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Prudence Hughes

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Romance is not Dead, It's Changing: A Grounded Theory Inquiry Investigating the Changing Views of Monogamy Among Canadian Adolescents

Prudence Hughes

This study examined the feasibility of monogamy in Canadian adolescents' romantic relationships by exploring their perceptions of monogamy. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather data: 125 students participated in a survey and 21 students were interviewed. Data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach, and three generalized theories were developed: (1) adolescents highly value monogamy in romantic relationships; (2) although adolescents value monogamy, they believe they are too young to engage in monogamous relationships as it distracts from their priorities such as self-exploration and other life obligations; therefore, adolescents primarily engage in casual romantic relationships as they are not distracting; (3) males and females value monogamy (in general) equally; however, at their current age, females have a stronger preference for casual relationships than males. Since adolescents are more focused on other life priorities than maintaining monogamous relationships, it was concluded that monogamy is not feasible for Canadian adolescents.

Keywords: monogamy, adolescents, serious relationships, casual relationships and consensual non-monogamy.

Introduction

The changing landscape of social norms has left the next generation of adolescents exposed to a realm of romantic relationships different than those experienced by Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Hawkins et al, 2020). Some examples of changes to romantic relationships include the delay of romantic activities such as sex and the increased dependency on technology to maintain and initiate relationships (Hawkins et al, 2020; O'Sullivan et al, 2013). Although researchers have investigated contemporary social trends around romantic relationships in the younger generation of adolescents, there is one aspect that has been neglected: monogamy (Hawkins et al, 2020). Monogamy is defined as sexual and romantic exclusivity to one partner (O'Sullivan et al, 2013). Among the current generation of adults,

high divorce rates and increased accounts of infidelity indicate a decline in the success and sustainability of monogamy (Clyde et al, 2020; O'Sullivan et al, 2013). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the decline as divorce rates have escalated significantly (DiDonato, 2020). Considering the state of monogamy among Western adults, it is important to investigate adolescents' perceptions of monogamy in the modern age to discern whether monogamy is a feasible expectation for adolescent romantic activities.

The current study answers the question: What are Canadian adolescents' perceptions of monogamy in romantic relationships? Romantic relationships during adolescence play a role in the development of social skills, setting the stage for future relationships such as marriage and parenting; therefore, adolescents' changing views of monogamy could have implications for their relationships as adults (Williams

& Russel, 2013; Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018; Willoughby, 2010; Harknett & Cranney, 2017; Norona et al., 2017; Byers et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2018; Dearnorff & Suleiman, 2015). Not only that, trauma and distress from negative romantic experiences can have detrimental impacts on teens' development, undermining their future relationships (Norona et al, 2017; Byers et al, 2016; Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018). To prevent negative experiences, educators need to teach adolescents the skills to healthily navigate their romantic activities. The Ontario Health Curriculum for secondary students only discusses safe sex practices and strategies to develop and maintain healthy relationships in general, but lacks information regarding non-monogamous configurations such as casual sexual relationships or consensual non-monogamy (CNM) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). The results of this study could potentially be utilized to modify the health curriculum to include lessons that allow teenagers to better navigate non-monogamous romantic activities. Moreover, the results could help improve the existing curriculum surrounding relationships.

Literature Review

Adolescent romantic relationships

Researchers typically study romantic relationships in adolescence from a normative perspective, examining the evolution of adolescent romantic activities as they age (Williams & Russel, 2013, p. 650). Using interview data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, sociology professors Anne Meier and Gina Allen found that at each stage of adolescence, there are normative romantic activities individuals participate in (Meier & Allen, 2009). Data from Jonathan Beckmeyer, an assistant professor at the Department of Learning Sciences and Development at West Virginia University, and his colleague's cluster analysis corroborate Meier and Allen's findings (Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018). Early adolescence is when individuals begin socializing with potential romantic partners, develop interest and potentially engage in short-term romantic relationships characterized by group dating (Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018, p. 2398; Meier & Allen, 2009, p. 310). By middle

adolescence, short-term romantic relationships with increased emotional and sexual intimacy are common (Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018, p. 2398; Meier & Allen, 2009, p. 310). Late adolescence is when adolescents begin engaging in long-term committed relationships with high levels of intimacy (Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018, p. 2398; Meier & Allen, 2009, p. 311). Dr. Beckmeyer and his colleague state that "adolescents who followed [this] normative trajectory of romantic involvement" were found to have fewer problems with psychosocial adjustment than those who did not (Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018).

