

Diversity in Partner Number Sexuality via Sexual Configurations Theory

ABSTRACT

“Partner number sexuality” (P#S) refers to how many partners individuals have/are interested in having. Those with P#S outside of monogamous desires and/or practices commonly face stigma in North America and elsewhere. Yet theories of sexuality do not always make room for diverse P#S. One theory that does is Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT), which visually models gender/sex and sexuality (van Anders, 2015). In this study, we investigated what insights SCT could provide into P#S, whether SCT was useful to those with minoritized P#S, and how those with minoritized P#S made use of SCT. To do so, we conducted online interviews, asking participants ($N = 26$) to complete two SCT diagrams and report on their experience. We used template analysis to analyze transcripts, and compiled “SCT heatmaps,” aggregates of SCT diagrams. We constructed 11 major themes, including diverse understandings of eroticism and romantic/platonic relationships, the impacts of hermeneutical injustice (the injustice of knowledge systems) on participants’ abilities to conceptualize and discuss their P#S, and how SCT facilitated conversations about P#S. The heatmaps showed that participants made use of most of both SCT diagrams, showing branchedness in P#S between “eroticism” and “nurturance,” and between status, identity, and orientation. Our study highlights that the lived experience of partnering, especially of those with minoritized P#S, extends far beyond commonly understood categories, and that SCT is a useful tool that can accurately reflect diversity in P#S.

Keywords: Nonmonogamy, Minoritization, Partner number sexuality, Relationships

INTRODUCTION

Partner number sexuality (P#S), or “the number of partners people have or are interested in having” (van Anders, 2015), is an area of sexuality that is receiving increasing attention but remains understudied. The most well-understood P#S is monoamory, the desire for and/or presence of only one intimate, sexual relationship partner (Klesse, 2006; van Anders, 2015). This is sometimes understood as monogamy, which reflects a larger system of legal, religious, cultural, and ethical norms (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Emens, 2004; Klesse, 2016b). However, there are some cultures where monogamy is not the norm (e.g., polygamy is in Mormon culture; Emens, 2004; Klesse, 2016b; Rambukkana, 2015b). Even within cultures where monoamory is normative, there are many P#S that exist outside of this range which have been practiced throughout history and continue to be practiced (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Carrigan, 2011; Hammack et al., 2018; Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Luce, 2021; “Polyamorous Language Page,” n.d.). Individuals may identify with one or multiple P#S over their lifetimes (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Carrigan, 2011; “Polyamorous Language Page,” n.d.; van Anders, 2015).

Some people are multisexual, which describes P#S involving more than one partner, whether romantic and/or sexual (Klesse, 2006). This includes what is often called “consensual nonmonogamy” and many other identities and behaviors, including polyamory and swinging (Klesse, 2006; Rambukkana, 2015b; Tweedy, 2011). It also includes a wide array of relationship configurations, such as polycules or open relationships (Brunning, 2018; Hoff & Beougher, 2010; Klesse, 2006; Rambukkana, 2015b; “Polyamorous Language Page,” n.d.). Multisexual P#S may also involve an openness towards having one or multiple partners, such as in ambiamory (Vaughan & Burnes, 2022).

P#S extends beyond monoamory in another way as well: some individuals are nonsexual¹, which describes those who do not desire any sexual and/or romantic relationships, or only desire these relationships in specific contexts (van Anders, 2015). This includes identities on the asexual and aromantic spectrum (i.e., ASPEC identities; AVEN, n.d.; Carrigan, 2011) and single-by-choice individuals (Abad, 2022; Moore & Radtke, 2015). This also includes relationship configurations such as queerplatonic relationships, a term used in the asexual and/or queer community to describe relationships that are more intimate and structured than traditional friendships but typically do not involve sexual attraction or romance (Decker, 2015; Luce, 2021).

Finally, there are some individuals whose P#S does not fall neatly within the multisexual-nonsexual binary. For example, relationship anarchists consider every relationship they have to be unique, and therefore do not make distinctions between sexual, romantic, and other relationships (Andersson, 2022; Nordgren, 2012). And, framings of P#S tend to be culturally situated. For example, Kim TallBear (2018) describes how the Indigenous Dakota definition of a partner is different from the Western colonial definition because the family unit in Dakota epistemology includes many individuals outside of two parents and their children (TallBear, 2018). Likewise, framings of P#S can be historically situated in ways that impact understandings of who counts as a partner, even in the presence of sexual interaction, and therefore which acts or relationalities count as being multisexual or not (Foucault, 2019). This applies to cultures that are

¹*The term “nonsexual” does not translate into a complete absence of sexual/romantic desire or behavior. This is worth noting given that research on sexuality often ignores the reality of many asexual individuals who do feel sexual desire in certain contexts and/or desire intimate relationships (Acer, n.d.; Carrigan, 2011; Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2022; Decker, 2015; Scherrer, 2008; Winter-Gray and Hayfield, 2021). We decided to use the term “nonsexual” to avoid conflation with specific identities (e.g., asexuality, ASPEC), but we understand that this term may not perfectly describe the individuals we have categorized under it. As in most cases of terminology, there is no word or phrase that can perfectly communicate all intended meaning with a complete absence of the potential for harm. We see this as being the most accurate and causing the least harm, but welcome other suggestions.*

often treated as ‘the same’; for example, although ancient Greco-Roman societies are discussed as precedents to contemporary European cultures, they all conceptualize P#S in distinct and different ways (Foucault, 2019). Accordingly, monoamory is only one of many diverse P#S identities, desires, and relationship configurations.

Limitations of Research on Partner Number Sexuality

Research on sexuality and relationships tends to center monogamy, operating under the assumption that everyone desires one intimate, sexual relationship partner (Scherrer, 2008) or, sometimes for men, many casual sexual non-relationship partners (Anderson, 2010; Emens, 2004). Research also assumes that desire for partners is static, and that individuals feel the same type and level of desire, identify with the same labels, and engage in the same behaviors over their lifetime (Alcaire, 2020; Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Carrigan, 2011; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021). However, these assumptions do not reflect the lived experience of many (Carrigan, 2011; Diamond, 2002; Emens, 2004; Klesse, 2016b; TallBear, 2018; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021). Research that assumes monogamous desires also excludes the experiences of many self-identified monogamous individuals who desire sexual experiences with multiple people outside of their established relationship or have multiple sexual relationships by cheating on their primary partner (Anderson, 2010; Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Emens, 2004; TallBear, 2018), thus illustrating the differences between the social, emotional and sexual dimensions of experiencing monogamy. P#S can also be branched or coincident (reflecting heterogeneity and homogeneity, respectively; van Anders, 2015) along gender/sex lines (Diamond, 2003; Carillo & Hoffman, 2016); for example, some straight/heterosexual men report that they desire/have engaged in sexual relationships with men, but do not desire romantic relationships with men

(Carillo & Hoffman, 2016). Accordingly, current research on sexuality and relationships generally does not reflect the complexity of individuals' understandings of P#S.

One relationship theory that incorporates P#S beyond monoamory is Emens's (2004) model of partner number desire. In her article, Emens discusses how self-identified monogamous individuals often fail to adhere to the principles of monogamy: many individuals desire more than one sexual partner, cheat on their primary partner, and get divorced and/or remarried (Emens, 2004). Informed by the "failure" of monogamy and by her own experience as a polyamorous woman in a polygamous Mormon relationship, Emens posits that everyone exists on a spectrum from extremely monogamous to extremely polyamorous (Emens, 2004).

Emens's model is more inclusive of non-monoamorous P#S than most others and is more effective at capturing complexity in partner number desires, particularly multisexual desires. However, since the model limits partner number desire to being dichotomous (one or many), it excludes many other partner number configurations (e.g., desiring no partners, desiring specifically two partners, being open to any partner number; Scherrer, 2010; Vaughan & Burnes, 2022). Also, many individuals do not feel that the categories of "sexual" and "romantic" accurately represent their sexuality (Andersson, 2022; Schudson et al., 2017), and would therefore have trouble placing themselves and their desires within Emens's framework. Finally, Emens's model equates romantic desire with a desire to live with one's partner(s), which excludes those who would not want to live with their romantic partner(s) as with many solo polyamorous individuals (Parry, 2022; Scherrer, 2010; Vaughan & Burnes, 2022). Therefore, the need for models that can describe the full range of P#S that exist outside of monoamory remains.

Another limitation to research is that the meanings of P#S identities can be understood differently by different individuals, adding complexity to the study of this topic (Alcaire, 2021;

Brotto et al., 2010; Cardoso et al., 2021; Carrigan, 2011; Luce, 2021; Rubel & Burleigh, 2020; Tweedy, 2011). For example, those in polyamorous communities debate whether polyamory is an identity or a relationship status, whether it should involve hierarchical relationships, and how much importance polyamory should place on sexual behavior (Brunning, 2018; Cardoso et al., 2021; Emens, 2004; Tweedy, 2011). And, individuals who enjoy engaging in some kinds of intimate behaviors may or may not identify as asexual depending on how they or their culture categorizes sexual and non-sexual intimacy (Scherrer, 2008; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021). As such, individuals who identify with the same label can have contrasting desires or engage in contrasting behaviors, adding further complexity to how people understand their own and others' P#S (Brunning, 2018; Emens, 2004; Link et al., 2022; Parry, 2022; Scherrer, 2010; Vaughan & Burnes, 2022). A model that describes P#S should be able to account for differing understandings of P#S identities.

Another consideration is that studies on P#S often only explore specific identities (e.g., polyamory *or* swinging), limiting insights into conceptualizations of P#S as a whole. Studies have also often focused either solely on multisexual identities or nonsexual identities (e.g., asexuality *or* polyamory). Because of this, research has created a false separation between the two, when in fact there are many P#S that lie across or outside of this dichotomy (e.g., individuals who are asexual and polyamorous; Cardoso et al., 2021; Scherrer, 2010). A model describing P#S should be able to account for individuals who fall outside of this multisexual-nonsexual binary.

Finally, research often focuses on P#S separately from other axes and intersections of oppression (e.g., by racialization or sexism, or their intersection), and is therefore less effective at describing the lived experience of many individuals, especially minoritized ones (McCormick-

Huhn et al., 2019; Moore & Radtke, 2015; TAAAP, 2022). Culture and religion can significantly influence an individual's P#S (Emens, 2004; TAAAP, 2022; TallBear, 2018), and individuals of a certain P#S may be perceived differently depending on the social locations they occupy/are seen to occupy (Abad, 2022; TAAAP, 2022; Vaughan & Burnes, 2022). For example, the hypersexualization of Black people makes it difficult for Black ASPEC individuals to have their identity affirmed (TAAAP, 2022). A model that attempts to describe P#S should be able to account for intersectionality with a person's other social locations.

Stigma and Discrimination of Non-Monoamorous P#S

In many parts of the world including North America, those who engage in non-monoamorous behavior can face stigma and discrimination in daily life (Bunning, 2018; Emens, 2004; Emens, 2014; Klesse, 2016b; Rambukkana, 2015a; Scherrer, 2008). Many societies adhere to compulsory monogamy, or the social and legal rule that monogamy is the natural and only appropriate partner number approach (Emens, 2004; Klesse, 2016b; Rambukkana, 2015a). Many societies also adhere to compulsory sexuality—the social and legal rule that sex is an inherent and required part of partnered relationships (Emens, 2014)—and to amatonormativity—the assumption that everyone desires an exclusive long-term romantic partner and that romantic relationships are the most important and emotionally deep (Brake, 2012). These three institutions contribute to the perpetuation of harmful beliefs and discriminatory behaviors against those with non-monoamorous P#S (Cardoso et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021, Emens, 2004; 2014), and can be seen as integral to the social construction of a dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' sex (e.g., sex within a monogamous marriage versus sex outside of that context; Rubin, 2007).

This stigma impacts the lives of non-monoamorous individuals in many ways. Individuals who are not multisexual often view multisexual individuals as cheaters and associate

multisexuality with negative outcomes like poor sexual health (Brunning, 2020; Cardoso et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021; Klesse, 2006). Polygamy is widely considered by Western nations as “uncivilized,” involving “base” desires that the institution of monogamy keeps in check (Heath, 2023). Even those within the multisexual community can stigmatize each other; for example, polyamorous individuals often stigmatize swingers and position polyamory as a better identity because of its focus on love over sex (Cardoso et al., 2021; Klesse, 2006; Matsick et al., 2014), or on values such as honesty and explicitness (Cardoso, 2024). Multisexuality also lacks legal protections, and those in multisexual relationships face judicial discrimination (British Sociological Association, 2020; Emens, 2004; Klesse, 2016b; Ling et al., 2022; Tweedy, 2011). For example, polygamy is illegal in Canada and many other Western countries (Heath, 2023).

