

The most debatable topics of the 21st century are monogamy, marriage, and sexuality. We live in the world where the words “homosexual” and “the same-sex-marriage” are our everyday reality. We hear and read about it all the time. Sometimes we get involved into heated discussions on whether homosexuals should have the right to get married or they should have open relationships. We even love to watch the popular TV series “Big Love” about openly polygamous couples. In these series, the women involved into polygamous relationships were portrayed as well-educated and independent women that had made a conscious choice of polygamy. The end of these series has also represented the general population’s view about polygamy and polyamory as the models of alternative relationships. Bill’s neighbor killed him to show his protest against the basic beliefs about marriage constitution. It was a symbolic presentation of general population’s opinion about polygamy as a system. It is very interesting to see the progression of the American society to the point when the hot topics like these do not create a shock in a general population, but make the points for discussions. How did we get to this point? What are monogamy, non-monogamy, polygamy, and polyamory? How do they affect us? Why do many people react negatively to polyamory? How do debates about same-sex-marriages and polyamory affect each other? Why is our reaction to these topics changing? All these questions create a lot of tension in our society. Let us try to answer them.

Looking throughout the world’s history, starting from ancient times, we can find examples of monogamy and polygamy. The first monogamous relationships could be observed in the Bible. As many Christian denominations state, the first marriage between Adam and Eve was created by God (Gen. 2:18) and is considered as a prototype in modern society. What is monogamy? As Merriam Webster Dictionary states, monogamy is staying married to only one person through a whole life, being married to only one person at a time, and having only one mate at the time (Merriam Webster, 2011).

More than 75% of the United States population are married or have been married. Almost two-thirds of divorced couples remarry again, and more than 90% of the whole population considers getting married. It shows the population's undeniable drive towards monogamy as a core institution. The analysis of monogamous relationships presents us with an idea about jealousy as a proof of true love and a definition of romantic love. Jealousy is considered to be a factor separating love from friendship. It is the reason for people to stay exclusive in their relationships (Emens, 2003). Feeling jealous, people discover that they are in love with someone they used to view only as a friend before (Austen, 2003). Interestingly enough, a friend's jealousy is considered to be a problem of a friend. However, lover's jealousy is a problem of an object of this jealousy, who should overcome the desire to be unfaithful. The courts' reports have been showing us the state's sympathy with sexual jealousy based on adultery. In some cases, adultery was the reason for considering a murder as a voluntary manslaughter. The main ideas are having one partner at a time and "monogamy is the law" (Emens, 2003).

The idea of "super monogamy", or absolute monogamy, is even "stricter model of monogamy" (Emens, 2003). It was beautifully introduced in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*. Plato introduced the idea of the existence of the perfect half for every person in the world, regardless of sex. From his point of view, we are spending our lives searching for our perfect halves. When we find them, we do not want to be separated from them anymore and become one being, the complete whole (Plato, 1993).

Evolutionary psychologists, biological anthropologists, and scientists from different fields, observing human and animals' behavior, give us their own explanations of the development of monogamy in human society. From women's point view, females are looking for male's protection during childbearing and child caring periods. Having only one provider would improve the survival rate for their offspring. From men's point of view, being monogamous would make sexual resources

available to all males, regardless of their wealth. Males could be interested in the protection of their offspring too. They could guard their females from somebody else impregnating them. Males could also understand females' tendencies to pair with the males who were committed to only one female. As a result, the pairing would create the domestic bliss and increase the possibility of offspring's survival (Emens, 2003)

Unfortunately, the reality is not as romantic or scientific as it is presented to us. The high divorce rates are examples of the gap between the theory and practice, questioning the theory about the "super monogamy" and the existence of only one perfect someone for everybody. Many of the divorced couples remarry again, raising the question of how these new couples should be classified. Some commentators consider it as a form of polygamy. Others call it the serial monogamy arguing that each time a person stays with only one significant other and never with more than one. The serial monogamy or divorce of parents leads to developing the view about non-monogamous relationships in their children, who have to deal with blended families. Undermining the idea of monogamy, adultery happens all the time. The data provided by the National Health and Social Life Survey (1994) show that more than 20% men and women have been cheating on their significant others. This number may be even higher because many people participating into the survey did not provide truthful information. It is interesting to mention that adultery by itself is not acceptable, but sexual desire to the opposite sex is considered to be a norm and something that many people have to deal with in their striving for keeping monogamous relationships (Emens, 2003).

