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Mormon Fundamentalist, Polygamous Marriage and What It May Tell Us about Being Human

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Abstract: The research that forms this paper was conducted over six years 1993-1999 in a Mormon Fundamentalist community in Western USA. I wanted to understand if it was possible to love multiple individuals at the same time or if, instead, there was a preference for emotional involvement. I live inside the community dwelling with different families which enable me to view ordinary life and daily interactions that are often not noted in survey research. I supplement this approach by collecting the life history of people's relationships and feelings toward one another. My results are present as a set of ethnographic narratives that highlight the emotional fulfillment and angst of individual experience trying to love more than one person at the same time. I found that the impulse to form dyadic love is relentless; women are the primary agents behind the push towards a more exclusive couple centered or dyad love intimacy; the "favorite" wife was readily identified in 52 out of 60 families. This presents something of a paradox: humans are both a pair-bond species who desire to form dyadic unions, even when they are not culturally sanctioned, and who have an adaptive cognitive capacity to create alternative ways of living.

Keywords: romantic love; Mormon Fundamentalist; co-wives; favorite wife



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1. Is the Pair Bond a Human Universal?

America's fascination with the polygynous (here after I will use the community's term polygamous) family arises out of a relentless interest in wanting to achieve a more fulfilling marriage. Mammals are notoriously resistant in forming a pair bond or a lifelong socially monogamous bond. Of the "roughly 5000 species of mammals, only 3 to 5 percent are known to form lifelong pair bonds" [1] (pp. 1–2). This select group includes beavers, otters, wolves, some bats and foxes, a few hoofed animals" (and homo sapiens. Given the difficulty of establishing an enduring pair bond, some people ask if humans are really a pair-bond species, or have we been culturally misled into accepting the dyadic bond as our "natural" state of being?

David Barash suggests the ethnographic record supports the assertion that thousand years ago the early forgers' marriage system was more polygynous than monogamous [2]. It was only over time and with increasing pressure from society's unmarried male youth that societies gradually shifted to a monogamous marriage system. Even then, wealthy men continued to engage in pseudo polygynous mating arrangements. In partial support of Barash's hypothesis (his position remains a hypothesis as the ethnographic data on prehistoric forgers is too sparse to reach a firm conclusion) is research conducted on contemporary polyamory (i.e., confluent loves) that argue humans evolve to have multiple concurrent lovers.

Polyamour or confluent/plural love is intertwined with a new society-wide moral revolution that no longer condemned individuals who pursued casual sex and serial love encounters. Confluent love is not organized around a search for a life-long partner in which to raise a family with but rather is sustained only by mutual "deep feelings". Once the feelings dissipate, so does the love bond. The "confluent love" stands in symbolic

opposition to the historic middle-class configuration of love, sex, and ideally a lasting marriage. Because confluent love is based on a moral maxim that holds relationship commitment is a transitory state's best savior when the feelings are "hot." It is assumed that the passion will diminish and with it the reason to remain together.

The polyamour ideal unit is a triad that could be one woman and two men, or one man and two women. "Open couples may either engage in hierarchical polyamory, in which they prioritize their primary connection, or they seek to become part of a like-minded pod via an extended family of choice [3]. It is a form of "entrepreneurial strategy" whereby participants hedge their commitment, while deciding whether they want to remain "committed" [4]. Alongside these open couples, solo polyamory has emerged for those who embrace the communication values of polyamory, namely honesty and transparency, but who do not seek to cohabit, share finances, or generate emotional interdependency with a primary partner" [5] (p. 2).

But "do polyamorous men and women really love everyone they are relationally attached to the same? Polyamour practitioners insist they do. It is their official discourse, which they invoke to counter outsiders' claims that they are selfishly sex-driven" [5]. Most contend that they have formed a heightened spiritual state through the creation of a plural-love bond.

Amongst practitioners of hierarchical polyamory, Wood, Santis, Desmarais, Milhausen research found a division of ranked affection whereby one person is the primary or more exclusive love interest, whereas others serve as secondary or even tertiary love interests [6]. Very often, it was the newest lover that generated the most passionate interest and not the in-place primary partner. For some couples, this dynamic might threaten the core of their partnership [5].

In a separate study of individuals who did not seek to, but nonetheless became emotionally involved with, more than one person at the same time, Jankowiak and Gerth [7] found the two lovers were conceptualized differently: one was an intense passionate romantic love interest, and the other was thought of as a companionate love partner. The existential struggle of such individuals revolved around how best to reconcile loving two persons at the same time [5].

Because practitioners of polyamory openly "seek out plural arrangements, they rarely admit they suffer from guilt or emotional angst. Jankowiak suspects, if this is true, the absence of acute emotional angst arises from all members accepting their relative place within the polyamorous arrangement" [5] (p. 2). Still, according to Wolfe, embracing poly values is much easier said than done. "Couples new to the lifestyle fear loss of the integrity of their primary bond, while singles engaging hierarchical couples complain that their rightful desires for time and attention may be put aside in favor of the primary couples'" emotional preference [5] (p. 2).

Although polyamours readily assert the superior of plural love over monogamous love, Wolfe found their assertions is "based more in hope than practice" [5] (p. 2). This effort and subsequent failure to develop and sustain a plural *mutual* love of equal intensity speaks to the human condition, "which has evolved often contradictory inclinations, namely, to be sexual polygamous while also being emotionally monogamous. Individuals in every culture must in their own way reconcile these often dueling and competing emotional orientations" [5].

If passionate or romantic love is indeed organized around emotional exclusivity, which also includes the reordering of an individual's motivational priorities, what then is the effect of becoming emotionally (as opposed to sexually) involved with more than one person? My research explored how people who claimed to be in love with two people at the same time (a concurrent love) found, as Sternberg predicted, that individuals who were in love with more than one person struggled to balance both lovers in a manageable arrangement. For many, there was, at the beginning of the relationship, little or no tension or conflict. In our sample, these individuals tried to manage the relationships, like some bisexuals do in a concurrent relationship—through establishment of boundaries, either with actual

geographical distance or by psychological bracketing, a cognitive technique that helps them to close-off or isolate, however short-lived, their involvement with another [7] (pp. 95–96).

A number of individuals reported, as polyamour practitioners claim, experiencing a deeper, richer, and more meaningful satisfaction being involved with multiple lovers. Their satisfaction, however, appears to be relatively brief [7] (pp. 98–99). All of the respondents upon further reflection told us that it was the worst time of their lives, and they would not wish the experience of “loving two at the same time” on anyone.

Clearly, some humans have a capacity for deep-seated concurrent or simultaneous loves, but it seems that these seldom endure for any significant length of time. In time, they tend to move toward a more companionship-based love. Whenever that occurs, cognitive dissonance arises, as the two lovers who had been situated in a person’s mind at different endpoints on the love spectrum can no longer easily separate them [7] (p. 99).

