Predictors of Perceived Stigmatization within Consensually Non-Monogamous Populations

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Consensual Non-Monogamy (CNM)

• 4-5% of American adults may be engaged in CNM relationships. (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013)

• Large percentages of LGB relationships may be CNM. (c.f., Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Bonello, 2009; Munson & Stelboum, 1999; Wosick-Correa, 2007)

• CNM often broken down into: polyamory, swinging, open relationships. (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Matsick, Conley, Ziegler, Moors, & Rubin, 2013)

• Prevalence of CNM in two large general samples did not differ when using behavioral vs. identity-based assessments. (Rubin, Moors, Matsick, & Conley, 2014)

• But….this basic taxonomy has yet to be empirically validated as matching CNM participants’ views of themselves or the definitions researchers ascribe to these labels.
Stigmatization of CNM

• CNM relationships heavily stigmatized compared to monogamous ones. (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, Rubin, & Conley, 2013)

• Prejudice against CNM extended to perceptions of the individuals involved in those relationships. (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013)

• CNM relationships also rated more negatively on arbitrary qualities, indicating possible ‘halo effect’ surrounding monogamy. (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013)

• CNM individuals have reported suffering acts of prejudice and discrimination due to their lifestyle. (Weber, 2002; Wright, 2008)

• CNM sub-types may be differentially stigmatized by general public: Two studies found polyamory less stigmatized than swinging or open relationships. (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2015; Matsick et al., 2013)
Unanswered Questions

- Do the CNM practices and identities of participants align with the tripartite model?

- What predicts greater CNM-related perceived stigma and experiences of discrimination, harassment, and violence (DHV)?

- Are there differences between CNM subtypes regarding:
  - Perceived stigmatization (of the individual).
  - Perceived stigmatization (of CNM group).
  - Experiences of DHV.
  - Level of outness about CNM.
  - Importance of CNM to sense of identity.
The Present Study


**Control Variables:**
- Age, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, Race/Ethnicity, Income, Education, Personality (Big 5).

**Independent & Dependent Variables:**
- Outness about CNM. (OI; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000)
- Salience of CNM identity. (CSES; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)
- Perceived stigmatization due to CNM. (SCQ; Pinel, 1999)
- Experiences of DHV due to CNM. (adapted from Cox et al., 2009)
- Length of CNM identification
- Multi-partner cohabitation
- Presence of children at home
Participants

- **1,582** self-identified CNM adults living in USA.
- Age: $M = 36.7$, $SD = 10.5$ (range 18-80)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>1361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black/AA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Binary</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans (M + F)</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>30</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual/Pansexual</td>
<td>51.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>564</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>44</td>
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</table>
Participants

- Income: Median = $40k
- 2013 US median income = $28.8k

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>% of Sample</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Some H.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.S. Grad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Grad School</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA/MS Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA/BS Degree</td>
<td>30.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

2014 U.S. Average:
- 71% Some Grad School
- 29% Doctoral Degree
Tripartite CNM Taxonomy

• **Polyamorous relationship definition**: A person (or couple, if applicable) is involved in multiple simultaneous relationships that are romantic in nature and may also be sexual. These relationships usually involve sex, but do not have to. All parties involved understand and agree to the lack of sexual and/or romantic exclusivity. A key factor is the desire to have multiple relationships that are romantic/emotional in nature, not just sexual.

• **Swinging relationship definition**: A couple desires to have sexual relationships with people other than their primary partner (i.e., spouse or significant other), and typically engage in these sexual relationships at parties, social settings, or group/couple dates. All parties involved understand and agree to the lack of sexual exclusivity. Key factors are that the couple views consensually non-monogamous activities as something they usually do together, like a recreational activity, and that the outside relationships are only sexual, not romantic/emotional.