Nonsexual individuals are also stigmatized. ASPEC and single-by-choice identities are often conceptualized as “deficit identities,” and are often pathologized (Moore and Radtke, 2015; Rendle, 2023; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021). Nonsexual individuals are often told that they have simply been slow to mature and will eventually “grow into” their sexual and/or romantic feelings (Acer, n.d.; Alcaire, 2021; Decker, 2015; Rendle, 2023). Nonsexual individuals also face judicial discrimination, such as through laws around marriage consummation (Emens, 2014). Research that highlights the existing diversity in P#S and discusses non-monoamorous P#S using neutral language could de-stigmatize non-monoamorous P#S and be used to further the rights of non-monoamorous individuals.

Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT)

One approach to understanding the complexity of P#S is Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT), which also introduced the construct of partner number sexuality (van Anders, 2015). SCT includes a model on which individuals can visually locate their sexuality in more inclusive and

accurate ways (van Anders, 2015). The P#S aspect of SCT has previously been tested in two studies so far, and participants reported that they were able to effectively represent their conceptualization of their own P#S using SCT (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et. al., 2017). However, SCT has not been used to specifically explore the diversity of partner number sexualities, or used online for this construct.

SCT is useful for the purpose of the current study as it can effectively reflect the complexity of lived experience (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et al., 2017) without perpetuating stigma against minoritized sexualities, since the terms and concepts referenced in SCT are unvalenced (van Anders, 2015). SCT can also represent a variety of partner number configurations, and it accounts for many aspects of P#S excluded from much of research, including fluid sexualities and sexualities that vary in the strength of desire and/or importance of being partnered with others (van Anders, 2015). SCT was created with intersectionality theory in mind (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991) and makes it possible for individuals to incorporate their culture, social locations, and those locations' intersecting dynamics into their sexuality. For example, a participant in Schudson and colleagues' (2017) study discussed how her preference for short-term rather than long-term relationships was informed by her chronic illness diagnosis.

SCT also distinguishes between sexual statuses, identities, and orientations (van Anders, 2015). Status involves the behaviors, activities, and relationships that an individual engages in, past, present, or future. Identity involves the way an individual labels their sexuality and what communities they belong to and are accepted in. Orientation involves an individual's desires, attractions, arousals, and fantasies. SCT makes clear that an individual's status, identity, and orientation can branch. This is particularly valuable when investigating P#S, as many individuals report branchedness between different aspects of their sexuality (e.g., people with asexual

identities and orientations may have sex with their partners; Schudson et al., 2017; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021).

SCT also distinguishes between erotic sexuality (involving bodily pleasure and related experiences) and nurturant sexuality (involving warm and caring experiences; van Anders, 2015), reflecting the lived experience of many individuals (Diamond, 2003; Schudson et al., 2017; van Anders et al., 2011). This is particularly relevant for research on P#S, as P#S eroticism can branch from P#S nurturance; for example, many asexual participants report alloromantic orientations (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2022; Carrigan, 2011; Decker, 2015; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021) and, as previously discussed, many self-identified monogamous individuals desire multiple erotic partners (Anderson, 2010; Emens, 2004). Participants in previous SCT studies have reported that the separation between eroticism and nurturance was useful when articulating their P#S (Schudson et al., 2017). Additionally, some asexual participants reported that the use of “erotic” and “nurturant” over “sexual” and “romantic” better aligned with their experiences (Schudson et al., 2017). The complexity of SCT allows it to more accurately reflect a variety of lived experiences.

The Current Study

In the present study, we explored diversity in partner number sexualities using SCT, including branchedness between status, identity, and orientation, and between eroticism and nurturance. We also tested whether SCT, used online, was useful for research with individuals of minoritized P#S. Specifically, we explored the following research questions:

1. What insights can SCT provide into the nature of P#S?
2. Is SCT useful to those with minoritized P#S?
3. How do those with minoritized P#S make use of SCT?

To investigate these questions, we targeted recruitment towards individuals who were multisexual, nonsexual, or outside the multisexual-nonsexual binary. We deliberately targeted these groups and not monoamorous individuals because these minoritized groups are usually absent from research and popular conceptions of relationships and sexuality or portrayed in inaccurate or stigmatizing ways. Since SCT was designed to represent a wide array of minoritized P#S statuses, identities, and orientations, we wanted to investigate whether the theory was equipped to do so.

We investigated these questions by interviewing participants and asking them to describe their sexuality using SCT. We also asked reflection questions after the interview to learn whether participants were able to effectively describe their sexuality using SCT. Through this study, we hoped to gain novel insights into P#S, receive useful feedback on the usefulness of SCT in representing partner number sexualities, and increase inclusive knowledge frameworks for the study of P#S. We hope that this study's findings will benefit the field of sexuality research and those with minoritized P#S by increasing knowledge about P#S diversity, supporting a queer and intersectional model of sexuality, and helping to normalize the experiences of those with minoritized P#S, while still helping those with majority-situated P#S understand their own experiences as part of a wider field of possibilities of experiencing statuses, identities and statuses (Abed et al., 2019).

METHOD

Participants

We recruited participants through Facebook ads for an interview study on partnered sexuality. To be eligible, participants had to be 18 years or older, fluent in English, located in Canada or the USA, and have access to a computer. Participants also had to meet any of the

following criteria: 1) they desired/had two or more sexual/romantic partners, or 2) they did not desire a sexual and/or romantic partner, or 3) any combination of the above (e.g., asexual and polyamorous). Participants ($N = 319$) filled out the screener and demographics survey; from these, we recruited 26 participants for interviews (M age = 25.00 years, $SD = 8.22$, range = 18–58). We focused recruitment on those who identified as a minoritized racialized person as well as those whose P#S might test the bounds of the SCT model (e.g., individuals who were graysexual), and on representing a variety of statuses/identities/orientations within each of our categories of interest (multisexual, nonsexual, and outside the multisexual-nonsexual binary). This sample size falls within the recommended sample size for qualitative studies suggested by Dworkin (2012) and is similar to the number of participants recruited for previous SCT interview studies (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et al., 2017).

Participants self-identified their P#S through an open-ended question, and we used this information to organize them into the following categories: multisexual ($n = 8$; e.g., “*Both my partner and I am ambiamorous, looking around*”), nonsexual ($n = 8$; e.g., “*Aromantic Asexual*”), and participants who challenged this binary ($n = 10$; e.g., “*Polyamorous in a poly relationship, demisexual nebularomantic*”). Nine participants (34.62%) identified as a racial/ethnic minority, racialized person, and/or person of color, with the remainder as white or racial/ethnic majority. Please see Table 1 for more demographic details.

Table 1

Demographics of Interview Participants

Demographic Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Race/Ethnicity		

White	17	65.38
South Asian	3	11.54
Black	1	3.85
Chinese	1	3.85
Igbo-Nigerian	1	3.85
Métis	1	3.85
Multiracial (white and Middle Eastern/Lebanese)	1	3.85
Southeast Asian	1	3.85
Country of residence		
Canada	21	80.77
USA	5	19.23
Gender/sex sexual orientation/identity		
Plurisexual and/or pluriromantic	9	34.62
Queer	5	19.23
Heterosexual/Straight	3	11.54
Marsic	1	3.85
T4T lesbian	1	3.85
Unlabeled	1	3.85
Not reported	6	23.08
Individual gender/sex		
Binary cisgender woman	8	30.77
Nonbinary	5	19.23
Agender	3	11.54

Binary transgender man	3	11.54
Nonbinary cisgender woman	2	7.69
Binary cisgender man	1	3.85
Genderfluid	1	3.85
Genderqueer	1	3.85
Binary transgender woman	1	3.85
Two-Spirit	1	3.85
Employment		
Part-time	10	38.46
Full-time	10	38.46
Not employed	6	23.08
Disability status		
Disability	19	73.08
ADHD	5	19.23
Anxiety	2	7.69
Autism	13	50.00
Chronic pain	3	11.54
Depression	3	11.54
PTSD	2	7.69
Other/unspecified mental disability	3	11.54
Other/unspecified physical disability	9	34.62
No disability	7	26.92

Note. The terms ‘plurisexual’ and ‘pluriromantic’ describe sexualities involving sexual attraction and romantic attraction, respectively, to more than one gender/sex (e.g., omnisexual, biromantic, pansexual). The term ‘t4t’ stands for “trans for trans” and is used by trans individuals who are primarily interested in forming sexual/romantic/platonic relationships with other trans individuals (Awkward-Rich & Malatino, 2022; “T4T,” n.d.). The term ‘marsic’ is used by non-binary individuals who are attracted to men and/or masculinity (“Marsic,” n.d.).

Materials

Screener and Demographics Survey. This lab-developed survey collected demographic information from participants, and we used it to screen participants for eligibility. Participants provided information about their age, gender/sex, socioeconomic status, disability status, religious affiliation, country of residence, parental status, race/ethnicity, and how they discovered the study. Participants then answered several questions about their sexuality, including their P#S identity, gender/sex sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, and number and type of relationships (sexual and/or romantic). Participants chose a pseudonym which we used to refer to them throughout the study itself and in this paper.

SCT & Partner Number Sexuality Instructional Video. This lab-developed video (Beischel et al., 2020) was designed for use in online studies on SCT. The video describes the main components of the SCT P#S diagrams and defines key terms needed to understand the diagrams (e.g., status, nurturance) by providing examples of how hypothetical individuals mark the diagrams.

SCT Diagrams. These diagrams, developed by van Anders (2015), allow individuals to visually locate their P#S. This study used a modified 2D version of the SCT diagram that was designed by Beischel and colleagues (2021b) for use in online studies on SCT (see Figure 1). We

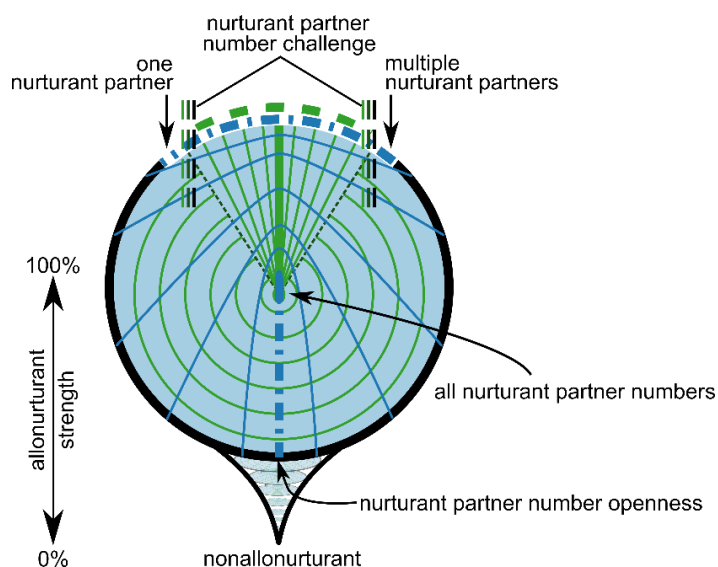
used the two diagrams related specifically to P#S (P#S eroticism; P#S nurturance), which have been successfully utilized in previous research (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et al., 2017).

An SCT P#S diagram consists of several key components. There is a binary ring, where individuals can indicate their sexuality along a continuum from one partner to multiple partners. A mark in the middle indicates partner number openness (e.g., if an individual would be fine with having one or multiple partners). A mark at the bottom of the ‘tail’ of the diagram indicates nonallosexual P#S, involving zero partners. SCT also includes a nonbinary area for locations outside of the binary of one or multiple partners (e.g., not using the labels of “sexual” and/or “romantic” to describe partners). There is also a challenge area, which reflects sexualities that challenge societal norms. It is marked by contingent norm boundaries, since sexualities can differ by time and place in terms of whether they exist within cultural norms or challenge them (van Anders, 2015). For example, someone from the current majoritized Western culture might place their non-monogamous identity within the challenge area, but someone who came from a culture where having multiple partners is common and legal might not place their non-monogamous identity within the challenge area (Emens, 2004). SCT diagrams also contain specificity lines to illustrate how certain sexualities have more specific criteria than others. The least specific sexuality is illustrated at the center of the diagram, where individuals can indicate a sexuality that encompasses all partner numbers. Finally, SCT diagrams contain a strength axis, where individuals can indicate how important their sexuality is on a scale from 0% to 100%. Individuals are able to mark SCT diagrams in any way that makes sense to them for status, identity, and/or orientation (e.g., multiple markings, a circle or range), which reflects lived experience and highlights important insights about sexuality (Abed et al., 2019; Beischel et al., 2021a; Beischel et al., 2021b; Schudson et al., 2017).

