



PolyColumbus Inclusive Sexuality Policy

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Background

PolyColumbus is a community where Inclusion is a Core Value. We seek to be inclusive of all manners of sexuality that are rooted in consent, while maintaining a focus on polyamory. This focus on polyamory is important, as we serve many people that are new to alternative sexuality. We want new members to have information available should they wish to explore additional options beyond polyamory, without causing them to feel overwhelmed or that they must also choose additional options in order to fit in with PolyColumbus.

This policy helps to explain how we build an inclusive community in this regard. It is a sibling document to our Community Conduct Policy.

Focus on Polyamory

To quote our Mission & Vision, “PolyColumbus provides a safe, comfortable, and welcoming community for those exploring or living ethical non-monogamy in Central Ohio. We envision a future where society accepts all consent-based intentional relationship structures.” Our only sexuality requirement is that someone be exploring or living ethical non-monogamy. We welcome those who self-identify as polyamorous, open, or ethically non-monogamous, or those who eschew labels or self-identify in a different way, so long as they agree that their relationship style could accurately be described as ethically non-monogamous (even if they don't normally describe it that way themselves).

Consent is a Core Value for PolyColumbus. Any relationship style that fails to prioritize consent is inconsistent with our work. We welcome those who wish to explore and understand more about consent-driven (i.e. “ethical”) non-monogamy, so long as they recognize that being a long-term fit in our community requires an embrace of consent as a driving principle.

GLBTQ-related Sexuality

PolyColumbus owes an undying debt of gratitude to the GLBTQ movement. Our very first meeting in 2000 was held at Stonewall Columbus.¹ The persistent work of activists in the

¹ <http://www.stonewallcolumbus.org>

GLBTQ movement, including every person who came out in whatever way, has been part of shifting the broader cultural views on alternative sexuality, which in turn makes PolyColumbus' work possible. PolyColumbus stands on the shoulders of giants, proudly waving a rainbow-colored flag.

Even with the victory of *Obergefell v. Hodges*,² much work remains to ensure that employment, housing, and other aspects of civil equality become a reality. PolyColumbus stands firmly alongside our GLBTQ-identified members, leadership, friends, neighbors, and fellow Americans as we work together towards full equality. As part of these efforts, we use our Community Conduct Policy to address homophobia, transphobia, and other phobias of marginalized sexualities (even of the unintentional variety) in PolyColumbus spaces.

In discussion groups, we encourage our GLBTQ-identified members to share of their particular experiences without hesitation. In event planning, we seek to ensure that the speakers we bring in provide GLBTQ-related perspectives. In choosing leadership, we seek to ensure that GLBTQ voices are represented. We expressly encourage our GLBTQ-identified members to share opportunities for us to become the best we can be in this regard.

Kink / Power Exchange / Leather (collectively, "BDSM")

Central Ohio has a vibrant BDSM community. Indeed, a member of our Founding Board is the co-owner of Adventures in Sexuality, the Midwest's largest BDSM-focused organization.³ PolyColumbus is also a proud coalition partner with the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, which supports polyamory while being historically focused on BDSM advocacy.⁴

We want those members who are into BDSM to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives in PolyColumbus spaces. Consensual BDSM intersects with polyamory in ways that are worth discussing, exploring, and understanding. While we are happy to partner with and refer members to those groups, we strive to avoid creating an environment where those new to polyamory wonder if they must also become involved in BDSM in order to become a member of PolyColumbus.

In Monthly Gathering discussion groups, or other spaces where those new to polyamory are known to be, we encourage those who are into BDSM to preface any BDSM-related remarks with phrases similar to "I happen to be kinky as well as poly, and so..." or "One of my partnerships is also a power exchange relationship, and so..." By making clear that other consensual lifestyle choices are something that can be added to poly, we can emphasize to those new to polyamory that they have an additional option available beyond "vanilla" polyamory (although staying with "vanilla" polyamory is also okay!)

² 576 U.S. ____ (2015) (GLBTQ marriage equality) (citation pending publication in the *United States Reports*).

³ <http://www.adventuresinsexuality.org>

⁴ <http://www.ncsfreedom.org>

PolyColumbus views BDSM as similar to polyamory insofar as they are ideas worth sharing, and can significantly increase the happiness of those who choose to practice them. However, we must ask that BDSM advocacy be respectfully limited in PolyColumbus discussion spaces, especially to those who are new to polyamory. By advocacy, we mean statements such as “This is something you should try!” or “Here, let me help explain BDSM for you...”

Shifting the emphasis of discussions from polyamory to advocating anything that is not inherently polyamorous hampers the building of a polyamory-focused community. Informing event attendees of future BDSM community events is generally fine, as is setting a time for further discussion outside of a PolyColumbus event. In social-focused PolyColumbus spaces, participants should feel much more free to discuss whatever interests them, whether it be BDSM, board games, or local sporting events.

Swinging

Many members of PolyColumbus also swing (engage in recreational sex with others, often at specific events). PolyColumbus views swinging as within the umbrella of ethical non-monogamy, as all involved have consented to non-monogamous sexual experiences.

We welcome those who identify as swingers, although swinging is not a focus area for PolyColumbus. Most of our education and discussion relevant to swinging revolves around either managing jealousy and related feelings when an existing partner finds new partners (whether “merely” sexual or otherwise) or safer sex concerns inherent to ethical sexual non-monogamy.

We endeavor to provide spaces where those seeking new connections of whatever kind can find them, although we do not prioritize providing events where people can simultaneously find partners for and engage in recreational sex. We will occasionally hold events at local establishment(s) that caters to the swinging community.

Asexuality

Being a community where Sex- and Pleasure-Positivity is a Core Value includes enthusiastic support for those who self-identify as asexual (or similar). We note here that the majority of PolyColumbus' work focuses on managing and enjoying emotional, romantic, and other non-sexual aspects of intimate relationships.

Those who self-identify as asexual (or similar) are welcome to share their self-identification or not in PolyColumbus spaces, as they choose. We also encourage those who self-identify as asexual (or similar) to let our leadership know if there are additional ways that PolyColumbus can meet your particular needs and interests.



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for Inclusive Sexuality Policy

The core of the PolyColumbus Mission is empowering individuals that either self-identify as polyamorous, open, or ethically non-monogamous, or are exploring such possibilities. Part of this empowerment comes from serving organizations with similar goals by documenting best practices and creating other resources for successfully running such an organization.

Good policies and related documents facilitate the orderly and sustainable growth of communities and events that advance the PolyColumbus Mission, whether in the Columbus, Ohio area or elsewhere.

PolyColumbus does not claim a monopoly on wisdom. What we do claim is fifteen years (and counting) as an organization, and leadership with relevant and valuable education, experience, and training. We have confidence in the documents we draft, as well as the humility to revise them when necessary in light of experience.

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