A concurrent love requires a strong dedication, or even a conscious determination, to maintain simultaneous, albeit separate, life histories or narratives that for most are simply too trying to sustain. Moreover, the construction of separate personae can lead into various behaviors and attitudes associated with ‘a dual personality.’ Regardless of how we might describe the behaviors, separate personae can result in inner turmoil. In effect, such personae can be sustained for a time, but predictably at some emotional cost. The very nature of what these individuals hoped to achieve will produce stress on their sense of self, if not substantially fragment it. In the process, the stress on hopes can weaken the very foundation of the bond they seek with another individual. What may have begun as a need to satisfy passion and secure companionship eventually turns into an acute psychological dilemma that is experienced as intensely dissatisfying and ultimately personally destructive. The inability to resolve the dilemma of merging both types of love—passionate and companionship—into a sustainable whole underscore the primacy of the dyadic bond which is based more on emotional exclusivity than on sexual exclusivity [7] (pp. 99–100). In the end, love’s pull toward dyadic exclusiveness conquers most polygamous and other triadic arrangements such as those found in the Polyamour movement.

“Every culture must come to terms with the relationship between love and sex construct” [8] (p. 1). Because love and sex are independent conceptual and behavioral units that are in a lively relationship with each other, societies seldom give free reign to either impulse, preferring instead to blend them together in support of broader cultural norms related to kinship, inheritance, caste, and class. David Barash and Judith Lipton [9] focusing on only one half of the sex/love configuration correctly assert that humans are not a sexually monogamous species. Although many humans do live out their lives in sexually monogamous union, it is not something, the authors argue, that comes easily or naturally. That kind of union requires an ethical commitment and personal dedication to maintain it. This raises the question: if humans need to be vigilant in their moral commitment to remain sexually faithful, does this vigilance extend also to the domain of love? Is it possible to be sexually non-monogamous while being emotionally monogamous? This is the central question that lies at the core of my investigation of the American polygamous family.

To fully probe the social and emotional nuances fundamentalists associated with what it means to create a loving family, it is essential to first explore the social and psychological complexities often associated with being in love.

2. What Is Love? Is It Really Necessary?

Jankowiak and Fisher’s [10] cross-cultural research revealed that passionate love was a universal or near universal, sparked a flood of “comparable ethnographic studies on love in a variety of cultures have vastly expanded in breadth and depth. These accounts illustrate the cultural variability of ideals and practices of love while challenging Euro-American ideals of where and how “true” love ought to be manifest” [11] (p. 376). The cross-cultural study sparked cognitive studies [12,13], independent ethnographic accounts [8,14,15] and theoretical position papers [3,4,16–20] sparked a renewed interest into the study of love as a psychological and social phenomenon.

If love is central to what it means to be human, what is its essence? Helen Fisher [21,22] in a series of publications, argues that love is a drive like sex and hunger rather than an emotion. For her and others there are thirteen psychophysiological characteristics often associated with being in passionate love [23] (p. 86). These characteristics are “(1) thinking that the beloved is unique; (2) paying attention to the positive qualities of the beloved”; (3) feelings of “exhilaration,” “increased energy,” “heart pounding,” and intense emotional arousal induced by being in contact with or thinking of the beloved; (4) feeling even more connected to the beloved in times of adversity; (5) “intrusive thinking”; (6) feeling possessive and dependent on the beloved; (7) “desiring ‘union’ with the beloved; (8) having a strong sense of altruism and concern for the beloved; (9) reordering one’s priorities to favor the beloved; (10) feeling sexual attraction for the beloved”; (11) ranking “emotional union” as taking “precedence over sexual desire” [22] (pp. 6–20); [23] (pp. 86–87).

Fisher, speaking collegially, aptly characterizes love as invoking an emotional reorganization of your personal life so that a love object “takes on special meaning.” She writes: “You focus your attention on them. You also have high energy when you’re in love: You can walk all night and talk till dawn. You have mood swings and real bodily reactions: weak knees and dry mouth, butterflies in the stomach. You feel emotional dependency and separation anxiety” [21] (p. 1).

Given love’s physiological and psychological configuration it is understandable why there would be a pull toward forming a pair bond. The strength of the pair bond preference is readily revealed in polyandrous and polygynous family systems there is, in spite of claims to the contrary, a recognized preference to form an emotional monogamous love bond with one person, who is often refer to as the “favorite wife”, or the “favorite husband” [8] [24].

Forming a pair bond is never a casual undertaking, nor is it necessarily life-long in duration. Its persistence arises from its ability to satisfy human sexual desire and need for emotional belonging and fulfilment that is vital to an individual’s reproductive interests” [25] (p. 4). Yet societies that do not approve of marital choice construct elaborate mores and norms to ensure that their offspring’s behavior is based on something more than physical attraction.

To guard against the formation of unexpected and unplanned love bonds, cultures have developed a multitude of forms of social regulation [26] that can include: “harem polygamy . . . seclusion of women and chaperonage, obsession with virginity, descent systems that create primary allegiances to parents rather than spouses, clitoridectomy, the men’s house complex, association of women with impurity and contamination . . . and patterns of sexual promiscuity that undermine enduring relationships” [26] (p. 78). Cultures that adopt these strategies of direction strive to uncouple passionate love bonds from feelings of sexual satisfaction. The senior generation in most cultures, Alice Schlegel and Herb Barry reminds us, seeks to “control the young through control over their future sexual [love] lives” [27] (p. 186). In these societies, the passionate love bond is held to be a potential rival to other, more important, non-dyadic loyalties [27]. It is further understood that feelings of sexual attraction can lead to deeper relationships of human feeling that in turn can develop into full-scale resistance to parental authority. In the case of passionate love, parental guidance is often one of definition: Is it supposed to exist? If so, when, and how should it be expressed” [8] (p. 23).

American history is filled with novel attempts to embrace, ignore, deny and re-image the proper relationship between sex and love. Historically these have ranged from nineteenth century Oneida stressing that romantic love was a psychological dead end, while frequent sex with numerous partners would be led to a more fulfilling life. The nineteenth century Shakers came to an opposed conclusion: the source of human suffering is too much passionate sex, they urged in its place the practiced of sexual abstinence. In the late twentieth century American youth would once again experiment with communal living that either denied love in favor of unrestricted sexual partners or the withdrawal into themselves to avoid human intimacy and, thus, the potential of acute disappointment.

In spite of optimistic expectations and enthusiastic hopes, other researchers have shown that concurrent or plural love is inherently fragile, unstable, and seldom long lasting [7] (pp. 102–103). I suspect that, while there may be occasional, and, thus, highly idiosyncratic concurrent love relationships that are successful, ethnographic, and historical studies have consistently documented that these relationships are not feasible on a larger community scale. For example, Benjamin Zablocki's [28] comprehensive sociological research into plural or group love arrangements among, for example, the Oneida, Kerista, New Buffalo found that group love arrangements presented insurmountable difficulties for its members. In fact, the arrangements are often abandoned in a relatively short time for some type of pair-bond relationship [8].