Figure 1

A 2D SCT P#S Diagram

Note. 2D SCT diagrams contain the same key elements of 3D SCT diagrams, including the binary ring, nonallosexual point, nonbinary section, challenge area bound by contingent norm boundaries, specificity lines, and strength axis, but are adapted for easier mark-up (Beischel et al., 2021b). This diagram allows individuals to mark their P#S nurturance.



Follow-Up Survey. This survey asked participants to report their experience using P#S SCT diagrams, based on questions from Beischel and colleagues (2021a). Participants reported whether they understood the terms “partner number nurturance” and “partner number eroticism,” were able to describe themselves with these diagrams in ways they had not been able to in other surveys, and found the status-orientation and eroticism-nurturance distinctions useful. Participants responded via yes/no or yes/maybe/no responses and open-ended textboxes for any elaboration on their answers. Finally, participants rated how difficult they found the diagrams on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = very easy, and 7 = very difficult.

Procedure

Online advertisements directed interested participants to the screener and demographics survey (which took an average of 16 min per invited participant) hosted through Qualtrics, which included the option to enter a raffle for \$45 CAD or \$35 USD. Researchers contacted a sample of eligible participants to invite to follow-up interviews (~45 min), which took place virtually over Zoom.

The interviews were conducted by the first and second authors. When the participant joined the Zoom call, the interviewer asked for preferred pronouns and briefly described the lab and its research topics, next sending a link to a Qualtrics survey with the letter of information. The participant read about the study and provided consent. Participants had the option to turn their video off if they were uncomfortable with having their video recorded. The participant then shared their screen with the interviewer, and the interviewer began recording.

The interviewer next introduced the study and shared their own P#S with the participant (because research shows that sharing relevant personal information and showing vulnerability and honesty builds trust with participants and helps them feel more comfortable being vulnerable and sharing sensitive details about themselves later in the interview; Thurairajah, 2019). The participant then used the same Qualtrics link to watch the SCT and Partner Number Sexuality instructional video and read through instructions about the diagram marking software. They then used an example SCT diagram to practice, and the interviewer ensured that the participant could competently use the software before continuing. The participant then completed the two P#S diagrams (eroticism and nurturance) in randomized order. The interviewer encouraged the participant to speak about why they marked the diagrams a certain way (or, if they skipped certain elements, why) to gain an understanding of their answers and for qualitative analysis. The participant was able to mark the diagrams in whatever way made the most sense to them.

Throughout this process, the interviewer remained on the Zoom call, and the participant could ask questions at any point.

After working through the diagrams, the interviewer asked the participant to stop sharing their screen but remain on the call to fill out the Follow-Up Survey in the same Qualtrics survey. Once the participant notified the interviewer that they submitted the survey, the interviewer thanked them for their time and asked the participant for any final feedback before ending the call. Participants were reimbursed with an additional \$40 CAD or \$30 USD for their involvement in the interview.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analyses. We ran one-sample proportions tests to examine the frequency of participants who reported that they were able to understand SCT terms, describe themselves using the diagrams and/or that they found the status-orientation and eroticism-nurturance distinctions useful. We used two one-sample *t*-tests to examine if participants found either SCT diagram to be more difficult than the neutral midpoint (4 on the 7-point scale). We transformed individual SCT diagrams into aggregate heatmaps² (see Results section). These heatmaps were created by overlaying each participant's markings on top of each other using MATLAB 2016 scripts developed by Beischel and colleagues (2021b) and Python software developed by Ana Carolina de Barros, Greg van Anders, and Sam Connolly (available upon request to Dr. Sari van Anders).

² Technical difficulties had a small impact on the final appearance of the heatmaps. First, three diagrams are missing from the heatmaps: one from a multisexual participant (we could not retrieve their nurturance diagram), and two from a nonbinary P#S participant (who was unable to use the diagram software during the interview; the participant described how they would have marked their eroticism and nurturance diagrams to the interviewer, but did not provide digital data that could be included in the heatmaps). Second, for three of the diagrams included in the heatmaps, we could not ensure that all markings were captured by the heatmap-making software due to compatibility issues from Qualtrics.

Qualitative Analyses. We used template analysis (King, 2012) to analyze interview transcripts and open-ended Follow-Up Survey feedback, using NVivo software. This method was selected since we had, at the onset, a series of specific questions (i.e., the RQs) about the experiences of the participants regarding SCT usage (thus, a more top-down approach to the themes we were looking for), but also an interest in understanding what participants thought were the most relevant aspects (thus, a bottom-up approach to coding). As King (2012) notes, “template analysis can be positioned in the middle ground between top down and bottom up styles of analysis.” Furthermore, our objective was not to constructively interpret our participants’ narratives and perceptions, but rather to take them as *prima facie* expressions of their situated experiences³.

The first author read through the initial 25 participants’ transcripts⁴ and written feedback and inductively developed a coding scheme based on themes of ideas that many (four or more) participants touched on in their responses. After independently coding all 25 interviews, the study authors refined the coding scheme to better align with participants’ responses. Using the refined coding scheme, the first author and an RA independently coded five interviews and then met to discuss and resolve discrepancies to ensure that the coding scheme was interpreted the same way by both coders. After the final participant was interviewed, the first author recoded the remaining 21 participants according to the final codes and collated the final codes into cohesive, overarching themes identified in the interviews, defined here as “the recurrent and distinctive

³ A more in-depth discussion about different strands of qualitative analysis that fall under the “thematic analysis” umbrella is outside of the scope of this paper, but can be found in, e.g., Braun & Clarke (2022) and Flick (2014).

⁴ This project originated as an undergraduate thesis, and 25 participants were interviewed in time to be included in the thesis project. We interviewed the final participant after the thesis project had been submitted because they had indicated interest during the initial phase, but their interview required an amendment to add accommodations to the interview process to our ethics approval.

features of participants' accounts [that] characterize perceptions and/or experiences, seen by the researcher[s] as relevant" (King, 2012).

RESULTS

Quantitative Analyses

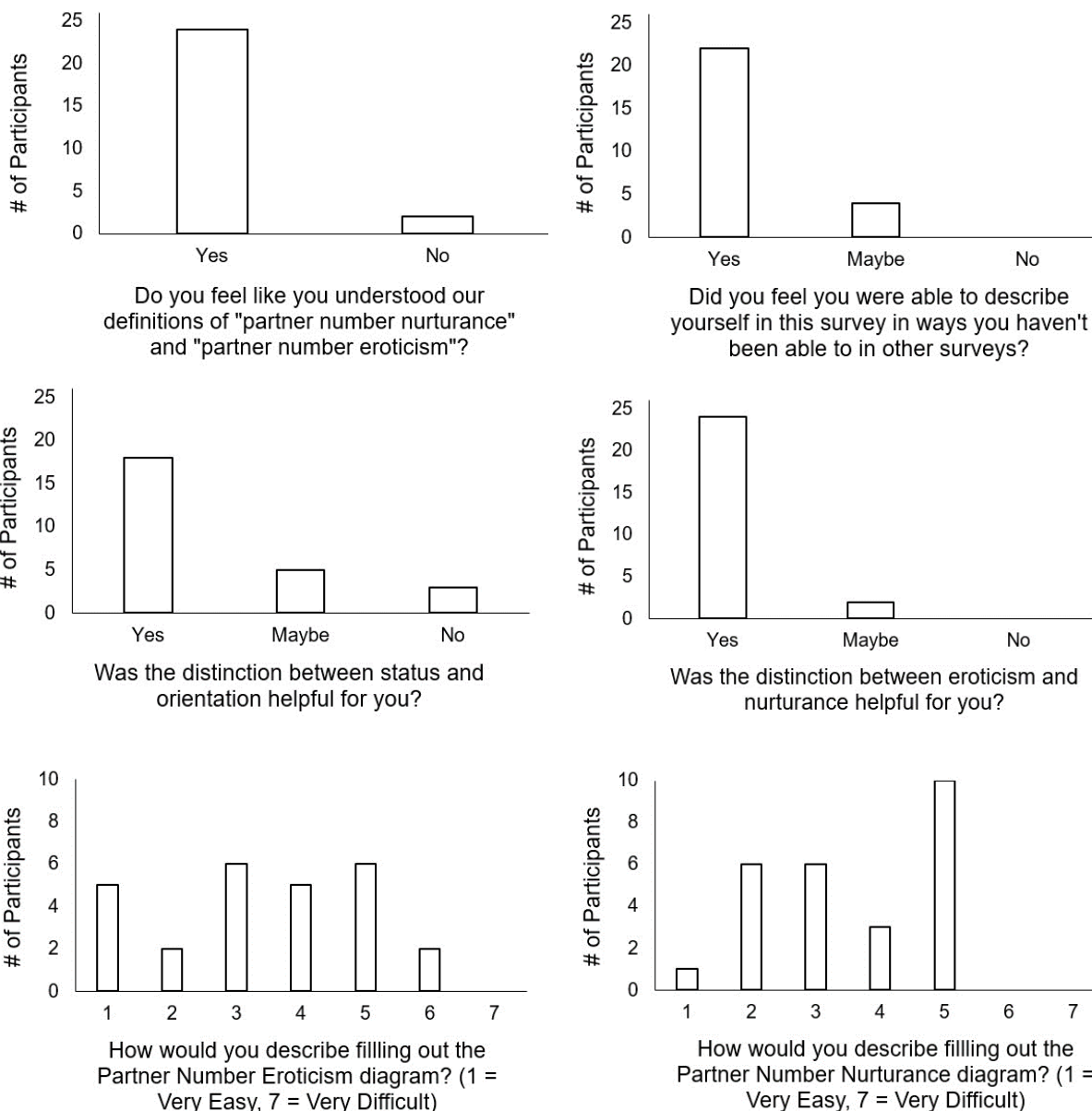
Participants' Comprehension of SCT (see Figure 2). We conducted four one-sample proportion tests to determine whether the proportion of participants who answered 'yes' compared to those who answered 'maybe' or 'no' to the comprehension questions was greater than chance (0.5) (i.e., the proportions of responses was significantly weighted towards yes relative to what one would expect by chance). The proportion of participants who understood the terms "eroticism" and "nurturance" (24/26) compared to those who did not (2/26) was significantly greater than chance, $X^2(1, N = 26) = 16.29, p < .001$. The proportion of participants who were able to describe themselves using SCT in other ways than other surveys (22/26) compared to those who were uncertain if they could describe themselves in other ways (4/26) was also significantly greater than chance, $X^2(1, N = 26) = 11.12, p < .001$, as was the proportion of participants who found the eroticism-nurturance distinction helpful (24/26) relative to those who were uncertain if it was helpful (2/26), $X^2(1, N = 26) = 16.29, p < .001$. No participants reported that they were unable to describe themselves in other ways or that the eroticism-nurturance distinction was not helpful.

The proportion of participants who indicated that the status-orientation distinction was helpful (18/26) compared to those who were uncertain if it was helpful (5/26) and those who did not find it helpful (3/26) was not significantly greater than chance, $X^2(1, N = 26) = 3.11, p = .078$. We ran an additional one-sample proportional test to determine whether the proportion of participants who indicated that the status-orientation distinction was helpful and who were

uncertain if it was helpful (23/26) compared to those who did not find it helpful (3/26), and this was significantly greater than chance (0.5), $X^2(1, N = 26) = 13.89, p = <.001$. Participants did not find the eroticism ($M = 3.42, SE = 1.60$) and nurturance ($M = 3.58, SE = 1.33$) diagrams significantly different in terms of difficulty, $t(25) = 0.54, p = .596$. They also did not find either diagram significantly different from a neutral level of difficulty (as in, neither difficult or easy, or 4 on the 7-pt scale): eroticism ($M = 3.42, SE = 1.60$), $t(25) = -1.82, p = .079$; nurturance ($M = 3.58, SE = 1.33$), $t(25) = -1.62, p = .118$. It is notable that although the P#E and P#N diagrams were ranked similarly on average, the pattern of answers as shown in Figure 2 are qualitatively different (e.g., the P#E diagram had more rankings of ‘1,’ and the P#N diagram had more rankings of ‘5’). However, most individual participants ranked the two diagrams as similarly difficult (i.e., if they found the P#E diagram easy, they also found the P#N diagram easy, and vice versa).