Dr. Lela Williams, an associate professor at the School of Social Work in Arizona State University, and her colleague, argue that the normative perspective is limited as it does not account for sexual activity outside of the context of serious romantic relationships (Williams and Russell, 2013). There are two types of relationships adolescents engage in: serious romantic relationships and casual romantic relationships (Williams & Russel, 2013). The defining feature of serious romantic relationships is the explicit agreement to remain exclusive to one another (Norona et al, 2017; Williams & Russel, 2013). Casual relationships do not have an explicit agreement to be monogamous (Norona et al, 2017; Williams & Russel, 2013). Sexual activities occur in both types of relationships (Williams & Russel, 2013). The primary difference between the two types of relationships, aside from the monogamous agreement, is the level of emotional intimacy: serious romantic relationships generally have higher levels of emotional intimacy than casual relationships (Williams & Russel, 2013, p. 654).

Adolescents' perceptions of different types of relationships influence the romantic activities they participate in. Gender is one aspect that affects perceptions. Stereotypically, women prefer committed relationships whilst men are more likely to prefer casual sex (Harknett & Cranney, 2017). Kristen Harknett, a sociology professor, and her colleague found that the gender composition of high schools influenced the relationship ideals students espoused: when females were the majority, students were more inclined to engage in committed relationships, and when males were the majority, the opposite was true (Harknett and Cranney, 2017, p. 492). Dr. Brian J. Willoughby, an associate professor at the Brigham Young University School of Family Life, corroborates

Harknett and Cranney's findings. Willoughby (2010) examined adolescent attitudes towards marriage—the institutional embodiment of monogamy. Survey results demonstrated that women tend to place more importance on marriage than men. Having said that, Willoughby's findings also indicated that gender was not the sole influence on perceptions. Results from his survey illustrate a connection between adolescent age and expectation to marry, with expectations to marry increasing as participants aged (Willoughby, 2010, p. 1311). Despite placing importance on marriage, Dr. Sandra Byers, a professor of psychology at University of New Brunswick, and her colleagues, conducted a study that revealed that the second most common reason for romantic avoidance among both male and female adolescents was the lack of interest in participating in committed relationships (Byers et al., 2016). The contradiction between Byers' and Willoughby's findings suggests that adolescents' ideals for future relationships differ from their ideals for current ones, reinforcing the idea that there is a link between age and perception (Willoughby, 2010).

Aside from gender and age, adolescent relationship ideals are formed based on their understanding of romantic relationships. Knowledge about relationships is gained from a variety of sources such as school, peers, media and family (Norona, 2017, p. 1674). Dr. Joe Pittman, professor of Human Development and Family Studies, and his colleagues, conducted a quasi-experimental study exploring the impact of relationship education on adolescent standards for romantic relationships and partners (Pittman et al, 2014, p. 463). Post-test scores revealed that education led students to develop higher standards of warmth/trustworthiness and intimacy/loyalty in relationships (Pittman et al, 2014, p. 463). Yet, the school curriculum primarily focuses on teaching teenagers how to develop and maintain healthy relationships, and safe sex practices (Pittman et al, 2014); therefore, adolescents are not educated about the nature of casual relationships. For education on casual relationships, adolescents must rely on their peers and the media. Peer influence can be subtle—behavior modeling and reinforcement—or can be more outright—peer pressure (Deardorff & Suleiman, 2015; Norona, 2017). Additionally, Dr. Hawkins states that “media consumption [films, tv shows] may also subtly shape marital and relational attitudes” (Hawkins et al., 2020, p. 159).

Finally, adolescents' views are indirectly shaped by their parents: adolescents learn interpersonal skills from their relationship with their parents and by examining the relationship between their parents (Xia et al., 2018; Sun-A, 2019; Meier & Allen, 2009). Those who had a good relationship with their parents and had parents who were still married developed better interpersonal skills, making them more likely to have healthy serious romantic relationships, and as these adolescents generally have more positive experiences, they develop a positive attitude towards serious relationships (Xia et al., 2018; Sun-A, 2019; Meier & Allen, 2009; Byers et al, 2016).