The problematic nature of concurrent or plural love, I argue stems from the dyadic nature of love. It is telling that research into plural love communes found few reported experiencing happiness or emotional satisfaction or nourishment in their concurrent love relationships. This strongly underscores the burdens of departing from a pair bond relationship that is organized around emotional exclusivity. It raises the question: would the experience of the individuals in our small sample have been any different if they lived in a community that supported plural or concurrent loves? What impact does a society's cosmology that regards plural love as superior to monogamous love have on dampening the desire and willingness to form a dyadic love bond? Can religious belief, commitment, and moral dedication overcome the tug toward forming an emotionally exclusive pair bond within the larger social unit?

3. My Question: Can A Cosmology Based in Plural Love Eliminate Romantic Love?

The Mormon Fundamentalist community that I studied is organized around a notion of harmonious or familial love that encourages the development of a spiritual love bond between all family members. The bond includes co-wives and their children who collectively learn to love and care for each other. In effect, it is an idealized state that is neither individualized nor dyadic in orientation. Harmonious love, unlike a dyadic love bond, is akin to *communitas* in being unbounded in its potential for forging, strengthening, and sustaining affectionate bonds. It is somewhat equivalent to Reddy's [29] idea of "longing for association." Because it encourages respect, empathy, helpfulness, and lasting affection, harmonious love often serves as the principal means to bind and unite the polygamous family. Its non-dyadic focus stands, however, in sharp contrast to romantic love, a tolerated but kept secret or seldom openly affirmed emotional experience. Although harmonious love is fervently stressed as the ideal, it is vulnerable to personal sexual desires and romantic preferences.

Because social relations in the polygamous Mormon family, like many other polygamous societies [15], revolve around personal sentiment as much as duty, there is a twin pull of almost equal force—that of the personal pushing against the societal and doctrinal. Whenever a conflict arises, an individual's response is unpredictable, threatening the social order. The tension hovers: Which partner will uphold family harmony, which will seek to satisfy personal gratification? The threat is dominant in the case of romantic love, which, more than any other emotional experience, not only can overwhelm a person's judgment but also reorder his or her priorities. The duration of the priorities is unpredictable.

For Mormon women, romantic love's presence, or absence—much more than role equity—constitutes the primary measure of the quality of their relationship. In many ways, the present-day fundamentalist community is similar to 19th century Mormon polygamists whose love letters were filled with expressions of romantic yearnings, descriptions of emotional turmoil, and heart-rending disclosures [30]. At a bio-psychological level, these expressions of passionate love resemble those found not only in mainstream America, but also those reported in other cultures around the world.

My working hunch was that humans as a species are not so much sexually monogamous as they are emotionally monogamous. It is very difficult to love two people at the same time. To determine if the hunch was correct, I embarked on a six-year investigation

into a Mormon polygamous family that believes plural, not romantic love, is the highest form of love. In plural love, wives, children, and husbands hold a high mutual regard for each other and actively work, and often struggle, to build a harmonious love bond that will unite them in this world and in the next. The plural family is held together as much by a collective will or communal effort to maintain a strong image of a harmonious family as it is through individual actions and decisions. The community's own belief that this harmonious love bond can be accomplished has received support from few anthropologists. For Bohannan [31] and Harrell [32], the pair bond is a culturally constructed ideal, more a byproduct of a specific type of social organization and thus not a cultural universal. In this way, it is not inconceivable that communal efforts at complex family living can be successful. Others disagree, arguing that an impulse to form a pair bond is present in every known society, even in those that strive to deny its existence [33].

So who is more correct? Can the "impulse" to form an exclusive pair bond be readily reconceptualized and relegated to a secondary or minor consideration? Between 1993-1999 I explored how members in Mormon Fundamentalist communities strive to form and uphold a cosmological that deeply values the creation of a harmonious plural loving family that recognizes yet devalues dyadic love. To recognize the personal and ethical dilemmas that can arise from individuals embracing the often-dueling values of dyadic love and plural love provides a framework to understand how these values have and continue to shape family life in the fundamentalist community.

4. Methods

Through observation and interaction, anthropologists strive to understand the people they live with before they evaluate them. This approach requires, as Tanya Luhmann [34] reminds us, a "delay in judgment" in order to maintain an openness to the phenomenon that is under study. As is typical for most long-term field research projects, the subject of the study often changes. I initially set out with a simple focus: to find out whether the polygamous family is a viable family system in which wives and offspring lived more or less satisfying lives. Specifically, I wanted to determine if a man could be romantically in love with two or more women at the same time.

This aim raises questions that are fundamental to anthropology. How does one understand another way of life? What does it mean to live inside a polygamous family? Sometimes people's lives are denser and multivariate than they can recall. How can we make sense of what is believed to be remembered and what is believed to be forgotten? I tried to address these questions by focusing on what individuals told me about their lives, paying special attention to the uncertainties and qualifications in their descriptions and comments about the quality of family interaction, especially as they pertain to marital satisfaction.

Angel Park is one of those towns where "although everyone doesn't know everyone, many know a lot about many" [35] (p. 1). Between 1993-1999, I visited the community. My visits included overnight stays with different families and attendance at church service. I never hid my identity, and everyone in the community knew I was an anthropologist interested in understanding their lives. Members who wanted to participate were highly respectful in answering my questions and helping me understand what it was like to live in a complex marriage system. In the process, I obtained insight into the voiced and unvoiced values that structure individual lives.

I found that almost everyone in Angel Park had a keen ethnographic eye about polygamous family life. I further found that females had better knowledge than men of the community's social contradictions. This might be because women socialize with other families more often than men and that the interaction provided them with a wider range of experiences and a greater opportunity to hear personal stories, especially from their sisters who had married into other families.

My sample included anyone who was living at the time in Angel Park as well as those who once lived there but now live elsewhere. Because there is frequent mobility of

individuals between the various polygamous communities, my sample expanded, enabling me to come to a better understanding of variations between communities. In addition, I relied on the ethnographic accounts and descriptions found in some “escapist literature.” I functioned in one important sense as a divorce lawyer, but not one who represented any party. This stance allowed me to maintain skepticism about their autobiographical accounts of marital pain. Because the concerns and problems they acknowledged and discussed are like those voiced in other studies, I became less skeptical of what I read or was told and decided to include, with proper citation, some of their voices. This approach enabled me to obtain information on more than 60 families which ranged from the number of wives, offspring, family management system, and the relative quality of their family life. I did not use a standardized questionnaire but preferred to let community members raise topics which I would then ask follow-up questions. Because communities are multi layers in its values and individual interests, no one method can uncover the complexity. In this situation it is best to embed yourself in ordinary life and see what comes from it.

One role of an ethnographer is to provide others outside the discipline insight into and understanding of a lifestyle that most people are unfamiliar with. Whenever this occurs, Michael Agar stresses, “it is imperative to be extra cautious in interpreting their way of life” [36] (p. 4). This is especially the case when that life has received many false, erroneous, and, at times, malicious descriptions, and opinions, and still did when I was actively in the field there. Every social system has its unique tension points and conflicted perspectives concerning its own identity. This fact should not diminish or negate the values that define for itself the essence of the good life.