What is polygamy? Why is even a thought about it prohibited? Oxford English Dictionary gives us an explanation of the word "polygamy" as being married to more than one person of any sex, or being married to more than one woman (Oxford English Dictionary, 2011). The latter also has a different term, which is "polygyny". The marriage of one woman to more than one man is called polyandry. Polygamy

was first mentioned in the Bible. Many advocates of this life style always quote the Bible's phrase, "7: And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus said the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; 8: And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things" (2 Sam. 12) (Polygamy and Bible, 2011). Darwinists and other researchers of adaptive animal's behavior favor against monogamy too. They explain it by evolutionally desire for reproduction based on the primal instinct of species' survival. Many supporter of polygamy argue that if the situation with two people being in love is acceptable, why is the situation with three people being in love a taboo? However, the word "polygamy" in the United States is almost a synonym for Mormon polygamy. It is always represented by polygyny, or one man marrying several women. Polygamy is pictured as undermining women's rights, their exploitation, and sex inequality (Emens, 2003). The most known presenter of Mormon polygamy is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This sect believes that they represent a true church and follow the steps of its founder, Joseph Smith. Warren S. Jeffs, the leader of the sect, has been waiting for a trial on the charges of bigamy and sexual assault (New York Times, 2011). The other example of polygamy and its prosecution is the TV reality show family practicing polygamy. The stars of the reality TV show "Sister Wives" Kody Brown and his three wives are the subjects of the police investigation for bigamy and third degree felony. The investigation began after the show had been aired on TV (Religion and child abuse, 2010). The traditional Mormon polygamists with the sex-based hierarchy are usually not included into polyamory. However, contemporary polygamist families, blending traditional hierarchy with feminist ideas, consider themselves polyamorous.

What do we know about polyamory and how does it affect us? Polyamory is a relatively new word. Its translation means "many loves" and defines numerous sexual relationships between more than

two adults, regardless of sex. The other word for polyamory is ethical non-monogamy. It could include open marriages, couples, sexually active singles that have or do not have a partner at the moment, and groups of people involved into intimate network (Loving more, 2011). As we could see, the definition includes a significantly large group of people. It even includes people who do not participate in polyamory at the moment, but potentially could do so. There are many different models of polyamory. Sometimes it even does not involve sex. It could be a lesbian couple and a donor of alternative insemination, who is involved into a child's life (Ertman, 2001). Basically, everybody who wants to be included into this category is included, regardless of sexual involvement. The other dispute about polyamory is including sexual non-monogamy into this definition. It brings the question of noninvolvement of love into relationships, such as casual sex or "swinging". Group marriage, open marriage, casual sex with two or more people are a few models of polyamorous relationships. The number of these models is theoretically limitless. "Primary relationships", "secondary relationships" and "tertiary relationships" are other typical modes of polyamory. "Several ongoing secondary relationships" could be observed in the intimate network. Individuals could be involved with one or two people from the group at once. There could be couples only, singles only, or a mix of both. The "line marriage" is the other term used for the polyamory. It is a marriage that adds or declines the other member from its establishment. The term "polyfidelity" could be used in the attempt to explain different parties' involvement into polyamorous relationships. The group members could have sex only within an existing group. These relationships could be considered exclusive. Sometimes new partners could be added to the group with everybody's consent. This type of relationships could be considered open. The poly triads could involve sexual partners who could have only primary relationships, only secondary relationships, or mix. The triads could be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or mix. Very often it is a mix of two bisexuals and one heterosexual. The types of bond in the group could be "vees" and "triangles." "Vee"

is a group of three people with one person being at the bottom of vee, the pivot point. In these relationships, two people in the group are less involved with each other, but more involved with a third member, who holds the group together. Triangle, or triad, is a group where all members are involved with each other equally (Emens, 2003). As we can see, the field of polyamory is very new. Very often members of its community have to create their own language in the attempt to identify themselves (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). However, living in a culture of compulsory monogamy brings many obstacles into the lives of people deciding to lead polyamorous lifestyle.

