



Not 'What's in a name?' but 'What's in the substance?'

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*What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet*

Wm. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

There's no difference between the three main party leaders on gay marriage, but David Cameron has most to lose. He has bought into the Policy Exchange document *What's in a Name? - Is there a case for equal marriage?* which at least recognises that marriage involves two vows: fidelity and lifetime commitment.

Different loves: Keeping the name but changing the substance

The Male Couple study (McWhirter and Mattison 1984:252,3) found that male couples could expect to achieve monogamy *or* longevity but not both: "all couples with a relationship lasting more than five years have incorporated some provision for outside sexual activity". Consequently, "each of these men has had to alter his own value systems." Fidelity "is not defined in terms of sexual behaviour but rather by their emotional commitment." This 'fidelity' by another name is 'non-monogamy'; it does not smell as sweet.

Why should two men be excluded from what Andrew Sullivan calls "the primary institution of love"? Let's apply the fidelity (*translation: 'non-monogamy'*) test. Non-monogamy typically lengthens male couples' relationships but shortens those of heterosexuals. This difference is objective and important. To mix two mutually exclusive fidelity cultures within marriage would be catastrophic.

Corrosion of values, not weight of numbers

But with so few same-sex marriages likely, what's the danger? Policy Exchange don't mention sex education. Boys must be told that they may marry a man or a woman. Also that in the former case, both spouse and self are likely to become non-monogamous. No firewall will prevent this exciting philosophy spreading throughout the class, with eventual consequences for heterosexual relationships. It's about values, not numbers.

Sullivan says (*Virtually Normal*: 202,3), "at times, among gay male relationships, the openness of the contract makes it more likely to survive than many heterosexual bonds" and "within this ['equal marriage'] model, there is plenty of scope for cultural difference." Sullivan minimises the monogamy/ non-monogamy conflict as a 'cultural difference'; Policy Exchange goes further and denies it completely: "It seems pretty clear that most gay people have no desire to change the nature of marriage"(34). Untrue. If Sullivan, a conservative, sees 'plenty of scope for cultural difference', how much more will radicals reinterpret marriage once they get inside?

The marriage institution cannot reform a man; only a woman can

Lee Badgett's Dutch research is quoted: "I looked hard for evidence of changes in the cultural idea of marriage and for evidence that heterosexuals and gay and

lesbian couples have different ideas and behaviour related to marriage – but I couldn't find any." Also untrue. She says elsewhere, "... most of the married and unmarried male couples I spoke with were not monogamous, and some distinguished their norms related to monogamy from those attached to traditional marriage" (*When Gay People Get Married*: 95). As damage limitation she offers the new fidelity as "evidence of more traditional norms". "As Willem, who was married, put it, 'Fidelity is not between your legs but between your ears.'" Conservatives should protest to Mr Cameron that monogamy which is not between your legs is not a norm in British culture, and will destabilise marriage. Women and children will suffer. Clearly (same-sex) marriage as an institution has not reformed these men. It takes a woman to do that.

Policy Exchange says, "The burden of proof is on the opponents of marriage equality to say, in the language the law understands, why gay people do not deserve the same liberties as their fellow citizens." The proof is clear. Marriage is under threat from a change not just of name but of substance. And it does not smell sweet at all.

Does Mr Cameron really want this to be his legacy to the British people?