



## CONTINUING EDUCATION SESSION

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SESSION	CE HOURS	DATE/TIME	
CE17	1.0	Saturday, November 5th	2:45pm-3:45pm
TITLE			
Consensual Non-monogamy and Clinical Implications: Understanding Engagement, Emotions, and Affirming Practices			
AUTHORS			
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AASECT - Core Knowledge Areas and Training:		B; C; F	
APA - Curriculum Content Criteria:		1.3	
NCHEC - Areas of Responsibility:		1.3.3; 4.5.1; 4.5.2; 4.5.3; 4.5.4; 5.1.2	
ABSTRACT			
<p>SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) is a rising issue in a number of medical and mental health professional circles. A non-trivial number of people in the U.S. have engaged in a CNM relationship (22%) or are currently in one (5%; Fairbrother et al., 2018; Hupert et al., 2017). Without additional education and resources, mental health care practitioners are susceptible to holding prejudiced attitudes or engaging in exclusionary practices (Schechinger et al., 2018). In the present symposium, we first cover large-scale data that explores fantasies about and previous engagement in CNM as well as common emotions experienced (e.g., jealousy, compersion). Next, we focus on clinical implications related to robust interest in consensual non-monogamy, including a newly designed tool to assess CNM-affirming policies and practices. Moors and colleagues will discuss a new U.S. national-level study that assessed people’s desire for, attitudes toward, and previous engagement in polyamory, including emotional challenges. Lehmiller will cover how interest in CNM changes over the lifespan and notably peaks in mid-life. Flicker and colleagues will report on intrapersonal and interpersonal factors predictive of positive feelings towards one’s partner’s intimate relations with others. Schechinger and colleagues will present a newly developed clinical tool aimed at providing therapists and organizations insight on ways to incorporate CNM-affirming practices.</p> <p>INDIVIDUAL SYMPOSIUM TALKS Desire, Familiarity, and Previous Engagement in Polyamory: Results from a National Sample of Adults in the United States, Amy C. Moors, PhD; Amanda N. Gesselman, PhD; Justin Garcia, PhD Background: Investigations of diverse intimate relationships—long-term cohabitation, blended families, and even affairs—abound within family and relationship science literature (e.g., Carr &amp; Springer, 2010; Schmitt, 2005). However, these inquiries almost exclusively focus on monogamous relationships. Recent national surveys in the U.S. and Canada have found that consensually non-monogamous relationships are common, though prevalence of specific types of consensual non-monogamy are unknown. Method: The present research draws on a U.S. Census based quota sample of single adults (N = 3,438) to estimate the prevalence of desire for, familiarity with, and engagement in polyamory—a distinct type of consensually non-monogamous relationship where people typically engage in romantic love and sexual intimacy with multiple partners. Participants also reported on various sociodemographic factors and possible emotionally challenging experiences when engaged in CNM. Results: Results show that 1 out of 6 people (16.8%) desire to engage in polyamory, and 1 out of 9 people (10.7%) have engaged in polyamory at some</p>			



point during their life. Approximately 1 out of 15 people (6.5%) reported that they knew someone who has been or is currently engaged in polyamory. A series of logistic regressions found that few sociodemographic correlates emerged; no differences in prevalence were found based on political affiliation, income, religion, geographic region, or race/ethnicity (small effect sizes and  $p$ values  $> .05$ ). Sexual minorities, men, and younger adults reported greater desire to engage in polyamory (compared to heterosexuals, women, and older adults, respectively). Men and people with lower education backgrounds were more likely to have previously engaged in polyamory (compared to women and people with higher education backgrounds). Conclusions: Our results are the first to document prevalence estimates related to polyamory in the U.S. Given that emotional and sexual intimacy is an important part of most people's lives, understanding the varied ways in which people navigate their intimate lives is critical for the fields of sexuality and family science. Ultimately, it appears that many people hold interest for and have engaged in polyamory, regardless of their backgrounds.

