

**Differences in Traditional Family Values and Willingness to pursue a CNM Relationship between
LGBTQ+ Community Members and Heterosexual Individuals**

Selin Guenduez, s1994832

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences, University of Twente

First supervisor: Mieke van Bergen

Second supervisor: Gamze Baray

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Abstract

Despite its positive health outcomes, consensual non-monogamy (CNM) is highly stigmatised by Western society. Especially people who represent traditional family values are detached from CNM, whereas LGBTQ+ community members are more likely to engage in it. In order to understand these differences in the perception of CNM, this study aims to investigate the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to engage in CNM and the influence of LGBTQ+ community members on this relationship. In this context, CNM is defined as an agreement between one or both romantic partners to pursue an emotional or sexual relationship with one or more individuals. Heterosexual individuals and LGBTQ+ members were provided with the traditional family values scale and the consensual non-monogamy scale. Analyses revealed that traditional family values cannot account for the willingness to engage in CNM and that LGBTQ+ community members and heterosexual individuals do not differ in this regard. Consequently, future research should focus on other potent directions such as personal values to understand the different attitudes toward CNM while treating heterosexual and LGBTQ+ individuals as an entity.

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Introduction

Great figures like Pablo Picasso and Simone de Beauvoir appeared to be in favour of living in non-monogamous relationships. Non-monogamous relationships are not limited to the artists and philosophers of that time. In contemporary Western society, there is an increase in the popularity of these alternative relationship styles (Levine et al., 2018; Træen & Thuen, 2021). The majority of participants in a study by Lehmiller (2020) reported fantasising about and desiring non-monogamous relationships (Lehmiller, 2020). Moreover, 4-5% of Western populations report living in consensual non-monogamous relationships, which are characterised by agreement upon one or both partners pursuing an emotional or sexual relationship with one or more individuals (Moors et al., 2014; Cohen & Wilson, 2017).

Even though the number of people interested in CNM relationships is increasing, these relationships are subject to high stigma. Compared to monogamous relationships, CNM relationships are publicly associated with lower relationship quality and satisfaction (Moors et al., 2013). Furthermore, individuals who engage in CNM relationships are often perceived as fundamentally flawed (Moors et al., 2013). In turn, many CNM partners internalise CNM negativity, which in turn impacts their well-being and relationship satisfaction (Rodrigues et al., 2022). The mostly mononormative foundations of psychological theories on romantic relationships contribute to the conditions of people practising CNM. An example of this is Chapman's Love languages, which theorises about the differences in how people express their love and was aimed at improving dyadic marriages (Chapman, 2009). Furthermore, attachment researchers focus primarily on mononormative bonding and regard love as the same as a pairing (Mikulincer, 2006). As a result, these approaches suggest healthy love to be limited to dyadic relationships.

Contrary to this, CNM entails several relationship forms that have been associated with positive effects on the parties involved. One of these relationship forms is polyamory, which is characterized by open multiple partner relationships (Dodd, 2021). In a study by Morrison et al. (2013), polyamorous participants reported higher intimacy and trust levels than did their monogamous counterparts.

Furthermore, swingers or individuals who together with their primary partner engage in sexual activities with others show increased levels of psychological well-being and excitement compared to monogamous couples (Dodd, 2021; Bergstrand & Williams, 2000; Rubel & Bogaert, 2014). Another relationship style, namely an open relationship represents a couple which agreed on one or both partners to engage sexually with individuals outside their relationship (Dodd, 2021). According to Fleckenstein and Cox (2014), individuals who are part of open relationships are generally happier than those who live monogamously. Monogamish relationships are similar to open relationships but distinguish themselves by the fact that sexual encounters with others are agreed by otherwise monogamous partners to be limited to specific occasions (Dodd, 2021). Couples engaging in this type of relationship demonstrate low depression levels and high life satisfaction (Parsons et al., 2011).

Given the high stigma and, on the other hand, the associated positive health consequences of CNM, the question arises why some people are averse to CNM and others choose to participate in it. A broader understanding of the reasons for these discrepancies could provide a first theoretical approach to decreasing stigmatisation. A first reference point is provided by a study by Wood (2021), who found that the motivations and reasons for pursuing a CNM relationship are rooted in the personal values of the participants. Correspondingly, Schwartz's theory of basic human values states that values provide standards to evaluate and guide behaviours (Schwartz, 2012). Within his theory, Schwartz identifies ten basic human values, with contrasting values arranged on opposite sides of a circle model (see Appendix A). In regard to these ten basic human values, it can be said that studies show relations between monogamous marriages and the value of tradition in the sense of traditional family values (Huddak & Giamattai, 2014). Moreover, Hynie et al. (2006) found next generations' relationship choices to be predicted by their parents' more traditional preferences. Those traditional family values are characterised by traditional gender stereotypes and child-friendliness (Wang & Zheng, 2021). The relation of the value of tradition to monogamy points to tradition as a potential determinant of a CNM-rejecting attitude.