Monogamy in adult relationships

Perceptions of different types of romantic relationships are studied more among adults than adolescents. College students are of particular interest among researchers due to the notorious “hookup culture” in Universities which researchers refer to as “collegiate sexuality” (Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013; Olmstead et al., 2017). “Hookup culture” encompasses a variety of casual sexual relationships such as one-night stands (Jonason, 2013). Dr. Spencer Olmstead, associate professor and co-director of the Wellbeing in Adolescents and Emerging Adults Laboratory, and colleagues, found that participation in hookup culture was most common among first-semester college students (Olmstead et al., 2017, p. 1833). Despite participation in hookup culture, many young adults value monogamy as an essential element of relationships, with women placing greater importance on monogamy than men (Olmstead et al, 2017, p. 1183; Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013). Monogamous relationships are favored due to the emotional intimacy and socioemotional support they provide (Jonason, 2013, p. 1409). Wilkins, and Dalessandro (2013, p. 738) point out that the contradictory nature between college students' value of monogamy in principle and their collegiate sexuality in practice is related to age. This is parallel to the observation made in adolescents' perceptions of commitment. In interviews, college students revealed that they want to “focus on self-development and experimentation” and thus, they do not engage in monogamous relationships (Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013, p. 738).

There is one type of relationship studied among adults and college students that has yet to be exam-

ined among adolescents: Consensual Non-Monogamy (CNM) or polyamory. CNM is defined as a committed romantic relationship in which participants consent to romantic/sexual relations with multiple other consenting partners (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2018, p. 1432). It is unclear whether adolescents participate in CNM as it has never been researched. Sizemore and Olmstead (2018, p. 1428) performed an explanatory sequential analysis which revealed that the majority of emerging adults were unwilling to participate in CNM. The primary reason for their unwillingness to participate in CNM was that individuals believed monogamous relationships were “normal” and had better quality than other arrangements (Sizemore & Olmstead, 2018, p. 1428). However, Dr. Jennifer J Harman, a professor at Colorado State University, and her colleagues, state that this was only true in some cases (Harman et al, 2019).

Gap Analysis

Researchers have delved extensively into adults’ perceptions of monogamy in romantic relationships. Some studies regarding adolescent relationship behaviors and attitudes have indirectly provided insights about adolescent perceptions of monogamy, demonstrating that adolescents generally value monogamy (Byers et al., 2016; Willoughby, 2010; Norona et al., 2017; Harknett & Cranney, 2017). However, no prior study has explicitly explored adolescent perceptions of monogamy in romantic relationships and the reasoning behind these perceptions. Harknett and Cranney (2017) come closest, examining the romantic ideals within high schools and their relationship to gender composition. Yet, their study examined perceptions from a gendered perspective, looking at how gender composition influenced whether the high school dating culture would align with traditionally feminine attitudes towards relationships or traditionally masculine attitudes. The current research derives a generalized theory about adolescent perceptions of monogamy solely based on participants’ experiences, not following any societal constructs that exist. Though the research does explore the influence of gender, there are many other facets explored. The research investigates adolescent attitudes towards various types of relationships, the

link between age and perceptions of commitment, and adolescents’ perceptions of polyamory.

Hypothesis

Based on prior literature, I have developed the following hypotheses:

1. Adolescents believe that monogamy is an important aspect of romantic relationships in general.
2. Though adolescents value monogamy, they believe that they are too young for the commitment associated with monogamy and will primarily participate in casual romantic relationships.
3. Female adolescents will place greater importance on monogamy than males.

Methodology

Grounded theory inquiry was utilized in this study. Dr. John Creswell, a professor of family medicine at the University of Michigan, and Dr. J. David Creswell, an associate professor of psychology at Carnegie Mellon University, explain that grounded theory inquiry involves gathering data from participants regarding their experiences of a certain “process, action or interaction” and developing a generalized theory about the subject of interest based on that data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). In the current study, survey and interview data from participants regarding their romantic experiences were used to derive a generalized theory about Canadian adolescents’ perceptions of monogamy.

