livingston, G.; Menasce Horowitz, J.; Morin, R.; Parker, K.; Taylor, P.; Wang, W., 2010)

The survey gathered a vast array of data points to help answer those questions. Results showed that 75% of those surveyed did *not* agree that women should assume traditional gender roles when married, however 71% said that they have old-fashioned values about marriage and family. Neither the researchers nor those surveyed defined what they meant by “old-fashioned values about marriage and family.” Sixty-seven percent of Americans said that it is very important for men to be able to support their family financially, while only 33% said that it is very important for women to do the same. Broken down by gender, 33% of men and 26% of women feel that a “traditional marriage arrangement” would be more satisfying. More traditional in this study refers to a marriage where the man financially supports the household and the woman takes care of the household responsibilities. There were differences among generations favoring a traditional marriage arrangement; 22% of 18-29 year olds (Millennials), 30% of 30-49 year olds (Generation X), 31% of 50-64 year olds (majority of Boomers), and 65% of those 65 or older (older Boomers and Silent Generation). Of the total surveyed however, 72% of 18-29 year olds (Millennials) endorsed an egalitarian marriage where both the husband and wife share household and children responsibilities as opposed to a more traditional arrangement. As far as generational differences, this study found that those who were fifty or younger were more likely to believe that marriage was becoming obsolete, however if marriage was to take place, they

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prefer a more egalitarian marriage arrangement. Out of the 1302 participants who were unmarried, 46% said that they did want to marry, 25% did not want to marry, and 29% were unsure (Cohn et al, 2010). My study will seek more specifically define an egalitarian relationship versus a traditional marriage and identify any difference between how gender, generation, and sexual orientation influence individuals' expectations about those types of relationships.

The Pew study reported that a majority of Americans do not see marriage as an essential element to define a family; 86% say a single parent and child constitute a family, 80% say an unmarried couple living together with a child is a family, and 63% say a gay or lesbian couple raising a child is a family. Forty-one percent of those surveyed said marriage was not a prerequisite to having children, compared to 5% in 1960. Sixty-two percent of all surveyed said that they want to have children, 16% said they did not, and 22% said they were unsure. Sixty-three percent of men and 60% of women reported wanting to have children. The largest difference between those wanting to have children and not, was generational; 76% of 18-29 year olds (Millennials) want to have children, versus only 45% of 30-49 year olds. (Cohn et al, 2010) This difference makes sense just based on prime reproduction years alone. The Pew study asked Americans if their family life has turned out as they expected, among the total participants is was close to a fifty-fifty split (49% said as expected, 47% said differently than expected, 4% did not know or did not answer) (Cohn et al, 2010). My proposed study will look more closely at expectations around having children in or outside of a committed partnership. The study will also examine how the couple expects to divvy up the child rearing responsibilities.

In their study, Campbell, Wright, and Flores (2012) asked what newlywed women's expectations of divorce were. They acknowledged that women's attitudes toward marriage have changed over the years due to factors including birth control, more economic independence, and

no-fault divorce laws (Campbell et al., 2012). Campbell et al. used Johnson's (1999) commitment framework to describe the changing nature of marriage for women. Johnson (1999) proposed that individuals commit to relationships for three distinct reasons: personal, structural, and moral reasons. Quoting Coontz (2005) and Ingoldsby (2002), Campbell et al. state that a majority of marriages are based on "personal commitment, meaning that individuals remain married as long as they want to be in the relationship. This stance makes marriage more unstable because when love and satisfaction decline, there is a greater risk of infidelity and divorce (2012)." Results of the qualitative study by Campbell et al (2012) support that a majority of marriages are based on personal values with 71.5% of responses describing personally valued characteristics of the relationship as reasons they got married. Examples of these values include: companionship, sharing core values, having a trusting relationship, personal fulfillment, long-term stability, being attracted to their partner, their partner was their soul mate, fear of being alone, or being better with their partner (Campbell et al., 2012). Twenty-seven and a half percent of responses fell into categories that were more practical in nature including: timing (i.e. marriage was just the next logical step), wanting to start a family, legal reasons, financial benefits, or religious reasons (Campbell et al, 2012).

Campbell et al. (2012) asked the same 197 women who had been married for less than two years about their experience with infidelity. Results showed that the most common form of infidelity reported included flirting, feeling arousal, and thinking about the alternative partner (Campbell et al., 2012). They also discovered that "individuals were more likely to have engaged in infidelity if they had an open personality type, had been involved with their partners for an extensive period of time, or perceived that there was a high-quality alternative (Campbell et al., 2012)." When participants were asked to estimate the percentage chance of experiencing divorce,

on average, they perceived there to be a 13.20% chance, while 97% reported that they expected to remain married to their spouse for the rest of their life (Campbell et al., 2012). This mixed method study addresses a similar research question, that is, what are people's expectations for marriage? And touches cursorily on monogamy and whether marriage is viewed as a life-long commitment. The researchers acknowledged that responses about infidelity were likely influenced by socially desirable response bias (Campbell et al., 2012). The anonymous, quantitative nature of my study will hopefully avoid some of this under-reporting about expectations of extra-relational sexual behavior. Other limitations of this study are that it only looked at women, only women who were married for less than two years, it did not look at whether participants were in same-sex or heterosexual marriages.

Andrew Cherlin's research on the deinstitutionalization of American marriage (2004) echoes the above findings. Cherlin's historic research led him to work by Dr. Ernest Burgess from the 1940's and 1950's where Burgess described the concept of marriage moving from an institution to passionate marriage (Burgess, 1945 as summarized by Cherlin, 2004). That change was observed by expectations of satisfaction stemming from emotional security and expression of feelings in a marriage as opposed to a partner who was a good provider, homemaker, or parent (Cherlin, 2004). Cherlin's further historic research about the changing concept of marriage led him to research that was done by F.M. Cancian (1987) who analyzed popular magazines from 1900-1979 to learn about the changing dynamics of marriage. Cherlin summarized the findings as follows: 1) greater self-development within the marriage, 2) greater flexibility and negotiation within the marriage, and 3) greater openness and communication in confronting the problems in the marriage (2004). Cancian succinctly described this shift in emphasis as "from role to self" (Cancian, 1987).

Cherlin (2004) also underscored the Pew Research and Qu's study that cohabitation is on the rise. Cherlin found as well that couples do not view marriage as a prerequisite to child rearing (2004). According to Cherlin, the current views of marriage are: 1) It is desired but elusive – especially for low-income couples who want partners with the ability to maintain a decent job and save money toward stable housing, 2) cohabitation is a gateway to marriage – the general idea is that this arrangement will help avoid divorce, and 3) the wedding ceremony represents a personal achievement or a developmental milestone for the individuals involved. It will be interesting to see if my study further supports these changing views about marriage, cohabitation, and child rearing.

Pelts (2014) discussed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a law that was signed in 1996 by President Bill Clinton that defined marriage as taking place between one man and one woman. This law speaks to multiple aspects of this study: 1) it was not that long ago, and in some states it is still the case, that same-sex couples did not have the option of getting married, 2) laws influence or reflect public opinion about what is acceptable or right, and 3) as social workers we can help advocate for the rights of minority groups and influence laws that affect people's opportunities and access to privileges and benefits.

Riggio and Weiser (2008) did a study assessing the strength of participants' attitudes and interconnected associations with marriage compared to their expectations of romantic relationships. They called these strong attitudes "embeddedness." They posited that "marriage attitudes are likely to be enmeshed in a complexly structured cognitive schema that contains beliefs and feelings about romantic relationships acquired through experience (Riggio & Weiser, 2008)." They evaluated the strength of embeddedness based on the number of free associations that participants had related to a stimulus word. Then participants were asked to rate scenarios

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and their expectations of a happy marriage or an unhappy marriage that ended in divorce on Likert-type scale. They studied 400 heterosexual undergraduate college students to examine embeddedness and participants' use of marriage attitudes in evaluating personal relationship scenarios and issues not centrally relevant to marriage. The study also examined the connection between marriage attitudes, embeddedness of those attitudes, general expectations of relationship success, and outcomes in current romantic relationships. Thirty-four percent of participants were men and 66% were women. The average age of participants was 21.9 years old, making them part of the Millennial generation. Sixty-nine percent of participants were in romantic relationships at the time of the study; 20% were married, engaged, or living together; 67% were in an exclusive relationship. (Riggio & Weiser, 2008)

The results of the study indicated that marriage attitudes that were more strongly embedded were more likely to influence evaluations of marriage issues and personal relationship scenarios. Results also indicated that marriage attitudes and their embeddedness are related to outcomes in personal relationships. Specifically, "negative attitudes toward marriage are related to negative relationship outcomes, supporting that specific relationship attitudes about lifelong commitment and partnership may be used in interpreting relationship events and guiding interpersonal behaviors (Riggio & Weiser, 2008)." Although this study did not look at expectations of marriage specifically, it suggests that stronger emotions and associations with marriage will influence the outcomes. This could indicate that participants in my study that strongly disagree with the expectation that they will cohabit, marry, be monogamous, or raise children with a partner may manifest their own destiny.

Why Should We Live Together?

There has been a rise in cohabitation, which doubled from 1990 to 2010 (Cohn et al, 2010). Instead of inquiring about expectations around cohabitation, the Pew study asked Americans if they thought that the phenomenon of unmarried couples living together was good for society. Over all 43% felt that it was bad for society, 9% said it was good for society, and 46% said that it made no difference. The major opinion divide occurred among generational lines: only 27% of Millennials felt it was bad for society, 39% of Generation Xers, 46% of Boomers, and 65% of older Boomers and those of the Silent Generation. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed said that cohabitation was a step toward marriage, however the majority of those who felt that way had an annual income of \$75,000 or more. Only 59% of those with annual income of \$30,000 or less felt that cohabitation was a step toward marriage. That being said, across the income spectrum, only an average of 32% of cohabitating couples said household finances were an important reason for them to move in together. (Cohn et al, 2010) My proposed study will seek not only to understand individual's expectations around legal marriage versus some other committed relationship arrangement including the expectation of living with a partner. While the Pew study generated data that gets close to the information I am looking for, it focused a lot on American's views of marriage and family trends being good or bad for society, not at what individuals expect for themselves with regard to committed partnerships. The study did a fairly good job at breaking down data by gender and generation, however they stick to a gender binary and their age breakdown doesn't follow generational categories for the Boomers and Silent Generation. This study does not examine trends based on sexual orientation at all.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (2003) researched cohabitating couples' expectations of marriage to understand more about a rising trend of cohabitating unmarried

couples. This study sought to answer the following questions: To what extent do people cohabitating have marriage in sight? Does the perceived prospect of marrying vary according to the length of time people have been cohabitating? Does the perceived prospect of marrying vary according to gender, age, or previous marital status? To what extent do partners agree on their marriage prospect? A total of 1,348 individuals responded to this survey; 640 were men and 708 were women; 596 of the responders were partners (Qu, 2003). The results overall showed that 57% of cohabitating men and 52% of women said that they were likely or very likely to get married. Sixty percent of cohabitating men and 61% of women who were never married expected that they would get married. Those that had previously been married were less likely to expect marriage; 51% of men and 35% of women (Qu, 2003). This study did look at the age of responders, however the age brackets they used do not fit into generational categories. Roughly two-thirds of men and women under 29 (partially Generation Xers and Millennials) reported that they were likely or very likely to get married. Fifty-six percent of men and 49% of women between 30 and 39 reported they were likely or very likely to get married. Thirty-seven percent of men, and 19% of women 40 or older reported feeling likely, or very likely, to get married (Qu, 2003). These results show that women's expectations of marriage decline more rapidly than men's as they age. It will be interesting to see if my study of American respondents will discover a similar pattern.