Interestingly, the contrasting value to tradition, namely, stimulation within Schwartz's theory resembles underlying goals such as seeking excitement and novelty which in turn are related to forms of

CNM relationships. As mentioned, swinging partners show higher levels of excitement (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015). Another study by Griebeling (2012) shows that CNM satisfies the need for novelty. Furthermore, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Individuals or Individuals questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation as well as others (LGBTQ+ community members) are more inclined to seek stimulation than their heterosexual counterparts (Mogilski, 2021). In addition, more gay, bisexual, lesbian or queer couples agreed on CNM relationship styles than their heterosexual counterparts (Moors et al., 2017). The association of LGBTQ+ to CNM and stimulation possibly points to LGBTQ+ community membership as an influencing factor for the negative relation between the value of tradition and the willingness for CNM.

The stigma resulting from the differences in attitudes towards CNM is affecting individuals engaging in CNM in negative ways. The literature reviewed presents traditional family values and LGBTQ+ community membership to be factors associated with willingness to pursue a CNM relationship. For this reason, this study is concerned with the research question: “To what extent are traditional family values related to the willingness to engage in CNM and is this relation moderated by LGBTQ+ community membership?” The willingness to engage in CNM is hereby determined by attitudes towards CNM. Knowledge of the relations between traditional family values and LGBTQ+ community membership will prove valuable in understanding the discrepant attitudes towards and reducing stigma. For this purpose, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a significant negative effect of traditional family values on the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship.

H2: The first level of the moderator variable sexual orientation namely LGBTQ+ community membership will significantly weaken the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship whereas the second level heterosexuality will significantly strengthen the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship.

Methods

Design

A correlational research design was employed. The study included one independent (traditional family values) and one continuous dependent variable (willingness to pursue a CNM relationship). For H2, a moderation variable (LGBTQ+ community member) with two levels (Yes/No) was introduced.

Participants

The final sample comprised $n = 232$ participants with ages ranging from 16 to 64 years ($M = 28$, $SD = 13.88$). Of the 232 contestants, 177 had German nationality (76%), and 55 individuals (24%) had other nationalities. Eligibility was restricted to English speakers. Overall, 153 participants (66%) identified as female, 70 participants (30%) as male and nine participants (4%) as non-binary. Moreover, 153 (66%) individuals indicated their sexual orientation to be heterosexual and 79 (34%) individuals were characterised as LGBTQ+ community members. A non-probability sampling method by means of convenience sampling was used. Participants were recruited via social media platforms (Instagram and Reddit) and Sona Systems, a research and participant management software. Participants who completed the study via Sona Systems received 0.25 Sona points compensation. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Materials

Consent form

The informed consent of participants was ensured by the use of a consent form (see Appendix B). It was composed of general information on the study's purpose, the possibility of voluntary discontinuation and the anonymisation, use and storage of data. For further questions, participants were provided with the contact details of the researchers. The study was authorised by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences (BMS) of the University of Twente (Date: 24.03.22, Request number: 220317)

Questionnaires

The inheritance of traditional family values was assessed via the Family Values Scale. It was originally developed to measure the effects of modernisation and urbanisation on the Greek population (Georgas, 1999). The family values scale consists of 14 items and measures the factors family role hierarchy and family/kin relations. Responses were collected by means of participants indicating their level of agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of an item would be FV1: “Father should be the head of the family”. The Family Values Scale shows good psychometric properties (Cronbach's Alpha= .80) (Byrne & Van de Vijver, 2014). The scores on traditional family values are calculated by adding the numerical values for each item of a participant and dividing the result by 14. Traditional family values scores can range from 1 to 5 with low scores indicating little and higher scores more inheritance of traditional family values.

