



# Compulsory Monogamy and Polyamorous Existence

Leehee Rothschild

**ABSTRACT:** This article examines the construction of monogamy as a social institution through various discursive fields. It shows how religion, sexology, psychology, law and popular science all play a part in the normalisation and naturalisation of monogamy as the only normal, healthy and moral way to maintain a romantic relationship. It goes to further show how a traditional gender binary and a sexual double standard are constructed as a part of this mononormativity in each and every one of those discursive fields. Following that, the article looks into polyamory through a queer and feminist lens, and explores its theoretical potential in subverting these patriarchal conceptions. It then suggests the idea of the 'polyamorous continuum' and the 'polyamorous existence' as an alternative paradigm to the institution of monogamy. It is a paradigm that allows for a broader spectrum of relationship formations, including ones that feature elements of sexual and/or romantic exclusivity, which are bereft of the patriarchal elements of mononormativity.

---

*Want you to make me feel  
Like I'm the only girl in the world  
Like I'm the only one that you'll ever love  
Like I'm the only one who knows your heart  
Only girl in the world  
Like I'm the only one that's in command  
'Cause I'm the only one who understands  
Like I'm the only one who knows your heart  
Only one*

– Only Girl (In The World) / Rihanna (Eriksen & Hermansen, 2010, track 5)



*Amazon Households enables two adults within a family to collectively manage content and share access to membership benefits.*

– [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

These two opening quotes reflect on some of the very common manifestations of mononormativity – the conception of monogamy as the only moral, normal, natural and healthy form of romantic relationship (Pieper & Bauer, 2006). In recent years, alternatives to monogamy have been more frequently discussed in both academic and public discourse<sup>1</sup> (Barker & Langdrige, 2010a). Nevertheless, a thorough discussion and analysis of the social function of monogamy has not been explored in the literature. In this article, I will review the construction of monogamy as a social institution, and show how a binary gender system and a gendered double standard are established within it. I will argue that much like heteronormativity, the foundations of mononormativity are also spread over a wide range of fields and discourses; that the construction of mononormativity is mostly invisible; and that its scattered and mostly invisible construction provides it with a strong hold on society. Later, I will explore contemporary alternatives to monogamy, highlight their feminist potential in subverting the sexual double standard and other gendered norms, and suggest the ideas of “polyamorous existence” and a “polyamorous continuum” as an alternative paradigm to the institution of monogamy. The analysis I present here is mostly theoretic in its nature. However, I do occasionally refer to some of its practical implications and manifestations.

The literal meaning of “monogamy” is having only one marital relationship. Contemporarily, however, it has been used to denote a couple’s relationship in which romantic and sexual exclusivity are practiced (Brewster et al., 2017). The monogamous form most commonly practiced in the western world is “serial monogamy” – which means that people are not limited to a single life partner, but they would not have multiple relationships at once (Rambukkana, 2015). At the same time, monogamy also functions as a powerful social institution, constructed through various discourses, including but not limited to biology, law, religion, sexology, popular culture and capitalist economy (Emmens, 2004; Deri, 2015). These discourses all set the foundations to mononormativity (Farvid, Braun & Roney, 2016).

The fact that monogamy is a social construct is usually unspoken, transparent and invisible, camouflaged by mononormativity (Rosa, 1994). Performances

of monogamy are glorified and celebrated as the romantic ideal, while representations of alternative forms of relationships in mainstream media tend to be rare and usually focus on revealing their inevitable failure. The social constructionist approach to sexuality, which guides my analysis, was well defined by Ritchie and Barker (2006, p. 585):

The social constructionist approach to sexuality is grounded in the belief that our identity, desires, relationships and emotions are shaped by the culture in which we live (Weeks, 2003). We come to understand ourselves in terms of the concepts that are available to us in the time and place we live in.

Thus, the fact that monogamy is assumed as the default of any romantic relationship, makes any alternatives difficult to conceive of or imagine, and situates non-monogamous relationships in a state of social “otherness”.

Mononormativity is a sex-negative paradigm. Rubin (1984) explains that sex-negativity creates a hierarchy, under which some sexual activities are deemed productive, positive and proper, while others are perverted and negative. Heterosexual sex within a marital relationship for procreational purposes is found on top of this pyramid of respectability; whereas BDSM and different types of fetishism, are often considered to have a negative value, even when practiced consensually. Within this hierarchy, monogamy is one of the factors that allows certain practices (such as gay and lesbian sex) to earn social acceptability (Rubin, 1984; Warner, 2000).

Rubin notes that there are gradual shifts in the borders between “moral” and “perverted” sex, yet argues the dichotomy between the two remains. She notes, for example, the growing acceptability of gay and lesbian sex, but points to the fact that its legitimacy is limited to sexual acts performed within a monogamous marriage-like setting (Rubin, 1984). A more timely example could be the increasing acceptability of casual sex, even though, this too fails to shake the mononormative foundations. Casual sex is socially legitimate when performed by people who are relatively young, usually in their 20s, who either happen to be between relationships or in a temporary situation in which they cannot commit to a long-term partner, whose ultimate goal is to find a committing monogamous relationship. It is legitimate as a phase of sexual experimentation, but not as a way of life (Farvid & Braun, 2017; Farless, 2017; Schippers, 2016).

Thus, while framed in the 1980s this pyramid of respectability and the sexual hierarchies it reflects is still relevant to contemporary discussions of monogamies and non-monogamies (See for example, Navarro, 2017 for a discussion on its legal effects; and Brandon-Fridman, 2017 for a discussion of its effects on sociology and social work). This mononormative sex negativity is expressed in many ways: in the discussion of virginity loss as a unique experience that must happen with a chosen person; in the slut-shaming of women who have multiple partners; in the framing of all sex that takes place outside the boundaries of a romantic relationship as “casual”.

Part of the mononormative sex-negativity (and of sex-negativity in general) has been a gendered sexual double standard that reflects positively on a multiplicity of sexual partners on the side of men, referring to them as “Studs”; while condoning women who have multiple sexual partners as “Sluts”. As Farvid, Braun & Rowney (2016, p. 2) pointed out:

The sexual double standard invokes traditional discourses of heterosexuality, such as the Madonna/whore binary (virtuous versus promiscuous), to negatively construct women’s desire for, and participation in what is socially, culturally or morally defined as ‘too much’ sex.

This double standard has characterised the institution of monogamy throughout a major part of history. In many allegedly monogamous cultures, various social structures allowed men to pursue more than one romantic and/or sexual relationship – concubines, whores, salt-wives, courtesans and mistresses are just some examples of the non-monogamous options that were afforded to men. Meanwhile, monogamy was strictly demanded from women, who paid heavily for straying from its path (Mint, 2007b; Sheff & Tesense, 2015).

Currently, many of the discourses involved in the construction of mononormativity address men, as well. Nevertheless, I argue that a double standard is still present, even if it manifests more subtly. Thus, while social narratives compel men to the ideal of one true love in theory and to serial monogamy in practice, other social powers still work to encourage them to sexual and romantic multiplicity. Meanwhile, the social narratives working to reinforce the romantic ideal are even more enhanced when targeting women, whereas those narratives that

allow and encourage men to pursue and discover non-monogamous options are rarely available to them; and when they do it is in a more limited manner (Mint, 2007b). This sexual double standard is still rooted in a patriarchal conception of men's ownership over women's bodies. It increases the social polarity between men and women, supplementing their heteronormative construction as two opposing genders. It minimises women's libidos on the theocratic level, and reproves women for "hyper-sexuality" on a practical level, limiting their sexual agency and subjectivity. At the same time, it paints men's sexuality as dominant, bestial and uncontrollable (Serano, 2008).