Looking at the reaction of society to polyamory's practices, we can see that not only church and the government, but also general population react very negatively to polyamory. One of the examples of such reactions is a case of April Divilbliss, whose daughter was removed by the court order as a result of her polyandrous threesome, a polyfidelitousvee. The case was highly publicized and sponsored by polyamorous community. On April 16, 1999, the case was heard in front of the judge. The judge refused to read any documentation provided by April's lawyer or listen to the experts' testimonies showing the evidence that April was a fit mother. He made a speech about non-acceptance of the frivolous relationships April lived in and the effect it could make on her daughter. In the end, he made a decision of taking the daughter away from April and putting her under a supervision of the child's grandmother. April did not appeal this decision (Emens, 2003).

Even homosexual groups have a tendency to lean towards monogamy in their relationships, moving away from the multiple partners or open relationships. The on-going war continues between these groups and the state about the homosexuals' rights to be married at the different states of the United States. However, the Christian right groups try to use as an argument against same-sex marriage an opening door for legalization of polyamorous and polygamous relationships. "At the beginning of June 2006, the US Senate considered the Marriage Protection Amendment (MPA)." If this amendment

could pass it would prohibit same-sex marriage. Despite the hopes of Christian right groups, same-sex relationships gain their recognition. Vermont and Connecticut established same-sex civil union, and the move continues throughout the country (Ashbee, 2007). One of the many examples is the fight between the state of California and the gay-rights groups. The proposition 8 is under attack (Gay marriage in California won't resume for now, appeals court rules, 2011). The proposition 8, stating that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" has become the part of constitution on November 5, 2008 (California Supreme Court - Oral arguments about Prop 8, 2011). Until the decision on proposition 8 is overturned, the state law prohibits a marriage between the same sex couples. The gay rights groups have found this proposition unconstitutional. In his speech, Chad Griffin, the American Federation for Equal Rights founder, has said, "It is decidedly unjust and unreasonable to expect California's gay and lesbian couples to put their lives on hold and suffer daily discrimination as second-class citizens while their U.S. District Court victory comes to its final conclusion." For now, the appeal of the decision is pending (Gay marriage in California won't resume for now, appeals court rules, 2011). We could observe an undeniable shift in the opinion about monogamy as a basic model of the relationships between homosexuals. Their fight for the right to get married also represents a major setback for polyamorous groups that fight for their right to be accepted as the alternative models for relationships' and marriage' institutions.

As a summary, we could assume that our society is not ready to accept any other institution except monogamy. It brings us to the idea about compulsory monogamy where monogamy is less than optional. Most people choose to have monogamous relationships, even slipping out of them occasionally, because they prefer exclusive sexual relationships from their partners due to jealousy. Jealousy is the reason for them to stay monogamous. Some people prefer monogamy for moral reasons or their desire to avoid possible pain due to failed romantic relationships. Many people also think that

having open relationships would increase a risk of losing their partner. As a result, they interpret their partner's desire for sexual experiments outside of their relationships as lack of their partner's concern about losing them, or even as lack of their partner's love and passion. The other reason for choosing monogamy is the government's enforcement of monogamous model of relationships. Many states have the adultery laws, penalizing married people who are involved into sex outside of the marriage, and bigamy laws going after the couples having additional partners outside of their relationships. The law in these cases is very strict to the point that parents are penalized by removing their children from such households (Emens, 2003).

From my point of view, choosing a lifestyle should be a personal choice, but not something that is forced the government or the rules of society and church. We should make our decisions based on what makes us happy, but not because it is an accepted rule, or society forces us to make this decision. I hope that one day we will be able to live our lives the way we want to versus the way we need to.

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