The attitude towards CNM relationships was measured by the Consensual Non-Monogamy Attitude Scale (CNAS). The CNAS consists of eight items, which participants are invited to rate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 1, 3 and 4 are reversed and were consequently coded in opposition to the remaining five items. The CNM showed to be adequate for a sample size of at least 200 participants (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Moreover, the CNAS by Fabrigar et al. (1999) shows excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .91 (95% CI .895–.931). The CNAS scores are computed by means of mean scores per participants. Here, higher scores within the range of 1 to 5 indicated higher acceptance of CNM whereas lower scores were associated with less accepting attitudes.

Procedure

Participants were provided with a hyperlink via their social media or Sona Systems account which led them to the study. Thereafter, a new page opened, and participants were introduced to the study by means of the consent form which they read through and gave their consent. Only if consent was given, participants were provided with demographic questions and questionnaires which took approximately five

to ten minutes to complete. The distinct parts of the survey were randomised. Finally, a message which indicates the end of the study was presented.

Data Analysis

For analysis, the collected data was exported from Qualtrics into SPSS. Here, six cases were sorted out because no informed consent was given. Furthermore, 64 cases, which showed missing values due to discontinuation of the survey were excluded from the analysis. Hereafter, the independent variable ‘tradfamscore’ was created by calculating the mean scores for the 14 items of the traditional family values scale. The dependent variable, ‘cnmscore’ was created by calculating the mean scores for the eight items of the CNAS. In contrast to the continuous nature of these variables, the moderator variable ‘LGBTQCOM’ is subject to two categories. These were created by recording the value 1-heterosexual into 0-NOTLGBTQ and the values 2-homosexual, 3-bisexual, and 5-queer into 1-LGBTQ. Then, the data was explored by means of descriptive statistics. Case 63 and 275 were detected as outliers and consequently excluded from further analysis to prevent distortions.

Next, reliability was assured by running an intraclass correlation. Psychometric properties of validity were explored by means of the remaining five assumptions for regression analysis. First, the independence of observation was tested by the Durbin-Watson statistic. For the second assumption of a linear relationship between ‘tradfamscore’, ‘cnmscore’ and ‘LGBTQ’ a scatter plot was introduced. An additional scatter plot of residuals was created to assure homoscedasticity and normal distribution. Next, the variables were checked to discard multicollinearity via collinearity analysis. Finally, H1 and H2 were tested by a process analysis via the process macro (Hayes, 2017).

Results

Descriptive statistics

The mean score for the traditional family value scale shows a light inclination towards modern family values ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.04$). Moreover, on average the sample shows medium-high scores on the Consensual Non-Monogamy Attitude Scale ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.34$).

Assumptions

The collected data met the assumption of independence of residuals while indicating a negative serial correlation (Durbin-Watson value = 1,78). A scatter plot visualisation shows that the assumption of linear relationship was also met. There is a negative linear relationship between traditional family values and willingness to pursue a consensual non-monogamous relationship ($y = 3,48 - 0,17x$) as well as a positive linear relationship between LGBTQ+ community member and willingness to pursue a consensual non-monogamous relationship ($y = 1 + 0,5x$). Further, Levene's test was conducted to test for homoscedasticity, which implied equal variances ($F = 5.29, p = .47$). Moreover, a regression analysis showed a 14% inflation of variance for coefficient LGBTQ and Traditional family values ($VIF = 1.14$). Thus, the assumption of no multicollinearity was not met with a moderate correlation of coefficients. The residuals are approximately normally distributed.

Moderation analysis

For hypothesis 1, the process analysis revealed a direct negative effect of traditional family values on willingness to pursue a CNM relationship ($B = -0.09, SE = 0.08$). However, this effect was not statistically significant $p > 0.05, p = .29$. Therefore, the present evidence shows that the null hypothesis that there is no significant negative effect of traditional family values on the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship can be accepted.

For hypothesis 2, the process analysis indicated a direct positive effect of LGBTQ+ community membership on willingness to pursue a CNM relationship ($B = 0.34, SE = 0.38$). This effect was not statistically significant $p > .05, p = .38$. Further, the process analysis shows that there is a negative interaction effect between LGBTQ+ community membership and traditional family values on the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship ($B = -0.05, SE = 0.14$). Although, this effect was not statistically significant $p > 0.05$. Thus, the present evidence cannot reject the null hypothesis that the moderator variable LGBTQ+ community membership will not weaken the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship.

Discussion

The current study was introduced to investigate the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship and further explore the influence of LGBTQ+ community membership on this relation. More specifically, heterosexual individuals and LGBTQ+ community members were compared regarding their traditional family values and attitudes towards pursuing a CNM relationship. The results showed to have insufficient power in explaining these relations. In other words, the current study demonstrates that traditional family values do not relate to the decision against a CNM relationship and that there are no differences concerning willingness for CNM between heterosexual individuals and LGBTQ+ community members.