In focusing on some of the contradictions within the Mormon Fundamentalist polygamous family system, I do not mean to offer an adverse or negative evaluation. Every society has its own contradictions, personal disappointments, and existential doubts. Identifying and describing them does not delegitimize the society’s goals or ideals. Rather they can highlight or underscore the underlying structures and possible difficulties that confront individuals living in either a monogamous or polygamous family. We can learn much about how society seeks to manage its structural tensions and difficulties when we look at how individuals seek to manage, overcome, adapt to, and cope, sometimes reconcile with those same societal tensions and difficulties.

Because I wanted to understand how the community’s beliefs were internalized by individuals and shaped the way they expressed their personal desires, especially within the intimate domain, it was essential to probe the family system as a holistic institution that is organized around interdependency of family members and their membership within a religiously ordained community. I have focused on men and women as unique, independent individuals who accept or deny the roles of husband, wife, parent, or sister wife. I found the key for understanding Angel Park’s implicit ethos was to focus on the way affection is expressed and denied.

It is imperative to understand how women, especially in their role of sister wives, negotiate, manipulate, and support or even undermine other sister wives as well as their husbands in pursuit of their own self-centered interests. I wanted to understand the everyday pressures and struggles between husbands and wives, between cowives, and their teenage children. I do not look to criticize the complex family system, but rather to understand the values, both voiced and unvoiced, that shaped and impacted how they sought to resolve specific difficulties, especially within the domain of love.

To maintain the anonymity of my subjects, I have given aliases to nonpublic figures and altered any identifiable characteristics of those who shared their own or others’ life histories. I have used the real names of public individuals if they had been used in earlier historical or sociological studies and in newspaper and television accounts. To protect privacy and confidentiality, I have modified or reshaped details that could help to identify someone. The modifications do not diminish or distort the representativeness of the social values of behavior within specific contexts. Instead they modulate and dampen the harsher

tone of reactions that people who live outside the community might have toward accounts of ordinary life in a fundamentalist polygamous community.

5. Research on Fundamentalist Polygamous Settlements

There are not many empirical studies as opposed to quickly edited journalist accounts, that focus on how fundamentalists live their lives. Irwin Altman and Joseph Ginat [37] were the first to provide a groundbreaking investigation through use of a social-psychological survey to provide an overview on local beliefs, attitudes, and practices found in their sample of twenty-four polygamous couples (twenty-three I suspect are from Salt Lake City region and one elite family situated in Colorado City). Janet Bennion's study [38], set in a different location, produced a pioneering ethnographic account that explored how women, and, to a lesser extent, men, adjusted to living in the polygamous community of Pinesdale (alias the Harker community), Montana. In a later study, Bennion [39] provided a macro or ecological account of why various polygamous communities tend to cluster in ecologically restricted environments. This study also allowed insight into the smaller LeBaron polygamous community, which migrated in the 1950s from Salt Lake Valley to Northern Mexico. Her study was not intended to be a long-term investigation; thus there remains much to learn about life in that settlement.

My ethnographic investigation of Angel Park constitutes the second long-term ethnographic investigation into an American polygamous community. It probes how individuals, and their families strive to create meaningful lives within a religiously sanctioned community. It is the first to explore how men and women perceive, understand, and endeavor to live according to fundamentalist religious principles and to sustain a structured effort to achieve dignity and life satisfaction in the roles of spouse, parent, and community member. Moreover, it is the first study to explore the role that romantic passion exerts in undermining and reshaping the plural family.

The community of the Fundamentalist Church of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) (which is not Angel Park) is the most written about polygamous community in U.S. history. Most of the writings are journalistic in approach and are provocative, interminable, and ethnographically thin. Never before have so many people living in a similar community had their life histories—often referred to as “escape literature”—published. The result is that FLDS is well documented. Yet, despite numerous accounts, analysis of the community—how it is composed in terms of relationships, its organization, and how it functions—remains remarkably unsubstantial and far from thorough. This is due, in part, to the fact that “the story,” as told by journalists and most researchers, has centered on women's regrets and disappointments in joining or remaining an active participant in a polygamous lifestyle. The media accounts and the published life histories downplay the plural family as a viable multidimensional social system that has benefited most members living in the community. In other words, the dissatisfactions and failures have taken center stage when they belong to the sidelines.

6. Fundamentalist Life Orientation: A Blend of American Values

Given the uniqueness of the polygamous family system, it is easy to overlook the commonalities that fundamentalist Mormons share with mainstream American culture. Forged out of the eighteenth-century American frontier experience [40], fundamentalist Mormonism embraces many American middle-class values: basic frugality of means, emphasis on controlling one's destiny, a striving for upward mobility, and a belief in individual responsibility. Fundamentalist Mormons never rejected mainstream culture as much as it feared provoking its wrath. Nonetheless, for most of its seventy-year existence, the Mormon community has repeatedly encountered political persecution and social harassment. From the 1930s and into the 1950s, numerous polygamous communities were subjected to governmental raids, with the last and largest taking place in Short Creek in 1953. That one resulted in the arrest of 39 men and 86 women and the placement of 263 children into foster care for up to two years [41] (p. 110); [42]. An unintended consequence of the raids was

to “strengthen everyone’s conviction and dedication to maintain their lifestyle. Outside pressure had in effect turned everyone who embraced the lifestyle into a community of firmly committed believers [41] (p. 110). In this way, the external pressure ensured that U.S. polygamous communities would remain “enclave cultures.”

Given the present-day tolerance of mainstream culture toward cohabitation, alternative child-rearing practices, and other related social experiments in family living, the polygamist community has become a “public secret.” Since the late 1960s, there has emerged a greater tolerance, though often reluctant, within different states and various polygamous communities [43]. Although the Western states remain adamant in their view that the polygamous lifestyle is illegal, they have tacitly adopted a “live and let live” policy toward the more than thirty thousand polygamous people living in western North America [44].

Because “Mormons, as free agents, were left to find out for themselves how to conduct their affairs” [41] (p. 3), it is not surprising that there is a range in types of community, stretching from reactionary-conservative to orthodox-liberal. Fundamentalist Mormons live in a variety of communities, many of them alongside formerly polygamous households. Independents (or individuals who believe in Mormon scriptures, but do not belong to an organized community) total around fifteen thousand people [45]. The largest community is the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which includes Hildale, Utah (2726 people), and Colorado City (4821 people), whereas the smallest is Pringle, South Dakota (112 people) [43,46]. In between are communities located in Pinesdale, Montana (917 people), in Centennial Park, Arizona (1264), in Kingstons, Salt Lake City (1500 people), in Bountiful, British Columbia (800 people), and in Angel Park (2700 people). The communities are in solid agreement as to the four foundational theological books: the Bible (the Old Testament), the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

However, they profoundly disagree with the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) in its rejection of the centrality of a polygamous family in this life. Like the nineteenth-century Mormons, fundamentalists perceive plural marriage as an essential means to salvation. Their defiant affirmation of plural marriage resulted in ongoing strife between Mormon Fundamentalist communities and the LDS, which after 1890 officially prohibited polygamy. The theological, often antagonistic, disagreement between them is ongoing and constitutes a conspicuous eyesore for the mainstream LDS. Regardless of the strong “similarities between Mormon Fundamentalist and mainstream Mormon theology . . . the fundamentalists insist their organization is not an ‘off shoot’” [38] (p. 20), but rather a more authentic representation of Joseph Smith’s religious teachings; LDS, however, vehemently disputes their interpretation of Mormon history and scripture.