The grounded theory approach was chosen because it satisfied the goal of the study: to gain insight into Canadian adolescents’ perceptions of monogamy. In order to accomplish this goal, the findings from my study would have to be applicable to the larger population of Canadian adolescents. In her frequently cited research paper about shame-resilience theory in women, Dr. Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston, explains that the data gathered in a grounded theory study serves as empirical evidence for the development of a theoretical framework that can be utilized to describe the general population being studied (Brown, 2006). A grounded theory inquiry allowed me to utilize the data from my study to

develop a general theory about adolescents' perceptions of monogamy that is applicable to the greater population of Canadian adolescents and thus, was the most suitable approach for the current research.

Method

Data was obtained from a sample of 21 adolescents, aged 14-18. A recruitment email was sent to students in grades 9 to 12 at an independent school in Ontario. The recruitment email included a Microsoft Form survey that was used to obtain demographic information and information about the romantic involvement of students in the last 12 months (see Appendix 1). The form also allowed individuals to indicate whether they were interested in participating in an interview. Out of a total of 124 responses, 35 individuals indicated that they would be willing to participate in interviews, though 5 were omitted due to inconsistencies in their survey data. The 30 individuals remaining were categorized by their gender, grade level and the type of relationship they had participated in in the last 12 months. For each grade level, there were 6 categories: (1) male, had been in a casual relationship in the last 12 months, (2) male, had been in a serious relationship in the last 12 months, (3) female, had been in a casual relationship in the last 12 months (4) female, had been in a serious relationship in the last 12 months (5) male, had been in neither a serious nor casual relationship in the last 12 months, (6) female, had been in neither a serious nor casual relationship in the last 12 months. 21 candidates were randomly selected from these categories for an interview.

The interview candidates chosen were contacted through email and interviews were scheduled. Due to pandemic restrictions, all interviews took place virtually over Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions regarding their knowledge of, and attitude towards, various types of relationships, the sources where they gained knowledge about relationships, their past relationship experiences, and their ideals for future relationships. For most candidates, a total of 15 interview questions were asked (see Appendix 2). Some interview questions were followed by smaller follow-up questions to aid participants in formulating answers to questions. Answers were documented by hand.

A few ethical concerns must be addressed: the most pertinent was questioning minors about their sexual activity. To subvert ethical issues, no interview questions explicitly asked adolescents about their sexual activity. Rather, the wording of questions allowed adolescents to choose whether or not they discussed their sexual activity. Moreover, participant's responses were anonymous, and they had the right to refuse to answer a question they were uncomfortable with. After implementing the aforementioned mitigation measures, the study was approved by the school's Internal Ethics Review Board.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Extrapolation of Generalized Theory #1

In order to discern whether or not adolescents valued monogamy, I investigated the participants' opinions of infidelity. All 21 participants, aged 14-18, approximately 52% of whom were female and 48% were male, believed that infidelity was atrocious. The reasoning behind participants' beliefs followed the common theme that infidelity was morally wrong and hurtful to the other romantic partner. The belief that breaking the monogamous contract in a relationship is hurtful and immoral demonstrates that adolescents highly value monogamy in romantic relationships. Twenty of these adolescents' views surrounding infidelity were reflected in their behavior as they reported that they had never been unfaithful to a romantic partner. The twenty-first individual reported infidelity in a past relationship, despite holding the same beliefs as everyone else. Additionally, I analyzed individuals' willingness to participate in CNM. Twenty participants stated that they were unwilling to participate in CNM, with many of them scoffing at the idea of polyamory. A common sentiment echoed among participants was that the one-on-one connection in monogamous relationships was "special" or "fulfilling." The adamant opposition to non-monogamy further justifies the claim that adolescents believe monogamy is an essential aspect of romantic relationships.

As mentioned in the literature review, a serious romantic relationship is generally defined as monogamous (Williams & Russel, 2013). This was confirmed by the participants of the study as many of them

named “exclusivity to one partner” as the main quality of serious relationships. To understand the reasoning as to why adolescents value monogamy, participants’ responses to the interview question “what was your best relationship and why?” were analyzed. Specifically, I looked at the reason provided by students who claimed their best relationship was a serious one. The quality most frequently considered to be a favourable aspect of serious romantic relationships was emotional support; therefore, it can be inferred that serious romantic relationships are preferable because of the emotional support partners provide each other. Having said that, this question only encompassed the responses of participants who had been in serious romantic relationships; thus, the theory developed based only on this evidence would not necessarily be applicable to all adolescents. In order to gather the opinions of all participants, I examined what adolescents considered to be acts of infidelity. Nineteen participants believed that infidelity meant having the same emotional connection that is had with a romantic partner with someone other than a romantic partner. As adolescents believe that violating the exclusivity of an emotional connection with someone is cheating, and thus is hurtful, it is clear that the emotional connection between monogamous romantic partners is something highly valued. Based on this, I can conclude that the emotional support and connection is what makes serious romantic relationships admirable amongst adolescents.

