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Polyamory in Paris: A Social Network Analysis of Alternative Sexual Relationships

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Abstract

In this paper, I use Social Network Theory to analyze the unique links of love and friendship between females and metamours (lover's lovers) in a Parisian polyamory community. Previously, such networks have only been applied to fictional polycules, or love networks, such as the L Word or Game of Thrones. In the Paris networks, there exists a vast web of nodes connected in much more intimate and complex ways than one finds in the mono-normative landscape. Using participant-observation, informal and structured interviews, and social network analysis, my data showed that cis- and trans-women, with a strong sense of family and skills in interpersonal communication, score highest on network metrics of density/degree, homophily, transitivity, and "indirectedness," a new term synonymous with bridging ties as an important measure of centrality. The network data also indicate high modularity and endogamy with clustering tendencies for both cis-men and cis- and trans-women linked to kink, atypical intelligence, sexual and gender non-conformity, and mitigating factors of socioeconomic advantage and racial privilege.

Keywords: polyamory, alternative sexuality, non-monogamy, social network theory