Inspired by Rich's (1980) analysis of compulsory heterosexuality and its social implications on women, the first part of this article explores the construction of monogamy as a social institution through various discursive fields. In each one of these fields, I discuss the patriarchal elements in its construction, and show their disempowering effects on women and on their sexual agency. I highlight the double standard that demands commitment to monogamy from women, while allowing men more sexual freedom, thus sustaining conventional gender roles, and social conceptions of female sexuality.

Despite the dominance of mononormative mechanisms, alternatives to monogamy do exist. There are various forms of consensual non-monogamies (CNM) that take place with the full knowledge and consent of all participants. Under the umbrella term "Consensual Non-Monogamies" one can find many non-exclusive relationship types ranging all the way from swinging to relationship anarchy (Taormino, 2008; Sheff & Tesene, 2015). The second part of this article delves into polyamorous relationships and explores their potential to empower women, in providing an escape route from the monogamous double standard and an opportunity to achieve greater sexual agency. The third and final section suggests the "polyamorous continuum" as an alternative paradigm for discussing relationships that dispense of the monogamous "rule book", without negating the possibility of emotional and/or sexual exclusivity.

## Compulsory Monogamy – The Discursive Construction of a Patriarchal Institution

The institution of monogamy has changed and developed over the years. For

many centuries, it was equated with the marital contract, and the demand for exclusivity was sexual in its nature. In the modern era, monogamy has become part of the romantic ideal, and thus emotional exclusivity is also required. The social demand for one life-long relationship was replaced by serial monogamy, even though the romantic ideal of one true love is still prevalent (Sheff, 2013). In this section I discuss the institutional construction of monogamy in various discursive fields. I begin with a brief overview of different justifications that have been used to legitimise and standardise monogamy. In each case I also show how a gender binary was embedded into it. Then, I expand on the specific function of law and popular culture that serve as broader examples both to the social construction of monogamy, and to its patriarchal aspects.

Religious axiology was used to justify monogamy throughout much of recorded history, with marriage being one of the most important religious ceremonies. In most Christian traditions, monogamy has been required of both women and men, as part of the marriage sacrament. Augustine of Hippo, one of the founding fathers of the Christian church, declared that the monogamous marital bond was the most basic human relationship (Augustine, 401). He claimed that the good of marriage derives from the fact that it limits and confines the sexual desire. He highlighted the importance of sexual exclusivity as overriding that of marriage, as it is the commitment of one's whole life to a single person which stands at the root of marriage, and not the marital ceremony. Nevertheless, while monogamy is required of both men and women, their relationship is not egalitarian. In fact, one of the benefits of monogamous marriage, according to Augustine, is the preservation of a gender hierarchy. He believes that in the ideal marriage the wife should view the husband as her lord, and while a lord may have several servants, no servant can have more than a single lord (Augustine, 401).

Meanwhile, Islam, Judaism<sup>2</sup> and some specific Christian traditions have demanded monogamy of women, but not of men, who could practice polygamy and marry several women. Moreover, in polygynous societies, marriage to several women has been considered to be a status symbol, a manifestation of virility and economic prosperity. Polygyny is still commonly practiced in many societies around the world (Sheff & Tesene, 2015).

Even as the world turned to a scientific axiology for social norms, sex negativity remained a leading component of social thought. Many of the early works of

sexology, psychology and sociology highlight the importance of the containment of sexuality within the marital relationship. These conceptions are still reflected in these sciences to this very day (Barker & Langdrige, 2010a). In Sexology, for example, the gendered perception of monogamy remains very similar to the paradigm that had been drawn by Krafft Ebbing in “Psychopatia Sexualis” (1892). In this guidebook of sexual perversions, sexual activities which are not performed by a married couple for procreational purposes are all diagnosed as excessive and perverted; even more so when the sexual agent is a woman. Krafft Ebing claims that monogamy is the only way to lead healthy and stable relationships. But he goes beyond that to argue that monogamy is the root of human civilisation, and that it is crucial to the proper functioning of both family and society. Moreover, he states that monogamy grants the white Christian man his moral superiority over the non-European Muslim (Klesse, 2016). At the same time, Krafft Ebbing argues that monogamy comes naturally to women whose sexual desire is limited and contained, whereas men must struggle against their polygamous nature, in order to contain their abundant sexual desires within the monogamous setting (Willey, 2006). This assumed inherent discrepancy between men and women’s sexual drives has continued to be the sexologist axiom for many years.

A similar process occurred in psychology; although here it was more gradual, it reached similar conclusions. In his early writing Freud considers monogamy as an oppressive sexual norm, a source of neurosis for both men and women (Freud, 1915). Later on, however, he succumbs to the monogamous hegemony and argues that monogamy is a necessary evil, on which human social function and culture relies. Modernity, he says, could not exist without monogamy (Freud, 1930). Despite Freud’s belief that monogamy causes anxiety to women as well, in his writing he also enhances the double standard that surrounds it. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) Freud describes the original human state as a polygynous society, and in “Modern Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness” (Freud, 1915) he argues that women have weaker libidos than men; in both cases supplementing the dominant assumption of women’s lower sexual drives.

While modern psychologists may not accept the “historical” Freudian narrative regarding monogamy, they do conceive of monogamy as inherent to romantic relationships. This view is present in measures used to determine people’s satisfaction from their love life, in which monogamy is the assumed default. In “The Pas-

sionate Love Scale”, for example, people are asked to grade sentences like “I would rather spend time with X than with any other person”, that negate the possibility of having more than one love interest at the same time (Zeigler et al., 2014). Non-monogamy is rarely taught as an option in psychological training. Thus, it is often pathologised by therapists, especially when practiced by women (Zeigler et al., 2014; Barker, 2007). Zeigler et al. (2014) note that women are pressured by therapists to measure themselves by their success in maintaining a monogamous romantic relationship. One example they provide for a monogamous double standard in psychology is the common diagnosis of hypo-sexuality for women who stopped feeling sexual attraction towards their partner in long-term monogamy. The opposite case, in which men’s desire towards his partner has dwindled, is simply considered to be a result of men’s non-monogamous nature (Zeigler et al., 2014).

A more concrete manifestation of the social construction of monogamy is present in the legal system. Law plays a crucial function in creating and setting the borders of social institutions that define human relations. It specifically plays a major part in the construction of monogamy, as law books and courts define and interpret the term “relationship”, choosing who shall be included and excluded within it, granting rights, benefits and social protections accordingly (Navarro, 2017).

The monogamous couple sharing a household is the only romantic relationship formation acknowledged by the state (Klesse, 2016). It is considered by the legal system as a single unit with certain rights and obligations: housing rights, pensions, residential rights following a partner’s citizenship, taxation benefits, and visitation rights in hospitals, to name but a few (Navarro, 2017). Aviram & Leachman (2014) note that in the US there are 1,138 federal laws dealing with taxation and economic benefits that derive from the marital relationship between a couple, who are, by proxy, assumed to be monogamous<sup>3</sup>.