Extrapolation of Generalized Theory #2

To determine whether there is a connection between age and adolescents’ perceptions of monogamy, adolescents’ responses to the question, “what is the ideal relationship at your current age?” was investigated. Approximately 28% of participants stated that age did not influence their romantic ideals. Among the youth who believed that age was an influence, most of them said casual relationships were ideal. These individuals either outright stated that casual relationships were ideal or that the optimal choice was either “no relationship or a casual one.” These responses seemed contradictory to what they stated earlier in the interview regarding the importance of monogamy. In order to understand their choice, I questioned their reasoning. The primary reason students gave was that the

focus during adolescence should be self-exploration and/or other life obligations (i.e. school); it was commonly stated that casual relationships, unlike serious ones, are “low maintenance” and thus, do not distract from these priorities. Even if casual relationships are not distracting, abstaining from relationships would likely require less attention than casual relationships, making them the most optimal option for teenagers. Yet, many people still considered casual relationships the best option even when presented with the option to have no relationship. Respondents’ answers to the question, “what do you think a casual relationship is?” provided a rationale for this choice. One of the most frequently named qualities of casual relationships was personal amusement. Thus, I was able to infer that casual relationships are favored because they provide brief enjoyments whilst allowing adolescents to pursue their ambitions. Their beliefs surrounding casual relationships being more conducive to their current priorities had no bearings on their beliefs surrounding monogamy in relationships in general.

Age not only had a profound impact on adolescents’ current romantic ideals, it also impacted their romantic behavior. The survey revealed that of the 82 students who had engaged in a romantic relationship in the last 12 months, 38% engaged in a serious romantic relationship while 62% had been in a casual relationship; these findings indicate that adolescents primarily engage in casual romantic relationships. Although this was true, when participants were asked the question “what was the best relationship you ever had” and “what was the worst relationship you ever had” during interviews, most participants answered that serious relationships were their best while casual ones were their worst. The fact that youth primarily engage in casual relationships, even though they consider them worse than serious ones, illustrates that their romantic desires are superseded by their beliefs about what the normative romantic activities are for their age. Moreover, it shows that many adolescents would assess their romantic relationships as “bad,” potentially having implications for their future relationships by undermining the development of social skills. These findings surrounding age and adolescent romantic behavior were similar to the studies investigating the effect of age on college student’s romantic behavior (Wilkins & Dalessandro, 2013; Olmstead et al., 2017; Jonason, 2013).

Extrapolation of Generalized Theory #3

The majority of the prior literature states that females value monogamy more than males (Harknett & Cranney, 2017; Willoughby, 2010; Byers et al., 2016). Yet, there was no evidence of this in my study. When determining whether adolescents value monogamy by looking at the participants' opinions on infidelity and opinions of CNM, there was no indication of a difference between males and females.

Since there was no clear difference between females' and males' perceptions of monogamy based on participants answers to interview questions, I followed the strategy used in Wilkins and Dalessandro (2013), examining adolescent romantic behavior to investigate their perceptions. Specifically, I compared the number of casual relationships adolescents participated in to the number of serious relationships they participated in. The analysis revealed that 54% of female candidates engaged in more casual relationships than serious relationships and only 38% of males engaged more casual relationships than serious ones. The behavioural data illustrates that adolescent females have a stronger preference for non-monogamous relationships than males. For males, the data shows that they have an equal preference for both relationships as there was an equal percentage (38%) of males who participated in more serious relationships than casual ones.

These findings connected to gender contradict the data in the prior literature which indicates that females tend to have a stronger preference for monogamy than males (Harknett & Cranney, 2017; Willoughby, 2010). To decipher the reasoning for the difference in my findings versus the findings in the prior literature, I examined answers to the question "as a female, what is the most frustrating thing about relationships?" Many of the females in the study described past relationship experiences where their male partners had expected them to fulfill outdated stereotypes regarding female behavior: submissive, caring for the male, etc. As feminism continues to grow in contemporary Western culture, this behavior from males is increasingly considered intolerable. Therefore, it is possible that females abstain from serious romantic relationships to avoid sexist attitudes.

