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**1. What first drew you to relationship science?**

For several years, I worked as a server at a restaurant that was a hot spot for first dates, engagement celebrations, anniversaries, and date nights. As an avid people-watcher, I found the dynamics between couples fascinating. Some couples seemed so solid and in love, while I could tell others were struggling. Some first dates I knew would turn into something more. Others... Not so much. When I took a course on Close Relationships with Dr. Danu Stinson at the University of Victoria, I was amazed to learn about the thriving science behind my late-night observations during dinner rush at the restaurant. I could not believe people were paid to study relationships and was sold on this career path after the first day of class.

**2. What do you find most exciting or rewarding about studying relationships?**

It feels very special and unique to do research in an area that is so central to the lives of everyone. It's so easy to connect with others about the work we do, and I find seeing that initial spark of curiosity when friends, family, or my students learn about the theories we have or the fun studies we do really rewarding. I also feel very fortunate to be a part of such an incredible community of close relationship researchers. This line of work seems to attract the brightest, most interesting, down to earth, and intelligent humans and I am forever grateful for the connections that I've made as part of our community.

**3. What's something about relationships that people often misunderstand—or that your work has changed your mind about?**

When I began studying relationships, I came to this work as a hopeless romantic and serial monogamist who had not been single for more than 5 minutes since grade 10. I now recognize I had an intense "fear of being single" (thanks for this insight, Dr. Spielmann) and this did in fact lead to some extremely poor dating decisions that I will save for the IARR cocktail hour. Through researching relationships, and singlehood more specifically, I've come to believe that people perhaps stress too much about romantic connections, and not enough about platonic connections. This isn't to say that romantic relationships are not important. But people are generally feeling lonelier than ever, and a romantic partner can't do everything for us. Our broader social networks are integral for meeting our needs for belonging and support – regardless of our relationship status.

**4. What are you working on next, or what question are you most excited to pursue?**

As a senior PhD student, I will be working diligently to find a job in what has been called 'the worst academic job market in recent history'! Jokes aside, my supervisor, Dr. Yuthika Girme, and I are preparing to launch my first truly qualitative study to explore the interplay between social support and discrimination in singlehood. As it is often single peoples' friends or family who treat them poorly for being single, I'm curious to see how single people feel about being embedded in social networks that may, at times, be sources of both support and negative

treatment and how they manage the ambivalence that may come from such contradictory experiences.