Over the years, many western countries – including USA, Australia, Israel, and the UK – have expanded their definition of “Relationships”, “Families” and “Couples” (Shifman, 2005). Many have broadened them to include common-law marriage, bringing in those couples who follow all the practices of mononormativity without the ritual formality. More recently, a growing number of countries have granted legal status, and the rights resulting from it, to same-sex couples. In order to win this legal recognition, however, same sex couples were forced to emphasise and enhance the mononormativity of their relationships (Polikoff, 1993). In



the struggle for same-sex marriage in the United States, for example, participants worked hard to distinguish themselves from polyamorous people, who were used by the opposition (along with practitioners of bestiality and pedophiles), as the slippery slope to which same-sex marriage approval would lead (Aviram & Leachman, 2014; See also, Navarro, 2017 for a discussion of a similar process in Spain).

At the same time, the monogamous structure that the legal system constructs is not an egalitarian one either. In some cases, the double standard manifests itself in divorce laws that judge women more harshly in cases of adultery, or in court verdicts that do the same. But the monogamous double standard that treats men as free agents and women as their possession is most visible in criminal law: its treatment of domestic violence as a family matter and not a gendered phenomenon (Hassan, 1999); or the “provocation” defence in murder cases, used to minimise the accountability of men who murder their adulterous wives, or even ex-wives who moved on (Kamir, 1997; Fitz-Gibbon, 2012) are all examples of this. It is also very evident in rape law and in rape cases, where conceptions of sexual ownership within a romantic relationship still prevail on one hand, and on the other women who enact independent sexual agency are said to be seducing men and bringing the predatory act upon themselves.

The prohibition on rape was originally meant to defend the man’s property – his wife. As a result of this, for many years, there was no legal sanction on marital rape, which was considered to be the husband’s marital right. Its criminalisation process in the USA, as well as in many European countries had only occurred during the 1990s and early 2000s, and even then it was not always complete. In many American states and in some European countries the law still distinguishes between marital rape (or rape within a romantic relationship) and other rape cases. This distinction is expressed in the severity of the punishments; in the fact that violence is required in order to define the act as rape; or in more meticulous limitation laws (Bennice & Resick, 2003). In other countries, like Canada or Israel, despite the amendment of the law conservative conception regarding marital rape is still reflected in the treatment of survivors by both the police and the courts, leading to many unfounded cases and lighter punishments (Randall, 2010; Negbi, 2009).

While the state grants women limited protection from their partner reflecting, as previously noted, patriarchal conceptions of ownership within relationships, women are also punished for having an independent sexual existence. Manifes-

tations of sexual agency by single women, that range from having several sexual partners or simply being sexually active, to acts which are connected with sexuality like dancing in clubs, drinking, or flirting with men are all interpreted as sexual promiscuity, or risky sexual behaviour. Kelsse (2016), while rephrasing Laura Tenenbaum notes that:

Promiscuity allegations function as a means of regulating women's sexual agency, stigmatize women and legitimize men's sexual violence and abuse (Klesse, 2016, p. 330).

Thus, "promiscuous" women, deemed by social discourse to be legitimate sexual prey, have to contend with victim blaming by the police and in courts (See O'Hara, 2012 for a discussion on media representation in the UK; Raphaell, 2013 for similar discussion as well as an analysis of political discourse in the US). In many Western countries, this victim blaming is translated into the unfounding of rape cases where the victim does not fit the ideal victim narrative constructed by the police, or to lighter punishments in courts (see Sphon & Tellis, 2012 for the USA; Randall, 2010 for Canada; Jordan, 2004 for New Zealand as well as for a reflection on various other countries; and Negbi, 2009 for Israel). Negbi further argues that in addition to using promiscuity and seductiveness in victim blaming, Israeli courts also tend to portray the masculine sexuality of rapists as an animalistic sensation of uncontrollable desire, which at times simply cannot be contained. The sexual violence of men is legitimised as part of their natural instincts, their internal urges to possess and exploit multiple female bodies (Negbi, 2009), thus constructing a predator-prey dichotomy within the legal treatment of rape. These conceptions of risky feminine promiscuity and masculine bestiality are not limited to courts and interrogation rooms. This sexual double standard is also manifested in cultural portrayals of sexual violence, and embedded into the popular discourse on these matters (O'Hara, 2012; Serano, 2007). Yet, within the legal system specifically it is often translated into lack of legal protection or limited legal protection to survivors of sexual violence, who by choice or by proxy are located outside (the limited, as previously noted) defence of the monogamous bond.

As I move from the discussion of mononormativity in law to a discussion of mononormativity in popular culture, I would like to return to the growing legal ac-

ceptance of gay and lesbian sex, when it happens in a mononormative framework. This limited and confined acceptance is also present in popular culture, often framed as support for gay marriage or marriage for all; but also in the prevalence of mononormative gay and lesbian couples in TV shows and movies, which replaced previously common imageries of the prevented gay. This is one further arena in which same-sex relationships managed to earn social legitimacy through mononormative performance that made them less threatening to socially accepted function and familial structure (Seidman, 2005; Avila-Saavedra, 2009).

Popular culture is, indeed, another medium through which monogamy is shaped as the social default. It is also another site in which gender binary and sexual double standards are embedded into the monogamous narrative. Media representations are a code, charged with meanings that reflect the dominant ideology of a certain period (Richardson & Wearing, 2014). The cultural representations of monogamy conserve its hegemonic status, as they are the images shaping romantic imagery. Kim et al. (2007) argue that sexuality is learnt from the social scripts available in popular culture. Those scripts define for their audience what is a sexual encounter and what role one should play in it. The same argument can be made about mononormativity.

Monogamy is performed in almost every popular text. It is present in song lyrics, movies, books, TV shows, commercials, magazines and computer games. The vast majority of cultural texts deal with the search for romantic relationships, romantic gestures, broken hearts, unrequited love, longing and loss. All of this popular romance is monogamous romance, in which the search for love is a search for “the one” (Kean, 2015). Mononormativity is constructed in popular culture on two levels – firstly, monogamy is idealised and naturalised simultaneously, as sexual and romantic exclusivity are presented as an inherent part of romantic relationships (Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Barker et al., 2013). Secondly, alternatives to monogamy are both passively and actively erased. Passively by scarce representations of CNM alternatives, and actively by negative portrayal of characters who breach the monogamous order, who are either punished or brought back into it<sup>4</sup>.