Figure 2

Participants’ Answers to the Multiple-Choice Follow-Up Survey Questions



Heatmaps. We made eight aggregate heatmaps to visually explore the diversity of P#S within each category that we recruited for and compare marking patterns within and between participants. This included an eroticism and nurturance diagram each for all participants (Figure 3), multisexual participants (Figure 4), nonsexual participants (Figure 5), and participants who challenge the multisexual-nonsexual binary (Figure 6). To do so, we followed the procedure in Beischel et al. (2021b): we cleaned the diagrams of non-location extraneous marks (e.g., text),

unless it was impossible to remove the extraneous markings without also removing markings representing participants' P#S. On heatmaps, high frequency answers are indicated by warm colors, and low frequency answers are indicated by cool colors. Each diagram has its own scale, with the highest frequency always represented by dark red.

Across participants, there was use of all areas of the SCT diagrams, including the strength axes. Participants did so using singular or multiple marks indicating discrete areas (e.g., dots) or larger ones (e.g., outlined areas). These heatmaps show the diversity present in participants' P#S configurations and help answer our first and third research questions by providing insight into P#S and demonstrating the diverse ways those with minoritized P#S make use of SCT.

Participants' overall eroticism and nurturance heatmaps showed some patterns (Figure 3). Participants' marks were most frequent at 'one partner,' and there was also a higher frequency of markings at other labelled points ('all partner numbers,' 'partner number openness,' 'multiple partners,' 'nonallosexual') and in the nonbinary area near 'multiple partners.' There was also similar variety in the sizes of markings that participants used to represent their eroticism and nurturance on the diagrams (some large and some small markings).

There were also specificities between the two heatmaps (nurturance and eroticism). For example, participants marked 'nonallosexual' more frequently on the eroticism heatmap compared to the nurturance heatmap, and they marked 'all partner numbers' and 'multiple partners' more frequently in the nurturance heatmap relative to the eroticism heatmap. There were also distinctions along the strength axis: the eroticism heatmap had its highest concentrations of markings at the low end (near 25%) and upper end (near 75%) of the axis, whereas markings on the nurturance heatmap's strength axis were concentrated at the high end (near 100%). However, in both heatmaps, there was considerable variety in locations along the

strength axis with little commonality among participants: the highest points of overlap incorporated fewer than a quarter of participants. In both heatmaps, the highest point of overlap (at ‘one partner’) incorporated around two fifths of participants, and there were notably more cool-colored markings, indicating that most markings were unique to participants.

Our multisexual participants’ heatmaps (Figure 4) shared many similarities. Participants made markings both within and outside of the challenge area, and along the binary ring and within the nonbinary area, especially near ‘multiple partners.’ Both heatmaps showed areas of overlap at ‘one partner’ and in the nonbinary area near ‘multiple partners’ (inside and outside of the challenge area). There were also differences between these heatmaps. On our multisexual participants’ eroticism heatmap (Figure 4), there were no markings at ‘all partner numbers,’ and the strength axis markings were spread out along the axis (but located primarily in the upper half). On our multisexual participants’ nurturance heatmap (Figure 4), one participant represented their desire for all nurturant partners with a spiral covering much of the nonbinary area of the diagram and ending at ‘all partner numbers.’ All markings on the strength axis were concentrated near the high end, yet showed little overlap. Overall, our multisexual participants reported higher eroticism and nurturance strength compared to our participants with nonsexual and nonbinary P#S. Multisexual participants were also unique as they did not make use of the ‘tail’ of either SCT diagram. However, these heatmaps show that there was still considerable diversity in how multisexual participants understood their sexuality.

The heatmap of our nonsexual participants’ eroticism diagram (Figure 5) showed the highest points of overlap at ‘nonallosexual’ and ‘one partner’; this was one of the only heatmaps where ‘one partner’ was not the place most frequently marked. There were also markings in the nonbinary area on the left half of the diagram (between ‘one partner’ and ‘all partner numbers’).

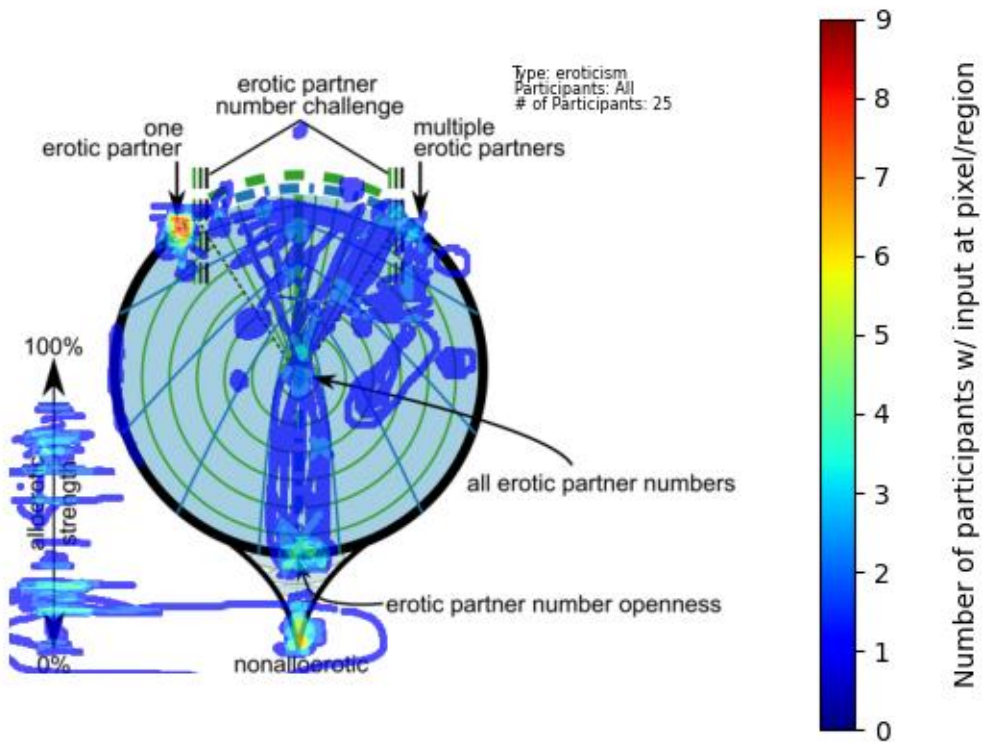
However, there was only one marking in the challenge area (in the nonbinary space near ‘one partner’), no markings on the right half of the diagram (closer to ‘multiple partners’), and no markings along the binary ring except for those at ‘one partner.’ Participants made markings all along the eroticism strength axis, with points of overlap at 50% and near 0%. One participant marked below 0%. Our nonsexual participants’ nurturance heatmap (Figure 5) displayed the highest point of overlap at ‘one partner,’ as well as overlapping markings at ‘all partner numbers,’ ‘multiple partners,’ and the nonbinary space near ‘one partner.’ A few participants made markings along the contingent norm boundaries, but there were no markings exclusively within the challenge area. One participant represented their desire for many/all nurturant partner numbers by drawing an outline around the entirety of the nonbinary space excluding the challenge area. Markings along the nurturance strength axis were also very spread out, with slightly higher markings (i.e., closer to 100%) than in the eroticism heatmap. One participant marked above 100% on the nurturance strength scale. Overall, nonsexual participants made the least use of the challenge area compared to those with multisexual or nonbinary P#S, though there was still considerable diversity between nonsexual participants.

In both the eroticism and nurturance heatmaps of our participants with nonbinary P#S (Figure 6), participants marked all around the diagram (in the binary ring, the nonbinary area, the challenge area, and the ‘tail’ of the diagram). Markings made on the binary ring were almost always located at ‘one partner,’ ‘partner number openness,’ or ‘multiple partners.’ One participant marked outside the eroticism diagram above the challenge area (see Figure 7). The eroticism heatmap displayed the highest overlap at ‘one partner.’ Markings on the eroticism strength axis showed the most overlap near the bottom of the axis (0%), but there were also marks along the upper half of the axis. The nurturance heatmap showed the highest overlap at the

‘multiple nurturant partners’ point, the only other heatmap where ‘one partner’ was not the place with the highest concentration of markings. There were a few markings near the bottom of the strength axis, but most markings were concentrated at the top, with the highest point of overlap at the very top of the axis (100%). Again, there was a high degree of diversity.