Summary of Findings

The interview responses were all coded using the table in Appendix 3. Then, the coded interview responses were analyzed for trends, and the trends identified were developed into themes. Finally, these themes were used to derive the following generalized theories regarding adolescent perceptions of monogamy:

Adolescents highly value monogamy in romantic relationships; the emotional support and connection between romantic partners in monogamous romantic relationships are considered the most favourable characteristics of these relationships.

Although adolescents highly value monogamy in general, they believe that they are too young to engage in monogamous relationships as it distracts from their priorities such as self-exploration and other life obligations; therefore, adolescents primarily engage in casual romantic relationships as it provides personal amusement without being distracting.

Males and females value monogamy (in general) equally; however, at their current age, female adolescents have a stronger preference for casual relationships than males.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the study. One limitation was the small sample size. The aim of this study was to develop a generalized theory about adolescent perceptions of monogamy that is applicable to the larger population of Canadian adolescents. Having a small sample size impedes the generalizability of the theoretical framework developed because a small sample size is not an accurate representation of the larger population of Canadian adolescents. Future studies examining adolescent perceptions of monogamy should look to examine larger groups of students. Another limitation was that all participants came from the same independent school. Independent schools tend to have a lack diversity in financial backgrounds and thus, having all participants from the same independent school limits the diversity in perspectives of participants, impeding the generalizability of results. However, approximately 18% of families at the independent school being examined

are receiving financial aid; therefore, the student body holds a multitude of financial backgrounds, providing various viewpoints. Additionally, the student body represents 40 different countries, indicating that there are a variety of cultural backgrounds, further contributing to the diversity of viewpoints. The final limitation was the lack of younger participants. One of the goals of the study was to investigate the link between age and adolescents' perceptions of monogamy. Most participants of this study were ages 17-18; the lack of diversity in the age of participants undermined the generalizability of results. Future studies should focus more on the perspective of younger adolescents.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current research was to determine whether monogamy is a feasible expectation for adolescent romantic relationships. The research question which guided the study was, "What are Canadian adolescents' perceptions of monogamy?" The findings of my study revealed that Canadian adolescents view monogamy as an essential aspect of romantic relationships. They favour monogamous relationships because of the emotional support and connection they provide. Despite valuing monogamy in general, adolescents believe that at their current stage in life, the focus should be on self-exploration and other life obligations. Serious romantic relationships are considered high maintenance and are not conducive to their priorities. Casual relationships, on the other hand, are able to provide amusement while requiring little effort; therefore, casual relationships are the primary romantic activity for adolescents. These findings were consistent with the first two hypotheses I proposed. Conversely, my findings surrounding the influence of gender were contradictory to my hypothesis. While I predicted that females would value monogamy more than males, the interviews demonstrated that males and females equally value monogamy in general; however, at their current age, females had a greater preference for non-monogamy than males. The study also found that the primary sources where adolescents learned about relationships were from their friends, parents and media. Friends and media were the primary sources of knowledge about casual relationships. For serious relationships, youth primarily look

to their parents. Many regarded their parents as their ideal serious relationships. Interestingly, those with divorced parents did not negatively view monogamy. In fact, many of them said that their parents served as an example of what they did not want in a monogamous relationship.

Since adolescents are more focused on tasks other than maintaining monogamous relationships, I conclude that monogamy is not a feasible expectation for Canadian adolescent romantic relationships. Yet, since youth consider monogamy to be the foundation of romantic relationships in general, they will likely engage in monogamous relationships in the future. Having said that, their ability to maintain these monogamous relationships may be compromised. As mentioned earlier, even though many adolescents consider casual relationships to be worse than serious ones, they still primarily participate in casual relationships. Consequently, they are constantly partaking in negative romantic experiences, undermining the development of their social skills (Williams & Russel, 2013; Beckmeyer & Malacane, 2018; Willoughby, 2010; Harknett & Cranney, 2017; Norona et al., 2017; Byers et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2018; Deardorff & Suleiman, 2015). The underdevelopment of social skills may lead to poorer quality romantic relationships in adulthood. To mitigate this, the Canadian health curriculum for secondary should be modified to include information regarding casual relationships. Less than 15% of individuals in my study reported learning about any sort of romantic relationships from school, let alone casual romantic relationships. Therefore, adjustments must be made. First, the discussion of different types of romantic relationships (including casual and polyamorous relationships) should be made a curriculum expectation. The curriculum currently discusses romantic relationships under the broad category of "intimate relationships" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Though this may prompt some teachers to explain the different types of romantic relationships that exist, there is no guarantee. Having it explicitly stated as a curriculum expectation is more likely to incite this discussion in the classroom. Additionally, the skills needed to navigate these types of relationships effectively should be taught. While the curriculum does state that teachers should discuss the skills needed to healthily navigate relationships, it is not a targeted conversation (2015). Students are taught the