Monogamy in popular culture is a gendered structure that works within the patriarchal order (Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Galician, 2004). Monogamy is presented as more natural for women, who seek commitment and whose sexuality is mostly limited to the confines of romantic relationships. Men are presented as inherently

sexual beings, who might eventually search for true love, but do well with “casual” sexual relationships in the meantime. This is while women’s search for love is usually portrayed as urgent, desperate and total (Kim et al., 2007). The popular genres catering to women, whether dramas or romantic comedies, focus on this search for true love (Power, 2009). Men are also exposed to monogamous love since a romantic narrative tends to accompany non-romantic movies, and the reunited or reformed couple represents the happy ending of most movies. Even action and apocalyptic films where the world, or merely the hero, were just saved from a terrible end, usually conclude with a happy couple. Men have other goals in movies, other forms of achievements, other aspects they are measured by, aside from finding romantic bliss, whereas in many occasions female characters will be mostly, if not only, focused on finding true love (Smith & Cook, 2008). Lauzen, Dozier & Horen (2008) note that a similar phenomenon can be detected in the function and dialogues of female and male characters on TV shows. Female characters tend to be much more focused on tasks and dialogues related to family and romance, while male characters are likely to perform work related roles. The overall message that women receive from popular culture is that their social value is measured mostly by their success in finding a long lasting monogamous relationship (Kim et al., 2007; Smith & Cook, 2008; Behera, 2015)<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, the mononormative sexual double standard is also largely present in popular culture. Singlehood for women is temporary, permitted for a limited time, at a certain age, as long as their end goal is still finding true love – take “Sex and The City” (both the TV show and the movies), for example (Di Mattia, 2004; Behera, 2015). For men, bachelorhood is something to be cherished and celebrated, a heroic space, reserved for characters like James Bond or Indiana Jones. The hero may find a love interest by the end of the movie. This genre of movies also have a reserved spot for a “Bond Girl”. Paraphrasing Neundorf et al. (2010, p. 758) she will be young, attractive, slender and somewhat disposable, replaced by another girl on the next film. She will not in any way get in the way of his adventurous life. Furthermore, the sexual freedom of a single woman is limited, or else she will be termed a slut; but a single man is expected to enjoy all that life has to offer him, including sexual pleasures (Haskell, 1974). Spinster vs. bachelor, slut vs. stud or ‘ladies’ man’: the terms reflect these representations and the representations reflect the terms (Valenti, 2008). The double standard is also expressed in the fact

that cheating on the part of women will almost always mark the end of a relationship, while cheating on the part of men will be treated as an inevitable result of their sexually abundant nature, justified with the saying “boys will be boys” and forgiven on these grounds (Polowy, 2014). Through such statements, and through other manifestations of masculine sexuality as bestial and uncontrollable, as opposed to contained sexual femininity, mononormativity also works to enhance the predator-prey paradigm. It portrays various scenarios in which sex is something that women give and men take. This encourages disrespect to women’s consent and more importantly, lack thereof, in sexual encounters, as the predator is not meant to mind the desires of its prey (Filipovic, 2008).

At this point it is important to note again, that the gendered construction of mononormativity in popular culture does not just begin or end with representation, it has consequences and effects in real life. Popular culture shapes people’s worldview, their emotional language, and their mindset (Galician, 2004). Girls base their romantic conception on the monogamous model of one true love (Steele & Brown, 1995), and older women judge their peers by their ability to find a boyfriend and by his attractiveness (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). They also accept the notion that women should make great sacrifices for their relationships, and lead their lives in accordance with their partner’s needs. Meanwhile, men find it hard to say no to sexual interactions in a culture that measures them by the number of women they manage to bed (Kim et al., 2007), and are short of role models for emotional management, as managing the relationship is portrayed as “women’s work” (Ingraham, 2009).

Additionally, the fact that every character that has sexual interactions in non-romantic settings is named a “slut” intimidates teenage girls and women and limits their sexual agency (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Farvid, Brown & Rowney, 2016). A woman who chooses to be sexual with many partners is excluded from the “good girl” myth, and presented as a legitimate target for sexual violence, as her choice to be sexual with some people, is portrayed as a choice to be sexual with everyone (Kim et al., 2007). Women internalise these conceptions, and project them on other women, blaming them for the violence they encounter (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). Filipovic (2008) notes that the “boys will be boys” myth established by popular culture has concrete manifestations in rape culture, as it is used to justify sexual violence on the part of men. The double standard also af-

fects women's sexual autonomy outside the monogamous bond. Therefore, the fear of social stigmatisation, sustained by media representations allows women fewer opportunities to experiment and investigate their sexuality.

As we have seen so far, many fields and discourses play a part in the construction of monogamy as a social institution. They all establish its gendered nature as something that is inherent to it, and idealise the gender binary that accompanies it. In most cases this binary is accompanied by a double standard that strictly requires sexual and romantic exclusivity from women, while allowing men more freedom. This double standard later manifests itself in social conceptions regarding sexuality that deprive women of a great deal of their sexual agency, and marks some women as legitimate victims of sexual violence, as they refuse to adhere to its moral codes.

## Beyond Monogamy – From Theory to Practice

The institution of monogamy has been subjected to various forms of social critique since the middle of the 19th century (Sheff, 2012). Until the 1990s, though, these social critiques had usually developed under revolutionary circumstances, in which monogamy had been described as part of the old order that needed to be overthrown. Communists, like Engels and Kollontai spoke of monogamy in terms of class, the ownership over the means of production and the distribution of wealth (Engels, 1884; Kollontai, 1909, 1921). Anarchists like Emma Goldman (1917) saw it as an authoritative structure. Activists of the sexual revolution referred to it as another way in which society limits sexual freedom. In the feminist discourse of the 1970s, and also in the Gay Liberation Front that worked over the same years, it was considered to be a part of the patriarchal, heterosexual, oppressive order (Greer, 1970; Millet, 1970; Gay Liberation Front Manifesto, 1971). These critical analyses have mostly failed to construct alternative institutions of sustainable relationships<sup>6</sup>. This, together with the fact that many of these critiques were merely a byproduct of a more general social critique, meant that once the flames of rebellion had subsided, replaced by a commitment to social reforms, opposition to monogamy was cast aside, along with other matters that were deemed personal or “women's issues”.

Some non-monogamous formations have developed and survived over the

course of time like swinging, sex parties and gay cruising culture, yet all these formations have only subverted, to a limited extent, aspects of sexual exclusivity. They have not shaken the emotional foundations of monogamy as it is socially structured. Moreover, Mint (2007a) notes that these non-monogamous structures have rarely been egalitarian in their nature, and often focused on the sexual satisfaction of men, thus failing to subvert the double standard.

It was only during the 1990s that a social movement which combined a critical discussion of monogamy with the structuring of sustainable alternatives to it, carrying these two as its main banners, was established. Polyamory is a type of CNM in which people are allowed to engage in more than one sexual and/or romantic and or/intimate relationship at the same time, with the informed consent of all parties (Klesse, 2011; Sheff & Tesene, 2015). Polyamory assumes that one person cannot and need not satisfy the entirety of another person's needs and that people may desire a multiplicity of simultaneous romantic and/or sexual relationships (Klesse, 2011). There is a great variety of polyamorous practices, ranging from the number of people involved, the types of relationships they share and the levels of hierarchy or lack thereof (Sheff & Tesene, 2015).

The polyamorous discourse developed simultaneously with the development of polyamorous communities, with practice and theory supplementing one another. From its initial phases it was a discourse led by women who were often also identified as queers, lesbians or bisexuals. They pointed out the sexual double standard in mononormativity and its gendered nature, saw the feminist value in creating alternatives to it, and tried to approach other women in their writing. Amongst the pioneers one could note Easton and Liszt who wrote *The Ethical Slut* (1997), which is considered to be "the polyamorous bible" and Deborah Anapol with *Polyamory – The New Love Without Limits* (1997). Anapol was also the founder of *Loving More* magazine, which developed into a website and global social network for the polyamorous community (Mint, 2007a). More recent writing about polyamory is also dominated by women and non-binary people, with Elizabeth Sheff, Meg John Barker, Tristan Toramino and Eve Rickert, to name but a few of the leading voices; all of whom place a high emphasis on the feminist aspects of the polyamorous discussion.

