

For Immediate Release

New Study from Woodbury Psychology Chair Dr. Joye Swan Asks: 'Can Monogamy Actually Increase the Risk of HIV Infection?'

***Research Examines Monogamy as a Protection Strategy and
The Impact of Emotional - vs. Sexual - Fidelity***



LOS ANGELES (Feb. 24, 2016) – Monogamy has long been touted as one of the key ways to reduce an individual’s risk of HIV infection. But according to research published last month by [Woodbury University](http://www.woodbury.edu) Psychology Chair Dr. Joye Swan in the *Journal of Sex Research*, monogamy -- as practiced in the “real world” -- may actually increase the risk of infection from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Entitled “Monogamy, The Protective Fallacy: Sexual Versus Emotional Exclusivity and the Implications for Sexual Health Risk,” the study provides empirical evidence that people use emotional rather than sexual fidelity to define monogamy. According to Dr. Swan’s research, more than a third of participants reported infidelity in their current self-defined “monogamous” relationship and yet reported using condoms significantly less than individuals in self-defined non-monogamous relationships. The research sample of more than 650 included 373 heterosexual college students and 282 gay men.

“If individuals define a relationship as monogamous, even when it is not, and then use the perceived safety of monogamy to forego condom use, monogamy could actually increase an individual's risk of HIV infection and thus, could be seen as a potential HIV risk factor,” Dr. Swan said. “The research is quite profound and certainly flies in the face of convention. The important message is that monogamy, as practiced in the real world, could increase risk of HIV or other STI infection.

“The study provides the final link in a long research chain,” she noted. “We have long known that people assign the monogamy label to relationships at the drop of a hat, even when the relationship is not sexually monogamous or is, at best, serially monogamous. We also know that as soon as a relationship is defined as monogamous, condom use goes out the window. So, how can people define a relationship as monogamous, when it is not, and then use the perceived safety of the monogamy label to forego condom use?”

According to the study, “people are using their emotional attachment to a partner to determine monogamy, not their sexual fidelity,” Dr. Swan said. “So, I can have sex with Tom, Dick, and Harry, but I'm (emotionally) monogamous with Tom, because he's the only one I love. And, because monogamous sex is safe sex, I don't need to use condoms with Tom.”

Dr. Swan, who holds a Ph.D. in Applied Social Psychology from Claremont Graduate University, has focused her research on sexual risk-taking in intimate relationships and sexual identity. In addition to her latest study, her recent research includes “Heterosexuals Do It With Feeling: Heterocentrism in College Students' Definitions of Female Heterosexuality and Bisexuality,” published in *The Journal of Bisexuality*. She has also published groundbreaking research on the informed consent process in human subjects research, which found that signing an informed consent form actually represents a subtle type of psychological coercion for research participants.

Dr. Swan is a former three-term elected representative to the California Democratic Party, in the 42nd Assembly District.

About Woodbury University

Founded in 1884, Woodbury University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Southern California. With campuses in Burbank/Los Angeles and San Diego, the university offers bachelor's degrees from the School of Architecture, School of Business, School of Media, Culture & Design, and College of Transdisciplinarity, along with a Master of Business Administration, Master of Arts in Media for Social Justice, Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Interior Architecture (MIA), Master of Science in Architecture (MSArch), Master of Leadership, and Master of Arts in Media for Social Justice. The San Diego campus offers Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture, Master of Interior Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture degrees, as well as an MSArch degree with a concentration in Real Estate Development and Landscape +

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