The length in a cohabitating relationship showed that expectations of marriage increased between two and four years to 73% of men and 74% of women (Qu, 2003). Sixty-four percent of men and women in cohabitating relationships for less than two years reported being likely to get married (Qu, 2003). Cohabitating for more than five years saw a decline in marriage expectations with 42% of men and 45% of women reporting they were likely to get married (Qu, 2003). These

results indicate that when couples initially cohabit the majority have the expectation of getting married, however after five years the majority of couples seem to decide getting married is not a necessary step for their relationship. American expectations around cohabitating and marriage expectations may mirror the Australian results, however cultural norms or the economy may have made a difference. This study looked at expectations of marriage for already cohabitating couples, but did not explore expectations about monogamy, child rearing, or domestic responsibilities.

What Role Does Feminism Play In Relationship Expectations And Satisfaction?

The 1960's feminist movement in the United States addressed feminist issues including female sexuality, women's role in family life, women in the workplace, female reproductive rights, and other inequalities based on gender (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014). This movement undoubtedly broadened the ways that women saw themselves in relationships. Yoder, Perry, and Saal (2007) did a study that explored the relationship between 165 US college women's feminist identity and their expectations for committed and sexual relationships. Their study used the stage model of feminist identity developed by Downing and Roush (1985). The progressive stages are: passive acceptance – the endorsement of traditional gender roles and denial of sexist discrimination; the revelation stage – those beginning to question themselves and their roles; the embeddedness/emanation – the affirmation of one's emerging identity and more relativist thinking; then synthesis - an understanding that gender roles matter yet can be transcended; and then finally active commitment - characterized by engaging in meaningful action toward creating a less sexist world (Yoder et al, 2007). Yoder et al (2007) cite many sources positing that women not only desire a more egalitarian relationship, they are more satisfied in these types of relationships, whether those relationships are heterosexual or lesbian (Apparala et al.2003;

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Botkin et al. 2000; Schroeder et al. 1992; Donaghue and Fallon 2003; Kurdek 1995). The average age of the survey responders in 2007 was 19 years old, making them Millennials. The study found a positive correlation between survey responders' progressed feminist identity and their expectations for balanced power between partners, division of household labor, and shared childcare (Yoder et al, 2007). This study also found a positive correlation between lower feminist identity (passive acceptance) and lower sexual satisfaction (Yoder et al, 2007). This study was mostly concerned with the correlations of women's feminist identity and their egalitarian expectations in relationships; because of this they did not note the percentage of the women in each stage of the progressive model. My study will look at the number of responders with strong egalitarian expectations and will be able to discuss what this might mean about society's feminist status quo. It would be interesting to note if they differ based on gender, sexual orientation, or generation.

In direct opposition to the Yoder et al study, Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp (2013) published a study that found that the more men contribute to household responsibilities the less the couple has sexual intimacy. This study looked at data collected from 9,122 married men and women who reported information about their sexual frequency and their division of household labor on Wave II of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) in 1992-1994 (Sweet and Bumpass 1996). Citing Sullivan (2006), and Sullivan and Coltrane (2008), this study asserted that presently more and more U.S. marriages are egalitarian, flexible, and fair. While this study is interesting in its opposition to Yoder et al, neither fully explore both men and women's expectations around different aspects of egalitarian relationships and how they are related to overall relationship satisfaction. My study will elaborate on trends of expectations

among men and women either support Yoder et al or Konrich et al regarding the correlation between satisfaction and egalitarian relationship expectations.

Are We Exclusive?

So far I have discussed some of the research that explores marriage expectations for committed couples but not all committed relationships are marriages. For the purpose of my study I have defined a committed relationship as an interpersonal romantic relationship based upon a mutually agreed-upon commitment to one another regarding certain behavior and lifestyle choices. For some that behavior and lifestyle choice may include other sexual partners. Monogamy is not synonymous with commitment. In *Open Relationships, Open Lives* Davidson (2007) discusses polyamory, a term coined in the 1990's meaning many loves. Davidson estimated that there were approximately 65,000 polyamorists in the US based on the number of profiles listed on a popular social network called MeetUp.com (Davidson, 2007). Each polyamorous relationship has rules and boundaries determined by the partners. These relationship arrangements can range from something called "primary-plus," meaning that there is a primary couple and additional relationships happen outside that dyad, to multi-partnered relationships (Davidson, 2007). Polyamory is so widespread that MTV had a show in 2009 called *True Life: I'm Polyamorous*. Davidson (2007) explained that because these relationships require negotiating rules and boundaries that all parties are comfortable with, polyamorists might seek support from mental health counselors. It is important for counselors to check-in with their own preconceptions about healthy relationships and to be careful not to pathologize this behavior as intimacy avoidance, narcissism, or unwillingness to commit (Davidson, 2007). Davidson (2007) also discussed the legal trouble polyamorous families may find themselves in because of state

laws that condemn relationships outside of marriage or discriminate against polyamorists who have young children.

In his article titled *The Adaptive Functions of Sexual Plasticity: The Suppression and Surreptitious Expression of Human Sociosexuality*, Josephs (2012) discussed the concept of sociosexuality. He extensively describes the sexual behavior of primates that serve adaptive social functions including soothing and comforting as well as de-escalating aggression. He argues that humans share the drive and capacity to use sexual behavior in similar adaptive ways, however human jealousy and moral objections often prevent it (Josephs, 2011). Josephs (2011) explores one “sexually permissive” culture, the !Kung tribe, who anticipate that individuals will have husbands or wives who provide economic support, comfort and security; and lovers who provide passion, excitement and unpredictability that humans naturally crave. The concept that we need both security and excitement to fulfill our romantic lives is one that is thoroughly explored in Mitchell’s (2002) work *Safety and Adventure*. Mitchell offers that this dialectic tension is obtainable within one partner, but as Ester Perel (2013) explains, that takes work: “Committed sex is premeditated sex. It's willful. It's intentional. It's focus and presence.”

Summary

The literature discussed provides a broad base for understanding why individuals are motivated to commit to one another in romantic partnerships. It also explored some of the challenges individuals face when considering what it means to depend on a partner for attachment-related comfort and security. It is clear that committed relationships, whether they are marriages or not, have evolved over the last few decades to be more about love and personal fulfillment rather than economic security, social status, or other practical concerns. Some research indicates that this evolution makes relationships more prone to instability and

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dissolution. Committing to a life-long romantic relationship for personal fulfillment also brings up questions about how couples can sustain satisfaction, is it obtained through more traditional or egalitarian roles? Is it reasonable to think that individuals will be fulfilled sexually with one partner, or does society need to evolve to incorporate polyamorous relationships?

Several of the studies utilized quantitative data that described attitudes toward marriage, commitment, cohabitation, and child-rearing expectations. These studies provided some information regarding my research question - expectations regarding monogamy, cohabitation, marriage, child bearing, and domestic responsibilities in American committed romantic relationships - however none have looked specifically at what those expectations are and how they may differ based on gender, sexual orientation or generation. This study will contribute to the descriptive data available regarding American expectations for committed romantic relationships. It will provide social workers direction for social change advocacy, and provide insight to clinical social workers working with clients who are struggling with relationship-related expectations.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This descriptive study was an exploration into expectations adults (i.e. people 18 years old or older) living in the United States have regarding committed romantic relationships. This study looked at expectations around marriage, monogamy, cohabitation, and child-rearing. The analysis compared how those expectations may or may not differ based on participants' gender, sexual orientation, and generational age group. This study was designed as a brief survey conducted through Survey Monkey that gathered quantitative demographic and Likert-scale data to allow for the largest sample possible. The intent was to generate a large sample so that any trends found could be generalized within each identified variable – gender, sexual orientation, and generation.

Sample Selection

Participants for this study were recruited via social media including Facebook and an email listserv that was distributed to individuals throughout the Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire. By the nature of social media, the survey link was shared and distributed to reach a wider audience than this researcher's social network. However, because the posting originated from my personal social media and email account, the sample will be biased toward friends and acquaintances of mine and individuals that live in the Northeastern United States. As an incentive to participate and/or distribute the survey further I provided potential participants the option to sign up for the results after the study is completed.

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The use of my personal social media account and email address associated with the listserv as the initial means of survey distribution will be a potential bias in the sample selection. Because of my personal geographic location in the Northeastern region of the United States, more participants from this location will be exposed to the survey link by proximity. Additionally, my age places me on the cusp between Generation Xers and Millennials. Because the majority of my social network also falls in these generational groups, this might influence the sample. My income might also create a potential bias in the sample. Although I am currently in school and not earning the salary my education and experience level would expect, my social network represents those that I come into contact with most often. I have attempted to address this potential bias by asking participants to share the link for the survey via their own social network. My hope is the ease and topic of this survey will allow it to go “viral” and reach a broad demographic of participants,

Participants in this study were required to be at least 18 years of age and living in the United States. The age requirement was set because participants had to be able to consent to the study individually without parent consent. The requirement that participants live in the United States allowed for data to reflect current trends within US culture. Gathering regionally specific data allowed for analysis to test the assumption that cultural norms effect individual expectations. The Survey Monkey survey began with informed consent which outlined the inclusion criteria, purpose of the study, description of the study procedure, risks and benefits of participation, and confidentiality and rights of participants (See Appendix B – Informed Consent). If participants were not 18 or older or they did not live in the United States they were redirected to the disqualification page. If participants met age and geographic location requirements after they had consented to participation, they began the survey by answering the

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Likert-like scale questions. The first set of questions asked participants about their expectations regarding marriage and monogamy. For example, participants were asked to respond to the statements, “I expect that my committed relationship will be (or is) a legal marriage,” and “I expect that while in a committed relationship my partner or I may choose to engage in sexual behavior with other people.” The next set of questions asked participants about their expectation to cohabitate with their partner. If the participant disagreed with the expectation that they would cohabitate with their partner, they were redirected to the set of questions regarding child rearing. If the participant disagreed with the expectation to raise children with their committed partner, they were redirected to the last set of demographic questions regarding their relationship status. If participants were currently in a relationship, they were asked about the kind of relationship (ex. marriage), the length of time they had been in the relationship, if they were cohabitating, if their expectations were being met and how satisfied they were in their current relationship. Those participants that were not in a relationship were directed to the end of the survey and thanked for their participation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Survey Monkey survey gathered self-reported expectations for romantic committed relationships by asking participants to rate various expectations on a five-point Likert-like scale indicating if they agree (5), disagree (1), or are somewhere in-between (Neutral-3). For example, one statement to be rated was, “I expect that while in a committed relationship my partner and I will NOT engage in any sexual behavior with other people.” Inevitably the results will be a snapshot of the participant’s expectations for committed relationships at the time they took the survey. Based on the participant’s life circumstances their expectations could change. The fluid

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nature of humans' hopes and desires is difficult to capture, however with a large enough simple random sample the trends that are found will be more generalizable.

In addition to the variables of gender (i.e. female, male, male to female transgender, female to male transgender, unsure, or other), sexual orientation (i.e. heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian, bisexual, or other), and generation (i.e. The Greatest generation 1901-1924, Silent Generation 1925-1942, Boomers 1943-1960, Generation X 1961-1981, and Millennials 1982-2004), the study collected participants income level (i.e. <\$10,000; \$10,001 - \$30,000; \$30,001 - \$50,000; \$50,001 - \$75,000; \$75,001 - \$150,000; \$150,001 - \$225,000; or >\$225,000), and identified the state or U.S. territory participants lived in. As a variable - committed romantic relationship - was defined as *an interpersonal romantic relationship based on mutually agreed upon commitment to one another regarding certain behavior and lifestyle choices*. Participants were also asked about whether they were currently in a committed romantic relationship, how long, whether the relationship was a marriage, if they were living with their partner, if their relationship met their expectations, and how satisfied they were in their relationship.

I chose to use a Likert-like rating scale to capture participants' attitude toward statements of expectation. This method is most appropriate for my study because I am looking for participants' attitude and opinion, not facts or 'correct' answers (Page-Bucci, 2003). The five point Likert scale is shown to be fairly reliable as opposed to fewer or greater numbers in the scale (Page-Bucci, 2003). I have included a Neutral option to allow participants to acknowledge a neutral stance about an expectation and not be forced to agree or disagree to any degree. The Likert scale allows for the expectation variables to be broken down into degree of opinion. This ordinal level of measurement will provide data describing participants' level of agreement to each expectation statement. Each option will be given a numerical value (disagree – 1, next level

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– 2, neutral, - 3, next level – 4, agree – 5). Participants' responses won't tell us the exact degree to which they agree or disagree with the expectation statement, but it will tell us that the higher the score the more they agree (How to use the Likert scale in statistical analysis, 2011). The results were measured by reporting the mean and the distribution of responses. Reporting the average responses provided the trend data that I looked for.