On a very basic level, polyamory subverts the double standard by providing both men and women with an equal opportunity to have multiple sexual and

romantic partners. A right, which, as we have seen, was historically reserved for men only. By doing so, it undermines the “Slut” vs. “Stud” dichotomy (Cascais & Cardoso, 2012). Mint (2007a, para 9) summarises this by simply saying that: “Polyamory’s most radical contribution is that it gives women full access to nonmonogamy.” Another aspect that contributes to the feminist potential of polyamory is the negation of jealousy and possessiveness as manifestations of true love. Under mononormative conception, Jealousy is usually perceived as a primeval emotion that cannot be controlled. Moreover, as previously noted, jealousy has been used to justify various forms of sexist and violent behaviours. In the polyamorous discourse, however, jealousy is turned into a personal feeling that needs to be dealt with through communication and self-reflection (Easton & Hardy, 2009; Easton, 2010; Mint, 2010).

By disengaging from the mononormative romantic script, polyamory has the potential to destabilise gender stereotypes and gender roles, which are embedded into it. This is reflected in the reflections of some of the polyamorous women interviewed by Elizabeth Sheff (2005) who described aspects of personal, social and sexual empowerment in their polyamorous experiences. Sheff (2005, p. 259) explains:

Departure from accepted forms of relationships required polyamorous women to form new roles or expand roles previously available to them as monogamists. The women in my sample expanded their familial, cultural, gendered, and sexual roles.

Those women related these empowering experiences to their polyamorous lifestyles and the new options it unfolded. Some of them also specifically spoke about how the release from the potential labelling as a “slut” has expanded their sexual freedom. It should be noted however, that some of the women interviewed also spoke of aspects of disempowerment, which in many cases relate not only to stigma, but also to lingering manifestation of more traditional gender roles, as well as to personal insecurities in their relationships. While the need to structure their own relationships without the pre-dictated rules of mononormativity allows women to transgress normatively in other forms, including gender, it does not simply erase the patriarchal society in which they have yet to live (Sheff, 2005).



Women are often brought up to devalue their needs and place themselves as secondary to others, limiting their space and their desires to fit in social and personal margins, especially in the context of romantic and familial relationships. As a result of the fact that polyamorous people are not working with a prescript relationship form, but constructing their own rules, the negotiation of boundaries and needs plays a major part in the establishment of many poly relationships (Taormino, 2008; Veaux & Riceart, 2014). This provides women with a setting in which they are encouraged to draw their boundaries and define their needs, a setting in which it may be easier for them to demand a space and an existence that is for themselves (Easton & Hardy, 2009). While this can happen in a monogamous setting as well, the fact that it is a common part of polyamorous practice makes it more likely to happen.

Also important, in this context, is the polyamorous focus on self-sufficiency and independent existence outside the couple's bond, which negates the social expectation that women, and to a lesser extent men, submerge themselves in their relationships, and become a single social (as well as legal) unit with their partners (Jackson & Scott, 2004). At the same time, polyamorous discourse does emphasise the construction of relationship networks, as well as the significance of various types of relationships and intimacies, in many cases giving names and value to relationships between women that have previously been devalued and unnamed (Sheff, 2005, 2014; Jackson & Scott, 2004). Sheff's (2005) interviewees also pointed out the improvement of their relationships with other women, and the positive and reassuring effects of this. All of these combined may provide women with better support nets to lean on, as they seek an easier escape route from abusive situations.

This does not mean that there is never co-dependency or abuse in polyamorous relationships, and that all these relationships are feminist in and of themselves. It also does not mean that polyamorous communities are free from patriarchal gendered conceptions, or a sexual double standard. Various manifestations of these still remain within those communities, from the division of house labour to the pursuit of the "Hot Bi Babe" (for an extensive discussion of these, see for example Sheff, 2014). This only means that some of the polyamorous values have the potential, which is to some extent reflected in practice, to subvert some of the patriarchal aspects of mononormativity.

Moreover, not everyone is interested in having multiple sexual and/or romantic partners. For some, partial or full exclusivity is more befitting. Polyamorous writers are well aware of this. Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (2004), while reflecting on polyamorous writings as journey books, says that some people will end their journey by choosing to be monogamous; adding, though, that now they will approach monogamy with self-awareness and approach it out of freedom and choice, not treating it as a default. In *'The Ethical Slut'* (2009), Easton and Hardy also noted that even in light of polyamory, monogamy will continue to thrive, as it always has, as a legitimate choice for those who really desire it. Yet, they stress that a choice is possible only when there are several options to choose from.

Robinson (1997) argues that heterosexuality as an institution should be separated from heterosexuality as a lived experience. Jackson (2006, p. 105) adds that compulsory institutionalised heterosexuality: "... regulates those kept within its boundaries as well as marginalising and sanctioning those outside them ...". Accordingly, I argue that the deconstruction of mononormativity is relevant not only to the non-monogamous, but also to those who would have actively chosen an exclusive relationship form, since they too are being limited and disciplined by its institutional nature.

Mononormativity, like heteronormativity, functions as a meaning structure, through which we read and analyse social interactions and situations. Many assumptions about the form and nature of relationships derive from this meaning structure that go far beyond sexual and romantic exclusivity. There are assumptions regarding the participants in the relationship: such as the assumption that at some point in time they will formalise their relationship, share their economic means and have children together, and that unless they do so, their relationship is bound to fail. There are assumptions regarding certain characteristics of the relationship, like the assumption that sexuality must play a part in it, or the assumed romantic performance demanded by cultural portrayals (Rosa, 1994). There are also assumptions regarding the role it plays in the lives of the people involved: it is assumed to be the most important relationship in their lives and the one to which they are most committed. Finally, there are assumptions regarding gender roles and division of labour: such as who was in charge of the invitation and planning in the dating phase, and who on the other hand pushed towards exclusivity and formalisation of the relationship. This process of interpretation and

attribution of meaning goes unnoticed, because we are so used to performing this that it is invisible to us. Upon making all these assumptions we do not feel like we are adding any new facts, we are merely acknowledging the natural order (Jackson, 2006).

## The Polyamorous Existence

I would like to suggest and consider the notions of “the polyamorous continuum” and “the polyamorous existence” as alternative paradigms, within which we can read, discuss, and understand relationships. The polyamorous continuum” acknowledges the fact that every person’s life is made up of a spectrum of relationships – long and short, romantic and platonic, sexual, flirtatious, a-sexual, and some which fit none of these definitions. It asks to subvert the dichotomy and hierarchy between romantic and sexual relationships to platonic and non-sexual ones. It should be noted that this continuum is mostly a theoretical category that exceeds the practical borders of day-to-day lives of both polyamorous and monogamous people. I suggest this in order to provide a categorical reflection on those practices through a theocratic framework in which mononormativity is not assumed as the default; a framework that could allow monogamous people, monogamish people, and other people located somewhere in between to examine their lives through the radical conceptions of polyamory.