Figure 3

SCT P#S Eroticism and Nurturance Heatmaps – All Participants



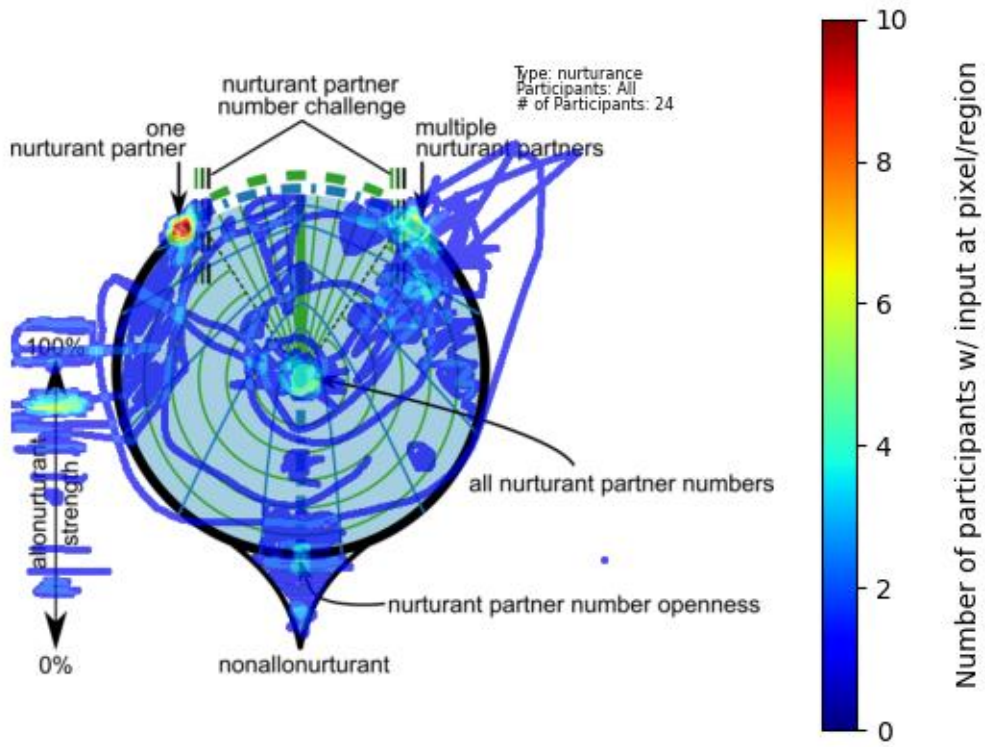


Figure 4

SCT P#S Eroticism and Nurturance Heatmaps – Multisexual Participants

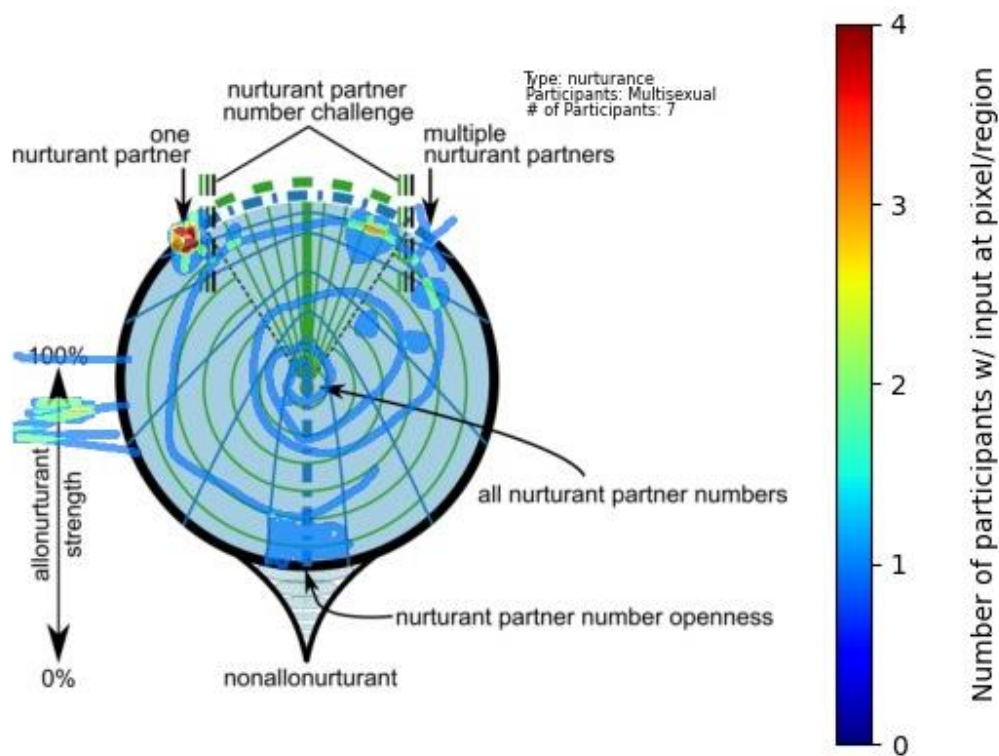
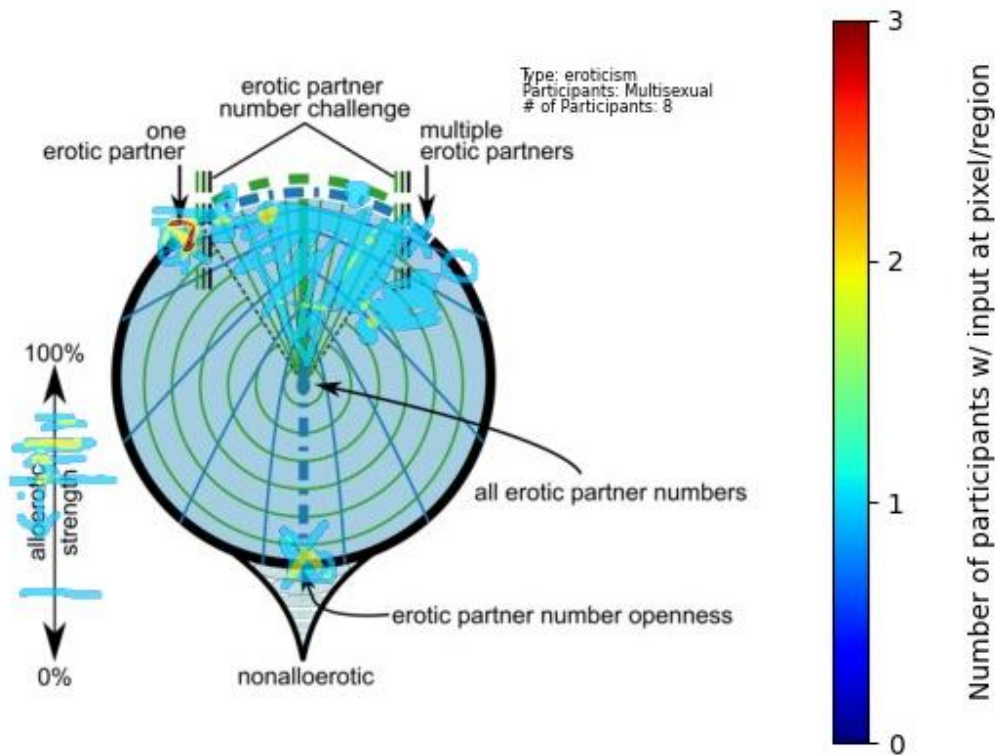
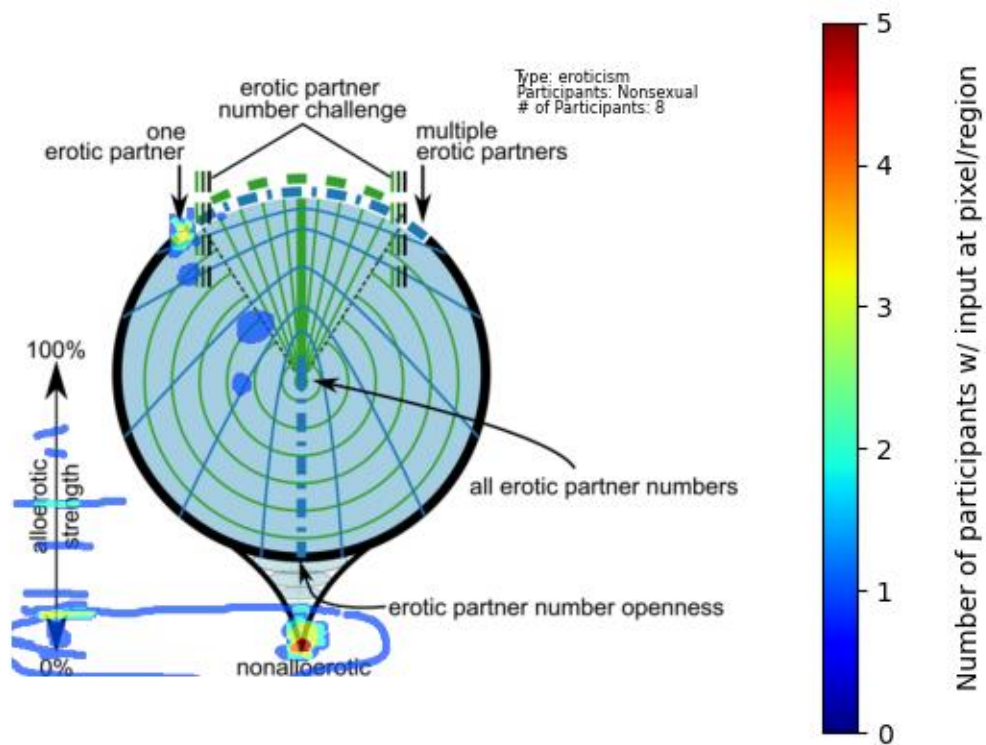


Figure 5

SCT P#S Eroticism and Nurturance Heatmaps – Nonsexual Participants



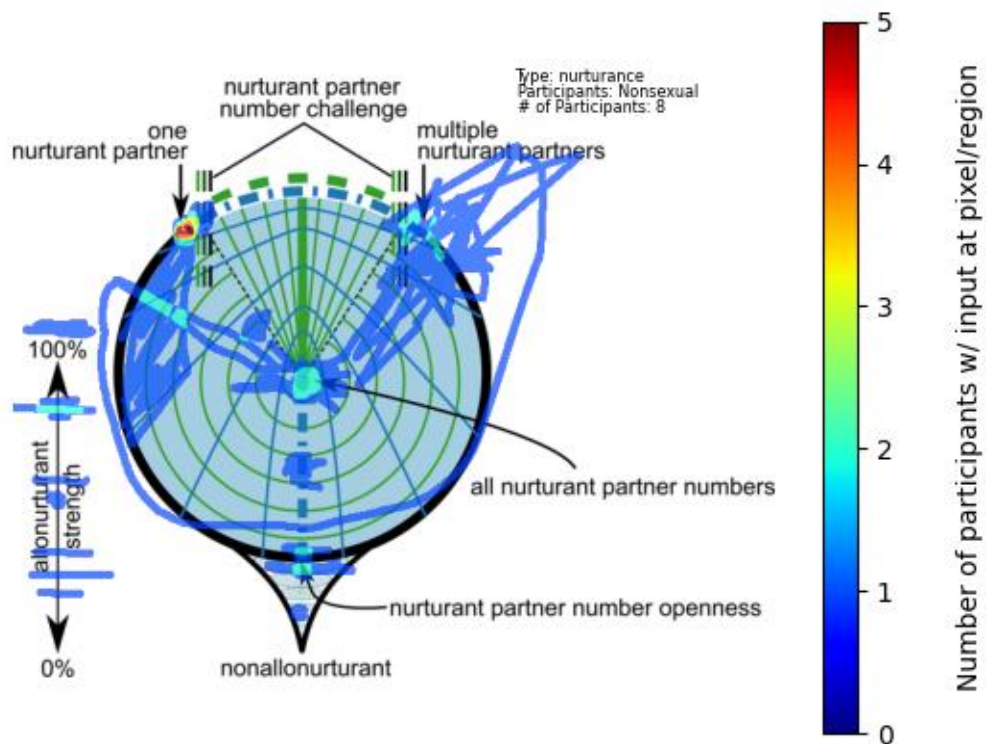
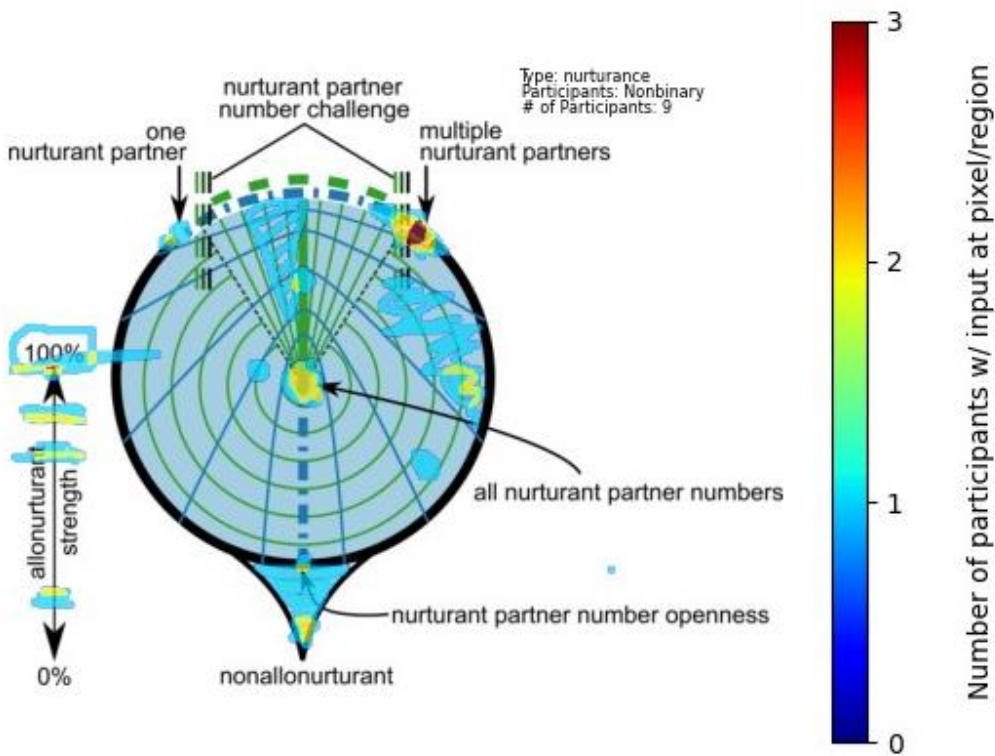
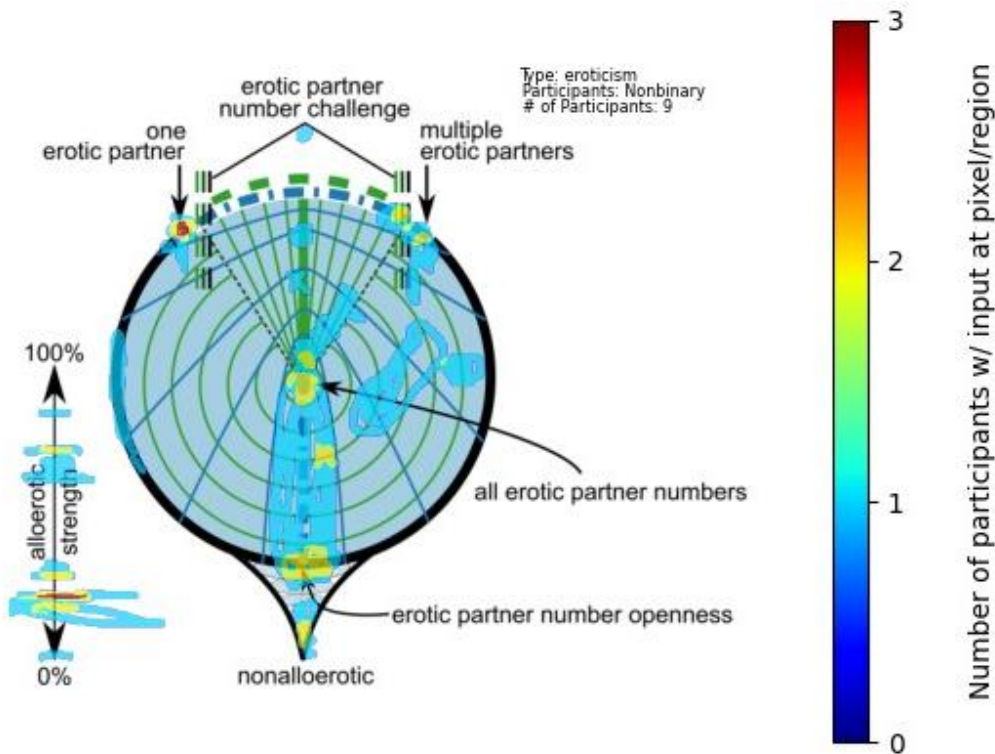


Figure 6

SCT P#S Eroticism and Nurturance Heatmaps – Participants Outside the Multisexual-Nonsexual Binary



Qualitative Analyses

We compiled 11 main common themes: five themes relating to RQ1 (what insights can SCT provide into the nature of P#S?), four themes relating to RQ2 (is SCT useful to those with minoritized P#S?), and two themes relating to RQ3 (how do those with minoritized P#S make use of SCT?). In order, the themes are called ‘Openness in P#S Orientation,’ ‘Defining Eroticism,’ ‘Similarity Between Romantic and Platonic Relationships,’ ‘The Importance of Platonic Partners,’ ‘The Impact of Norms About P#S,’ ‘Accuracy,’ ‘Ease,’ ‘Representational Issues,’ ‘Difficulty,’ ‘Representational Nuance,’ and ‘Knowledge.’ We present quotes that represent each theme. We also reference participants’ diagram markings when their verbal/written descriptions of their P#S did not completely describe what they drew.