Critique of Likert scales question whether they are a good measurement of attitude because there is no way to know why participants chose one rank over another (Page-Bucci, 2003). Some researchers try to make up for this by providing participants with a comment box under each scale. I chose not to include the comment box because compiling that qualitative data alongside the quantitative data for a study this large-scale would have been considerably challenging. Additionally, the qualitative data generated may not reveal anything constructive toward my research question. As stated previously, I acknowledge that the quantitative trend data that this study provided is a snapshot into the expectations of participants at that particular time in their life. Further disadvantages of Likert scales include: lack of reproducibility, absence of one-dimensionality or homogeneity, and validity may be difficult to demonstrate.

Results were analyzed by this researcher and Smith College School for Social Work Research Analyst, Marjorie Postal. In addition to looking for the mean and mode to identify trends in expectations and presenting distribution tables, comparative t-test analysis were performed to examine what differences in trends occurred between different groups of the sample. For example, we compared means of expectations between participants that identified as female, with those that identified as male. The t-test is an appropriate measure to compare different groups of respondents because it determines whether or not there is statistical significance between their average responses (Steinberg, 2004). One way ANOVA tests were

required to compare more than two groups to one another (ex. generational groups – Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials). The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to determine whether there are significant differences between the means of three or more independent groups. This test compares the means between the groups and determines whether any of those means are significantly different from each other. (Lund Research, 2013) After the ANOVA test was done and significant differences between the groups were found, post hoc testing needed to be done to determine which specific groups differed and how. Research Analyst, Marjorie Postal, determined that the post hoc tests that would be most helpful to find how the groups differed were the Tamhane and Bonferroni.

To determine if there was a correlation between relationship characteristics and relationship satisfaction a Spearman's Rho test was done. The Spearman's Rho tests is used to measure the strength of association between two variables, where the value $r = 1$ means a perfect positive correlation and the value $r = -1$ means a perfect negative correlation (Stangroom, 2015). For example, the Spearman's Rho allowed for us to test if there was a correlation between length in relationship and relationship satisfaction. Results are provided in the findings chapter.

Ethical Concerns

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants prior to them taking the survey. In the informed consent I presented the purpose and intent of the study to participants, described what would be done with the results, how it would be publicized in this student's thesis and that participation was voluntary. Although the information being asked of participants was not highly sensitive and would not likely put them at any physical or mental risk, I made sure to inform participants that their participation was confidential and voluntary and that they could choose not to participate by navigating away from the survey at any time.

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Participants were informed that minimal risk was associated with their participation in this study. They were informed that “some minor emotional distress may occur if the expectations that you have identified and your current relationship circumstances do not align” (Appendix B – Informed Consent).

Participants’ responses to the Survey Monkey survey were anonymous. All data collected will be stored on SurveyMonkey.com, which is a website that is firewalled, password-protected, and encrypted. All data will be stored on the website's server for three years as required by Federal regulations, after which they will be destroyed or kept secure as long as they are needed. Survey Monkey's Security Statement is listed in Appendix C (surveymonkey.com). The Survey Monkey account created for this study collected and retains the information provided by participants. I will retain the data, which will not include any identifying information on my computer’s hard drive, which is locked by a personal password. All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period.

Data was collected during a two-month period in January and February of 2015. The survey was closed after 327 individuals participated. Findings from the survey are reviewed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This descriptive study looked at expectations regarding marriage, monogamy, cohabitation, and child-rearing and compared how those expectations differed based on participants' gender, sexual orientation, and generational age group. A brief quantitative study was developed in order to gather a large and diverse sample to generate data that could be generalized and identify trends in these expectations based on demographic information. There were 294 participants. Thirty-three participants were excluded from the analysis because they either did not consent to the survey, lived outside of the US, or they navigated away from the survey indicating that they no longer wished to participate or be included in the analysis.

I will first describe the sample including demographic information gathered regarding gender identity, generational group, sexual orientation, individual annual income, and US region or territory the participant was living in. The analysis that follows will first compare data by gender. Only male and female gender identities could be included in the analysis because so few participants identified as any other gender. The findings continue by reporting on significant differences based on generational group. The Silent Generation and The Greatest Generation could not be compared because too few participants represented these generational groups. My hope was to then compare data based on sexual orientation, however this analysis could not report significant differences based on sexual orientation because so few participants identified as gay or lesbian (11), bisexual (25), or other (19), compared to the heterosexual or straight (237)

identified participants. Analysis based on individual annual income follows. Individual incomes of \$75,000 or more per year were combined to create a large enough group to compare to those in the other categories. US regions were compared after that, however only the Northeast, Southeast, and West regions were used in the analysis because other regions were under-represented in the sample. The last section of the findings reported will assess for correlations between relationship status and participants' relational satisfaction.

Description of the Sample

Of the 294 participants, 83.3% identified as female, 14.6% identified as male, 0.7% left the question blank, and 0.3% reported Unsure. Participants were also given an option to specify their gender identity and four participants wrote in individualized responses. Other gender identities (1.0%) included: cisgender female, gender fluid, and gender queer trans (Table 1). Participants were asked to provide the year they were born. The sample was then divided into generational categories as follows: The Greatest generation (1901-1924), Silent Generation (1925-1942), Boomers (1943-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), and Millennials (1982-2004). The sample was composed mostly of Millennials (47.6%) and Generation Xers (43.9%). Boomers made up 7.1% of the sample, the Silent Generation made up 0.7%, and the Greatest Generation made up 0.3%. There were 0.3% of sample who left the question blank (Table 2). The majority of the sample identified as Heterosexual or Straight (80.6%), 8.5% identified as Bisexual, 3.7% identified as Gay or Lesbian, 0.7% left the question blank, and 6.5% identified as Other. The Other category included: "90% straight," "I choose not to define my sexuality. I guess I would be bi curious," "I don't like labels. Have been with men and women. Married a woman," "omni/pansexual," "Queer," and "sexually fluid" (Table 3).

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Twenty-six point five percent of the sample had an individual annual income of \$30,001-\$50,000. Coincidentally the same percentage of the sample, 26.6%, had an individual annual income of \$50,001-75,000. Sixteen point three percent had an individual annual income of \$10,001-\$30,000. Thirteen point six percent had an annual income of less than \$10,000. The sample had 12.6% whose individual annual income was \$75,001-\$150,000 and 2.7% whose income was \$150,001-\$225,000 per year. One percent had an individual annual income over \$225,000. Zero point seven percent chose to leave the income question blank (Table 4).

Participants were asked what state or US Territory they lived in. Their responses were broken down into US regions for this analysis. The states or territories included in each region are as follows:

Northeast: Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey

Southeast: West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, District of Columbia (DC)

Midwest: Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota

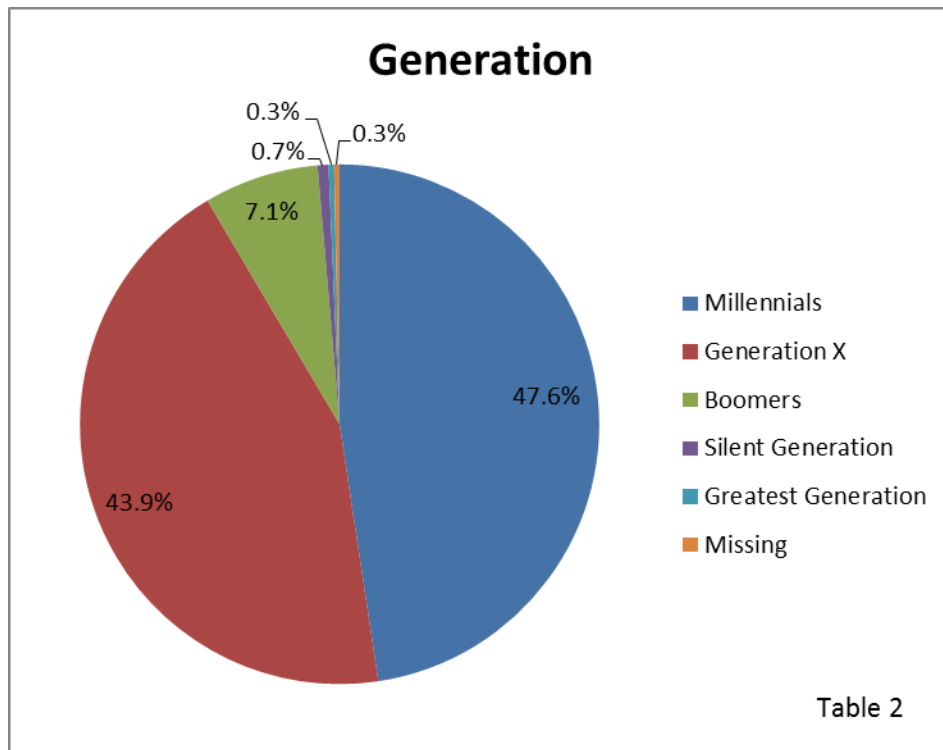
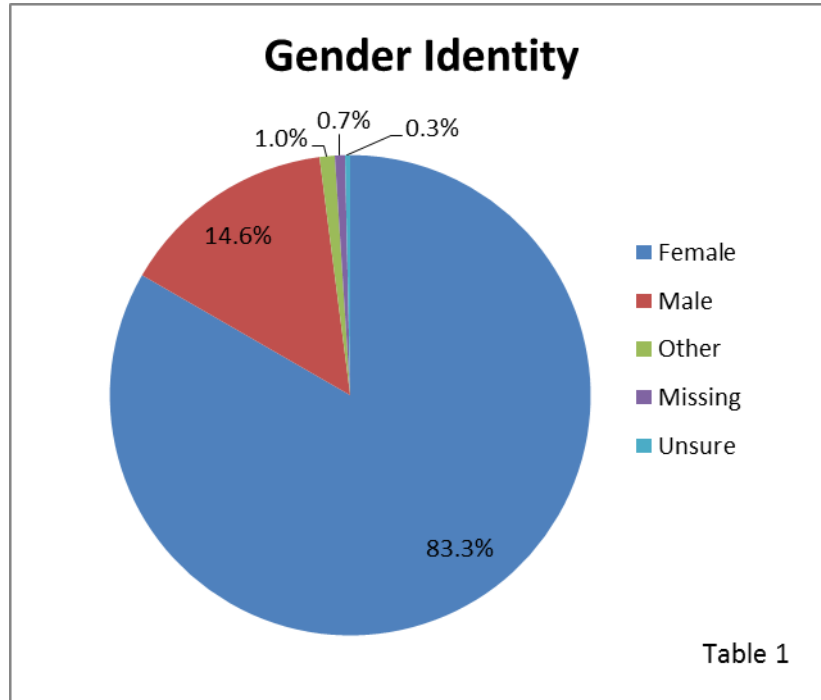
West: Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, California