The polyamorous existence assumes that relationships are structured and shaped by those who are leading them, out of communication, expressed needs, negotiated boundaries and consent, and not as an attempt to perform a pre-dictated script. The polyamorous existence uses polyamorous language to speak about all forms of relationships, enhancing the values of negotiation, communication and consent in their formation. It acknowledges the fact that some people may be interested in exclusive relationships, but also that there are varying levels of exclusivity, and that desires are fluid, and change over time. Exclusivity under this framework is viewed as a pole in a spectrum, with complete sexual and emotional freedom as the opposite. Neither should be assumed as the default. Instead, the placement of the relationship on this spectrum should be negotiated and agreed upon, and open for renegotiation as time goes by. It frees relationships from the mononormative paradigm that is charged with gendered, sexual

and practical meanings, while allowing people to pick and choose those aspects of the monogamous script that they find worthy, and incorporate them into their own lives. The release from the mononormative meaning of monogamy can allow it to be placed in other relationship dynamics that encourage more equal and independent relationships.

Jamie Heckhert (2010) made a similar suggestion in his article “Love Without Borders, Intimacy Identity and the State of Compulsory Monogamy”. Heckhert speaks of monogamy from an anarchist perspective, as an authoritative mechanism that narrows personal freedom. He suggests “the nomadic existence” as an alternative to compulsory monogamy, arguing that it allows the replacing of the strict borders of monogamy with fluid and temporary boundaries, which are individually drawn. I agree with Heckhert’s assertion that an alternative paradigm is required in order to deconstruct mononormativity. I also agree that it should be a paradigm that leaves enough room for relationships which feature some aspects of chosen, consensual exclusivity, for those who desire it, when they do. Nonetheless, since Heckhert is led by anarchist thoughts, his alternative paradigm focuses on the individual and individualism. I, on the other hand, approach this through a feminist and queer perspective. Thus, I do not only wish to challenge compulsory monogamy, but also its patriarchal characteristics, and therefore, suggest the notion of the polyamorous existence.

Rosa (1994) notes that the binary between platonic and romantic relationships is crucial to the monogamous existence. This dichotomy is accompanied by a hierarchy between the two that grants a higher and unique status to romantic relationships, which are glorified above all other forms of human bonds. By speaking about spectrums of relationship types, and noting the options of fluidity and liminality within existing relationships, the polyamorous existence” subverts this dichotomy and the hierarchy alongside it., thus, providing more room for various types of connections and commitments.

With the lesbian continuum, Rich (1980) tried to acknowledge and recognise various types of relationships between women – intimate, friendly, familial, social, playful, personal and political – that often go unnoticed under heteronormativity. Similarly, the polyamorous continuum seeks to acknowledge all those relationships that people in general, and women specifically, lead that digress from the setting of the monogamous couple. The subversion of the hierarchy between dif-

ferent forms of relationships could grant more space and value to relationships between women. Through the establishment of the conception of intimacy, which is not necessarily sexual, it enables the creation of a broader network of social relations, support systems, and new familial roles even for those who do choose romantic and/or sexual exclusivity.

In addition to this, looking at relationships through the conception of the polyamorous existence can contribute to the deconstruction of the mononormative double standard, and encourage the creation of a more egalitarian sexual and relational atmosphere. Given this, as a paradigm the polyamorous existence assumes that a multiplicity of sexual and romantic partners is a valid choice for everyone including women, and also that sexuality is one practice out of many through which people can express their affection. Women who prefer sexual and romantic exclusivity could still benefit from such a paradigmatic shift, since it would expand their sexual agency at times in which they are not partaking in a committed relationship. As such, as previously noted, most people in Western society lean towards serial monogamy, and many of them engage in casual sex. Given that women still fear the labelling as a slut, this change is relevant to many.

Thinking of the “polyamorous continuum” and the polyamorous existence gives us the opportunity to imagine the deconstruction of monogamy as a social institution. A realistic manifestation of this could potentially be coopted into the monogamous order, as social orders need practical changes to accompany theoretical ideas. As a thought experiment, even though it encourages a discursive frame that makes some of the radical notions of polyamory accessible and available to people who would not embrace a polyamorous relationship, it allows us to bring forth the legitimacy of sexual and romantic multiplicity; to question the prioritisation of romantic relationships over platonic ones; to make room for various forms of intimacies and to fluidity and changes within existing relationships; and to disengage from the mononormative rulebook in a way that allows people to consider what relationships they would like to have, instead of trying to fit relationships into pre-dictated boxes.

## Conclusion

In this article I examined some of the discursive foundations of mononormativity, and demonstrated how they all enforce a sexual double standard and a traditional

gender binary. A broader analysis of some of these discursive fields is still required, as well as an expansion of this discussion to other discourses that have not been covered here, like linguistics and socio-biology. When it comes to popular culture specifically, there is also room for deeper analysis of various instances of mononormativity, similar to those which have been done with heteronormativity, as well as research that would exceed the scope of American culture.

It is also crucial to look into the daily manifestations of mononormativity and how they come manifest, both in the lives of those who follow in its footsteps, and of those who choose to disengage from it. I do believe, however, that this article lays the groundwork on which such future examinations could build.

I have also looked into the feminist potential of polyamory in subverting some of the gendered aspects of mononormativity, and have tried to explore how these radical aspects of the polyamorous discourse could exceed the borders of the polyamorous community. While the polyamorous continuum” may remain a theoretical thought experiment, it is one that could give polyamorous people better vocabulary to explain their life choices to monogamous folk, and it could give monogamous people who do not want to adopt mononormativity the first steps of an alternative path. In order to conclude on a more practical note, I would point to Barker (2013), who claims that a paradigmatic shift is already taking place. More people are occupying the liminal space between monogamy and polyamory, asking themselves questions about relationships, or looking for the right questions to ask; thus making it a great time to consider what alternative relational paradigms we can construct, and how to make them more egalitarian. This article is one small step in that direction.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> There is a growing number of articles, books and other publications dealing with various forms of consensual non-monogamies (CNM), like, Sheff (2014, 2015), Barker & Langdrige (2010b), Klesse (2011, 2016), Deri (2015), to name but a few. See Brewster et al. (2017) for a thorough review of recent scholarship. Quite a few conferences dedicated to CNM have also taken place in recent years, amongst them “The 1st Conference on Non-Monogamies and Contemporary Intimacies” that took place in Lisbon in September 2015 from which this issue has resulted.

- <sup>2</sup> The practice of polygamy amongst Ashkenazi Jews ended around the 11th Century following a prohibition by Rabbi Gerhom. Jews of Sephardic origins continued to practice polygamy until the establishment of the state of Israel, into which most of them migrated, where polygamy is mostly prohibited by law. Even in contemporary Israeli law, though, that in matters of marriage and divorce is subject to Jewish religious law, there are various exceptions that allow polygamy on the side of men (Schotman, 1995).
- <sup>3</sup> Another important legal privilege enjoyed by monogamous couples relates to immigration rights. Since at the moment, this legal discussion is more relevant to the cases of polygamous families, and less relevant to the discussion of polyamory, I have not addressed this in this paper. However, it should be noted that in these cases too it is often the women who are mostly harmed by the lack of legal recognition to their marital status, as they find themselves disconnected from their family or faced with an ongoing threat of deportation. For a thorough discussion of the legal hurdles experienced by non-monogamous people see Navarro (2017), Rambakkana (2015) and Daaif (2007).
- <sup>4</sup> Klesse (2016) notes a growing wave of media representations of polyamory, as part of an attempt by poly people to gain greater visibility. Yet, she points out that mainstream media still clings mostly to the problems and hurdles and thus, relationships and positive representations are mostly marginal.
- <sup>5</sup> Due to the attempt to present a broader analysis, not focused only on media, most of the texts analysed by the article references in this section focus on American popular culture. As American media is broadcasted globally, and regularly reflected in creations across the globe, I do believe that its effects range beyond the lives of American women. Nevertheless, there is certainly room for a comparative examination of mononormative messages in popular culture produced in other countries.
- <sup>6</sup> Although some of them have succeeded within specific sub-cultures to maintain common forms of sexual variants like the gay cruising culture and the prevalence of sexually open relationships within these communities. These, though are very much focused on the sexual aspect of CNM. Moreover most of them are mostly, if not only, practiced by gays and not by lesbian, manifesting again the sexual double standard.