RQ1: Insights Into P#S.

Openness in P#S Orientation. Some participants indicated openness in P#S orientation or noted that they could find happiness in a variety of partner number configurations. Some expressed that they preferred a certain partner number but remained open to other possibilities, and others expressed complete ambivalence towards the number of partners they desired. For example, SC (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) stated, “I don’t care much either way [about having one or multiple partners]. Like, if it happens one way it happens one way. If it happens the other, it happens the other.” Some participants described fluidity, or that their P#S can/has changed over time, as Chi-Chi (age 18-22, nonsexual) did, stating that her desired number of nurturant partners “...varies day to day.”

Defining Eroticism. Some participants considered eroticism in a holistic sense when marking their diagrams, while others found specificity very important. For example, Sheen (age 23-27, nonsexual) stated, “there’s a spectrum in terms of, like, you know, just verbal flirting

versus more physical acts,” saying of herself, “I feel repulsed by the idea of penetrations.”

Similarly, Madelyn (age 18-22, nonsexual) stated, “full-blown sex: not cool with me. I’m ace, so, no. But I do like kissing and, like, quite a bit of physical intimacy beyond kissing, so it’s not, like, a very hard boundary for me of no eroticism at all.”

Two participants discussed kink when describing their P#S. Caine (age 23-27, nonbinary P#S) made the distinction between kinky and vanilla behaviors when talking about his P#S eroticism: “I’m not someone who’s usually looking for sex. I find it just doesn’t do anything for me, either from, like, sensory issues, and that sort of stuff. I think it’s fun to do, but it’s not a requirement. Whereas I find myself actively seeking out kink a little bit more, so, therefore, like, it’s a little bit higher. [It’s] something I enjoy.” Pigeon (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) also brought up kink, but stated that they struggled with “...whether kink-aligned activity counted in the nurturance or eroticism section if it didn’t directly involve anything sexual.”

Similarity Between Romantic and Platonic Relationships. Some participants stated that they did not make the distinction or have a clear understanding of differences between romantic and platonic relationships. For example, Sublunary_Stars (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) stated, “Romantically and platonically loving people is kind of the same thing to me. Cause, like, all it is—treat them nice, do fun things with them, you know, enjoy spending time with them, that kind of thing. And there really isn’t any difference for me between my friends and my partner other than the label, and the fact that me and my partner have sex.”

The Importance of Platonic Partners. Although participants were asked to consider only sexual and romantic partners when filling out the diagrams, some participants referenced friends, friendship, or platonic nurturance in discussing their P#S. For example, Pigeon included their platonic partner in their P#S nurturance diagram, describing their relationship as “... one of

platonic life partners.” This theme included participants who differentiated romantic and platonic relationships and those who did not, both of whom expressed frustration with amatonormative assumptions about love and the valuing of romantic partners over friendships.

Some participants felt ambivalence towards romantic nurturance, seeing it as equally desirable to platonic nurturance. For example, Riley (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) stated, “I definitely want to be in some kind of like, nurturant [relationship] [...] Maybe not necessarily romantic in the typical sense, but like, a very committed friendship, even, like, raising kids, like a queerplatonic relationship.” Some participants also highlighted how important friendship was to them as a source of nurturance. For example, Phaenopyrum (age 23-27, nonbinary P#S) stated, “I tend to show the same level of care and concern in my friendships that a lot of people do in just romantic relationships, and always have, probably always will. And that’s just a very crucial aspect of relating to other people that I care about.”

The Impact of Norms About P#S. In discussing their P#S, some participants indicated experiencing and/or witnessing the negative impacts of compulsory monogamy, compulsory sexuality, and amatonormativity. For example, Robbie (age 23-27, multisexual) stated, “I just watched a horror movie where having multiple sexual partners was, like, so obviously juxtaposed against like, extreme violence, like, extremely violent sadistic behavior...I mean, think about how, like, having multiple sexual partners is, like, so—I don’t know, associated with, like, deviance and, like, violence against humans, which is weird.” Charlie (age 28-32, nonbinary P#S) stated, “Socially, [my nurturant friendships] are very much still viewed as friendships and largely undervalued in the sense that most would assume that my primary / domestic romantic partner should be the one that I spend the most time with, am closest with, etc. So, I would say,

in that sense, that my relationships are somewhat outside the binary and a bit of a challenge to the status quo.”

Some participants described experiences that aligned with hermeneutical injustice, or the inability to conceptualize lived experiences due to the erasure of marginalized perspectives (Dotson, 2012; Fricker, 2007). For example, KCE (age 18-22, multisexual), who was an undergraduate student researching polyamory, stated that conducting research on polyamory is “...so hard to do, because there are so many ways to be polyamorous... Like, people might, you know, have a partner that they solely have sex with, or a partner they have sex and a romantic relationship with, or a platonic partner like a queerplatonic partner, and there’s very little differentiation between that.” For some participants who discussed this theme, hermeneutical injustice had a negative impact on their lives. For example, Nathan Harris (age 18-22, multisexual) stated, “There are still some people who I consider good friends, and they don't hate me for being polyamorous, they just—they just don’t understand it. They ask me questions like, ‘well, how can you feel this way about this person, and also that way about that person?’”

Some participants discussed their difficulty with finding a term that could accurately describe themselves and/or their relationship. For example, Slithytoves (age 53-58, multisexual), who was in a relationship involving multiple partners, stated, “I honestly don’t know what the terminology I would even use for this [relationship]. It’s not really as defined as polyamorous, or open relationship. It’s... We’ve kind of struggled with the nomenclature on that. But you know—and it’s not just me being old and not grasping the terminology. My fiancée is, like, 32, and [my other partner] is 25. So, I figure if it’s a young person thing—who would understand that—they’d have the terminology for it. But they don’t, so...” For some participants, this lack of terminology impacted their sense of identity. For example, SC stated, “I didn’t realize I was

ambiamorous until recently...I think because ambiamorous is such a, like, lesser-known term.” Similarly, Nathan Harris also stated, “I often found myself having crushes on multiple people at once and then feeling terrible about it, because I didn’t know about polyamory...I always thought, ‘oh, does this mean I’m destined to be a cheater forever?’”

RQ2: The Usefulness of SCT.

Accuracy. Some of our participants indicated that their P#S as represented by SCT was accurate to the way they understood their sexuality and its complexities. Some participants specifically used the word “inclusive” to describe SCT; for example, Moth (age 23-27, nonsexual) stated, “This was very well thought out, inclusive, and thorough.” Some participants indicated that the separation between status, identity, and orientation helped them represent their sexuality accurately, especially because their desired partner number frequently branched from the partner numbers they had in the past/present. For example, Fluid (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) stated that the separation “...was helpful because my current status is not all encompassing of my needs and identity. I liked being able to share both parts of myself without having to compromise either identity or status.”

Some participants also indicated that the separation between eroticism and nurturance helped them represent their sexuality accurately. For example, Riley stated, “My feelings regarding eroticism and nurturance are quite different and I would be unable to describe my orientation if they were both combined into one.” Some also indicated that the labels ‘nurturant’ and ‘erotic’ allowed them to describe their sexuality more accurately and precisely than the labels ‘romantic’ and ‘sexual.’ For example, Pigeon stated, “I am aromantic and asexual, but I still desire nurturant and erotic contact in relationships. I would say I do not desire a romantic or

sexual relation, but there are elements of nurturance and eroticism that I do want. Labeling them this way meant I could discuss polyamory and my relational desires more in depth...”

Some participants also discussed the characteristics of other surveys’ measures they were familiar with that limited their ability to describe their sexuality accurately, in comparison to SCT. Some participants indicated that the mononormativity present in other surveys impacted their accuracy. For example, SC stated, “with a lot of surveys, I find if there’s even a question about sexuality at all, they don’t include anything besides monogamous attraction.” Some participants discussed other surveys’ lack of separation between eroticism and nurturance; for example, Phaenopyrum stated, “Most surveys don’t really break apart partnering into people we’d like to be erotic with versus people we want to be nurturing towards.” Participants also commented on other surveys’ lack of separation between status, identity, and orientation. For example, Caine stated, “I’ve participated in a few surveys, and they’re very... First, they’re very binary, and they’re very identity focused and not status focused. So, it’s good to talk about both.”

A common complaint about other surveys that our participants brought up was about how they did not like the categories in them, and/or did not like having to place themselves into categories in general or rank themselves using numbered scales. Riley explained the limitations of labels in their response: “Even in surveys that do differentiate [romantic and sexual attraction], you describe yourself using a label. While this probably makes the research easier to quantify, labels can be somewhat limiting. I like labels, but everyone expects people with the same label to have the same experiences with sexuality, and even niche labels don’t always capture all of the nuance—not to mention that you usually have to explain what an uncommon label means anyways.” Michael (age 18-22, nonsexual) contrasted the rigidity of other surveys to SCT’s flexibility: “This survey allowed me to express myself openly without having to

categorize myself into binary categories. As such, it was possible to accurately represent the complex nature of my sexuality.”

Ease. Some participants indicated that SCT in general, or its terms and diagrams specifically, was easy to understand and/or use. For example, Sublunary_Stars stated, “I’ve never seen this diagram before and it’s extremely useful and straightforward.” Slithytoves also stated, “I didn’t struggle with the terms.” Some participants stated that the instructional video was useful in helping them understand SCT and its terms. For example, Parker (age 18-22, nonsexual) stated, “I feel that the video in the beginning of the study did an excellent job covering both terms, and also gave examples on the spectrum (demiromantic, or asexual) to help clarify the meaning of each diagram.” Some participants indicated that they liked the visual diagram component. For example, Freyja (age 23-27, multisexual) stated, “I was able to describe myself on a more visual level instead of simply describing with words.” Some participants liked that marking their P#S visually meant that they did not need to pick a label for their P#S. For example, SC stated, “Being able to just, like, be presented a thing and it’s like, ‘here, put yourself somewhere.’ I like it. I don’t have to find a label for it, but I can also just go ‘here, a spot.’”

Representational Issues. Some participants indicated that they had trouble representing their P#S using SCT. Some participants’ issues concerned the diagrams. For example, Sheen had issues with expressing strength in terms of numbered percentages: “I found it a bit hard to work around the diagram in terms of how do I mark—how do I differentiate, kind of, attraction from action? Because a lot of times I feel I do feel attracted to people, but I don’t want to act on it, and so that’s a very difficult thing to quantify on the strength...I felt it was arbitrary to assign numbers to strength of my nurturance and eroticism.” Also, Caine felt that his P#S could not be

simplified enough to mark it on SCT diagrams: “I was able to put some details about sub-categories in each [diagram], but I may not have been able to include as much as I would like without making the graph complicated and hard to read, or including a text to describe what’s happening.”

Participants who had representational issues were largely those whose P#S involved zero partners. For example, Pigeon had trouble indicating their openness to having zero, one, or multiple erotic partners on their diagram while also indicating that this openness challenged cultural norms: “In the challenge section there was no way to indicate that the societal challenge was an interest in no partners. I have found it challenges people to discover I am comfortable never having any erotic/sexual partners.” Riley struggled with how to include the importance of her solitary eroticism: “For eroticism ‘partner number’ feels a little weird to me in that I wasn’t sure whether to count myself as a ‘partner’ or not, since I have a strong sex drive and (probably) experience sexual attraction, but I don’t particularly have a desire to act on that attraction when I can satisfy my sex drive myself. Essentially, having myself as an ‘erotic partner’ is very important to me while having someone else as an ‘erotic partner’ is not really important at all.”

Some participants’ issues with SCT concerned the terms, especially ‘orientation.’ For example, Hera Carter (age 23-27, multisexual) stated, “I associate orientation with labels for identity, not as much about preferred relationship type.” Robbie pointed out that “...the word ‘orientation’ implies innateness (at least for me) ...” which does not align with her understanding of P#S. Though she acknowledged that “...other people would disagree with me and *would* see partner number as an innate desire,” she stated, “...I don’t think that the desire to seek out more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship with others is innate (like how I think about sexual attraction/sexuality), aka I don’t think people are ‘born’ monogamous/polyamorous/

nonmonogamous. I definitely see it more as a choice/way of living life for the most part.” As well, although the majority of participants found SCT’s separation between eroticism and nurturance to accurately reflect how they experienced sexuality, some participants felt that eroticism and nurturance were too intertwined to be meaningfully separated. For example, Fluid stated, “It was a little hard for me to separate [eroticism and nurturance] because they are very tied together.”