The results were not in line with the formulated hypotheses. First, the hypothesis that there is a significant negative effect of traditional family values on the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship could not be confirmed. Instead, the results show that there is no significant effect of traditional family values on the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship. These findings contradict a study by Huddak and Giammattai (2014) which displayed monogamous marriage and traditional family values to be related (Huddak & Giammattai, 2014). There is a possibility that there are other underlying factors that explain the decision against CNM relationships. In fact, Peabody (1982) states that in Christian tradition, monogamous marriage is part of the culture. This gives reason to assume that it is not the tradition itself but the often associated religiosity of individuals that promotes a CNM-rejecting attitude. In line with this assumption, participants in a study by St. Vil and Giles (2022) report that they never considered pursuing a CNM relationship because it does not fit within their religious beliefs. Thus, it is not the traditional family values, but the religious practice associated with these values that may explain the decision against CNM.

Second, the hypothesis that the moderator variable LGBTQ+ community significantly weakens the relationship between traditional family values and the willingness to pursue a CNM relationship could not be confirmed. Alternatively, it became apparent that there is no significant difference between these groups. In contrast, a study by Moors et al. (2017) shows that LGBTQ+ community members are more

inclined toward CNM than heterosexual individuals. Furthermore, a study by Mogilski et al. (2021) shows that LGBTQ+ community members seek more stimulation, which is related to engaging in CNM than homosexual individuals. A possible explanation for this could be that seeking stimulation serves as a mediator between LGBTQ+ community membership and the willingness to engage in CNM relationships. In fact, in a study by Wood et al. (2021), LGBTQ+ participants reported that novelty and excitement are motivations for engaging in CNM relationships. Novelty and excitement seek to form the underlying goals to the value of stimulation (Schwartz, 2012). This provides a reason to consider stimulation as a potential mediator.

Limitations and Strengths

A strength of the study is the evenly spread age distribution of participants which contributes to gathering views on traditional family values of different generations. Further, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals are equally distributed in the LGBTQ+ category. This ensures that the LGBTQ+ category is well represented within the sample. A limitation is formed by the unequal distribution of heterosexual individuals and LGBTQ+ individuals in general with approximately one-third of participants belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. This could distort the comparison of the two groups, as the mean scores for the scales could be a result of less differentiated attitudes towards traditional family values and CNM than the ones of heterosexual individuals. Moreover, the fact that the development of the traditional family values scale is two decades old could constitute a limitation. There is a possibility that the concept of traditional family values for participants is not equivalent to the ones that were prominent at the time of development of the scale. In turn, the validity of the scores obtained is arguable.

Implications and Future Research

The present study contributes to the existing literature by revealing that traditional family values can be excluded as a reason for individuals not to engage in CNM. It thus indicates that other directions need to be explored to understand the different attitudes towards CNM. For instance, present study did disclose relations between values related to CNM and monogamy. Further respondents in a qualitative

investigation of Wood et al. (2021) reported values such as authenticity, need fulfilment, creating community and relational well-being to be decisive for pursuing CNM relationships. Hence, future research could aim at further investigating value and CNM relations as potential determinants for pursuing or not CNM relationships.

Moreover, the characteristic of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community influencing the decision to engage in CNM can be let go of. This suggests that there is no fundamental difference between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual individuals in their willingness to engage in CNM. This contributes to the research in that it is now apparent that even though there are more LGBTQ+ individuals involved in CNM, belonging to the LGBTQ community does not contribute to increased participation in CNM. Instead, future research should focus on screening heterosexual and LGBTQ+ individuals together for explanatory factors. Another suggestion for future investigations is the analysis of stimulation as a moderating factor for the relation of LGBTQ+ community membership and CNM as no direct significant effect of LGBTQ+ on CNM and literature provides ground for stimulation to have moderating effects on this relationship.

Additionally, future research should take the limitations of the current study into account. For example, researchers should consider sampling methods that contribute to an equal distribution of individuals identifying with LGBTQ+ and heterosexual individuals to ensure valid representativeness. Another limitation to be addressed by future research is the maturity of the traditional family values scale. This could be undertaken by means of working on the development of a new traditional family values scale that depicts the present concept of traditional family values.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the current study has proven to be useful in providing further insights into why some people decide to engage in CNM relationships and others dislike the idea of it. More specifically, it has shown that traditional family values do not serve as predictors for engaging in CNM. Further, LGBTQ+ community members and heterosexual individuals do not differ in this regard. Recommendations for future research include the investigation of LGBTQ+ and heterosexual individuals together for predictors

of CNM engagement as well as analysing the relationship between LGBTQ+ community membership and CNM with the inclusion of the value of simulation as a moderator.