## References

- Amazon. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/>
- Anapol, D. M. (1997). *Polyamory: The new love without limits: Secrets of sustainable intimate relationships*. IntiNet Resource Center.
- Augustine of Hippo. (401). *Of the Good of Marriage*. Retrieved from <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1309.htm>
- Avila-Saavedra, G. (2009). Nothing queer about queer television: televised construction

- of gay masculinities. *Media, Culture & Society*, 31(1), 5–21.
- Aviram, H., & Leachman, G. (2014). The future of polyamorous marriage: Lessons from the marriage equality struggle. *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender*, 23, 269–338.
- Barker, M. (2007). Heteronormativity and the exclusion of bisexuality in psychology. In V. Clarke & E. Peel (Eds.), *Out in psychology: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer perspectives* (pp. 95–119). West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Barker M. (2013). *Rewriting the rules. An integrative guide to love, sex and relationships*. London: Routledge
- Barker, M., Heckert, J., & Wilkinson, E. (2013). Polyamorous intimacies: From one love to many loves and back again. In T. Sanger & Y. Taylor (Eds.), *Mapping intimacies: Relations, exchanges, affects* (pp. 190–208). Springer.
- Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (Eds.). (2010a). Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent research and theory. *Sexualities*, 13(6), 748–772.
- Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (Eds.). (2010b). *Understanding non-monogamies*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Behera, H. K. (2015). Representation of gender roles in the media: An analysis of gender discourse in Sex and City movies. *American Research Thoughts*, 1(8), 1775–1795.
- Bennice, J. A., & Resick, P. A. (2003). Marital rape: History, research, and practice. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 4(3), 228–246.
- Brandon-Friedman, R. A. (2017). Power, Deviance, Stigma, and Control: A Sociological Reconceptualization of Sexuality within Social Work Services. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 44(1), 141.
- Brewster, M. E., Soderstrom, B., Esposito, J., Breslow, A., Sawyer, J., Geiger, E. & Sandil, R. (2017). A content analysis of scholarship on consensual nonmonogamies: Methodological roadmaps, current themes, and directions for future research. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 6(1), 32.
- Cascais, A. F., & Cardoso, D. (2012). ‘Loving many’: polyamorous love, gender and identity. *Gender and love: Interdisciplinary perspectives*, 21–29.
- Daaif, A. (2007). *Palestinian women under the burden of national and social occupation – a feminist reading on racism and patriarchy in the shade of the Zionist discourse of citizenship and residentially and under the citizenship and entry to Israel law*. Pardes, Haifa. [Hebrew]
- Deri, J. (2015). *Love’s Refraction: Jealousy and Compersion in Queer Women’s Polyamorous Relationships*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.



- Di Mattia, J. (2004). What's the harm in believing? 'Mr. Big, Mr. Perfect, and the romantic quest for Sex and the City's Mr. Right. *Reading Sex and the City*, 17–32.
- Easton, D. (2010). Making friends with jealousy: therapy with polyamorous clients. In M. Barker, D. Langdrige (Eds.), *Understanding Non-Monogamies* (pp. 207–211). New York: Routledge.
- Easton, D. & Hardy J. W. (2009). *The ethical slut: A practical guide to polyamory, open relationships & other adventures*. Berkeley: Celestial Arts.
- Easton, D. & Liszt, C. A. (1997). *The ethical slut: A guide to infinite sexual possibilities*. San Francisco: Greenery Press.
- Engels, F. (1884). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/>
- Eriksen, M. S. & Hermansen, T. R. (2010). Only Girl (In the World) [Recorded by Rihanna]. On Loud. Los Angeles, CA: Def Jam.
- Farless, H. (2017). *Free(dom)inated: A feminist examination of hookup culture's sexual empowerment and sexual policing of Duke University undergraduate women* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Duke University, Durham NC.
- Farvid, P., & Braun, V. (2017). Unpacking the “pleasures” and “pains” of heterosexual casual sex: beyond singular understandings. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54(1), 73–90.
- Farvid, P., Braun, V. & Roney, C. (2016). ‘No girl wants to be called a slut!’: Women, heterosexual casual sex and the sexual double standard. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1–17.
- Filipovic, J. (2008). Offensive feminism: The conservative gender norms that perpetuate rape culture, and how feminists can fight back. In J. Friedman & J. Valenti (Eds.), *Yes means yes: Visions of female sexual power and a world without rape* (pp. 13–27). Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Fitz-Gibbon, K. (2012). Provocation in New South Wales: The need for abolition. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 45, 194–213.
- Freud, S. (1913). *Totem and taboo*. (A. A. Brill, Trans.). NY: New Republic.
- Freud, S. (1915). Modern Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness. *American Journal of Urology and Sexology*, 11(10), 391–405.
- Freud, S. (1930). *Civilization and Its Discontents*. (J. Riviere, Trans.). London: Hogarth.
- Galician, M. (2004). *Sex, love, and romance in the mass media*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Gay Liberation Front. (1971). *Gay liberation front manifesto*. London: Gay Liberation Front.
- Goldman, E. (1917). Marriage and love. In E. Goldman (Ed.), *Anarchism and Other Essays* (2nd ed.) (pp. 227–239). New York: Dover.
- Greer, G. (1970). *The Female Eunuch*. London: Paladin.
- Haskell, M. (1974) *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hassan, M. (1999). The politics of honour – Patriarchy, the state and the murder of women for family honour. In D. Yisraeli, A. Fridamn, H. Dahan Kalev et al. (Eds.), *Sex, Gender and Politics* (pp. 267–307). Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchd [Hebrew]
- Heckert, J. (2010). Love without borders? Intimacy, identity and the state of compulsory monogamy. In M. Barker and D. Langdrige (Eds.), *Understanding Non-Monogamies* (pp. 255–266). New York: Routledge.
- Holland, D. C. & Eisenhart, M. A. (1990). *Educated in romance: Women, achievement, and college culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ingraham, C. (2009). *White weddings: Romancing heterosexuality in popular culture*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, S. (2006). Gender, sexuality and heterosexuality: The complexity (and limits) of heteronormativity. *Feminist Theory*, 7(1), 105–21.
- Jackson S. & Scott S. (2004). The personal is still political: Heterosexuality, feminism and monogamy. *Feminism and Psychology*, 14(1), 151–157.
- Jordan, J. (2004). Beyond belief? Police, rape and women's credibility. *Criminal Justice*, 4(1), 29–59.
- Kamir, O. (1997). Reasonableness killed the woman – The warm blood of the reasonable man and the common Israeli. *Criminals*, 1,137–185, [Hebrew]
- Kean, J. (2015). A stunning plurality: Unravelling hetero- and mononormativities through HBO's Big Love. *Sexualities*, 18(5–6), 698–713.
- Kim, J. L., Lynn Sorsoli, C., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on primetime network television. *Journal of sex research*, 44(2), 145–157.
- Kollontai, A. (1909). *The Social Basis of the Women's Question*. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1909/social-basis.htm>
- Kollontai, A. (1921). *Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle*. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1921/sex-class-struggle.htm>