Difficulty. A few participants, who were still able to locate their P#S accurately on the diagrams, referred to SCT’s terms/diagrams as difficult to understand. For example, Chi-Chi stated, “Like, the whole gist [of the terms eroticism and nurturance] I can get. But, like, the specificity of it, I’m not too sure on.” One participant did not find the diagram difficult to understand but shared concern that *others* would find it difficult. Some participants attributed their difficulty to the speed at which they had to learn SCT concepts. For example, Eve (age 23-27, multisexual) stated, “[the SCT diagrams] were a little difficult to understand because of all the lines and the new terminology that you had to get used to all at once.”

RQ 3: How Participants Made Use of SCT.

Representational Nuance. Some participants indicated that they used SCT to reflect nuance in P#S not covered by established labels. For example, Chi-Chi stated, “I really liked the ability to sort of write and draw. It was really nice, because most of the ones I’ve done just have Likert scales, and I’m like [sigh], I need to, like, express how much I want to hold people’s hands.” Some participants used SCT to represent the undefined relationship dynamics of which they were a part. For example, KCE used multiple points and labels to represent their P#S, noting “I just have, like, the weirdest, like, most complicated bullshit scenario, where my whole

friend group was this weird polyamorous circle, and it was not defined except between my primary partner and one other partner.”

Also, some participants were able to discuss their way of understanding key concepts related to P#S. For example, Fen (age 18-22, nonbinary P#S) stated, “What I define as my romantic relationships tend to be more of an emotional commitment, not like commitment to one person, only one person, but commitment to my relationship with that person.” Also, Nathan Harris stated, “even if I feel like my relationship with one person and another person are the same level, the love or the—whatever the feelings may be, they’re always, like, completely different from one another, even if they’re the same, like, level of importance, it’s like, how I like lemonade and iced tea and green tea. I like all of those things, but I like them for very different reasons.”

Knowledge. Some participants indicated that they were able to use SCT in pursuit of knowledge. Some participants reported that SCT helped them figure out things about themselves and gain clarity about their own P#S. For example, after Riley explained the shortcomings of other surveys, they stated, “[SCT] allowed me to not only explain myself better, but also to explore what I would like in a partnership as well.” Freyja, who discussed her conflicted feelings about engaging in partnered relationships because of past sexual trauma, stated in the Follow-Up Survey that the separation between status and orientation “...was helpful to understand the difference between how I currently approach my relationships and how I feel like I want to.” And, Phaenopyrum commented on the usefulness of the distinction between eroticism and nurturance: “I experience eroticism and nurturance very differently, but have always struggled to put that difference into words, so having this new terminology is incredibly helpful—and it helps

me make sense of my own tendencies.” Similarly, KCE commented that the separation “...helps me to better understand what is important to me, closeness and care.”

Some participants indicated that SCT helped them learn about P#S in general. For example, SC stated, “Sometimes when I really get to thinking about it, I don’t really know what sexual attraction is, but calling it eroticism or erotic attraction helps me understand better.” KCE also thought that SCT could be used as a resource for individuals to learn about others’ sexuality: “I think this is a really good way to also kind of show people, like, what’s important to you in a relationship. And like, ‘what are you open to?’ ... ‘Are we compatible? Where are we not compatible?’”

DISCUSSION

By using SCT, our participants revealed aspects of P#S that extend beyond commonly presented conceptualizations and that challenge compulsory monogamy, compulsory sexuality, and amatonormativity. First, our findings demonstrate the diversity of P#S. Our aggregate heatmaps show that participants’ markings cover most of the surface area of the SCT diagram, most of the area along the strength axis, and some area outside of the diagram and strength axis, despite there being very little overlap in diagram markings between and within eroticism and nurturance.

Second, our findings indicate that P#S can be markedly branched, including between status-identity-orientation and eroticism-nurturance, which aligns with previous SCT research (Abed et al., 2019; Beischel et al., 2021b; Schudson et al., 2017). This branchedness was apparent on the heatmaps. There, despite our participants’ P#S involving multiple and/or zero partners, the highest frequency of locations overall was at ‘one partner’ for both eroticism and nurturance. This could be attributed to the fact that many of our participants made marks to

describe past or present statuses involving one partner. Additionally, participants expressed branchedness not only between but within status, identity, orientation, eroticism and nurturance (e.g., which erotic behaviors they *wanted* to engage in).

Further, many participants used more than one marking on the diagram and/or on the strength axis to represent their sexuality. Caine, as discussed previously, was worried that his diagram would be too cluttered if he tried to represent his sexuality fully, but multiple markings are welcome. A common critique of SCT by non-users is that it is too complicated and includes irrelevant aspects of sexuality (van Anders & Schudson, 2017). However, as our results and the results of other studies show, there are some who would consider SCT not complex enough to fully express their sexuality, though most find it meets their complexity (Schudson et al., 2017; van Anders & Schudson, 2017).

One interesting finding was the lack of use of the challenge area. Even though our participants' sexualities all challenged P#S norms, many of our participants did not mark the challenge area when describing their sexuality. This could be because some of our participants were not currently in relationships that challenged P#S norms (e.g., multipartnered relationships), and therefore did not find the challenge of P#S norms important enough to incorporate in their SCT diagram. The challenge area may also have been interpreted as a way to indicate non-transparent multipartner relationships, which would challenge the norms of consensual nonmonogamy. A third possibility is that participants did not think that how they were socially perceived was an important piece of their P#S compared to their own feelings, desires and actions.

Furthermore, only one nonsexual participant made a mark exclusively within the challenge area. It could be that seeking out multiple sexual and/or romantic partners feels like

more of a challenge to P#S norms than never/rarely seeking sexual and/or romantic partners, or having non-romantic nurturant partners. For example, Pigeon, whose long-term partner was nurturant but not romantic, stated “I didn’t put anything in the challenge area, because [...] I think a lot of people wouldn’t see a big difference between that and friendships [...] even if I might make a distinction between people who are friends and people who I would want some type of nurturant relationship with...” However, it could also be that nonsexual participants had more difficulty using the challenge area since the nonallosexual point and challenge area did not overlap. Future studies could investigate this idea further to better understand the reasons why someone with a minoritized P#S would not use the SCT diagram challenge area.

Also notable was the high levels of openness in our participants’ P#S desire. Common understandings of P#S are influenced by compulsory monogamy, compulsory sexuality and ‘alignment normativities,’ such that P#S is often conceptualized as inflexible, where status, identity, and orientation must be ‘aligned’ or coincident with each other (Emens, 2004; Emens, 2014; van Anders, 2015). Our findings contradict this conceptualization and reveal that P#S can be very open and fluid.

Finally, our findings provide insights into how people conceptualize ‘partners.’ The distinction between romantic and non-romantic nurturance was not easily defined, and some individuals who desired nurturance found that fulfilled with non-romantic partnerships, including those who found the romantic/platonic distinction useful and those who did not.

Those within and outside of research have reflected similar perspectives on nurturant relationships and expanded understandings of what partnering can be (Acer, n.d.; Brunning, 2018; Diamond, 2002; Diamond, 2003; Scherrer, 2010; Scherrer, 2008; TAAAP, 2022), such as the increasing visibility and recognition of queerplatonic relationships (Decker, 2015; Rendle,

2023). Terms like ‘quoiromantic’ have been used by some in the asexual and aromantic communities who do not have a clear sense of what romantic attraction is and what differentiates it from platonic feelings (Rendle, 2023; “Quoiromantic,” n.d.). Some participants in Abed and colleagues’ (2019) SCT study with sexual and gender/sex majoritized individuals also brought up friendship when using SCT or indicated that they understood platonic and romantic nurturance in similar ways. Also, some participants in Schudson and colleagues’ (2017) SCT study with gender/sex and sexual minoritized individuals described feeling “nebulous romantic, not-romantic attraction.” These findings challenge an amatonormative conceptualization of sexuality.

This study, building off previous research, conceptualized partner number sexuality as involving sexual and romantic partners but not platonic partners. However, if some individuals do not distinguish between romantic and platonic partners and some individuals place importance on non-romantic nurturant partners, then excluding non-romantic nurturant partners ignores a key aspect of the lived experience of partnering. It may be beneficial for future SCT studies to *not* instruct participants to consider only sexual/romantic partners but instead allow them to include friendships or other non-romantic nurturant relationships as part of their diagrams.

Taken together, our findings reflect a conceptualization of P#S that is in stark contrast to common assumptions about the construct and reveals how complex the lived experience of P#S can be. Our findings also highlight how the assumptions about P#S made within and outside of research have negative impacts on participants. Many of our participants expressed a dislike of previous research they had participated in because answering the survey measures would misrepresent their P#S.

Outside of research, many participants described experiences of discomfort, confusion, invalidation, and interpersonal conflict due to the lack of understanding of those around them. Our participants also highlighted the diverse and often conflicting understandings of P#S behaviors and identities that previous studies on those with minoritized P#S have communicated, such as kink's relationship to eroticism and polyamory's conceptualization as a natural identity or as a chosen relationship style (Brotto et al., 2010; Cardoso et al., 2021; Rubel & Burleigh, 2020; Tweedy, 2011; Winter-Gray & Hayfield, 2021).

Many participants also expressed an absence of self-clarity on their P#S. Those who found one/both of the diagrams difficult to fill out or who did not find the status-orientation distinction and/or eroticism-nurturance distinction helpful mainly attributed this to a lack of self-understanding, not necessarily a difficulty in understanding SCT's terms/diagrams. The experiences of our participants highlight the need to address hermeneutical injustice around P#S, given the paucity of relevant knowledge and knowledge frameworks people have to make sense of themselves.

Our findings indicate that SCT can meet needs for more just knowledge frameworks very well. Many participants considered SCT to be an effective method for accurately representing P#S and helping clarify aspects that were hard to express verbally. The way our participants discussed the visual nature of the diagrams suggests that the diagram was not a barrier to their ability to discuss their P#S, but instead helped them communicate their P#S in a way that words had trouble capturing. Our participants' feedback indicates that SCT's ability to allow for creative markings, such as using symbols like spirals and marking outside of the diagram and strength axis, is part of SCT's effectiveness.

Our findings also align with past research on the usefulness of SCT diagrams and terms and their ability to accurately represent P#S (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et al., 2017). For example, participants in previous SCT studies also indicated that the status-orientation distinction and the eroticism-nurturance distinction were relevant and accurate to their experience of sexuality (Abed et al., 2019; Schudson et al., 2017). Our findings support the idea that the ability to separate P#S into erotic and nurturant aspects is more relevant to lived experience than separating between sexual and romantic aspects (van Anders et al., 2011; van Anders, 2015).

Along with SCT's accuracy, our findings also align with previous research that suggests the majority of individuals do not find SCT difficult to use (Abed et al., 2019; Beischel et al., 2021a; Schudson et al., 2017). A common critique of SCT by nonusers is that its complexity makes it too difficult to understand (van Anders & Schudson, 2017). However, many of our participants indicated that they found it easy to use SCT diagrams and understand SCT's terms and even those who did not were able to use it accurately. Almost all participants expressed interest and/or excitement around SCT's capabilities, including those that had difficulty with the theory. In this way, our findings indicate that SCT is an excellent tool for addressing hermeneutical injustice and helping minoritized individuals better understand themselves and be better understood by others. In addition, many participants in this study reported that they found SCT to be interesting or "fascinating," and had very positive responses to the theory and the study ($n = 19$). Overall, our participants' responses suggest that those with minoritized P#S find SCT and related research valuable.