general skills needed to navigate all relationships in general, not specifying romantic ones (2015). Since romantic relationships have wildly different dynamics than non-romantic ones, they should be discussed separately. This is especially true for casual or polyamorous relationships. Future studies should investigate further into polyamorous and casual relationships among adolescents to provide greater insight into the modifications that need to be made to the high school curriculum.

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CHANGING VIEWS OF MONOGAMY AMONG CANADIAN ADOLESCENTS

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Appendix 1

Adolescent Romantic Relationships Study

1. How old are you?

2. What grade band are you in?

- Upper 1
- Upper 2
- Senior 1
- Senior 2

3. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

CHANGING VIEWS OF MONOGAMY AMONG CANADIAN ADOLESCENTS

4. Have you been in a serious romantic relationship in the last 12 months?

Yes

No

5. Have you been in a casual romantic relationship in the last 12 months?

Yes

No

6. Would you be comfortable participating in an interview about your experiences in romantic relationships? (1 service hour will be rewarded for participation in interviews)

Yes

No

7. If you answered yes to the previous question, please list your name and student number.

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 Microsoft Forms

Appendix 2

How many serious relationships have you had?
Average time span between relationships?
How many casual relationships have you had?
Average time between relationships?
Could you describe your most recent serious relationship? (if applicable)
What were some of the activities you did together?
What were some of the things you used to fight about?
Were you seeing anyone else while you were with this person?
How did your relationship end? (if applicable)
Now I will be asking you a series of questions about your most recent casual relationship (if applicable)
What was your arrangement with this person? (did you go on dates? Purely physical?)
Did you decide upon the casual nature of the relationship mutually or did only one person decide?
What were some of the activities you did together?
Were you public about this relationship?
Did you ever fight with this person? About what?
How did your relationship end? (if applicable)
What do you think a serious relationship is?
What do you think a casual relationship is?
Who/what taught you about these relationships? (friends, media, parents, school?)
Did your parent's relationship influence it in any way?
What was the best relationship you ever had? Why?
Did it change the way you see relationships?
What was the worst relationship you ever had? Why?
Did it change the way you see relationships?
At your age, what is the ideal type of relationship (if any) to be in? Why?
(if male) what is the most frustrating thing about being a man in relationships? (if female) what is the most frustrating thing about being a female in relationship?
While in a relationship, have you ever been attracted to someone outside of that relationship that was directly around you? If so, what did you do about it?
What is your opinion on cheating/infidelity?

What constitutes cheating?
Do you ever see yourself getting married? Why or why not?
Would you ever engage in a Consensual Non-Monogamy Relationship or Polyamory? Why or why not?

Appendix 3

Code	Individual's Responses
Number of serious vs. casual relationships	
Activities of serious relationship	
Reasons for fighting in serious relationships	
Faithful to partner in serious relationship	
End of serious relationship	
Casual relationship arrangement	
Activities of casual relationships	
Reasons for fighting in casual relationship	
End of casual relationship	
Qualities of serious relationship	
Qualities of casual relationship	
Source of knowledge about relationship	
Best relationship	
Favourable qualities of serious/casual relationship	
Worst relationship	
Unfavourable qualities of serious/casual relationship	
Past relationship experience affects standards of relationships	
Ideal relationship qualities	
Ideal relationship for age	
Age effect on relationship perceptions	
Gender norms affect on relationship	
Attraction outside of relationship	
Opinion on infidelity	
Acts of infidelity	
Opinion on marriage	
Opinion on CNM	