

# “Best Sex He’d Ever Had!”: A Qualitative Analysis of “Most Amazing” Pegging Experiences

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*“Pegging”—the sexual practice among heterosexual couples of cis-women/females anally penetrating (e.g., with strap-on devices, sex toys, etc.) cis-men/males—has not been examined by academic researchers. The present qualitative study focuses on the most “special” or “amazing” (optimal) experiences associated with pegging as described by those (N=15) who engage regularly in such practices. Findings show that context and timing are often important for exemplary pegging experiences. Furthermore, optimal pegging experiences tend to be associated with newness and novelty, a deep connection with partners, higher levels of psychosexual arousal and fulfillment, and increased pleasurable sensation. Some implications of these findings are also highlighted.*

**Keywords:** *anal sex, leisure, optimal experience, pegging*

## Introduction

Academic research on anal sex practices has typically focused on gay men’s experiences (Allan, 2016; Branfman et al., 2018). Conversely, relatively few studies have explored heterosexual anal intercourse (HAI) (i.e., Fahs, et al., 2015; McBride & Fortenberry, 2010; Molinares et al, 2017; Pickles et al., 2023). Reasons for engaging in anal sex, though stigmatized, include pleasing one’s partner, being religious (anal sex may be viewed by some participants as not counting, technically, as legitimate sex), curiosity, and personal pleasure (Fahs, et al., 2015; McBride, 2019; McBride & Fortenberry, 2010; Molinares et al., 2017, Pickles et al., 2023).

Scholars have observed that sexual practices are socially constructed, gendered, and follow social scripts (e.g., Diorio, 2016; Fahs, et al., 2015; Gagnon & Simon, 1973), thus people may commonly assume that males are penetrative while females are receptive in HAI (see Pickles et al., 2023). However, “pegging” is a relatively recent term that describes a consensual sexual practice wherein heterosexual cis-women/females anally penetrate (e.g., with strap-on devices, sex toys) heterosexual cis-men/males, whereby the dynamics of HAI largely are reversed (Williams et al., 2023). Although male anoreceptive penetration among heterosexual partners can be a form of consensual kink (BDSM) wherein the female is in the more dominant role while the male yields control (see Pitagora, 2019), pegging can be understood as a unique practice (Williams et al., in press). To date, academic research on pegging is almost nonexistent (for exceptions, see Aguilar, 2017; Williams et al., in press).

The present study is a subset of a larger qualitative study (N=17) that we conducted on if and how pegging might be leisure (Williams et al., 2023). Those findings revealed that pegging is associated with intense physical pleasure, shared mutual pleasure with partners, increased intimacy and relationship growth among couples, and a sense of connection for those involved in communities (such as Fetlife) that support pegging practices. Furthermore, pegging was, in most cases, found to be mostly (but not entirely) casual leisure in the form(s) of sensory stimulation, play, passive entertainment (when viewing sexually explicit materials with partners to increase arousal), pleasurable aerobic activity (for peggers), and relaxation (for peggees). Thus, pegging as a form of leisure appears to have several health-promoting benefits for those who enjoy it.

## Present Study

The present study is an analysis of pegging participants’ descriptions of particular pegging experiences that were special and memorable. Indeed, optimal leisure experiences, including those known as “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), may be particularly therapeutic in various ways. given the potential to improve life satisfaction while increasing the salience of specific health mechanisms, such as supporting coping, eliciting positive affective responses, facilitating social / relationship bonding, and / or enhancing subjective meaning (see Fancourt et al., 2021). Indeed, optimal leisure experiences are an important component of overall life satisfaction and happiness (Walker, Kleiber, & Mannell, 2019). Thus, the purpose of the present study was to explore characteristics of special experiences associated with pegging as preferred leisure.

## Methods

### Study Design, Sampling, and Participants

Prior to participant recruitment and data collection, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the second author. Both authors have extensive training and experience in the use of qualitative methods and analysis. This study utilized a flexible, constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000) as a strategy to gain an understanding of participants' meanings (Schwandt, 2000). Participants were recruited via our existing alternative sexuality community networks in the western United States and Canada, and our sampling method was a combination of snowball and convenience approaches.

Participants (N=15) were considered based on pegging being a regular and frequent part of their sexual activity repertoires. About half (n=8) of the participants were peggers (cis-women/females) while the rest (n=7) were peggees (cis-men/males). The majority of participants were 30 years or older (range=21-67 years), and half of the sample reported being in polyamorous relationships. Four of the men identified as heterosexual, while one identified as heteroflexible, another as bisexual, and one more as queer, but there was not a dominant sexual identity reported among women—heterosexual, heteroflexible, bisexual, queer, and pansexual were all reported. Regarding race, seven identified as White, six participants identified as Bi-racial, and two identified as Black. Most of the participants reported having at least a four-year university degree or higher, and most stated they did not belong to any religion.