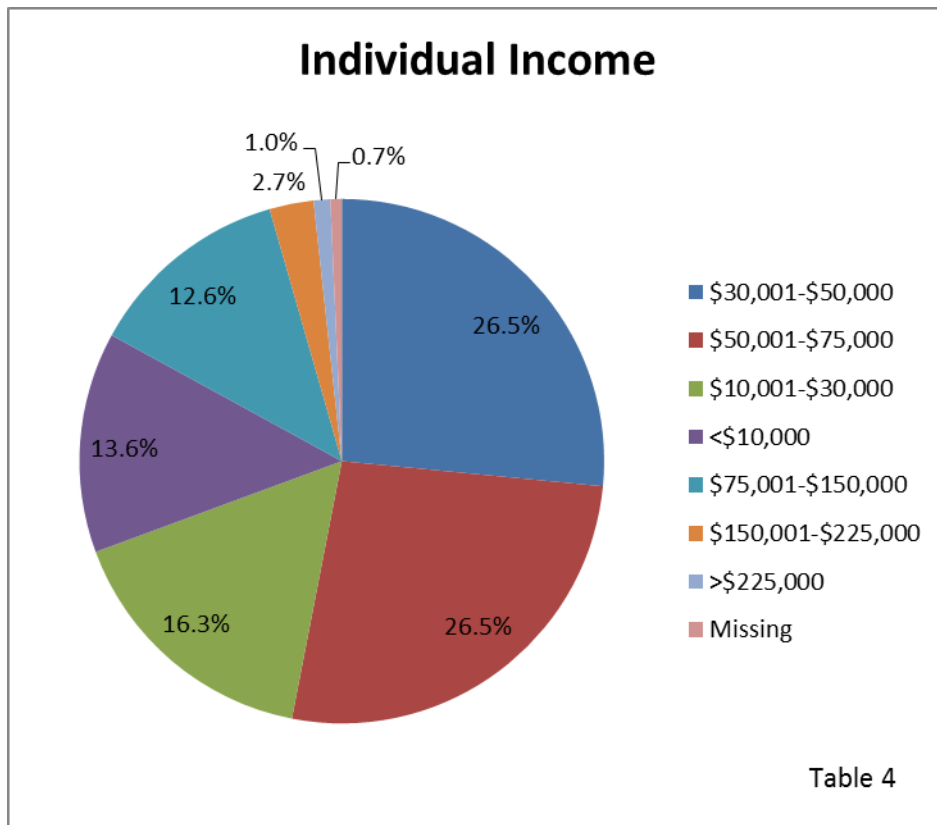
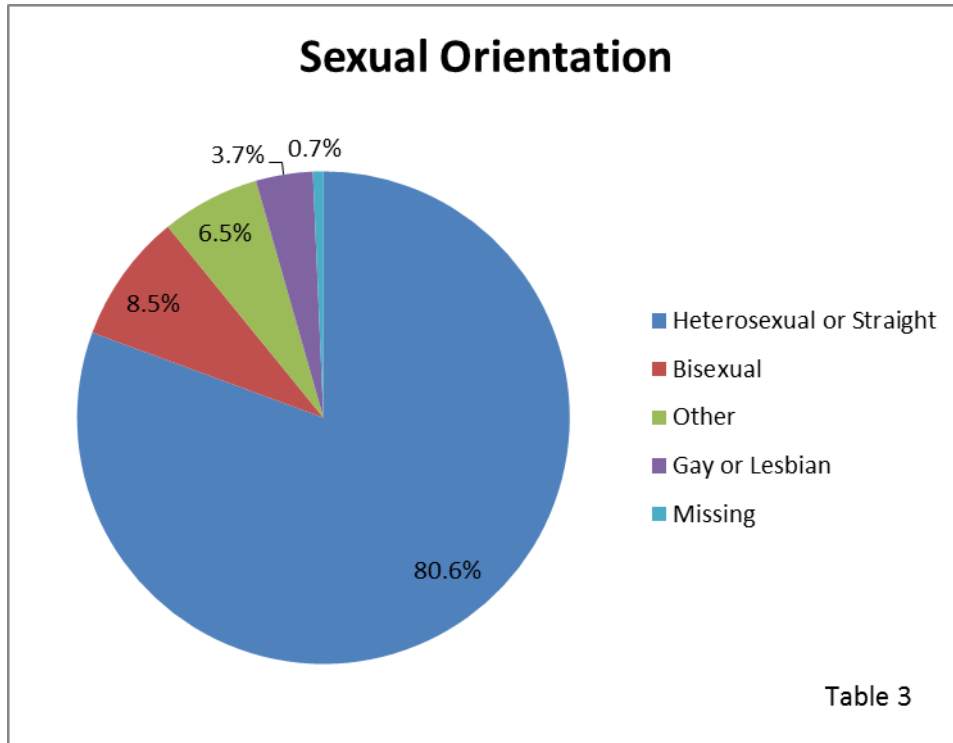
US Territories: American Samoa, Northern Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

Alaska or Hawaii

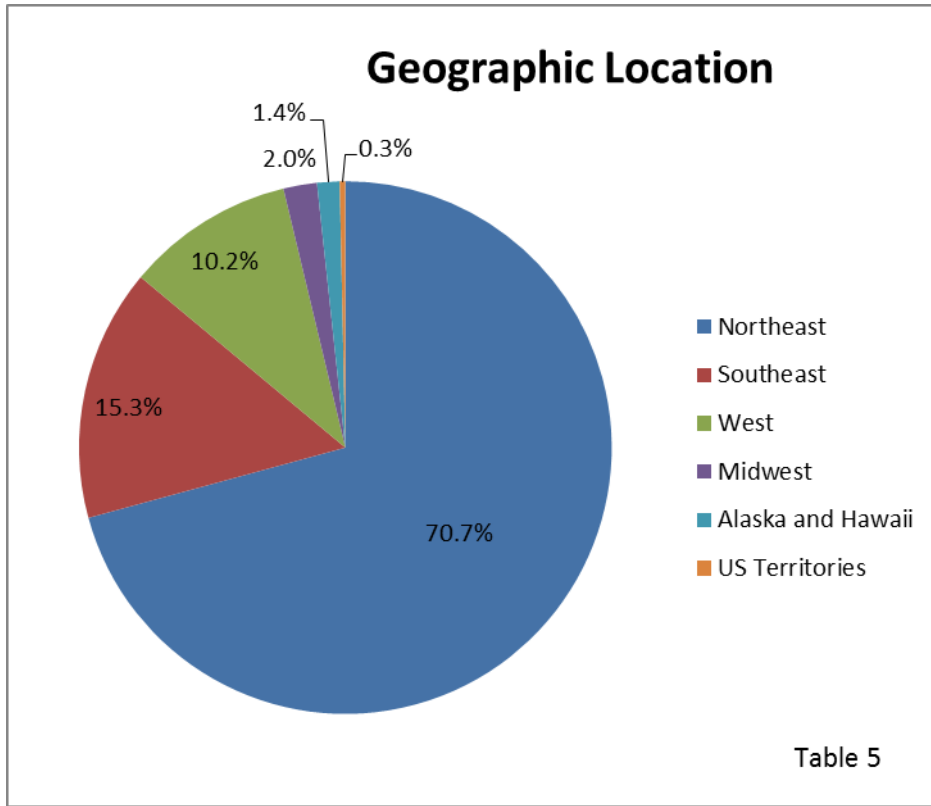
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The sample was made up of 70.7% Northeastern participants, 15.3% Southeastern, 10.2% Western, 2% Midwestern, 1.4% were from Alaska or Hawaii, and 0.3% were from US Territories (Table 5).

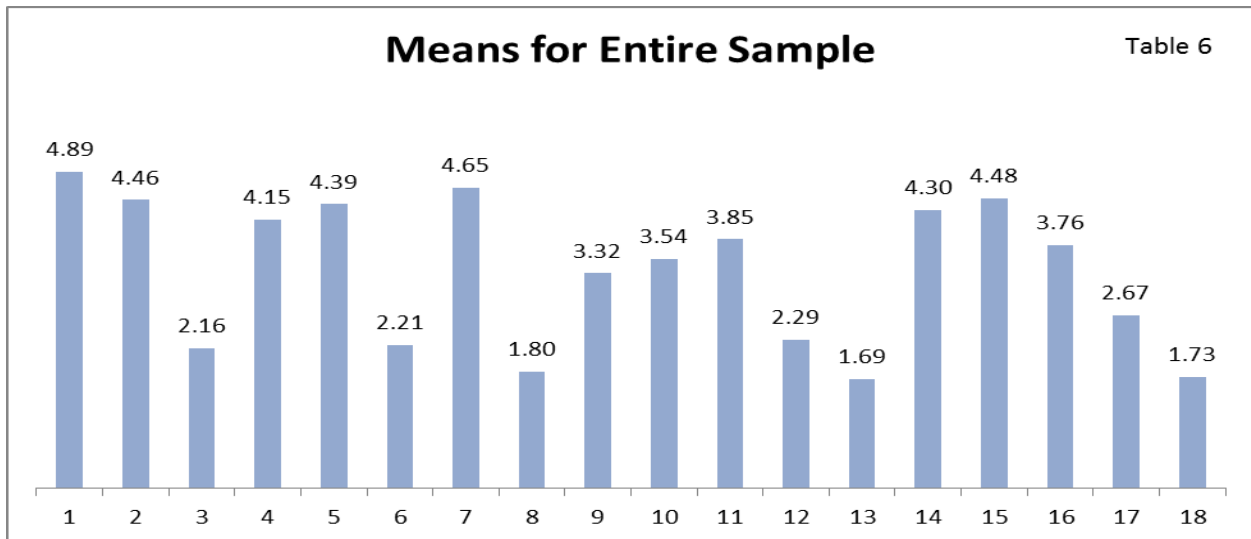




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The collective sample of 294 participants living in the United States reported the following means where 5 was agree, 3 was neutral, and 1 was disagree:



1. Expect to be in a committed relationship in lifetime
2. Committed relationship will be monogamous

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3. Committed relationship will be non-monogamous
4. Committed relationship is/will be a marriage
5. Marriage will be a lifelong commitment
6. Lifelong committed relationship other than marriage
7. Cohabitate with my partner
8. Partner will cover majority of household expenses
9. I will cover majority of household expenses
10. Share household expenses 50/50
11. Share household chores 50/50
12. I will do the majority of household chores
13. My partner will do the majority of household chores
14. Expect to raise children in lifetime
15. Expect to raise children with committed partner
16. Child rearing will be 50/50
17. I expect to do majority of child rearing
18. Partner will do majority of child rearing

Analysis By Gender

The first set of questions were analyzed using a T-Test to assess group differences by gender identity. Because the sample had so few participants who identify as anything besides male or female, these were the only two genders that could be assessed. To determine if differences exist in expectation of having a committed relationship during their lifetime, a t-test showed no significant difference based on male and female identified genders. Females reported a mean of 4.92 while males reported a mean of 4.79 ($t(45.139)=1.19$, two-tailed $p=.239$). In other words, males and females both reported a high expectation of having a committed relationship.

No significant difference was found regarding monogamy expectation based on male and female identified participants either. Reporting whether they agreed (5) or disagreed (1) with the statement, "I expect that while in a committed relationship my partner and I will NOT engage in any sexual behavior with other people," females reported a mean of 4.53 and males reported a mean of 4.19 ($t(50.141)=1.611$, two-tailed $p=.113$). These means indicate that both male and female participants have an expectation that they will not engage in sexual behavior with other people while in a committed relationship.

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Reporting whether they, “expect that while in a committed relationship my partner or I may choose to engage in sexual behavior with other people,” no significant difference was found based on gender identities. The mean for females was 2.09 and for males it was 2.30 ($t(285)=0.877$, two-tailed $p=.381$). Twenty-four point nine percent of the 294 participants reported either a 4 or a 5 (agree) with the statement that they may engage in sexual behavior with other people while in a committed relationship.

Male and female identified participants were not found to have a significant difference in expectation that their committed relationship would be a legal marriage. For females the mean was 4.17 and for males it was 4.21 ($t(286)=0.184$, two-tailed $p=.854$) indicating that both expect that their committed relationship will be a legal marriage. Seventy-two point one percent of the whole sample reported four or five (agree) that their committed relationship will be, or is, a legal marriage. When reporting on whether they agreed that their marriage would be a lifelong commitment, there was no significant difference between female and male identified reporters. Females reported a mean of 4.41 and males a mean of 4.33 ($t(285)=0.263$, two-tailed $p=.566$) indicating that both expect that their marriage will be a lifelong commitment. No significant difference based on gender identity was found regarding participants’ expectation that they would make an alternative lifelong commitment to their partner that would not be a legal marriage. Of the 287 male and female identified participants that responded, the mean found for females was 2.18 and for males it was 2.19 ($t(284)=0.046$, two-tailed $p=.963$). These means indicate that both males and females do not expect to make an alternative lifelong commitment to their partner other than marriage.

