

Neither Right nor Wrong

Let this story begin like many others, with “Once upon a time...” I had an in-depth conversation about the often conflicting nature of various lifestyles and relationship dynamics. At that time I saw some fundamental differences between polyamory and power exchange (e.g. M/s, Owner/owned, etc) as relationship goals.

Disclaimer: I try to be very honest and upfront in that I am not Poly myself. This is not to say I haven't experimented earlier on or don't identify with some of its values. However, my innate preference for Ownership and power exchange far more outweighs the Poly modality.

Respecting Differences

Their response during the conversation was of confusion, dispute, and frustration. For my part, it was a shrug and evidence that indeed many have such a firm belief structure in place that few are willing to discuss it without needing to defend their position or maintain a bias. The reason I revisit this now is because some recent conversations with others struggles brought this matter to mind.

In this instance, the others position was that humans are multifaceted beings (no argument there) and that no one individual can be everything to everyone (again, no argument). Their rationale was that poly was more natural (arguable) and that it allowed various relationships to exist to fill the various needs of a given individual (error). I soon learned that their position had a directly relevant motive, they were frustrated as to why **I** wouldn't consider a poly relationship, in which it seemed they were interested.

It would have saved a lot of time and frustration on their part if it was presented as a simple question, with a

*readily accepted answer in response, instead of a debate.
Some folks live for conflict...*

Personally I have no issue with poly or its practitioners. Many of my friends and acquaintances are poly, and that in no way bothers me to any degree. Typically mine is a “live and let live” attitude, provided my tolerance is reciprocated. Early on in my lifestyle exploration I even tried my hand at poly but found it wasn’t for me. For those curious as to why, poly contradicted some of my strongest principles or behavioral drivers.

Avoiding Drama

Most of the examples of poly I’ve seen tend to be laden with drama. Its rare (but heartening) to find it otherwise, as it requires significant emotional maturity and open communication skills for all those involved. High drama in poly is poly gone awry; likely engaged by those more enamored with the *idea* of poly than what it takes to actually *practice* it responsibly.

Honesty & Awareness

There is a significant degree of total honesty to promote self-awareness. This is needed to exercise open communication, emotional self-regulation, the ability to sit with discomfort, push through fear/insecurities, etc. Without these present there’s a tendency towards selective disclosure and lack of transparency (lying), suppressing needs/wants (denial), and emotional bleed over (drama/chaos). Without honesty with the self and others, and communicating truthfully and openly, the practice of poly falls apart.

Emotional Self-Reliance

Being emotionally self-reliant means being fully accountable for your own needs, happiness, satisfaction, contentment, peace, etc. No one should be held responsible for another's emotional experience. Some may view this as a lonely choice, but it need not be. It means we recognize that it is up to us individually to find peace, be content, or feel happy – but no one can be MADE to feel this. Such experiences can certainly be offered, facilitated, or presented by another, yet only I have the ability to choose to let it in. It is my responsibility to fill my own needs, not that of others, no matter how many facets of my personality there may be.

Ownership

I fully admit to and enjoy the idea of Ownership, especially of my submissive. I will not share them with other lovers, or wind up having them caught between conflicting protocols or standing orders. Nope – for in the words of Daffy Duck “what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine”. This is because I take immense pleasure and fulfillment in taking care of what's mine, see that flourish, grow, overcome, and transform to something they are surprised, proud, and happy to become.

Fundamental Difference



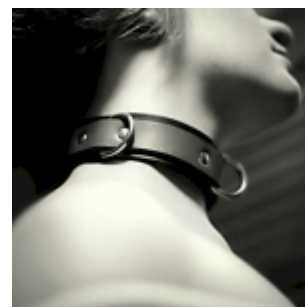
polyamory
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I see a fundamental difference between Poly and Ownership in that they are typically at different ends of the philosophical spectrum – and I'm certainly not alone in this observation. The essence is that poly holds highest an egalitarian model, while power exchange is explicitly not. To be clear, there are some that can compartmentalize their time and personalities so well that this is not a challenge for them, but they are the minority (note: not bad, just rare).

Polyamory is largely about an *egalitarian approach* to sharing time with people, intimately and emotionally. In addition, it's the practice of having more than one intimate relationship at a time *with everyone's full knowledge and consent* (and if it's without knowledge and consent then it's just cheating). It can also be said that, when looking at the bigger picture, poly is a philosophical approach to life that requires we surrender to the experience of love, giving and receiving openly, in the Now and without attachment and for ALL involved.

The essence of Poly is fluidity via egalitarianism

On the other hand, strong power exchange dynamics such as M/s typically often have an element of possession to it. This is not egalitarian, for there is the Owner and the owned, be that in full or in part. This presents a clear delineation of assumed roles, behaviors, responsibilities, expectations, etc. While some may see rigidity in such a model, from the possession and attachment often comes from a sense of belonging and being held of value. For many in power exchange, they experience a greater certainty in their relationship, and thus achieve a sense of security from *knowing* what is expected and where they stand with one another.



It is more common in these relationships that there is one

Owner which the s-type must answer to. Sharing s-types with multiple Owners or M-types often results in conflicts in training commands, expectations, time, resources, etc. This can frustrate and confuse the involved s-type in to the point of confusion, conflict, exasperation, and relationship failure. In cases where there are multiple s-types, the hierarchy and structure is set by the Owner or M-type. Even in a larger leather household there is a primary responsible for setting policies, house rules, delegating, etc. This is to ensure there aren't matters of confusion or conflict which organically arise.

The essence of Ownership is structure via hierarchy

It's up to You

Again, these are all just my perspectives, gathered from years of experience and listening to the experiences of others. If you are one of those that feel none of the above applies to you, then I hope this provided some insight as to the world of others. If you feel you balance the world of poly and power-exchange without issue, then congratulations on your rarity and uniqueness for your type is far and few between. But this isn't about you...

It's about all those facing a decision, or those wondering why mixing these worlds may not be working. It's for those who can't take paper to practice without the reality throwing the theory out the window. When trying to combine or face two philosophically divergent value systems there is naturally going to be friction, conflict, and tears. Its no wonder, for this is very much like water and oil – they are two innately different things. Neither is wrong nor lesser than the other, just different...

There's always a choice, and there's always the opportunity cost and resources that goes with it.