All interviews were scheduled and conducted by the second author. Participants were asked to describe a particularly special or amazing pegging experience they had enjoyed, and follow up questions were asked in order to gain clarification and/or more description, as needed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### Data Analysis Procedure

Interviews were disaggregated and analyzed using open, line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2000) in order to identify manifest content and basic patterns in the data. We then carefully explored and considered these codes and patterns within specific associated contexts in order to uncover latent content (Berg, 1995). By doing so, it was possible to identify common emergent themes and gain a sense of the meanings of optimal experiences as described by participants.

## Results

This study found that special and amazing pegging experiences were associated with multiple characteristics that tended to occur: (a) particular timing and context, (b) being a new experience, (c) deep connection and intimacy with partners, (d) extraordinary sensory pleasure, and (e) unusually high arousal and desire.

### Timing and Context

Special experiences were often, though certainly not always, connected to particular timing and context. For example, some participants reported that their very first pegging experiences were their most memorable and enjoyable, particularly among peggees. One male participant reported, "I think it's the first one (time), and it was the moment when I guess she most deeply penetrated me while looking in my eyes." Another male participant recalled of the first time he and his wife engaged in pegging, "For us, that time, it was wonderful. It built up to a great orgasm, and we both just felt wonderful." Similarly, a female participant recalled the anticipation of her first time pegging her partner. She noted:

What stands out in my mind was really the first time. The first time putting on the harness, the first time figuring out how to slowly ease into him, watching his reactions

as I gently thrust back and forth watching him surrender to me. (It was) just an absolutely amazing experience!

For others, their most special experiences were part of special occasions or personal celebrations with partners, such as birthdays or anniversaries. One participant explained:

My girlfriend and I were on a date, and it was really special. It was like our anniversary, and it was like National Women's Day. . . We went out to a fancy restaurant in New York, and we hadn't been to New York for awhile because she was working a lot. It was just a really special day. So, afterwards we went home, and the whole night she was wearing the strap-on all night. . . It was a special night.

Whether planned (most cases) or spontaneous, optimal pegging experiences were described by the sample as something new and exciting.

### New Experience

Pegging was a new experience for those who reported their first time was also the most memorable. However, other participants also explained diverse new experiences that were not their first times pegging. For example, a female participant reported:

We were with another couple and they were kinky. So, they were into anything that we really threw out there to explore together. So, we decided that we were going to, um, same bed, take each other's husbands. And so, we did that. . . She was pegging my husband and I was taking her husband.

Another female participant described the satisfaction of a new, "beautiful" experience that involved helping a friend explore anal sex:

My friend used to tell me that she would never do anal stuff. So, I was actually there when she had anal for the first time with a friend of ours. And, she comes up to me when she's done and she goes, "Thank you. I was finally able to have anal and I never thought that would happen. And, it didn't hurt. . . This was fun and I want to do it again. . . Now I can get closer to my husband because now he wants to do anal."

Doing something new and exciting can be a refreshing change from their everyday routine sex. Similarly, these new experiences opened a door to deep connection and intimacy for participants.

### Deep Connection with Partner

Virtually all participants spoke of the increased intimacy they felt with their partners during special pegging experiences. One female participant stated that there are so many special pegging experiences and emphasized that there is "so much intimacy!" Another female spoke of the "very deep intimate relationship" with her partner.

A male participant recalled a moment of being deeply penetrated by his female partner—"(It) was kind of a breathtaking moment. It was obviously exciting, but I also felt a heightened connection, and then also I felt all the fears and apprehensions kind of wash away at that moment." Another participant shared, "It was just a very fluid kind of thing. There were no worries. It was very romantic. It was very introspective. We were into each other, and it was a very loving moment, and there were no worries." Another summarized that, "The physical pleasure and emotional closeness. . . all met or exceeded my expectations." It is not surprising that deep connection and intimacy were key features reflected in participants' descriptions of special pegging experiences, given that couples must communicate honestly with each other and negotiate social stigma commonly associated with pegging.

### Increased Sensory Pleasure

Not surprisingly, extreme sensory pleasure, particularly for peggees, was a common theme in special experiences. A male participant explained how over several months of anal play, his partner gradually increased his ability to receive larger objects until she was able to regularly peg him, which was unusually stimulating and highly pleasurable. At the same time, peggers enjoyed providing such experiences to their partners. A female participant recalled a special experience that she particularly enjoyed:

We have a sex swing, so putting my partner in that and tying his hands and legs to the chains of the swing. . . It involved a lot more than just the pegging. . . just a lot of sensuality and a lot of sensation. . . It allowed me to be able to really penetrate well because the way the swing was, and I had on the right shoes, and the right height. Everything was perfect. It was like the stars aligned. It felt really good. . . Being able to stand between his legs just allowed me to play with his penis and bring him to completion. It was a 10 (out of 10).