Unlike evangelicals, fundamentalist Mormons do not view the standard Bible as an accurate literary translation; they are aware of different translations and their interpretative discrepancies. They are divided on the view that God is a wrathful God who sits in judgment of their behavior. Although many in the senior generation believe in the wrathful God of the Old Testament, I found the junior generation to be open to a God who is kind, understanding, and loving. Still, the essential teaching remains clear, as it did for the early Christians: one must be ever “vigilant and godly, lest you too slide into the abyss” [34] (p. 102).

The conventional feminist critique of the polygamous or plural marriage states that the dissatisfactions of women are the by-product of their dependency on their husbands, who monopolize both their earning power and sexuality. However, recent research of the polygamous family has not found this dynamic to be typically the case. Most Angel Park women have their own earning power and are more than ready to engage their husband in the give-and-take negotiations that potentially benefit themselves [38,39,47]. Moreover, fundamentalist religious doctrine and its ethical guidelines also restrict men’s sexual behavior. For both sexes, premarital sex is condemned. Also condemned are affairs that married and nonmarried men might have outside a church-sanctioned marriage.

Contrary to the feminist critique of the polygamous family, it is not women but young men who are more likely to lose out in the evolutionary struggle to obtain a wife [11,38,43].

Although the Mormon Fundamentalist polygamous communities share certain core theological beliefs, they vary enormously in social organization, residential preference, and the value of individual agency, marital practices, and flexibility in family organization and in the sexual division of labor. It is inaccurate and misleading, therefore, to think of the fundamentalists as a composite monolithic cultural entity. There is far too much variation to generalize across communities or even within them. It is critical to recognize and acknowledge that descriptions and commentary apply to a particular community or to even a smaller subset within it.

Fundamentalist polygamous Mormons are in solid agreement concerning: 1. the doctrine of eternal progression that holds God was once human and progressed through many transformations to become a god, and therefore ordinary men can follow in his footsteps and become a god in the next life [31] (p. 66); and 2. if a man is successful, the more children he has, the greater his kingdom, with wives sharing their husband's position in the next life. Because a woman's celestial ranking is linked to her husband's, it is to her benefit to advance his reproductive interest [31] (p. 84). The religious leadership customarily lecture their congregations about the importance of living up to the plural ideal. A keynote of the lecture is the principle that "if you have two wives, and you are a monogamist at heart, I am afraid the One Mighty and Strong will not be able to use you." From this perspective, the plural family is at the heart of the communitarian impulse to establish and nurture a spiritually unified and socially harmonious system of order. The maintenance of harmony, unity, and regularity depends on the strength and vitality not only of the relationships of father to son and mother to children but also the relationships between cowives. The plural family is held together as much by a collective will and communal effort as it is by any other action or pattern of behavior. In this and every other way, fundamentalist communities have remained throughout their history, both demographically and culturally, a male-centered, family-oriented, theologically governed religious community.

Although the Mormon Fundamentalist communities are in good agreement on core theological axioms, there is wide variation in how they organize their community and family life. Le Baron community does not believe wives should live together in one big house but rather should have their own homes. Angel Park and FLDS ideal is to live together in one large house. It is an ideal that only the wealthy families have been able to achieve. The Salt Lake community is more open with its members working and interacting with non-community members, while the Kingston community remains close and highly restrictive of interacting with outsiders.

Contemporary fundamentalists differ from mainstream Mormons only to the degree to which they acknowledge or accept a person's right to disagree. The fundamentalist communities of FLDS and Kingston, located in the United States, and Bountiful, located in Canada, restrict individual expression in favor of absolute obedience. The more open polygamous communities of Allred, LeBaron, Pinesdale, Centennial Park, and Angel Park embrace the American cultural ethos that values the cultivation of personal autonomy and self-fulfillment. They do not believe that the highest moral purpose is "unfettered individualism where man exists for his own sake, in the pursuit of his own happiness" [48] (p. 287). Rather, the polygamous fundamentalist communities believe that it is virtuous and worthy to embrace in-group norms such as duty, obligation, and sacrifice (Inglehart 2020). They readily agree that ideally what is best for "the greater Us, is what is best for the smaller You" [49] (p. 23). The recognition and embrace of a "greater Us" is not as totalizing or complete, however, as it may seem. This is especially evident when probing the expectation, satisfaction, and disappointment individual experience within their marriages.

7. Plural Marriage and the Pull toward Dyadic Intimacy

In the Mormon Fundamentalist community, there are two competing ideas about what love is and what it should not be. Both ideas are salient and often contentious, as the logic of one can undermine the logic of the other. The official ideal is noble or harmonious love and thought to have a higher calling than what many believe is the more self-centered sentiment of romantic love. Noble love is a “hierarchical love that reflects a sense of duty, while also justifying an ethic of protection, care, and reciprocity” [50] (p. 176). In this scheme, “a sense of self is founded in relatedness within the family, and this is what is most valued” [50] (p. 176). Angel Park families believe that patriarchy or a male-dominated hierarchy is necessary to maintain family’s coordination and an individual’s overall well-being [50] (p. 168). In Angel Park, like other fundamentalist communities, a wife is instructed to follow her husband’s directives, respect him, and show him acquiescence and loving affection, while he, in turn, is obligated to love all his wives.

Angel Park’s members justify the superiority of their faith and lifestyle with the valuation they give to harmonious or noble love, which some anthropologists would characterize as the essence of *communitas*. It is a feeling of being unbounded in its potential for forging, strengthening, and sustaining affectionate bonds between family members. It is somewhat analogous to William Reddy’s idea of “longing for association” [29] (pp. 4–10). Because *communitas* encourages respect, empathy, helpfulness, and lasting affection, harmonious love often serves as the principal means to bind and unite the polygamous family. It is seldom dyadic, and it is not in opposition to differential status, familial rank, or a sexual division of labor. It is distinctly more hierarchical than it is egalitarian in its daily manifestation. Unlike passionate love, which tends to be egalitarian, emotionally intense, and dyadic in its orientation, harmonious love celebrates involvement with every family member. In fact, it thrives on it.

