

The impact of relational stigmas on children of consensual non-monogamous families

Presenter: Carissa Gauthier

SFU Faculty/Major: Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Psychology

Presentation Description:

Education on the inclusion and acceptance of diversity should also include relational diversity. Despite the many benefits of consensual non-monogamy (CNM), evidence suggests that stigmas assigned to “non-normative” relationships can cause children of CNM families to experience “coming out” anxiety for fear of rejection and discrimination from their peers and teachers.

Abstract:

As relationships move away from the hetero-normative styles, an increase in consensual, non-monogamous (CNM) relationships is emerging (Hauptert et al., 2017). Despite having unique relational benefits not seen in monogamous, dyadic couples, such as increased need fulfillment, variety in new activities and increased self-growth, individuals in CNM relationships often experience relational stigmatization (being viewed less favorably based on their relationship style). Individuals in CNM relationships, as well as their children, are negatively impacted by the prejudice and discrimination they endure based on their family dynamic. Children experience anxiety and social development problems similar to children facing “coming-out” anxiety about their sexual identity. Drawbacks that are seen in CNM largely affect those who genuinely enjoy monogamy and are not suited for multi-partner relationships. Aside from societal prejudice, there seems to be very little evidence suggesting that children’s development is hindered by their parents’ CNM relationship, so long as their emotional and physical needs are being met. As diversity inclusion is increasingly being addressed in the classrooms, it is important to recognize relational diversity as well, bringing forth the reality of these relationships rather than permit their negative stigmas to continue. Through education and growing acceptance of various relationship styles the stigma that CNM individuals and their children face could be alleviated. Ultimately, CNM may provide benefits for those who choose it, thus bolstering the statement – it takes a village.