Male and female identified participants did not significantly differ regarding their expectation to cohabitate either. Male identified participants were found to have a mean of 4.44

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and females a mean of 4.70 ($t(50.725)=1.70$, two-tailed $p=.095$). This means that most male and female participants agreed that they would cohabit with their committed partner. Male and female identified participants did not significantly differ on their expectation that their partner would cover the majority of household expenses. The means of both genders indicate that they disagreed with that statement; for females the mean was 1.84 and for males it was 1.62 ($t(73.782)=1.554$, two-tailed $p=.127$). Both male and female identified participants were mostly neutral regarding an expectation to split household expenses 50/50. Female participants were found to have a mean of 3.31 and males a mean of 3.38 ($t(281)=.346$, two-tailed $p=.729$). Male and female identified participants' expectation regarding splitting the household expenses based on income did show a statistically significant difference. Female identified participants showed more agreement than males that they expected to split expenses based on income. Females reported a mean of 3.59 and males reported a mean of 3.12 ($t(278)=1.986$, two-tailed $p=.048$). There was no significant difference between male and female identified responders regarding their expectations to split household chores 50/50. Females reported a mean of 3.83 and males reported a mean of 3.98 ($t(282)=0.731$, two-tailed $p=.465$). These means indicate that participants were fairly neutral regarding this expectation, however both leaned slightly toward agreeing with the expectation that chores would be split 50/50. When asked to report about whether they or their partner would do the majority of the household chores, the majority of male and female identified participants disagreed. Females reported a mean of 2.32 when ranking that they, themselves would do a majority of the household chores, and males reported a mean of 2.17 ($t(64.733)=0.833$, two-tailed $p=.408$). Females and males were significantly split in the degree to which they disagreed that their partner would do the majority of the household chores.

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Females reported a mean of 1.61 while males reported a mean of 2.21 ($t(48.236)=3.377$, two-tailed $p=.001$).

Female and male identified participants did not significantly differ regarding their expectation to raise children in their lifetime, in fact 78.2% of the whole sample agreed (reported either a 4 or 5) that they expect to raise children in their lifetime. Females reported a mean of 4.36 and males reported a mean of 4.12 ($t(286)=1.233$, two-tailed $p=.219$). Both male and female identified participants also expect to raise children with their committed partner. Females reported a mean of 4.49 and males reported a mean of 4.45 ($t(268)=0.252$, two-tailed $p=.801$). There was a significant difference regarding the expectations of which partner would do the child rearing duties. When responding to the statement, "I expect that my partner and I will share child rearing duties evenly (50/50 split)," females reported a mean of 3.68, whereas males reported a mean of 4.27 ($t(69.717)=3.453$, two-tailed $p=.001$). When responding to the statement, "I expect that I will take on the majority of the child rearing duties," females reported a mean of 2.78, whereas males reported a mean of 2.03 ($t(69.639)=4.136$, two-tailed $p=.0001$).

Analysis By Generational Group

The same questions were assessed by generational groups; however with too few participants representing the Silent Generation and Greatest Generation, these groups could not be compared. In order to determine if there were differences in how the statement questions were rated, one way ANOVA tests were run for all variables, then Tamhane or Bonferroni post hoc testing was done to determine which specific groups are significantly different from each other. When assessing whether participants expected to be in a committed relationship, a significant difference was found between Boomers (mean=5.0) and Generation Xers (mean=4.84), as well as Boomers (mean= 5.0) and Millennials (mean=4.96) ($F(2,286)=5.079$, $p=.007$). While both

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means indicate that they agree that they expect to be in a committed relationship within their lifetime, the degree to which they agreed was significantly different. Boomers agreed more strongly than both Generation Xers and Millennials.

Also significant, Generation Xers (mean= 1.95) and Millennials (2.42) were found to differ regarding their expectation that they may choose to engage in sexual behavior with others while in a committed relationship ($F(2,286)=3.813, p=.023$). While both means were on the disagree side of the Likert scale, there was a statistically significant difference in the degree to which they disagreed. This means that that Generation Xers disagreed more strongly than Millennials regarding an expectation that they may engage in sexual behavior outside of their committed relationship.

Boomers and Millennials reported a significant difference in their expectation for sharing household expenses 50/50. Boomers reported a mean of 2.71 while Millennials reported a mean of 3.50 ($F(2,282)=4.118, p=.017$). This indicates that Boomers do not expect to share household expenses 50/50 while Millennials are rather neutral but lean toward agreeing that they will.

Generation Xers and Millennials differed significantly, although both were neutral leaning toward agree, regarding splitting household expenses based on income. Generation Xers were found to have a mean of 3.23, while Millennials a mean of 3.85 ($f(2,279)=6.487, p=.002$). This means that Millennials are in more agreement than Generation Xers that household expenses should be split based on individual income.

Generation Xers and Millennials also differed regarding their expectation of splitting household chores 50/50. Generation Xers were found to have a mean of 3.66, while Millennials reported a mean of 4.09 ($f(2,283)=5.155, p=.006$). This indicated that Generation Xers are more

neutral about splitting household chores 50/50 while Millennials agree that chores should be split 50/50.

A statistically significant difference was found between Millennials and Generation Xers regarding their expectation of raising children in their lifetime. While both agreed, Millennials' mean was 4.45 and Generation Xers' was 4.09 ($f(2,287)=3.482, p=.032$), Millennials agreed more strongly than Generation Xers. No other significant differences were found between generations.

Analysis By Individual Annual Income

For analysis, participants were divided into five groups based on individual annual income. These groups included <\$10,000 (40), \$10,001-\$30,000 (48), \$30,001-\$50,000 (78), \$50,001-\$75,000 (78), and >\$75,001 (48). A one-way ANOVA test was run to determine if there were statistically significant differences between these groups, then Tamhane, Bonferroni, or Games-Howell post hoc tests were done to determine which groups were significantly different from one another. Statistically significant differences were found regarding the expectation that participants *may* choose to engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship. Participants with less than \$10,000 annual income responded with an average of 2.75 while participants with between \$50,001 and \$75,000 responded with an average of 1.86 ($F(4,286)=2.581, p=.038$). This means that while both groups disagreed with this expectation, those who made more disagreed more strongly than those with a lower annual income.

These two groups also showed statistically significant difference in the way they responded to the expectation that their committed relationship would be monogamous. A Tamhane post hoc test showed no significant difference, however a Games-Howell post hoc test did. Again both groups leaned toward agreeing with the expectation, however those in the

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\$50,001-\$75,000 responded with an average of 4.64, while those who made less than \$10,000 responded with an average of 3.95 ($F(4,286)=3.105, p=.038$). This indicates that those with a higher annual income agree more strongly that their committed relationship will be monogamous.

Different annual income groups showed statistically significant responses regarding their expectation that their partner would cover the majority of the household expenses. Both participants with less than \$10,000 per year and those who made between \$30,001 and \$50,000 disagreed that their partner would cover the majority of household expenses, however those who made more disagreed more strongly. Those who made less than \$10,000 responded with an average of 2.21 and those who made between \$30,001 and \$50,000 responded with an average of 1.85.

Analysis By US Region

Of the 294 participants in this study only the Northeast (208), Southeast (45), and West (30) regions were represented enough to run tests to find statistically significant differences. Although these groups were compared, the number of participants representing the Southeast and West were not large enough to make them generalizable to the region on a whole. One-way ANOVA tests were run for all variables, and then a Tamhane post hoc test was run to determine which groups differed significantly. The only statistically significant difference found was between Northeastern participants and Western participants regarding their expectation that they may choose to engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship. Northeastern participants responded with an average of 2.05 while Western participants responded with an average of 2.83 ($F(2,280)=3.876, p=.022$). This means that Northeastern

participants disagree more strongly with that expectation than Western participants did that they may choose to engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship.

Correlations Between Relationship Satisfaction, Met Expectations, Marital Status, and Length of Relationship and Cohabitation

At the end of the survey participants were asked to identify if they were in a committed relationship, if that relationship was a legal marriage, how long they had been in the committed relationship, if they cohabitated with their partner and for how long, whether their current relationship met their expectations, and how satisfied they were in their current relationship. Eighty-one percent of the sample reported that they were in a committed relationship, 41% of those reported being legally married. Of the total 81% who reported being in a committed relationship, the median length of the relationship was 5-10 years (4). Of the 81% in a committed relationship, 64.3% were cohabitating with their partner. The median length of those who were cohabitating was 5-10 years (4). Of the 81% in a committed relationship, the mean for relationship meeting their expectations was a 4 on a scale of 1(disagree) to 5 (agree), indicating that most felt that their relationships met their expectations. The mean of overall relationship satisfaction was 8.36 on a scale of 1 (very unsatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied), indicating that most were satisfied in their relationships.

A spearman rho was run to determine if there was a correlation between length of relationship and participants' expectations being met, between length of relationship and satisfaction, cohabitation length and expectations being met, cohabitation length and satisfaction, as well as marital status and relationship satisfaction: no significant correlations were found for any of these tests. This means that this study cannot report any statistically significant correlations between length of relationship or cohabitation and relationship satisfaction or

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expectations being met. This study also cannot report any statistically significant correlations between marital status and relationship satisfaction.

Although no dramatic significant differences were found between groups (i.e. one group agreed while another one disagreed), the findings do suggest subtle differences in expectations that will have to be negotiated in the relationship. The discussion chapter will identify some of the important findings that social workers might find relevant in their work with couples or individuals in relationships.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The major findings in this study point to trends in the US population regarding expectations in committed relationships based on marriage, monogamy, cohabitation and child rearing. Overall the study found that the majority of participants expect to be in a committed relationship in their lifetime, they expect that while in a committed relationship they will not engage in sexual behavior with other people, they expect that their committed relationship will be a legal marriage, they expect that that marriage will be a lifelong commitment, they expect to cohabitate with their committed partner, they expect to raise children in their lifetime and they expect to raise children with a committed partner. Overall the participants who were in a committed relationship had their expectations met and were highly satisfied in their current relationship.

Statistically significant differences between gender groups, generational groups, income groups, and regional groups were analyzed. Female participants responded slightly more strongly, agreeing to more egalitarian expectations about splitting household expenses. Male participants responded more strongly agreeing to the expectation that they would share child rearing duties 50/50. However a more traditional attitude showed up when males disagreed more strongly that they personally would not take on the majority of child rearing duties. Generational differences were found suggesting growing trends in egalitarian expectations and more open relationships. Older generations were more likely to agree that they would be in a committed

relationship, and younger generations were more likely to agree that they may engage in sexual behavior outside of their committed relationship. Boomer (1943-1960) and Millennials (1982-2004) were significantly split regarding their expectation to split household expenses 50/50. Boomers were more likely to disagree to this expectation while Millennials were more likely to agree to it. Even between Generation Xers (1961-1981) and Millennials, there were trends that pointed toward more egalitarian expectations. Millennials were more likely to expect to split household expenses based on income, and Millennials were more likely to expect that household chores should be split 50/50. The statistically significant difference regarding child rearing expectation showed that Millennials expect to raise children in their lifetime more than Generation Xers do. Income groups were found to have statistically significant differences regarding monogamy expectations and splitting household expenses. Lower income individuals were more likely than higher income individuals to expect non-monogamous relationships. Higher income individuals had lower expectations that their partner would cover the majority of household expenses. The only statistically significant difference between regional groups was regarding monogamy. Participants from the Northeast were more likely to disagree with the expectation that they may engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship.

In order to discuss this study's findings in an organized way, I will first discuss the findings related to commitment and monogamy and how they compared to current research as well as differing based on generational groups. I will then discuss the findings regarding expectations of marriage or an alternative life-long commitment and what these findings say about national trends that differ from the Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends Project (2010). A large part of this study gathered data that would point toward participants'

expectations of a committed relationship that would be either egalitarian or more traditional. I will discuss the findings about how individuals expect to share household expenses, chores, and child rearing duties and how these findings might impact their overall relationship satisfaction according to current research. I will then discuss findings related to child rearing expectations and discuss how they compare to current research, namely the Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends Project (2010). I will then discuss the implications this study has on social work practice as well as discuss recommendations for further research.