If men and women wanted to be nearer to God they had to embrace his plan for establishing the ideal family which is based on everyone respecting their place within the family hierarchy and their relationship with God who being pleased with their efforts allowed the community to flourish [51] (p. 48). This view is similar to the Puritans belief that “love is rational and controlled, not voiced with passion” [51] (p. 48). At an abstract level, most community members are in good agreement with the Puritan outlook on love and marriage. At the personal level, there is wide variation.

The early American view of love and marriage is affirmed in church sermons, where it is a virtue to embrace responsibility and share kindness with everyone in the larger family. In stressing noble love’s superiority to romantic love, the community finds solace in personal sacrifice. It is considered an excellent preparation for living in the next life, where polygamous wives will achieve a higher glory and celestial rank than their monogamous counterparts.

The community is aware of this pull and works in good faith at trying to overcome “our natural” yearnings in order to embrace a higher calling: to form and sustain a loving plural family in which the husband and his cowives honor and respect each other. Although harmonious love is fervently stressed as the preferred family ideal, it is vulnerable to sexual and romantic desires. Its nondyadic focus stands in sharp contrast to romantic love, a tolerated but seldom publicly glorified emotional experience. This is one of the reasons for the community’s celebration of the virtues of sacrifice, loyalty, and commitment to the plural family. Everyone is aware of the personal commitment that an individual makes in deciding to participate in a plural marriage and live according to the way their God wants them to live. The experience of a first wife who had a deep love for her husband is instructive. After several years of marriage, she accepted a second wife with the acknowledgment that “she and I will adjust, we will learn and both of us will become a better person.”

It is the desire for romantic intimacy that intensifies a woman’s yearning for emotional exclusivity. It also leads to advancing her own interests and asserting a claim on her husband to be. In Angel Park, it is customary, on a wife’s wedding anniversary and birthday, to be taken on a trip or outing to see a theater show such as *Les Misérables*, attend

a local rodeo, go on a river trip, or dine at an upscale diner. Whatever is selected, everyone knows that this is a dyadic event that reaffirms the presence of a special relationship. A wife's birthday is celebrated more than her children's birthdays, and this is based on a dyadic impulse. Money is often tight, but husbands know they must find time to celebrate the bond with their wives, but do not feel the same pressure to do so for a child's birthday. The children do not place as much importance on their birthdays as their mothers' place on creating a temporary zone for the enhancement of couple intimacy.

The priesthood council has suggested that this practice be modified. Instead of bringing only one wife, a husband should bring all his wives to group celebrations. The council stresses that the arrival of a new wife is just as much about her marrying into the entire family as it is about her taking a husband. The council reminds everyone that the wedding ceremony (a highly secretive and exclusive ritual) is organized around the idea that marriage is less a dyadic relationship than a pluralistic institution. A fundamentalist Mormon wedding ceremony requires all the husband's wives to be present and, at the appropriate time, to place their hands over the incoming bride's hands as she publicly agrees to marry her husband (and, of course, join with all his other wives). In this way, the recommendation of the priesthood council is not a foreign notion. After church service, a twenty-seven-year-old man, with only one wife, seconded the council's recommendation. He stressed that their religion "teaches us to put our natural desires at bay and live a spirit life." To that a middle-aged man who had two wives responded: "OK, a good goal. But let's be realistic here. A woman needs to have time alone with her man. It is difficult or impossible to prevent this from happening. A woman wants to develop a special relationship with her husband." The younger man responded: "I agree, but I think we should strive for perfection." Significantly, the community continues to ignore the firm suggestion of the priesthood council. The vast majority of fundamentalist men find it easier to honor each wife's request to be treated as special or unique, even if only for one day. Clearly this attitude stands in contrast to the religious ideal that marriage is primarily a procreative institution organized around an ethos of harmonious love for the entire plural family. For most Angel Park women, it is also, albeit for a short period of time, a coupledness institution.

Although the desire to form an exclusive husband-wife bond runs counter to the community's theology, one that advocates a detached, less exclusive spousal relationship, it is a woman's expectation and desire to have a more exclusive husband-wife bond that accounts for much of the plural family's internal turmoil. The preference of Angel Park women for becoming their husband's favorite wife, along with their insistence on celebrating their birthday and wedding anniversary alone with their husband and not with their sister-wives, stands in sharp contrast to the fundamentalist assertion that the family is primarily a procreative institution. For many Angel Park women, the family is also the site or place in which to celebrate their "coupleness." The reflection of a wife on the material benefits of a plural marriage reveals the strength of the pull toward creating a dyadic love bond. She explained: "It is cheaper to run a plural family household and not have separate households where everything is bought twice. You use the same dishes, drive one car, and share clothes among different wives and their children." But she added as a qualification that, for her, "the positive benefits of a shared economy are not worth the emotional cost of sharing a husband. The only reason I do is because I deeply believe in our religion."

8. Emotional Exclusivity, Regret, and Plural Family Jealousy

A widow of Joseph Smith who later married Brigham Young declared that "a successful polygamous wife must regard her husband with indifference, and with no other feeling than that of reverence, for love we regard as a false statement, a feeling which should have no existence in polygamy" [52] (p. 195). Most Angel Park women, as noted, do not believe love is a false emotion. While they do not experience romantic passion in the earlier stage of their placement marriages, many do fall deeply in love as their marriage develops and matures.

In response to women's often unvoiced inclination toward an exclusive dyadic love bond, community leaders routinely restate the dangers of monogamy and the benefits of polygamy. It is one of the two recurrent themes in Saturday's men-only priesthood meetings, as well as in Sunday home family services and at Sunday church gatherings. In each of these customary group settings the biblical saying is repeated so often that it can be thought of as a chant: "Hell is the fate to any woman who refuses a man another wife, and it is a selfish wife who will not accept a sister-wife into her family." Despite the continuous admonishment to embrace and accept plural marriage, many women have difficulty doing so. A twenty-one-year-old woman, on the eve of her wedding, asked her mother, "why do I have to share a man? I do not want another woman holding and kissing my man." Her mother firmly advised, "Work it out." Then she added that "it is your responsibility to help your husband create a good marriage, which means you must blend together with all his wives."

To that end, a good marriage has implicit norms that most families try to follow. It is understood that a husband and wife should not share their sexual secrets with the sister-wives. Wives expect their husband to keep their personal fears, anxieties, and hopes to himself, never revealing them to her sister-wives. In this regard, each wife seeks to establish, however momentary, a dyadic zone of personal intimacy organized around emotional exclusion rather than cognitive inclusion.

Many women fantasize having a deeper, warmer, more intimate and, though typically not stated to anyone else, more exclusive marital relationship. For most, it is an unrealistic hope. Still, the consistent inclination or pull toward a "monogamous heart" can be an unpleasant reality. Angel Park men often become angry whenever a wife who is not the favorite begins to push for a more exclusive relationship. A middle-aged man reflecting on his plural family's situation said glumly, "There are four families here: "Sun's," "Mo's," "Mary's," and "Gracie's." Sometimes I feel like I am living in a monogamous family." After pausing for a moment, he added, "I will not live in four different monogamous families. I go to different houses and feel we are losing our large family identity." Yet many women complain that their husband cannot live in a plural family because he also has a monogamous heart. This is not a recent complaint.