**Interest in Consensual Non-Monogamy Over the Lifespan, Justin J. Lehmiller, PhD**  
**Background:** Media reports suggest that interest in consensual non-monogamy (CNM) differs substantially across generations, with younger adults expressing the most interest (Hawkins & Smith, 2019). Such reports presume older adults to have traditional sexual values and, therefore, more inclination toward monogamy. However, there are reasons to believe that interest in CNM may increase rather than decrease with age. For example, openness to experience and extraversion tend to rise with age (Gensowski et al., 2020), as do fantasies about sexual novelty (Lehmiller, 2018). The present research explored the extent to which adults fantasize about CNM at different stages of life.  
**Method:** An online survey of 3,141 adults (56% male-identified; 40% female-identified) was conducted. Participants were age 33 on average (range: 18-87) and were divided into five age groups: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60+. On the survey, they were asked to describe their favorite sexual fantasy as well as report on the frequency with which they fantasized about specific types of CNM.  
**Results:** The extent to which CNM was described as part of one's favorite fantasy depended on age, with young adults being least likely to report this. For both men and women, those aged 40-49 were the most likely to incorporate CNM themes into their favorite fantasy. Participants were separately asked how often they fantasize about polyamory, open relationship, swinging, cuckolding, and monogamy. Younger adults fantasized about all forms of CNM with significantly lower frequency and monogamy with significantly higher frequency than older adults.  
**Conclusion:** These results run contrary to popular media claims that young adults are disproportionately interested in CNM. In fact, older adults (and especially those at mid-life) report the most CNM fantasies. Implications, limitations, and future directions will be discussed.

**Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Predictors of Positive Feelings towards One's Partner(s)'s Intimate Relations with Others, Sharon M. Flicker, Ph.D. & Flavia Sancier-Barbosa, Ph.D.**  
**Background:** Compersion refers to the positive feelings that one may experience in response to one's partner's other consensually non-monogamous (CNM) intimate relationship(s). Although the topic of compersion appears frequently in online communities devoted to CNM and in popular and self-help literature, it has been the focus of few published empirical examinations. This study tests hypotheses stemming from a recent qualitative study (Flicker et al., in press) regarding the factors that facilitate and hinder CNM practitioners' experiences of compersion.  
**Method:** 255 participants were recruited through online CNM forums and completed anonymous online surveys. Participants responded to demographic and relationship questions, answered questions about a range of predictor variables, including intrapersonal, dyadic, metamour (their partner's partner), and extra-dyadic factors, and completed a recently validated measure of compersion. Twenty-eight hypothesized variables were tested via linear mixed effects models with random intercepts and fixed slopes.  $P$ -values were adjusted for multiple testing using the FDR method.  
**Results:** Those who felt closer to their metamour and those who knew more about the relationship between their partner and metamour reported greater compersion.. Reactive and



anticipatory jealousy predicted less positive feelings towards their partner's relationship with established metamours as well as towards their partner's potential new intimate connections. Attachment anxiety also predicted less compersion towards one's partner's potential new intimate connections. Conclusion: The connection between knowledge of one's partner's relationships and compersion is intuitive: one cannot emote onto a blank canvas. Yet the strongest predictor, closeness with metamour, was unexpected given the qualitative study's findings. The negative predictors, jealousy and attachment anxiety, likely reflect various intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions and may be amenable to intervention, resulting in increased compersion. CNM Mental Healthcare Equity Indicator: A Benchmarking Tool for Inclusive Care with Consensually Non-Monogamous Clients, Heath A. Schechinger, PhD; Amy C. Moors Background: Tools such as The Human Rights Campaign's Healthcare Equity Index and the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons have been created to help establish inclusive healthcare policies and practices for LGBTQ patients and employees. The present study sought to expand the scope of existing clinical resources by proposing an evidence-based benchmarking tool designed to assess mental healthcare facilities' policies and practices related to the inclusion of consensually non-monogamous (CNM) patients and employees. Method: A comprehensive review of the empirical literature pertaining to CNM mental healthcare was conducted and to create an initial model that was theoretically grounded in well-established LGBTQ research and resources. This model was consecutively reviewed by respected content experts and members of the APA Division 44 Committee on Consensual Non-Monogamy, whose feedback was integrated into the final model. Results: Similar to the format established in the Human Rights Campaign's Healthcare Equity Index, the present study's benchmarking tool permits institutions to assess their level of CNM-inclusivity in seven domains (non-discrimination, staff training, client services and support, client self-identification, employee benefits and policies, client communication and engagement, and responsible citizenship). Institutions' scores (0 - 100) fall into three tiers of recognition: 1) Foundational Policies for CNM Healthcare Equality, 2) CNM Healthcare Equality Top Performer, and 3) CNM Healthcare Equality Leader. Conclusion: The CNM Mental Healthcare Equity Indicator has numerous applications for mental healthcare clinicians and institutions and serves to advance efforts to improve the quality of care offered to CNM clients and employees.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To identify how many people hold desire for and have previously engaged in consensual non-monogamy and polyamory
- To describe common emotional and affective responses for people who engage in consensual non-monogamy
- To identify on-to-two ways to assess consensual non-monogamy affirming therapeutic and clinical practices