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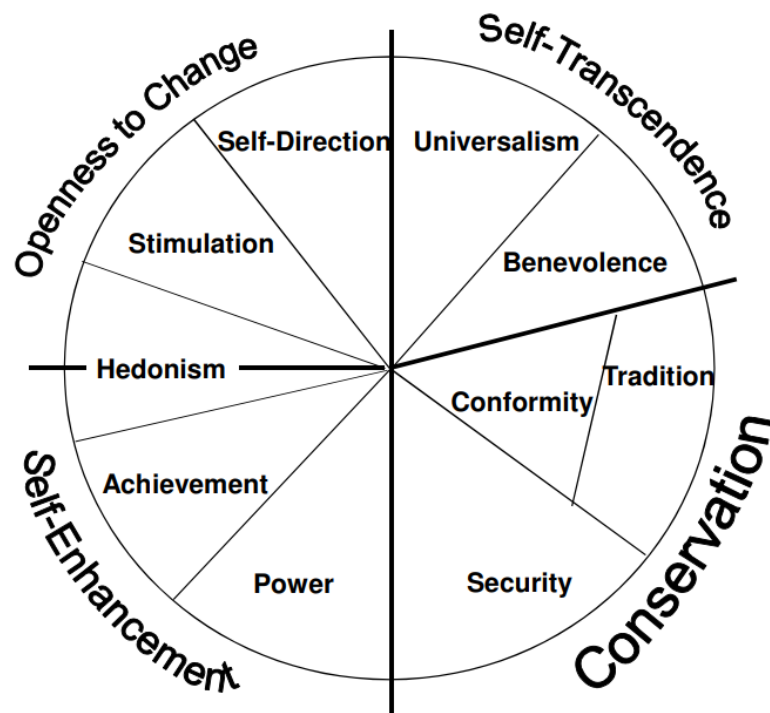
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Appendices

Appendix A

Model of Theory of Basic Human Values



Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Breaking the Stigma of CNM (Consensual Non-Monogamous Relationships)

This study examines factors regarding attitude towards and/of People in CNM relationships. If you agree to participate, you will answer survey questions that are about your demographics, attitudes and values.

You are free to discontinue your participation at any time. If you want to, the final report can be sent to you. If you agree to participate in the study, it will take approximately 15-25 minutes to complete the survey and task. No personally identifiable information will be collected, so that your response cannot be traced back to you. This anonymous data will be saved by the university for at least 2 years.

This research study is being conducted by Max Düwel, Selin Gündüz and Rika Neumann as part of a BSc thesis. The project supervisor is Nils Keesmekers, Department of Psychology, Positive Psychology (Principles of Human Flourishing), University of Twente. If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study or would like to receive the results, you may contact us via e-mail, m.k.duwel@student.utwente.nl, r.neumann@student.utwente.nl, s.guenduez@student.utwente.nl

By clicking “Yes, I Agree” below, you are indicating that you have understood your role in this research, and consent to participate in this research study.

Appendix C

Family Values Scale

Item	Label Abbreviated Content
FV1	Father should be head of family
FV2	One should maintain good relationships with one's relatives
FV3	Mother's place is at home
FV4	In family disputes, mother should be go-between
FV5	Parents should teach proper behavior
FV6	Father should handle the money
FV8	Children should take care of old parents
FV9	Children should help with chores
FV10	Problems should be resolved within the family
FV11	Children should obey parents
FV12	Children should honor family's reputation
FV14	Children should respect grandparents
FV15	Mother should accept father's decisions
FV18	Father should be breadwinner

Appendix D

Consensual Non-Monogamy Attitude Scale (CNAS)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree

1. You must be in a monogamous relationship to be in love.
2. I can see myself entering into a non-monogamous relationship.
3. A monogamous relationship is the most satisfying type of relationship.
4. Intimate relationships with more than one person are too complicated.
5. It is possible to have several satisfying intimate relationships at the same time.
6. It is possible to date other people while in a loving relationship with your partner.
7. It is possible to have sexual relationships with other people while in a loving relationship with your partner.
8. It is possible for one partner in a relationship to be monogamous while the other partner is not monogamous.