Nineteenth-century "Mormon diaries, historical records, and scholarly analyses are filled with examples of personal attraction" [47] (p. 96); [53] as well as a desire to form an exclusive love bond. Ida Udall, living in the 1880s, admitted that she held a deep love for her husband and experienced emotional trauma trying to cope with sharing her beloved husband with another woman [54] (p. 45). In her 1980s autobiography Dorothy Solomon [44] granted that her sister-wives suspected that she "harbored a selfish dream of being [their husband's] only wife." Susan Schmidt [55] (p. 139), in her autobiography, revealed that among sister-wives' jealous feelings are common. As she revealed: "I had been raised in the Church prepared all my life for polygamy. Yet I was crying. Jealous! So jealous, my hands were shaking, and I wanted to physically tear into Charlotte" (141). Her experience is typical also of many Angel Park women. It is a common response: studies have documented female-to-female conflict organized around the display of indirect aggression, which is strongly correlated with the ability to access and retain a mate [56] (p. 569). At a biopsychological level, these contemporary yearnings for fervent or passionate love resemble those found not only in mainstream America but also in other cultures around the world [8].

Women are caught between the commitment to practicing their religion, which demands the formation of more inclusive bonds with all family members, and their personal desire to establish an exclusive husband-wife relationship. Women struggle over the push of commitment to their community and the pull toward their own inclinations. A married woman, for example, was sitting next to a good friend when she suddenly felt that "an evil had come over me. I was in danger. My friend sensed this and held my hand. Together we overcame this force, thus experienced a love for each other, and together pushed evil's presence away." When I asked what she meant by evil, she looked at me with tears in her

eyes and confessed that “I wanted to live monogamously. It was a sinful thought.” The conflict is a silent and, at times, an immensely disruptive psychological force that is present in every plural marriage.

The conflicting emotions arise from two competing values—the desire to form a pair-bond and the wish to create a loving harmonious plural family. The inability to integrate them evokes a feeling of shame and its ethical twin cousin, guilt. “Why cannot I,” a wife bluntly declared, “accept this life? I believe the religion is right but am troubled with my inability to handle my emotions.”

The emotional pain that arises from attempts to integrate, bracket, ignore, or accept the duel between the desire for an exclusive pair-bond and the strong sense of responsibility to create and sustain a plural love account for much of the regret, disappointment, and occasional rage that periodically erupts inside the polygamous family.

9. Noble Love: Sacrifice as Virtue

In Angel Park, unlike other fundamentalist communities (e.g., Allred, LeBaron), noble love, as noted earlier, is thought best experienced when all the wives and their offspring live together in one large house. Not everyone, however, can achieve this ideal. I found only 21 out of 60 families surveyed lived in the same house. Still, the ideal remains one of the community’s most cherished ideals, and it is, within the community itself, the most admired form of family organization.

Within either the Big House (i.e., where cowives live together) or a small house (i.e., each cowife has her own dwelling), the ideal family strives to live according to the religious principles of harmonious, noble love. The spiritual sentiment contained in harmonious love is seen in what a first wife said to me when learning her husband had been assigned a second wife. She optimistically declared: “We will learn and both of us will become a better person.”

Women seem to be more willing to accept their family position, and thus mute or temper any real or potential disappointment, if it has a religious component. To reinforce the restraint, community members in church sermons and in family gatherings repeatedly remind women that it is imperative to be willing to sacrifice their personal interests for the good of the plural family. In this context, sacrifice is a virtue and a treasured and highly respected community value. Aptly expressed in the words of a first wife: “she and I will adjust.”

The “willingness to sacrifice” for a partner, stemming from intense empathy, and a “re-ordering” of one’s priorities, has psychological characteristics “associated with romantic attraction” [25] (pp. 415–416). Unlike romantic love, where a person sacrifices her self-interests in favor of her beloved, the fundamentalists’ sacrifice is oriented not toward any one individual but toward achieving a cherished ideal: the loving harmonious family. In Angel Park, a wife, like elderly Korean wives, often makes daily sacrifices to maintain her marriage. The sacrifices range from “the provision of domestic support, an endurance of hardship springing from inadequate financial resources, enduring conflicts with her husband” [25] (p. 12), and, I will add, having to contend with difficult or antagonistic sister-wives. A woman’s willingness to prioritize the family over personal interest effectively elevates her acts as well as herself into a more exalted state of being, if not in this life, then certainly in the next one. For women in the plural family, daily sacrifices are considered small gifts that enhance the plural family’s well-being. A thirty-something woman told me: “I pray every day not to be selfish. I know I need to sacrifice daily intimacy with my husband to learn and experience a fulfilling family love.”

Women retain their strong commitment to get the Work (i.e., polygamy) moving forward to build up the community before the Second Coming of Christ. This striving, this hope for the future, encourages a dedication to live what they believe is God’s law. They know that if they remain steadfast in their devotion they will receive greater glory in the next life [57] (p. 49). This view was echoed in a mature woman’s remarks on why she was so devoted to her religion. She gave voice to a community truism: “Once you learn the

Gospel—a woman’s a fool to ignore it. I want to go to heaven and see other women having babies and learn to be wives with other wives. You must adjust to life there and here too. I want to earn a high status, so I need to learn how to achieve it here right now.”

Another woman acknowledged that her commitment to a family organized around noble love is both a wonderful ideal and a daily challenge. She stressed the importance of care for another woman’s children the same way another woman would care for her own. “You have to love your husband enough so you can love all his children,” she added, “you cannot say these are mine and those are yours—that is wrong.” But her affirmation of the community’s ideal was qualified with the remark that achieving the state of noble ideal is difficult: “it is very hard to love another woman’s child as much as your own.”

Participants in the plural family, however, often have a different expectation and level of commitment to the creation of a unified, harmonious family. The variation in family organization arises less from an individual’s bad faith and more from personal, material, and psychological considerations.

The personality of a wife’s family is a by-product of the kind of family the wife came from, whether her mother had a high or low position within the family, and the degree to which she is committed to, in the community’s words, “live the fullness of the gospel” (i.e., form a vibrant plural family). There is a correlation between the personality of a woman’s natal family and the personality of her future family. A woman’s personality—extroverted or confident to introverted or diffident—formed in her natal family is readily transferred into her new plural family. If she had an assertive role within her natal family, she would assume a similar role in her marriage. This phenomenon results in an added incentive for her. If her husband has a weak emotional bond with his first wife, the second wife, if she has an assertive personality, can become his favorite wife. Family conflict is guaranteed whenever two “alpha” or assertive females who had strong personalities in their natal family are placed into the same family. If the husband is weak, aloof, or indifferent, the women will form a rivalry that will result in the family breaking up into competing subunits, or, if the women are truly dedicated to the religion, they will find a way to “work out” their personality differences, learn to compromise, and form a less stressed plural family that could be on its way to some degree of unity.