Commitment and Monogamy

This study found that the average participant expects to be in a committed relationship in their lifetime (4.89) and that their committed relationship would be monogamous (4.46). If we consider Pietromonaco's and Beck's (2015) work about how attachment style influences our expectations for an attachment figure in our adult relationships, we could interpret this data as perhaps related to the attachment styles of this study's participants. It would then suggest that the majority of participants have either a secure or anxious attachment style because they expect to have a committed relationship, rather than individuals with an avoidant attachment style who would not expect, or want, commitment. Noteworthy is that *no* participants responded with a "one" indicating that they disagreed with this expectation, and only 1.4% responded with a "two."

When comparing different group expectations regarding commitment and monogamy, no significant difference was found between male identified participants and female identified participants. However because the number of male participants was only 43 compared to the 245 female participants, this study cannot report with confidence that the male participants' responses are generalizable to the US male population. Generational groups, however, were

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found to have a statistically significant difference in expectation to be in a committed relationship. Boomers average was higher (5.00), than Generation Xers (4.84) and Millennials (4.96). While the tests indicate a statistically significant difference, it's important to recognize that all averages were high, indicating that they agreed with the expectation that they would have a committed relationship in their lifetime, and that Boomers were likely to rank higher because they have lived longer, increasing the likelihood that they've already been in a committed relationship in their lifetime. Millennial (140) and Generation X (129) groups represented in this study were large enough samples to generalize the results; however with only 21 Boomers represented, results cannot be generalized for this group.

No significant differences were found regarding the expectation to have a committed relationship based on annual income or US region, however the expectation for monogamy was different for those with a higher annual income. I hesitate to draw much of any conclusion about this difference for two reasons: 1) both groups' averages indicate that they agreed with this expectation, 2) the statistically significant difference was found with one post hoc test and not with another.

The average participant did not expect a non-monogamous relationship, which supports a hypothesis that the average person is expecting one attachment figure. Of the various groups compared regarding their expectation that their committed relationship *may not* be monogamous, statistically significant differences were found only based on generation and income. Both Generation Xers and Millennials disagreed, however Generation Xer's disagreed more strongly. This could mean that there is more openness to a non-monogamous relationship among younger generations. As for income groups, both participants making less than \$10,000 and those making between \$50,001 and \$75,000 disagreed with this expectation, but those making more annually

disagreed more strongly. I don't feel confident drawing any conclusion about this data though since it seems more significant that overall the majority of participants do not expect to engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship.

It is particularly significant to me that 24.9% of the 294 total participants responded with a "four" or a "five," indicating that they agree that they *may* engage in sexual behavior with other people while in a committed relationship. Even though this is a minority of the sample, it is a significant enough number to note that as social workers we should not assume that our clients expect monogamous relationships. Although one could interpret the expectation of non-monogamy as a sign that the individual avoids attachment, Davidson (2007) reminds us that just because a person is polyamorous does not mean that they don't have attachments to one or more of their partners.

Campbell et al (2012) discussed their study of 197 women regarding their experience with infidelity. While they did not report on the percentage of their participants that engaged in extra-marital affairs, they did report that, "most [participants] admitted feeling attracted to another person and had spent time thinking about and flirting with this person. Fewer individuals reported being emotionally or physically intimate (Campbell et al, 2012)." The present study asked participants about their expectation of engaging in *sexual behavior* with others outside of their committed relationship. For some participants sexual behavior could include flirting, but most likely behavior would not include thoughts or feelings *not* acted upon. Campbell et al (2012) acknowledged that their participants may have under-reported experience with infidelity because of social norms that frown upon that behavior. This makes the 24.9% of participants in this anonymous survey that responded that they may engage in sexual behavior outside of their

committed relationship even more significant. Granted these individuals weren't necessarily in marriages, but were in committed relationships.

Marriage or Alternative Life-long Commitment

The average participant agreed (4.15) that their committed relationship would be, or is, a legal marriage. In fact, 72.1% of the 294 participants responded with a "four" or a "five" indicating that they agreed with this expectation. At first glance this number seems quite different from the results of Cohn et al (2010) which found that out of their 1302 participants 46% said that they did want to marry, 25% did not want to marry, and 29% were unsure. However, Cohn's 1302 participants were unmarried, while 41.5% of this study's participants were already married. Of the 116 that were unmarried 57.8% agree (responding with a "four" or a "five") that they expect their committed relationship will be a marriage, 21.6% disagree (responding with a "one" or a "two"), and 20.7% were neutral (responding with a "three"). The average participant also agreed (4.39) that their marriage would be a lifelong commitment, which is hopeful considering Steele's (2015) theory that "attitude" is an important factor to assess an individual's commitment level. In fact, 81.6% responded with a "four" or a "five" indicating that their marriage would be a life-long commitment which points to a strong "attitude" for enduring commitment. It is more difficult to report that participants were committed in "fact" as well as "attitude." However if we look at the data reporting the length of time participants have been in their committed relationships, cohabitation data, along with the length they have been cohabitating, these numbers could indicate that these individual participants are also committed in "fact." Of the 81.6% that indicated that they were in committed relationships, 47.3% had been in their relationship for five or more years, 64.3% were cohabitating with their partners, and 46.0% have been cohabitating with their partner for more three or more years.

This data supports Cherlin's research that cohabitation is on the rise (2004). The high expectation that participants cohabit with their committed partner (89.8%) indicate that this is popular expectation. Cherlin (2004), Campbell et al (2012), as well as Cohn et al (2010) note that the motivation for marriage has changed over the years and that instead of marrying for practical reasons people are marrying for personal and emotional reasons. The fear is that these personal reasons are more subject to change, creating unstable commitments. This study does not support that fear when considering that 72.1% expect that their committed relationship would be, or is a legal marriage and 81.6% expect that their marriage would be a lifelong commitment. The high median of participants' length in committed relationship (median response 4 = 5 – 10 years) indicates that their commitment is enduring. When we look at these high commitment and marriage expectations alongside Riggio's and Weiser's (2008) study that found that embedded attitudes impact relational outcomes, it suggests that participant's commitment expectation will increase their likelihood of staying committed.

Comparing the different groups, male (4.17) and female (4.21) identified participants did not differ significantly in their expectation that their committed relationship would be a legal marriage. Responses indicate that the average males and females in the study *do* expect that they will be married, however with only 43 male participants we cannot assume the generalizability of this finding. No statistically significant difference between generational groups was found regarding their expectation of marriage either. This does not correspond to Cohn et al (2010) which found that those who were fifty or younger were more likely to believe that marriage was becoming obsolete, nor does it correspond to Qu's (2003) research that found that women's expectation of marriage declined as they got older. This difference in findings is significant considering that this study had enough Millennial and Generation X participants to generalize

that data. Seventy-five of Millennials and 69% of Generation Xers responded with a “four” or a “five” indicating that they expect that their committed relationship will be, or is, a legal marriage.

I surveyed participants about their expectation to be in a life-long committed relationship that was not a legal marriage. I anticipated that participants who were not eligible for legal marriage (ex. Gay and Lesbian identified participants in states where marriage was not an option for them) would expect this kind of commitment as well as Millennials or Generation Xers who didn't necessarily want or need a legal marriage to validate their commitment to their partner. I was surprised by the low average of all participants (2.21), and this survey did not get enough Gay or Lesbian identified participants to report significant findings for them.

Cohabitation and Egalitarian Expectations

Much of the Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends Project (2010) gathered data regarding expectations of egalitarian relationships or more traditional roles. The seemingly contradictory findings; with 75% *not* agreeing that women should assume traditional gender roles when married, and 71% saying that they have old-fashioned values about marriage and family; suggest that there are not clear expectations about this among the US population. This study supported the ambiguous nature of these expectations. While the average participants agreed that they would cohabit with their committed partner (4.65); expectations about how partners would divvy up household expenses, chores, and child rearing were more neutral. Egalitarian expectations including splitting household expenses 50/50 (3.54), splitting household chores 50/50 (3.85), and splitting child rearing duties 50/50 (3.76) were within the neutral range but leaned toward agreeing. I attempted to find if more traditional role expectations were present by asking participants if they expected that they or their partner would do the majority of

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household expenses, chores, or child rearing. It seemed clear that few participants were expecting that their partners would take the majority of those tasks. The average participant responded with a 1.8, indicating that they disagree that their partner would cover the majority of the household expenses, disagreed that their partner would do the majority of the household chores (responding with an average of 1.69), and disagreeing that their partner would do the majority of the child rearing duties (responding with a 1.73).

Looking at the entire sample we do not see clear trends, however it seems that the population is leaning toward a more egalitarian arrangement. I interpret the fairly neutral responses to indicate that these kinds of expectations are up for negotiation within the unique partnership. It is interesting to note that there were statistically significant differences in these expectations based on gender. When responding to the expectation that they should split household expenses based on income, female participants agreed more strongly (3.59) than male participants (3.12). This could indicate that females want a more equal partnership but understand that their income may be less than their male counterparts so splitting the expenses 50/50 wouldn't be as equal as splitting them based on income.

Statistically significant differences between generations regarding expectations for household expenses point to more and more egalitarian arrangements. Boomers (2.71) do not expect to share household expenses 50/50 while Millennials (3.50) are rather neutral but lean toward agreeing. And even between Generation Xers (3.23) and Millennials (3.85) there are stronger opinions about more equal ways of splitting expenses based on individuals' annual income. This indicates a trend that more egalitarian expectations are growing with younger generations.

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Females and males were also found to have a statistically significantly split in the degree to which they disagreed that their partner would do the majority of the household chores. Females disagreed more strongly (1.61) than males (2.21) which points to a more traditional expectation that females felt they could not expect their male partners to do more chores. Interestingly this statistically significant difference did not show up in female's expectation that they would do more household chores than their male partners. This continues to support ambiguity about traditional versus egalitarian expectations. Generationally the only statistically significant difference was found between Generation Xers and Millennials. Generation Xers (3.66) were more neutral about splitting chores 50/50, while Millennials (4.09) agreed that they should be split 50/50. This would support a trend towards more egalitarian expectations.

Regarding child rearing duty, there was also a statistically significant difference between males and females. Male participants responded more strongly (4.27) that they would share child rearing duties 50/50 than female participants (3.68). This data suggests that clearly the US population has more egalitarian expectations surrounding child rearing and that men expect to play a larger role than in previous generations.

So what does a growing trend for egalitarian expectations mean? The Yoder et al (2007) study connected egalitarian expectations with a more progressed feminist identity. The fact that the largely female sample in this study endorsed slightly stronger egalitarian expectations supports a trend towards the feminist movement and feminist beliefs impacting relationship expectations.

According to Yoder et al (2007) women will be more satisfied in these egalitarian styled relationships, while Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp (2013) found that the more men contribute to household responsibilities the less the couple has sexual intimacy, indicating that relational

discord could occur because of egalitarian expectations. This study found data supporting growing egalitarian expectations. This finding suggests that egalitarian expectations are satisfying when viewed alongside the findings that participants who were currently in committed relationship rated high satisfaction (average of 8.36 out of 10) and expectations being met (average of 4 out of 5).

Child Rearing Expectations

This survey supported the Pew Research Center Social and Demographic Trends Project (2010) with regard to its findings that a majority of the US population wants to have children. The average participant responded with a 4.30 indicating that they agree that they expect to have children in their lifetime. In fact, 78.2% of this study's sample responded with a "four" or a "five" indicating that they expect to raise children in their lifetime, 9.9% responded with a "one" or a "two" indicating that they did not, and 11.9% responded with a "three" indicating a neutral stance. Cohn et al (2010) reported that 62% of all surveyed said that they want to have children, 16% said they did not, and 22% said they were unsure. A child rearing expectation analysis by gender showed that 80.4% of females responded with a "four" or "five" indicating that they expect to have children, while 69.8% of males responded the same way. This supports Cohn et al (2010) who reported that a majority of men and women want children; 63% of men and 60% of women reported wanting to have children. Generationally, 82.1% of Millennials responded with a "four" or a "five" indicating that they expected to have children, 72.9% of Generation Xers did, and 85.7% of Boomers did.