• **Open relationship definition**: A couple desires to have sexual relationships with someone other than their primary partner (i.e., spouse or significant other), and there is an agreement where one or both partners may individually pursue outside sexual relationships. All parties involved understand and agree to the lack of sexual exclusivity. Key factors are that individual members of the couple typically pursue outside sexual relationships independently, for example without their primary partner present, and that these outside relationships are only sexual, not romantic/emotional.
CNM Identifications Participants Could Choose From

- Polyamorous
- Swinger
- Open Relationship
- Relationship Anarchy
- Monogamish
  - A couple that is primarily monogamous, but *occasionally* allows an outside sexual partner, either independently or together as a couple.
- Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell
  - A couple agrees that each member is free to pursue outside sexual relationships, but that the members of the couple will keep the details of these outside sexual relationships hidden from each other.
- Poly-Mono
  - A couple in which one partner maintains outside *polyamorous* relationships with the knowledge and consent of their primary partner, who is monogamous and does *not* maintain any outside romantic or sexual relationships.
- Other
Endorsed CNM Practices vs. CNM Self-Identification

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polyamorous</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinger</td>
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<td>25.5</td>
<td>41.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship Anarchy</td>
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<td>16.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monogamish</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the Above</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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Pearson $X^2$ (14, $N = 1,582$) = 885.79, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .529$
Polyamory Practices
Swinging Practices
Open Relationship Practices

Condensed CNM Identity vs. Practices

Cramer’s V = .484

Pearson $X^2 (6, N = 1,582) = 741.98, p < .001$
Experiences of DHV due to CNM

- 54.7% reported at least 1 type of DHV.
- 26.4% reported 3 or more types of DHV.

Percentage of sample reporting 1 or more experience of:
- 29.1% - Verbal Harassment
- 23.7% - Internet Harassment
- 16.5% - Discrimination by a medical doctor
- 14.2% - Discrimination by a mental health practitioner
- 19.7% - Sexual Harassment*
- 10.0% - Stalking
- 8.1% - Divorce
- 5.1% - Rape or sexual assault
- 3.9% - Physical assault
- 2.0% - Temporary or permanent loss of child custody
What predicts anti-CNM stigma & DHV?

Hierarchical multiple regressions were run:

- **Outcome Variables:**
  - Perceived Stigma (SCQ)
  - Experiences of DHV

**Step 1 (control variables):**
- Age
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Race/Ethnicity
- Income
- Education
- Personality (Big 5)

**Step 2 (independent variables):**
- Multi-partner cohabitation
- Children at home
- Length of CNM Identification
- Outness about CNM
- Importance of CNM to Identity
What predicts stigma and/or DHV?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Stigma</th>
<th>Experiences of DHV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R² = .098, Adj. R² = .083</td>
<td>R² = .142, Adj. R² = .129</td>
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<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<tr>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.012</td>
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<tr>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.026</td>
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<td>.184</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>.137</td>
<td>.000</td>
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Perceived Stigma

Experiences of DHV
CNM Type and Perceived Stigma (SCQ)

- CNM Practices
- CNM Identity

Practices $\eta^2 = 0.012$, Identity $\eta^2 = 0.014$
CNM Type and Experiences of DHV

CNM Practices vs. CNM Identity

Types of DHV Reported

Practices $\eta^2 = .015$, Identity $\eta^2 = .014$
Practices $\eta^2 = .055$, Identity $\eta^2 = .054$
CNM Type and Identity Salience

- CNM Practices
- CNM Identity

Practices \( \eta^2 = .01 \), Identity \( \eta^2 = .006 \)
Implications

• Overall impression: Huge within-group variability! Missing third variables?
• Question about utility, validity of Open Relationship category in CNM taxonomy.
• Research shows polyamory less stigmatized than swinging, open relationships. However:
  • Polyamorous participants in this sample reported slightly higher levels of perceived stigmatization and DHV events, compared to other CNM types.
  • Poly participants also reported higher levels of outness & CNM identity salience.
    • Mediation was not statistically significant – possibly due to small effect sizes.
• CNM identity salience predicted > perceived stigma. The more important CNM is to one’s identity, the more sensitive one is to feeling stigmatized due to it.
• DHV experiences were predicted by both level of outness as well as how long a participant had identified as CNM. Both factors could be seen as enhancing one’s exposure to CNM-related discriminatory events.
• Identifying outside the tripartite model = More out, less salient to overall identity, less perceived stigma, but more DHV experiences.
• Future work should investigate the effects of minority stress on CNM populations, as well as potential coping, resilience, and strength factors.
References

- Barker, M. (2004). This is my partner, and this is my… partner’s partner: Constructing a polyamorous identity in a monogamous world. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 18*, 75–88. doi:10.1080/10720530590523107
References


Thank You!

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