
During the litigation over the constitutionality of California's Proposition 8, which defined marriage as the relationship between one man and one woman, Attorney Charles Cooper maintained that the legislation "furthered the state's interest in procreation." Noting that he had recently performed a marriage between a ninety-five year old man and an eighty-three year old woman, Judge Vaughn Walker indicated that he hadn't demanded that the couple promise to have children. In any event, Vaughn asked, how did permitting same-sex marriage impair or adversely affect the state's interest? "Your honor," Cooper replied, "my answer is: I don't know. I don't know."

In *Just Married*, Stephen Macedo, a professor of politics at Princeton University, provides a closely reasoned, powerful, and persuasive refutation of the contention that same-sex marriage endangers "the channeling" of heterosexual sex into committed partnerships that forge the most advantageous environment for the rearing of children. In fact, he claims, same-sex marriage actually strengthens marriage, monogamy, and gender equality.

Macedo also offers a compelling rebuttal to the slippery-slope position of Justice Antonin Scalia and others on the right that same-sex marriage will pave the way for legalizing polygamy, bestiality, and incest. And he counters critics on left (including feminists and queer theorists) who assert that to promote the widest possible range of caregiving relationships marriage should be disestablished as a publicly sanctioned institution.

Macedo reminds us that a train of legal entitlements - hospital visitation rights, decision-making authority in the event of incapacity, and the right to jointly own property - accompany same-sex marriage. And he demonstrates that same-sex marriage does nothing to weaken families or children. The only children affected by it, he points out, are the children of gay and lesbian couples, who have heretofore been materially harmed (and stigmatized) by the failure to officially sanction the relationship of their parents. Equally important, according to Macedo, controversies over same-sex marriage distract us from attending to the challenges related to single parenting and the widening class divide that affects marriage and family stability.

Taking seriously the slippery slope argument, Macedo makes a persuasive case, rooted in democratic principles and social reality, for distinguishing polygamy from same-sex marriage. Homosexuality, he asserts, is a deep-seated feature of human personality; polygamy, though it may well originate as a religious tenet, is a strategy, "available to those with the inclination and resources to pursue it." Although exceptions exist, it seems clear that polygamy is harmful to women and children. It generates jealousy among plural wives; it lowers the age of women at marriage (and reduces the formal education they receive); it introduces inequalities with respect to divorce; it produces poor educational, emotional, and health outcomes for children (in part because it reduces the average parental investment per child); and it can lead to a substantial increase in men without mates.

Macedo suggests that the experiences of Winston Blackmore, the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints bishop of Bountiful, British Columbia, although admittedly atypical, underscore the dangers of polygamy. Among Blackmore's 34 wives were several under-aged girls. He did not know the whereabouts of his adult sons (he has 107 children). And Blackmore laughed off complaints against him filed by the Human Rights Commission.

Polygamy, Macedo concludes, is prone to a variety of social harms, including women's inequality and subordination: our values support
More importantly, perhaps, as he steps back from the less than pressing possibility of the legalization of polygamy, Macedo emphasizes that many heterosexual couples in the United States can have children but choose not to do so - and many gay couples make raising their children in a loving home environment a high priority. He quotes Judge Richard Posner: "Heterosexuals get drunk and pregnant, producing unwanted children; their reward is to be allowed to marry. Homosexual couples do not produce unwanted children; their reward is to be denied the right to marry. Go figure." Some states, Macedo indicates, allow same-sex couples to adopt but not marry. Acknowledging that sexual relations in marriage have a special significance because of their connection with procreation, Macedo adds the eminently reasonable observation that "everything else" in marriage should not be regarded as less valuable.

Although lots of alternatives are now available, tens of millions of Americans continue to embrace marriage. Indeed, about 95% of adults are married or say they would like to be. The 2013 Supreme Court decision (United States v. Windsor) declaring same-sex marriage "equal in dignity and justice" to "traditional" marriage (and growing support for it in the United States, especially among younger adults) are adding to their numbers. From the standpoint of justice, Macedo insists, "monogamous marriage helps imprint the DNA of equal liberty onto the very fiber of family and sexual intimacy."

That is reason enough, is it not, for laws and practices that encourage and facilitate this form of coupling?

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