

Challenging Heteronormativity and Mononormativity in Academia: Incorporating Consensual Non-Monogamy into Psychological Romantic Relationship Research

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Abstract : There has been recent resurgence in the popular and academic interest of consensual non-monogamous (CNM) relationships- an umbrella term that defines relationships in which each partner has openly agreed to engage in additional romantic and/or sexual relationships outside of their primary partnership. Despite an increase in the academic study of CNM, little psychological attention has been paid to the study of CNM, with the consideration of these relationships commonly occurring within related social science disciplines such as sociology or anthropology. As a discipline, psychology has a history of conducting research in the area of intimate relationships, and psychologists have amassed a wealth of theoretical knowledge in this field. However, historically individuals who engage in "alternative" sexual and romantic behaviours, such as non-heterosexual sex or sex with multiple partners have been pathologized within psychological research. Individuals in CNM relationships or individuals identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer have often been excluded from research or "othered" in psychological interpretations of what healthy relationships entail. Thus, our current theoretical understandings of romantic relationships are limited to heterosexual, monogamous relationships. The goal of this presentation is to examine commonly cited components of relationship satisfaction (e.g., commitment, communication) and to critically assess how CNM experiences are presented in, or missing from, the psychological literature on romantic relationships. Additionally, the presentation will also consider how CNM relationships may add to our understanding or enhancement of traditional psychological theories and address issues related to heteronormativity and mononormativity within the discipline. Finally, we will close with a consideration of additional theoretical perspectives that may aid in our understanding of CNM relationships and suggest directions for future research.

Keywords : heteronormativity, mononormativity, psychological research, diverse relationships, gender, sexuality, feminism, queer theory

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