The average response to the expectation that they would raise children with their committed partner was a 4.48 indicating that most participants agreed with the statement. Of the 275 that indicated there was a possibility that they would raise children in their lifetime

(responding with a 2, 3, 4, or 5 to that expectation), 82.5% responded with a “four” or a “five” indicating that they expect to raise children with their committed partner. While this doesn’t look at the same data point that Cohn et al did regarding marriage being a prerequisite to child bearing, it suggests that most participants expect to raise children in a committed relationship. I feel it is significant to point out, with this data specifically, that the majority of the sample was made up of female identified participants.

Implications for Social Work and Further Research

Aside from my role as a researcher and a social worker, I was curious about this topic as a woman and a member of Generation X who has struggled to negotiate relationship expectations regarding marriage and child rearing. I have observed within myself attitudes toward marriage, monogamy, and parenthood that differ from my parents’ generation and my peers. I was curious if attitudes and expectations were really changing or if this was just a subjective observation. I wondered how my expectations compared to those of others like me and different from me.

As a social worker I recognize how often conflict in relationships is what is brought into the room and is affecting our client’s wellbeing. While taking a couples counseling course in pursuit of my MSW, the professor commented that in his practice with adults in an outpatient setting, the majority of the work focused on relationship issues and that often those issues were based on individual’s differing expectations. The idea for this study was born out of the convergence of these personal and professional experiences.

It is always important for social workers to understand their clients as individuals and not make assumptions about them based on groups they may associate them with. We get extensive training about cultural awareness for this specific reason. Issues of race, gender, class, and disability are often discussed. What about assumptions we make about clients’ expectations in

relationships? Are there assumptions that we might make based on our own expectations? Or do cultural norms shape our assumptions?

This study may have identified overall trends in the US population's expectations, and it has supported some general assumptions that many may have. Those assumptions might include that the majority of people expect a committed relationship, they expect it to be a marriage, they expect monogamy, and to cohabit, and to raise children with their committed partner. The expectations could be seen as "common sense." Perhaps even the trend that individuals expect more egalitarian style relationships would not be surprising. The percentage of those in the minority however, may be the most relevant data collected for social workers.

It is important to check our assumptions, and to recognize that this study found that 24.9% indicated that they may engage in sexual behavior with others outside of their committed relationship. Eleven point nine percent did not expect that their committed relationship would be a legal marriage. Four point four percent did not expect that their marriage would be a lifelong commitment. And 9.9% did not expect to raise children in their lifetime. Our assumptions should not guide what we think is normal or expected, nor should we pathologize expectations that differ from the norm.

This data should also inform us that clients with expectations outside of the norm may find themselves in conflict or distress simply due to the fact that not as many individuals share their expectations. Their minority status may suggest to them that there is something wrong with them or that they are destined to not be satisfied in a relationship because they will not find a partner who shares their expectations. As social workers it is always helpful to normalize our client's experience and reassure them that they are not alone.

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Future research regarding relationship expectations would be most helpful. First of all repeating this study and obtaining a more diverse sample including different gender identified participants, participants that identify with different sexual orientations, and come from different US regions would allow for more generalizable and significant differences to be assessed. This study explored different expectations, but participants were not asked to share their motivation to commit to a relationship or why that commitment might be a legal marriage. Research that focused on motivation would be incredibly interesting and help us to understand whether marriage and commitment was truly becoming obsolete or just changing.

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Appendix A
Survey Instrument

Expectations in Committed Relationships

 SMITH COLLEGE

Informed Consent Part 1

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of trends in American expectations regarding monogamy, cohabitation, marriage, and domestic responsibilities in committed romantic relationships.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are presently or expect to be in a committed romantic relationship, are living in the United States, and are at least 18 years old.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to identify trends in American expectations regarding monogamy, cohabitation, marriage, and domestic responsibilities in committed relationships and will explore the ways expectations differ based on gender, sexual orientation, and generation.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master's in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer demographic questions about yourself and expectation questions on a likert-type scale of 1- 5. The study is anonymous and will take you approximately five to fifteen minutes depending on the questions your unique responses direct you to respond to.


Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no reasonable foreseeable or expected risks. Some minor emotional distress may occur if the expectations that you have identified and your current relationship circumstances do not align.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- If you would like to know how your expectations for committed romantic relationships compare to other Americans you may sign up to receive the survey results by emailing this researcher at arwhite@smith.edu with RESULTS as the subject line of the email. When the results have been compiled this researcher will email you a document that summarizes the results.
- Understanding trends and percentages of the population that have certain expectations can help social workers be prepared for the types of issues they will see in individual, couples, and family therapy. These partnership trends may also speak to state and national policy changes social workers can advocate for.

Expectations in Committed Relationships

 SMITH COLLEGE

Informed Consent Part 2

1. Confidentiality

- This study is anonymous. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity.
- If you choose to have the results emailed to you, your survey responses will not be linked to your email address and your email address will not be recorded or used in any way other than to provide you with this studies' results.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely. If you choose to withdraw, only the responses that you entered will be collected for this study. To withdraw before you have completed the study you can just navigate away from the Survey Monkey site. Only the information you have provided up until that point will be retained. This study will only utilize fully completed surveys to allow for participants who decide to withdraw part way through to not have their responses included. Partially completed survey data will be kept on the password protected account of this researcher as an anonymous survey. Survey monkey does not link participants to any email addresses, accounts or other identifiers so there will be no way to identify individuals who completed all or any part of the survey.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Amanda White at arwhite@smith.edu. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you would like to know how your expectations for committed romantic relationships compare to other Americans you may sign up to receive the survey results by emailing this researcher at arwhite@smith.edu with RESULTS as the subject line of the email. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Selecting "I agree" below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

I disagree

I agree



2. What is your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Female to Male Transgender
- Male to Female Transgender
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

Expectations in Committed Relationships



3. What year were you born?

Expectations in Committed Relationships



4. Do you consider yourself to be:

- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other (please specify)

Expectations in Committed Relationships



5. What is your individual annual income

Expectations in Committed Relationships



6. In what state or U.S. territory do you live?

- Alabama
- Alaska
- American Samoa
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- District of Columbia (DC)
- Florida
- Georgia
- Guam
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

- Mississippi
- Missouri
- Montana
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New Mexico
- New York
- North Carolina
- North Dakota
- Northern Marianas Islands
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Puerto Rico
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Utah
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Virgin Islands
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming
- Other location not in the United States

Expectations in Committed Relationships

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS



For the purpose of this study committed relationship is defined as:

An interpersonal romantic relationship based upon a mutually agreed-upon commitment to one another regarding certain behavior and lifestyle choices.

Please rate the following statement based on your expectations in general, not necessarily based on your current relationship circumstances.

7. I expect to be in a committed relationship during my lifetime.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



8. I expect that while in a committed relationship my partner and I will NOT engage in any sexual behavior with other people.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



9. I expect that while in a committed relationship my partner or *may* choose to engage in sexual behavior with other people.

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



10. I expect that my committed relationship will be (or is) a legal marriage.

Disagree Neutral Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



11. I expect that my marriage will be a lifelong commitment.

Disagree Neutral Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



12. Instead of marriage, my partner and I will make an alternative lifelong commitment to one another.

Disagree Neutral Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



13. I expect to live in the same household (cohabit) with my partner while in a committed relationship.

Disagree Neutral Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships



EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

14. Please rate the following statement based on your expectations in general, not necessarily based on your current relationship circumstances.

	Disagree		Neutral		Agree
I expect that my partner will take care of the majority of household expenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that my partner and I will share household expenses evenly. (50/50 split)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that my partner and I will share household expenses based on our income ratio. (e.g. If one partner makes \$75,000 and the other partner makes \$50,000 annually for a total of \$125,000, expenses would be split 60/40 because \$75,000 is 60% o	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that my partner and I will share the household chores evenly. (50/50 split of chores such as laundry, house cleaning, dishes)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that I will do the majority of the household chores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that my partner will do the majority of the household chores.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

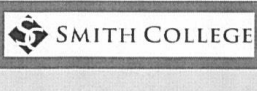
Expectations in Committed Relationships



15. I expect to raise children in my lifetime.

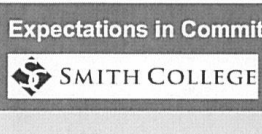
Disagree		Neutral		Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expectations in Committed Relationships

 SMITH COLLEGE

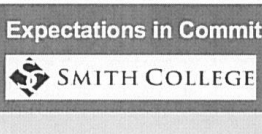
16. I expect to raise children with my committed partner

Disagree			Neutral			Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expectations in Committed Relationships
 SMITH COLLEGE

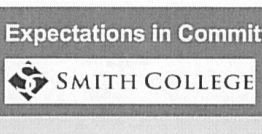
17. Rate the following statements about your expectations regarding child rearing duties.

	Disagree		Neutral		Agree
I expect that my partner and I will share child rearing duties evenly. (50/50 split)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that I will take on the majority of the child rearing duties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that my partner will take on the majority of the child rearing duties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expectations in Committed Relationships
 SMITH COLLEGE

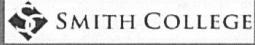
18. Are you currently in a committed relationship?

Yes
 No

Expectations in Committed Relationships
 SMITH COLLEGE

19. How long have you been in a committed relationship?

Expectations in Committed Relationships



20. Are you cohabitating with your committed partner?

- Yes
- No

Expectations in Committed Relationships



21. How long have you been cohabitating with your current partner?

Expectations in Committed Relationships



22. Are you currently legally married?

- Yes
- No

Expectations in Committed Relationships



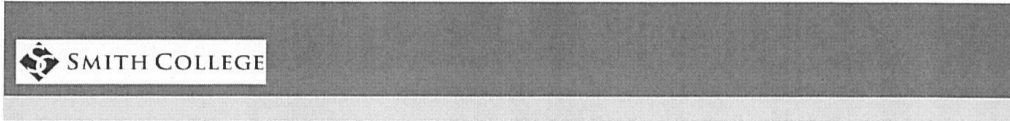
23. My current relationship meets my expectations

Disagree

Neutral

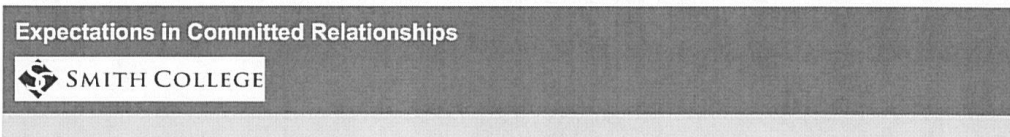
Agree

Expectations in Committed Relationships

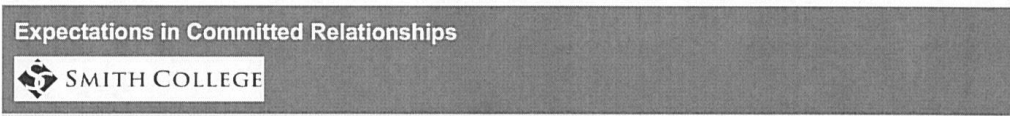


24. Overall how satisfied are you in your current relationship?

Very Unsatisfied Very satisfied



Thank you so much for participating in my survey. Again, if you wish to see the results send an email to me at arwhite@smith.edu and I will email out the compiled data.



Sorry you are not eligible to participate

Thank you for your desire to participate in this survey. Unfortunately you are not eligible to participate due to the specific inclusion criteria including:

Living in the United States

Being 18 years old or older

(Disregard this page if you have already seen the thank you for participating page)

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

Several of the drop-down menu options did not show up in the pdf version of the survey I downloaded. The options for those questions are as follows:

What year were you born?

1901
1902
1903
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EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

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1998 (this option links to the disqualification page)

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

- 1999 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2000 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2001 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2002 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2003 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2004 (this option links to the disqualification page)
- 2005 or more recently (this option links to the disqualification page)

What is your individual annual income?