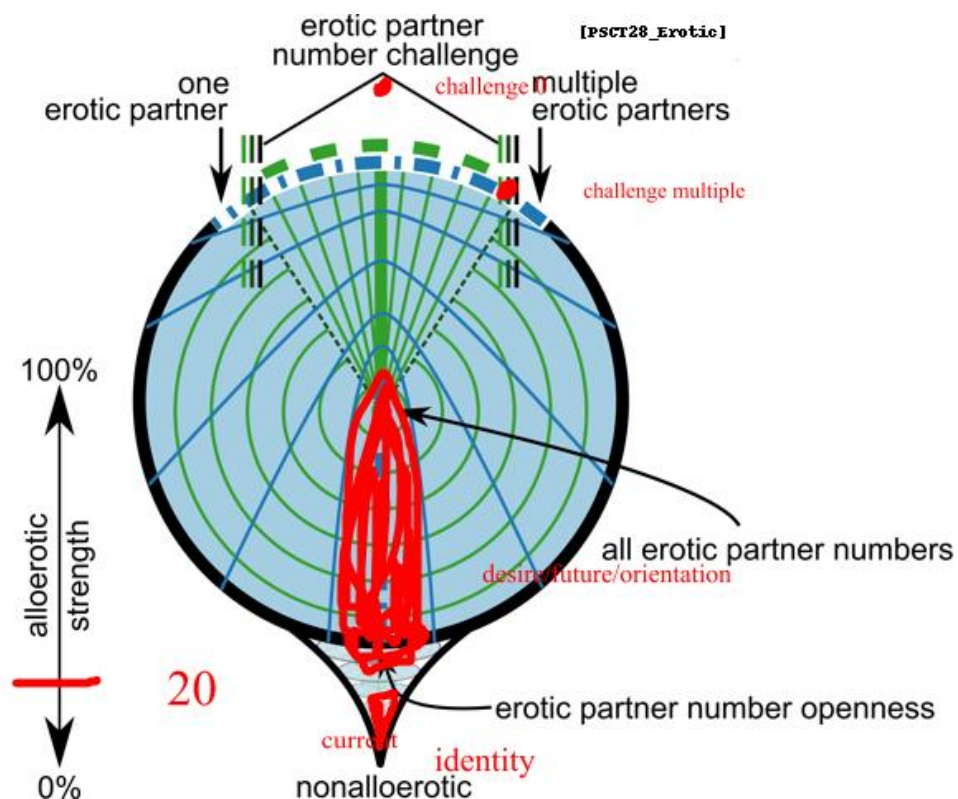
Although SCT mainly succeeded at representing our participants' P#S accurately, our data highlighted two shortcomings. First, though SCT defines "orientation" explicitly outside a

biological/innate framework (van Anders, 2015), many people in anglophone countries still understand it that way. More work could be useful in ensuring that participants do not see the use of “orientation” in SCT as connoting innate tendencies. Second, because of the way the SCT diagram is structured, the only place to incorporate zero partners is by marking the ‘nonallosexual’ point at the bottom of the diagram’s ‘tail’ (and as shown by the heatmaps, many nonsexual participants and participants with nonbinary P#S made use of that point). Openness to zero, one and multiple partners can be communicated using the ‘all partner numbers’ point at the center of the diagram, but there is no clear way to indicate if the individual sees this openness as a challenge to cultural norms other than to make a note or additional mark.

Although some participants had difficulty representing themselves on the diagram, they were still able to make a mark on the diagram that made sense to them. For example, Pigeon decided to represent their P#S by making a mark outside the diagram above the challenge area (see Figure 7). However, ensuring that SCT instructions make clear how to indicate full nonsexuality *and* challenge locations, and/or to make multiple marks to represent these locations, would be useful. Despite these shortcomings, our findings indicate that the P#S aspect of SCT can be used to effectively represent diverse P#S, and that individuals find it valuable to use this model to represent their P#S.

Figure 7

Pigeon’s Individual SCT P#S Eroticism Diagram



Participant Social Locations and the Importance of Intersectionality in Sexuality Research

Our study reflected a high number of participants who occupied minoritized social locations outside of P#S, which allowed us to investigate intersectional lived experiences of P#S. A notable finding was that half of our participants ($n = 13$) identified as autistic/having ASD; of these participants, we categorized seven outside the multisexual-nonsexual binary. Autism is defined by the Autistic Self Advocacy Network as a developmental disability that can involve ways of thinking, sensory processing, moving, communicating, and/or socializing that are different from allistic (non-autistic) individuals (ASAN, n.d.). In this study, two participants reported that their neurodivergence impacted their P#S, specifically their struggle to define romantic and platonic attraction. Anne (age 28-32, nonbinary P#S) stated “I struggled a bit with nurturance but I think that’s just because I am autistic and/or probably aromantic. I don’t really get the difference between romantic love/nurturance and friendship.” And, Fluid identified as

“nebuloromantic,” a sexuality under the aromantic umbrella for those whose find it difficult/impossible to distinguish between romantic and platonic feelings because of their neurodivergence (“Nebularomantic,” n.d.; Rendle, 2023).

There is mixed evidence about partner number sexuality among communities by autistic and allistic existence or identity. Some research suggests that asexuality is more prevalent among autistic communities, but other research disputes this (Bush et al., 2021, Ronis et al., 2021). There is a lack of research examining experiences of nonmonogamy among autistic people, but community sources suggest that nonmonogamy is more prevalent among autistic people (Hovet, 2023; Lang, 2020; Matlack et al., 2023). Community and research sources discuss how many autistic individuals find it easier than allistic individuals to understand that adhering to societal norms and constructs (e.g., allosexuality and monogamy) is not compulsory and so do not strictly adhere to the norms that do not suit them (Bayeh, 2022; Davidson & Tamas, 2016; Hovet, 2023; Lang, 2020; Kim, 2011; Matlack et al., 2023; TAAAP, 2022). We selected participants specifically to reflect non-normative experiences of P#S, which may have influenced a higher number of autistic participants. There is also a lack of research on the way autistic individuals experience platonic and romantic relationships, but this has been discussed in the autistic community (e.g., as evidenced by the term “nebuloromantic”).

There is more research on other minoritized sexualities among autistic people, and almost all of our participants ($n = 23$) identified as a sexual minority. Many studies have suggested that there are proportionally more individuals with minoritized gender/sexes and gender/sex sexual orientations in the autistic population compared to the allistic population, and also attribute these higher rates to many autistic individuals’ ability and willingness to break free of societal norms (Bayeh, 2022; Davidson & Tamas, 2016; Loy-Ashe, 2023; Mann, 2020; Toft, 2023). In our

study, 11 out of the 17 participants who identified as a non-cis-binary gender/sex also identified as autistic. Charlie specifically identified as “autigender,” which is a term for autistic individuals who feel that their experience of gender is inseparably influenced by their experience of autism (Rose & Heyworth, 2021; Toft, 2023).

Of the 17 participants who identified with a minoritized gender/sex sexuality, nine identified as autistic and eight did not. However, 12 out of the 17 participants who identified with a minoritized gender/sex sexuality were multisexual in some way, and this finding does align with some research suggesting that nonmonogamy is more prevalent among those with minoritized gender/sex sexual orientations (Hauptert et al., 2017; Klesse, 2016a; Moors et al., 2021), although it should be noted that there is ongoing discussion, and pushback, about the conceptual overlap—or lack thereof—between queerness and consensual non-monogamies (Cardoso, 2014; Wilkinson, 2010). Hera Carter, an autistic participant who identified as queer, commented on this intersection in their interview: “...a lot of people [who have nonmonogamous] relationship styles [are also] queer and, just, having queerness just opens your world up to think about things in more open and fluid ways, and that can lead to more nonmonogamy...” Our participants provided valuable insight into connections between autism and sexuality and how, like the ‘Openness’ theme suggests, living outside of one societal norm can lead individuals to question and dismiss additional norms. However, since we did not set out to research the intersection between autism and sexuality, and because of our smaller sample size, our ability to draw conclusions on this topic from our findings is limited.

As another social location variable, the majority ($n = 19$) of our participants identified as disabled/having a disability, and almost half ($n = 12$) of these participants listed more than one disability in their response. This is important in light of the discourse around disability and P#S.

Both nonsexuality and disability are heavily stigmatized and pathologized, and disabled individuals are often considered inherently nonsexual (Emens, 2014; Mann, 2020; Scherrer, 2008; Walker & Raymaker, 2021). For example, autistic individuals have been portrayed in and outside of research as being uninterested in engaging in sexual/romantic relationships and as having difficulty/being incapable of engaging in sexual/romantic relationships because of a perceived lack of the social skills needed to initiate and maintain relationships (Bennett et al., 2019; Sala et al., 2020; Ronis et al., 2021). In contrast to these assumptions, our participants highlighted the importance of P#S for disabled individuals, including multisexuality and nonsexuality (Cuthbert, 2021; Davidson & Tamas, 2016; Kim, 2011).

Our participants highlight the importance of intersectionality in research and recruiting from minoritized populations. Psychology research has repeatedly excluded or dismissed the perspectives of individuals who occupy minoritized social locations, especially those who occupy multiple minoritized locations, for example, autistic individuals of minoritized race/ethnicity (Coburn & Williams, 2023; Loy-Ashe, 2023; Mann, 2020; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019; Sala et al., 2020). Our participants occupied many intersecting minoritized social locations (e.g., sexual minority and racial/ethnic minority participants), and some participants indicated that their social locations informed their P#S. Including participants from a variety of minoritized social locations with perspectives that research had been lacking allowed this study to produce novel scientific knowledge and gain greater insight into the lived experience of P#S.

Additionally, there were many participants with intersecting majoritized identities (e.g., allistic and/or cisgender participants), and responses from participants of different minoritized and majoritized social locations had similarities that could be collated into cohesive themes (for example, almost all participants resonated with the eroticism/nurturance distinction). This shows

that although there are relevant differences in how individuals with minoritized identities experience the world compared to majoritized individuals, experiences that are relevant to those who occupy minoritized social locations can also be relevant to those occupying majoritized social locations. Therefore, primarily recruiting individuals from majoritized social locations may lead to the exclusion of insights that could benefit many majoritized individuals as well as minoritized individuals. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of recruiting participants from a variety of minoritized social locations to produce comprehensive and scientific knowledge that combats hermeneutical injustice.

Limitations and Future Directions

First, this study is limited in its generalizability. The individuals who participated in the interview were primarily those who were already eager to talk about their sexuality, so our findings may not reflect the experiences of others. Also, since our participants were selected purposefully to include a set array of P#S diversity, our findings cannot generalize more generally to those with minoritized P#S or, of course, those with majoritized P#S. Our study did not include individuals from some minoritized P#S communities, including swingers, single-by-choice individuals, and individuals in friends-with-benefits or queerplatonic relationships. Also, almost all of our participants with nonbinary P#S were categorized as such because they were *both* multisexual and nonsexual (e.g., nonmonogamous and grayromantic), as opposed to neither (e.g., a relationship anarchist). And, since all participants were located within anglophone North American countries (i.e., Canada and the U.S.) where mononormativity is enforced, it is difficult to know how the P#S aspect of SCT would be used by those in other cultures and societies, including those where mononormativity is not prevalent, privileged or equally enforced.

Another limitation to our study is that it may have left out the perspectives of less privileged individuals, which is an issue with research that many individuals from marginalized communities have highlighted (British Sociological Association, 2020). For example, our study excluded those with certain disabilities such as blindness, who did not fluently speak English, and who did not have access to the technology required for an online interview (e.g., a laptop or desktop computer, reliable internet connection). Also, the majority of our participants were white and/or did not consider themselves to be a racialized minority, and almost all had some amount of college education. These constraints limit our ability to determine whether SCT is relevant to some minoritized individuals and inclusive of marginalized lived experiences, and how these other axes and intersections of oppression are tied to potential insights gained from SCT.

Future studies could investigate the P#S aspects of SCT with monogamous and/or monoamorous individuals to explore their P#S, including branchedness between monogamous identity and multisexual orientation and/or status (Emens, 2004; Anderson, 2010). Future studies could also focus on a specific minoritized P#S status/identity/orientation or incorporate other minoritized P#S that our study did not end up including. Future studies could also further explore how specific intersecting axes of oppression (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability) influence P#S, or explore P#S in participants from other cultures and countries. All of these could provide novel insights into the nature of P#S and test the bounds of SCT's ability to reflect diverse P#S. As this is the first study to explore P#S via SCT in depth, there is much opportunity to further explore interesting and important research questions. And, reports from our participants support the value of SCT research to those with minoritized P#S.

Conclusion

Overall, results from our study add to the growing body of literature supporting the value of SCT as a tool for generating new knowledge about sexuality and as a useful, accurate, and inclusive model to represent sexuality. This study also highlights that the lived experience of partnering extends far beyond commonly understood categories, and that many aspects of P#S that are relevant and important to individuals cannot be expressed through established labels. Future research on P#S should strive to reflect this diversity, as failing to address assumptions based on compulsory monogamy, compulsory sexuality, and/or amatonormativity could reduce the validity and relevance of future findings and continue to perpetuate hermeneutical injustice against those with minoritized P#S. We hope that this study promotes the use of inclusive knowledge frameworks like SCT in future research on P#S and helps to provide new avenues for research into a number of questions about the links between sexuality, friendship, relationships, and partnering.

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