- Klesse, C. (2011). Notions of love in polyamory — Elements in a discourse on multiple loving. *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research*, 3(2), 4–25.
- Klesse, C. (2016). Contesting the culture of monogamy. In N. L. Fischer & s. Seidman (Eds.), *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies* (chapter 37). Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Krafft Ebing, R. V. (1892). *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct; A Medico-Legal Study*. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/psychopathiasex00chadgoog>
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200–214.
- Millett, K. (1970). *Sexual politics*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Mint, P. (2007a, March, 27). *Polyamory and feminism*. Retrieved from <https://freaksexual.com/2007/03/27/polyamory-and-feminism/>
- Mint, P. (2007b, July 20). *Nonmonogamy and the double standard*. Retrieved from <https://freaksexual.com/2007/07/20/nonmonogamy-and-the-double-standard/>
- Mint, P. (2010). *Jealousy, monogamy and power*. Retrieved from <http://www.pepperminty.com/writing/jealousy-power.pdf>
- Navarro, P. P. (2017). Beyond inclusion: Non-monogamies and the borders of citizenship. *Sexuality & Culture*, 21(2), 441–458.
- Negbi, E. (2009). *Rape Stories from the Court – A Narrative Analysis of Verdicts*. Tel Aviv: Resling [Hebrew]
- Neuendorf, K. A., Gore, T. D., Dalessandro, A., Janstova, P., & Snyder-Suhy, S. (2010). Shaken and stirred: A content analysis of women's portrayals in James Bond films. *Sex Roles*, 62(11–12), 747–761.
- O'Hara, S. (2012). Monsters, playboys, virgins and whores: Rape myths in the news media's coverage of sexual violence. *Language and Literature*, 21(3), 247–259.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2004). Take four pioneering poly women: A review of three classical texts on polyamory. In: S. Anderlini-D'Onofrio (Ed.), *Plural loves: Designs for bi and poly living* (pp. 227–234). Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Pieper, M. & Bauer, R. (2006). Polyamory and Mono-normativity – Results of an Empirical Study of Non-monogamous Patterns of Intimacy. (unpublished article).
- Polikoff, N. (1993). We will get what we ask for: Why legalizing gay and lesbian marriage will not 'dismantle the legal structure of gender in every marriage'. *Virginia Law Review*, 79(7), 1535–1550. Symposium on Sexual Orientation and the Law.

- Polowy, K., (2014, February, 13). *The great rom-com double standard: It's OK for men to cheat, but not women*. Yahoo Movies. Retrieved from <https://www.yahoo.com/movies/blogs/movie-news/great-rom-com-double-standard-ok-men-cheat-221726112.html>
- Power, N. (2009). *One dimensional woman*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Rambukkana, N. (2015). *Fraught Intimacies. Non/Monogamy in the Public Sphere*. Vancouver, Toronto: University of British Columbia Press.
- Randall, M. (2010). Sexual assault law, credibility, and “ideal victims”: Consent, resistance, and victim blaming. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 22(2), 397–433.
- Raphael, J. (2013). *Rape is rape: How denial, distortion, and victim blaming are fueling a hidden acquaintance rape crisis*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books.
- Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 5(4), 631–660.
- Richardson, N., & Wearing, S. (2014). *Gender in the Media*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ritchie, A. & Barker, M. (2006) There aren't words for what we do or how we feel so we have to make them up: Constructing polyamorous languages in a culture of compulsory monogamy. *Sexualities* 9(5), 584–601
- Robinson, V. (1997). My baby just cares for me: Feminism, heterosexuality and non-monogamy. *Journal of Gender Studies* 6(4), 143–158.
- Rosa, B. (1994) Anti-monogamy: A radical challenge to compulsory heterosexuality. In C. Griffin (Ed.), *Stirring it: Challenges for feminism* (pp. 107–120). London: Taylor and Francis.
- Rubin, G. (1984). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In C. S. Vance (Ed.), *Pleasure and danger: Exploring female sexuality* (pp. 267–319). London: Pandora.
- Schippers, M. (2016). *Beyond monogamy: Polyamory and the future of polyqueer sexualities*. New York: New York University Press
- Schotman, A. (1995). Women's status in marriage and divorce legislation. In F. Radai, M. Shalex & M. Liban Kobi (Eds.), *Women's Status in Society and Law* (pp. 380–436). Jerusalem: Shuken [Hebrew]
- Seidman, S. (2005). From polluted homosexual to the normal gay: Changing patterns of sexual regulation in America. *Thinking straight: The power, the promise, and the paradox of heterosexuality*, 39–61.
- Serano, J. (2007). *Whipping girl*. Emeryville, CA: Seal Press.

- Serano, J. (2008). Why nice guys finish last. In J. Friedman & J. Valenti, J. (Eds.), *Yes means yes: Visions of female sexual power & a world without rape* (pp. 227–240). Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.
- Sheff, E. (2005). Polyamorous women, sexual subjectivity and power. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 3(34), 251–283.
- Sheff, E. (2012, September, 9). *Three waves of non-monogamy: A select history of polyamory in the United States*. Retrieved from: <https://elisabethsheff.com/2012/09/09/three-waves-of-polyamory-a-select-history-of-non-monogamy/>
- Sheff, E. (2014). *The polyamorists next door: Inside multiple-partner relationships and families*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Sheff, E., & Tesene, M. M. (2015). Consensual non-monogamies in industrialized nations. In J. DeLamater & R. F. Plante (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of sexualities* (pp. 223–241). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Shifman, P. (2005). On the new family, Opening statements for a discussion. *Matters of Law*, 28(3), 643–670, [Hebrew]
- Smith, S. L., & Cook, C. A. (2008, June). Gender stereotypes: An analysis of popular films and TV. In Conference (Vol. 208, pp. 12–23).
- Spohn, C., & Tellis, K. (2012). The criminal justice system's response to sexual violence. *Violence against women*, 18(2), 169–192.
- Steele, J. R., & Brown, J. D. (1995). Adolescent room culture: Studying media in the context of everyday life. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 24(5), 551–576.
- Taormino, T. (2008) *Opening Up: A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Open Relationships*. San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.
- Valenti, J. (2008). *He's a stud, she's a slut, and 49 other double standards every woman should know*. Berkeley: Seal Press.
- Veaux, F., & Rickert E. (2014). *More than two: A practical guide to ethical polyamory*. Thorntree Press, LLC.
- Warner, M. (2000). *The trouble with normal: Sex, politics, and the ethics of queer life*. Harvard University Press.
- Willey, A. (2006). Christian nations, polygamic races, and women's rights: Toward a genealogy of non/monogamy and whiteness. *Sexualities*, 9(5), 530–546.
- Ziegler, A., Matsick, J. L., Moors, A. C., Rubin, J. D., & Conley, T. D. (2014). Does monogamy harm women? Deconstructing monogamy with a feminist lens. *Journal für Psychologie*, 22(1), 1–18.