Interestingly, the above case was rare in that it described optimal mechanics of their pegging experience, which was particularly important for her pleasure and special experience.

### Exceptionally High Arousal and Desire

Descriptions reflecting exceptionally high psychosexual arousal and desire were present in many accounts of special experiences by both peggers and peggees. A male participant shared:

So, I remember she (partner) had a lot of pornography. She was really into it, and I came out. . . Then lying on the bed, she used the lubricant and got me all opened up and ready to go. She was supposed to use the smaller one (anal toy), but then she said that she wanted to use the bigger one. That like, that was a desire. . . I'm interested in pleasing, and so if that's what she wants, then that's what you get.

A female participant explained that her special experience, unlike those of many in the sample, was spontaneous rather than planned. She shared:

. . . This was a more spontaneous pegging and it was very, very intense. I remember just how much he enjoyed it. . . It was getting late at night. We don't (sic) have time to do pegging, but we both really wanted to, and so we ended up doing it. I remember at the end, it was like, that was the best sex he'd ever had!"

Of course, arousal and desire are at the core of most, if not all, pleasurable sexual experiences, though the levels of arousal and desire were apparently much higher than participants' typical pegging experiences. Spontaneous experiences, particularly, are likely to occur based on exceptionally high arousal and desire.

### Discussion

Previous research has shown that a high percentage of Americans fantasize about novel, adventurous, erotic experiences, and that many have fantasies at one time or another that may involve pegging (Lehmiller, 2018). Pegging is associated with intense physical pleasure, shared mutual pleasure with partner(s), increased intimacy and relationship growth, and a sense of connection with others who enjoy participation in this activity (Williams et al., in press). It may be an important form of sensory stimulation, play, social engagement (with partner(s), and passive entertainment for those who enjoy it, thus having important restorative benefits (Williams et al., in press). The present study, which focused on particularly special pegging experiences for those who

enjoy pegging, found that timing and context, new experiences, deep connection and intimacy with partners, intense physical sensation, and exceptionally high arousal and desire were inherent to optimal experiences.

Findings herein are consistent with the broader research on optimal sexual experience (i.e., Kleinplatz, 2006; Kleinplatz et al., 2013; Kleinplatz & Menard, 2007), which seems to be remarkably similar across diverse groups, including sexual minorities and older adults, despite many academics and clinicians focusing on group differences (Kleinplatz et al., 2013). Indeed, the ingredients of optimal sexual experience appear to be being present, authenticity, intense emotional connection, sexual and erotic intimacy, communication, and transcendence (Kleinplatz & Menard, 2007). Research shows that couples can move toward having optimal sexual experiences by working on important broader relationship components, such as communication, trust, and a willingness to be vulnerable with each other (Kleinplatz et al., 2018)—which components have been shown to be present among couples who regularly engage in pegging (Williams et al., in press). Because of the intense cultural stigma associated with pegging, healthy relationship dynamics that reflect authenticity, acceptance, communication, and a willingness to be vulnerable may be especially important for those who try pegging. Research has also found that great sex, more generally, occurs when arousal levels and desire are extremely high and couples are willing to try new experiences (Kleinplatz, 2006). This also seems to be true of the best pegging experiences.

The opportunity and ability to have desired and highly rewarding sexual experiences falls within recent conceptualizations of sexual health, which is an important dimension of overall health and wellbeing (Satcher et al., 2015; Williams & Thomas, 2023; World Health Organization, 2017). Of course, optimal sexual experiences are human experiences, and highly rewarding personal experiences have long been recognized by humanistic and existential scholars as being important for overall happiness and life enjoyment (see Burt & Gonzalez, 2021). The realization that highly enjoyable sexual experiences can contribute to overall life satisfaction and happiness deserves more attention.

### Conclusion

A positive sexuality approach recognizes, among other things, that sexual desires, preferences, and identities are diverse, that sexuality is an important part of happiness and wellbeing, and that people are valued as fellow human beings (Williams et al., 2015). Given the long history of sex-negativity within modern western cultures, only recently have scholars and clinicians begun to approach diverse sexual practices from a more open, curious perspective. To date, the topic of pegging has largely eluded serious academic and professional attention. However, this topic and many other alternative sexual practices warrant further scholarly attention, given the potentially significant benefits to those who choose to participate.

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