- <\$10,000
- \$10,001 - \$30,000
- \$30,001 - \$50,000
- \$50,001 - \$75,000
- \$75,001 - \$150,000
- \$150,001 - \$225,000
- >\$225,000

How long have you been in a committed relationship?

- <12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- > 10 years

How long have you been cohabitating with your current partner?

- <12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- > 10 years

Appendix B

Informed Consent



Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA

.....

Title of Study: Expectations in Committed Romantic Relationships
Investigator: Amanda White, Smith School for Social Work MSW graduate student

.....

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study of trends in American expectations regarding monogamy, cohabitation, marriage, and domestic responsibilities in committed romantic relationships.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are living in the United States, and are at least 18 years old.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to identify trends in American expectations regarding monogamy, cohabitation, marriage, and domestic responsibilities in committed relationships and will explore the ways expectations differ based on gender, sexual orientation, and generation.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master’s in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer demographic questions about yourself and expectation questions on a likert-type scale of 1- 5. The study is anonymous and will take you approximately five to fifteen minutes depending on the questions your unique responses direct you to respond to.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no reasonable foreseeable or expected risks. Some minor emotional distress may occur if the expectations that you have identified and your current relationship circumstances do not align.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- If you would like to know how your expectations for committed romantic relationships compare to other Americans you may sign up to receive the survey results by emailing this researcher at arwhite@smith.edu with RESULTS as the subject line of the email. When the results have been compiled this researcher will email you a document that summarizes the results.

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

- Understanding trends and percentages of the population that have certain expectations can help social workers be prepared for the types of issues they will see in individual, couples, and family therapy. These partnership trends may also speak to state and national policy changes social workers can advocate for.

Confidentiality

- This study is anonymous. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity.
- If you choose to have the results emailed to you, your survey responses will not be linked to your email address and your email address will not be recorded or used in any way other than to provide you with this study's results.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely. If you choose to withdraw, only the responses that you entered will be collected for this study. To withdraw before you have completed the study you can just navigate away from the Survey Monkey site. This study will only utilize fully completed surveys to allow for participants who decide to withdraw part way through to not have their responses included. Partially completed survey data will be kept on the password protected account of this researcher as an anonymous survey. Survey monkey does not link participants to any email addresses, accounts or other identifiers so there will be no way to identify individuals who completed all or any part of the survey.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Amanda White at arwhite@smith.edu. If you would like to know how your expectations for committed romantic relationships compare to other Americans you may sign up to receive the survey results by emailing this researcher at arwhite@smith.edu with RESULTS as the subject line of the email. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Selecting "I agree" below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Please print a copy of this page for your records.

I disagree I agree

Appendix C

Survey Monkey Security Statement

APPLICATION AND USER SECURITY

- **SSL/TLS ENCRYPTION:** USERS CAN DETERMINE WHETHER TO COLLECT SURVEY RESPONSES OVER SECURED, ENCRYPTED SSL/TLS CONNECTIONS. ALL OTHER COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE SURVEYMONKEY.COM WEBSITE ARE SENT OVER SSL/TLS CONNECTIONS. SECURE SOCKETS LAYER (SSL) AND TRANSPORT LAYER SECURITY (TLS) TECHNOLOGY (THE SUCCESSOR TECHNOLOGY TO SSL) PROTECT COMMUNICATIONS BY USING BOTH SERVER AUTHENTICATION AND DATA ENCRYPTION. THIS ENSURES THAT USER DATA IN TRANSIT IS SAFE, SECURE, AND AVAILABLE ONLY TO INTENDED RECIPIENTS.
- **USER AUTHENTICATION:** USER DATA ON OUR DATABASE IS LOGICALLY SEGREGATED BY ACCOUNT-BASED ACCESS RULES. USER ACCOUNTS HAVE UNIQUE USERNAMES AND PASSWORDS THAT MUST BE ENTERED EACH TIME A USER LOGS ON. SURVEYMONKEY ISSUES A SESSION [COOKIE](#) ONLY TO RECORD ENCRYPTED AUTHENTICATION INFORMATION FOR THE DURATION OF A SPECIFIC SESSION. THE SESSION COOKIE DOES NOT INCLUDE THE PASSWORD OF THE USER.
- **USER PASSWORDS:** USER APPLICATION PASSWORDS HAVE MINIMUM COMPLEXITY REQUIREMENTS. PASSWORDS ARE INDIVIDUALLY SALTED AND HASHED.
- **DATA ENCRYPTION:** CERTAIN SENSITIVE USER DATA, SUCH AS CREDIT CARD DETAILS AND ACCOUNT PASSWORDS, IS STORED IN ENCRYPTED FORMAT.
- **DATA PORTABILITY:** SURVEYMONKEY ENABLES YOU TO EXPORT YOUR DATA FROM OUR SYSTEM IN A VARIETY OF FORMATS SO THAT YOU CAN BACK IT UP, OR USE IT WITH OTHER APPLICATIONS.
- **PRIVACY:** WE HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE [PRIVACY POLICY](#) THAT PROVIDES A VERY TRANSPARENT VIEW OF HOW WE HANDLE YOUR DATA, INCLUDING HOW WE USE YOUR DATA, WHO WE SHARE IT WITH, AND HOW LONG WE RETAIN IT.
- **HIPAA:** ENHANCED SECURITY FEATURES FOR [HIPAA-ENABLED ACCOUNTS](#).

PHYSICAL SECURITY

- **DATA CENTERS:** OUR INFORMATION SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE (SERVERS, NETWORKING EQUIPMENT, ETC.) IS COLLOCATED AT THIRD PARTY SSAE 16/SOC 2 AUDITED DATA CENTERS. WE OWN AND MANAGE ALL OF OUR EQUIPMENT LOCATED IN THOSE DATA CENTERS.
- **DATA CENTER SECURITY:** OUR DATA CENTERS ARE STAFFED AND SURVEILLED 24/7. ACCESS IS SECURED BY SECURITY GUARDS, VISITORS LOGS, AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS SUCH AS PASSCARDS AND BIOMETRIC RECOGNITION. OUR EQUIPMENT IS KEPT IN LOCKED CAGES.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS:** OUR DATA CENTER IS MAINTAINED AT CONTROLLED TEMPERATURES AND HUMIDITY RANGES WHICH ARE CONTINUOUSLY MONITORED FOR VARIATIONS. SMOKE AND FIRE DETECTION AND RESPONSE SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE.
- **LOCATION:** ALL USER DATA IS STORED ON SERVERS LOCATED IN THE UNITED STATES AND LUXEMBOURG.

AVAILABILITY

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

- **CONNECTIVITY:** FULLY REDUNDANT IP NETWORK CONNECTIONS WITH MULTIPLE INDEPENDENT CONNECTIONS TO A RANGE OF TIER 1 INTERNET ACCESS PROVIDERS.
- **POWER:** SERVERS HAVE REDUNDANT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POWER SUPPLIES. DATA CENTER HAS BACKUP POWER SUPPLIES, AND IS ABLE TO DRAW POWER FROM THE MULTIPLE SUBSTATIONS ON THE GRID, SEVERAL DIESEL GENERATORS, AND BACKUP BATTERIES.
- **UPTIME:** CONTINUOUS UPTIME MONITORING, WITH IMMEDIATE ESCALATION TO SURVEYMONKEY STAFF FOR ANY DOWNTIME.
- **FAILOVER:** OUR DATABASE IS LOG-SHIPPED TO STANDBY SERVERS AND CAN FAILOVER IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.

NETWORK SECURITY

- **UPTIME:** CONTINUOUS UPTIME MONITORING, WITH IMMEDIATE ESCALATION TO SURVEYMONKEY STAFF FOR ANY DOWNTIME.
- **THIRD PARTY SCANS:** WEEKLY SECURITY SCANS ARE PERFORMED BY QUALYS.
- **TESTING:** SYSTEM FUNCTIONALITY AND DESIGN CHANGES ARE VERIFIED IN AN ISOLATED TEST “SANDBOX” ENVIRONMENT AND SUBJECT TO FUNCTIONAL AND SECURITY TESTING PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT TO ACTIVE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS.
- **FIREWALL:** FIREWALL RESTRICTS ACCESS TO ALL PORTS EXCEPT 80 (HTTP) AND 443 (HTTPS).
- **PATCHING:** LATEST SECURITY PATCHES ARE APPLIED TO ALL OPERATING SYSTEM AND APPLICATION FILES TO MITIGATE NEWLY DISCOVERED VULNERABILITIES.
- **ACCESS CONTROL:** SECURE VPN, MULTIFACTOR AUTHENTICATION, AND ROLE-BASED ACCESS IS ENFORCED FOR SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT BY AUTHORIZED ENGINEERING STAFF.
- **LOGGING AND AUDITING:** CENTRAL LOGGING SYSTEMS CAPTURE AND ARCHIVE ALL INTERNAL SYSTEMS ACCESS INCLUDING ANY FAILED AUTHENTICATION ATTEMPTS.

STORAGE SECURITY

- **BACKUP FREQUENCY:** BACKUPS OCCUR HOURLY INTERNALLY, AND DAILY TO A CENTRALIZED BACKUP SYSTEM FOR STORAGE IN MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPARATE SITES.
- **PRODUCTION REDUNDANCY:** DATA STORED ON A RAID 10 ARRAY. O/S STORED ON A RAID 1 ARRAY.

ORGANIZATIONAL & ADMINISTRATIVE SECURITY

- **EMPLOYEE SCREENING:** WE PERFORM BACKGROUND SCREENING ON ALL EMPLOYEES.
- **TRAINING:** WE PROVIDE SECURITY AND TECHNOLOGY USE TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES.
- **SERVICE PROVIDERS:** WE SCREEN OUR SERVICE PROVIDERS AND BIND THEM UNDER CONTRACT TO APPROPRIATE CONFIDENTIALITY OBLIGATIONS IF THEY DEAL WITH ANY USER DATA.
- **ACCESS:** ACCESS CONTROLS TO SENSITIVE DATA IN OUR DATABASES, SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENTS ARE SET ON A NEED-TO-KNOW / LEAST PRIVILEGE NECESSARY BASIS.

EXPECTATIONS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

- **AUDIT LOGGING:** WE MAINTAIN AND MONITOR AUDIT LOGS ON OUR SERVICES AND SYSTEMS (OUR LOGGING SYSTEMS GENERATE GIGABYTES OF LOG FILES EACH DAY).
- **INFORMATION SECURITY POLICIES:** WE MAINTAIN INTERNAL INFORMATION SECURITY POLICIES, INCLUDING INCIDENT RESPONSE PLANS, AND REGULARLY REVIEW AND UPDATE THEM.

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

- **STACK:** WE CODE IN PYTHON AND C# AND RUN ON SQL SERVER 2008, UBUNTU LINUX, AND WINDOWS 2008 SERVER.
- **CODING PRACTICES:** OUR ENGINEERS USE BEST PRACTICES AND INDUSTRY-STANDARD SECURE CODING GUIDELINES TO ENSURE SECURE CODING.

HANDLING OF SECURITY BREACHES

DESPITE BEST EFFORTS, NO METHOD OF TRANSMISSION OVER THE INTERNET AND NO METHOD OF ELECTRONIC STORAGE IS PERFECTLY SECURE. WE CANNOT GUARANTEE ABSOLUTE SECURITY. HOWEVER, IF SURVEYMONKEY LEARNS OF A SECURITY BREACH, WE WILL NOTIFY AFFECTED USERS SO THAT THEY CAN TAKE APPROPRIATE PROTECTIVE STEPS. OUR BREACH NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES ARE CONSISTENT WITH OUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER VARIOUS STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATION, AS WELL AS ANY INDUSTRY RULES OR STANDARDS THAT WE ADHERE TO. NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES INCLUDE PROVIDING EMAIL NOTICES OR POSTING A NOTICE ON OUR WEBSITE IF A BREACH OCCURS.

Appendix D

HSR Approval



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

January 12, 2015

Amanda White

Dear Amanda,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Claudia Bepko, Research Advisor