

Facing a Monogamous World

by Pepper

What is Monogamy?

“One marriage”

Practice of only having sex with one person

Social system of conformity that structures life around couples in relationships

Nonmonogamous Difficulties

Problems with polyamory come in two flavors:

- 1) Problems inherent to nonmonogamy, i.e. scheduling, safe sex
- 2) Problems due to monogamous cultural conformity, i.e. social stigma, systems that assume coupling or monogamy, relationship practices

Surprises

Unforeseen nonmonogamous difficulties

- Heavy jealousy or guilt
- Weird social dynamics

Surprise monogamy

- Inability to find partners
- People pretending to allow or want nonmonogamy

Enforcement of Monogamy

Legal, Financial, Institutions

Culture

Family and Friends

Partners

Oneself

Legal/Financial/Institutions

Legal/Financial/Institutions

Government marriage law

- Anti-bigamy laws
- Anti-polygamy immigration rules
- Marriage benefits, i.e. “married filing jointly”

Court discrimination

- Custody cases
- Divorce cases
- But, adultery is legal!

Legal/Financial/Institutions

Bureaucratic couplism

- Insurance and mortgage forms
- Health benefits
- Hospital visitation

Discrimination

- Employment
- Adoption
- Targeted prosecution

Culture

Culture

Stigma

- Slut-shaming, “sex addiction”, etc
- Assumption of disease, abuse, etc
- Understanding as cheating
- Assuming predation, lack of standards, women must be tricked into it
- Variations on “that's impossible”
- Misunderstood by medical professionals and counselors
- Loss of opportunities

Culture

Discrimination

- Employment

Couple-structured society

- Wedding and engagement rings
- Travel
- Accommodations – i.e. hotel
- Company parties

Culture

Culture of monogamous conditioning

- Endless depictions of monogamy and cheating, i.e. in songs or movies
- No positive role models for nonmonogamy
- Depictions of nonmonogamous are problematic: out-of control hedonists, abuse, disease and pregnancy, etc
- Day-to-day social interactions assume and reinforce monogamy

Family and Friends

Family and Friends

Family freakout

- Incompatible with relationships or kids
- Immoral, sick, etc

Disowning by family

- Financial disowning, i.e. college funds

Couple-centered rituals, i.e. holidays

Family and Friends

Friends threatened

- By mere existence of nonmonogamy
- Assuming predation – no context
- Moral disapproval
- Abandonment or lack of common ground

Couple-centered rituals

- “+1” events
- Couples' night out

Partners

Partners

Unmanaged emotional distress

- Jealousy or possessiveness
- Insecurity
- Double standard – i.e. unicorn hunt
- Tit-for-tat or power games
- Excessive rules or conditions

Partners

Sudden expectation of monogamy

- Entitlement to monogamy

Inability to take relationship seriously

Oneself

Oneself

Guilt

- Feeling of shame or infidelity

Fears and insecurities

- Not being special, abandonment
- Erotic problems
- Making comparisons, competitiveness
- STD-phobia
- Afraid others are not up for it

Training in deceit around nonmonogamy

Oneself

Lack of structure without monogamy

- Feeling of vertigo
- No roadmap
- No space between celibacy and orgy
- Conceptual issues, i.e. understanding love as a zero-sum game
- Monogamous relationship assumptions
- Creatively addressed with new words, boundary negotiation, community knowledge