10. Is Love Really Dyadic? What Can Co-Wives Disappointment Tell Us?

Although the official theology asserts all wives are equal and should be treated the same way, in ordinary life this is seldom the case, however. I found there are three common co-wives’ personas: the low-profile wife, the power wife, and the favorite wife. These personas are also found in many non-Mormon fundamentalist polygynous families [15]. The low-profile wife, or, in a contemptuous folk jargon, “plantation” wife, is the more typical co-wife persona. She has a dedicated commitment to uphold the community’s cosmology and is tireless in working in support of the plural family. Most low-profile wives do not publicly object to their family position. For example, one mature woman admitted that: “I love this work. I wanted my husband to pick a sister wife. He refused. But I have opened my house and hearts to other families, and I must say I love my sister wives’ kids more than my own. I have a lot of love to give—I believe in the Principle and this work.”

The low-profile wife is most likely to admit being disappointed with her marriage compared with a favorite or power wife. “I just want to be held.” Irene Spencer [58], a low-profile wife who lived in Short Creek and then in the LeBaron Mexico community, writes about her need to feel loved and have companionship, acknowledging that her marriage was less than satisfactory: “We were lucky if we spent two nights with him a month” [58] (p. 211). Commenting on her divorce another low-profile wife admitted: “We got divorce over my status in the family—he could not take my sulking behavior. I knew when I entered the family, I could not be the favorite wife or the bossy wife. I would just have to blend into the woods—but after a time I just could not accept that role and made life difficult for everyone.”

Some low-profile wives are more reserved or indifferent in voicing their opinion. For example, when I asked one wife if she felt bad that her husband did not visit often, she replied: “No, he knows where to find me.” Another co-wife in a large family admitted that she preferred not spending much time with her husband. She enjoyed her children and interacting with a few of her sister wives. For her, it was unimportant to constantly be with her husband. It was never clear to me if these two wives expressed indifference was genuine or just a guarded performance for my sake. Compared to the other low-profile wives their posture is not representative.

The entire community recognizes that they belong to a larger plural family and therefore need to often sacrifice their personal desires in order to achieve what is for most the next life’s ideal family organization. A mid-thirties woman explained: “I have an excellent family here—a strong husband and a will to make the family system work and prosper. Other low-profile wives reported a more difficult experience. For example, one woman who was placed in the 1970s when she was eighteen years old in marriage to a man who had a close relationship with his first wife and did not really want to marry her. He told everyone how much he “hated her.” At the time, she thought his reaction was, in her words, “gross.” But they tried to make a go of it and for the next couple of decades they had eight children and struggled to create a large harmonious family. The woman revealed how her own story unfolded: “I am going to love it. But I could not—I always wanted to leave but I was pregnant all the time. Then one day I decided I could not take it anymore—I drove my car to a nearby city and while shopping for my children I started to cry—a man asked if he could help. I told him my story and he gave me money to rent an apartment and looked in on me. After a while I married him, and he turned out to be nice to my kids and he treats me very good today.”

A mature woman, while acknowledging her dedication to the work and her firm belief that it is a better way of living, stressed that “I have tried to teach the religion to my children and have kept my hurt to myself.” When I asked what she meant, she did not answer. Another mature woman, who was a low-profile wife and no longer lived in the community, thought that the one of the community’s foundational axioms “to give in, surrender, and sacrifice for greater reward in the next life,” was “bullshit.” A low-profile wife living in the FLDS community had a different complaint. She noticed her husband preferred to sleep with one wife over his other wives and this resulted in her children receiving the necessities such as shoes and clothes, while his other wives had to do without [59].

In all my conversations about love and marriage, the criticism of “unfairness” was the problem for those women who were the most dissatisfied living in a plural family. The thoughts of a mature low-profile woman are representative of the feeling of general discontent: “He promised to take me to St Louis, and he took a sister-wife instead. I was so angry all I could say was: “This is not fair. It is not fair.”

The opposite of the low-profile wife in attitude and style is the “bossy” or power wife persona, sometimes referred to as the “Queen Bee.” The practicality of power depends on personality [60] (p. 133). It is the “Queen Bee’s ability to assert her will over her sister wives that enables her to gain access to the household resources and controls their distribution. For example, she controls the family’s finances, and all requests of her sister wives flow through her. Unlike African or Imperial Chinese families where the first or senior wife is most esteemed, in Angel Park the custom is not a given. The fundamentalist communities have not institutionalized the senior wife position as the leader of the other co-wives. Instead the “leadership” position goes to the wife who has the warmer and more intimate bond with her husband.

Given her assertive personality, the Queen Bee can insert herself and take charge of the family’s ordinary affairs, either with her husband’s approval or because of his indifference. A mature woman recalls that, during her childhood years, the family’s power wife often swore at her sister wives, saying such things as “You little piece of shit—I’m in control here.” Because the mature woman’s father was often away, she became the unofficial leader of the family. I was told a story from the Short Creek era where the power wife took charge

of the family easily because of a weak and indifferent husband. During Thanksgiving celebration, she set the table using a low-profile co-wife's fine porcelain plates and ordered her to sit alone, next to a small table where she was served on paper plates. Meanwhile everyone else used her fine porcelain bowls and plates.

Another way that the power wife of a FLDS family asserts her authority is to insist that her sister wives and their children ask her for permission before doing something. For example, if a child asked his or her mother if they could go visit someone, the mother would immediately instruct them to "Go ask Barbara." Some women from other families consider this arrangement improper since "mothers have the right to control her own natal family." In the FLDS community that Bret Jeffs [61] grew up in, he often observed that the other wives of his father (including his own mother) were afraid to go against Marilyn, his father's favorite wife. He recalls that "the other women would not complain about any of Marilyn children's misbehavior, they knew that this would somehow be turned into a mark against them" [61] (p. 62). In most cases (54 out of 60), the favorite wife is also the power wife.

There is a close relationship between being the husband's favorite wife and her ability to influence and control the larger family. The favorite wife is not necessarily the first, the oldest, the youngest, or the prettiest. She may be the most emotionally intelligent and knows when and how to flirt, become playfully resistant, and engage her husband in interesting conversation that invokes his interest. A favorite wife's husband regards her as his best friend. For example, a husband goes to his wife's work and brings her a hot lunch that she was not expecting—it signals that he is thinking of her and is concerned about her. The gesture is received with gratitude and love. The favorite wife skillfully uses nuance, small acts of kindness, and careful attention to small things and intimate moments that are reminders of the times they enjoyed together: "honey remember when we walked along Lake Michigan?" Or "recall when you went away on that business trip, and we were separated for a long time—and how much we missed each other?"

It is essential to maintain the fiction of family harmony that neither she or her husband admit to being or having a favorite wife. This is the community's public secret where everyone knows who is and who is not the favorite but pretend there are no favorites. Unless an outsider asks who in that favorite is the favorite wife is? Then immediately everyone will be in good agreement as who is the favorite wife in a particular family. This was repeatedly demonstrated to me whenever I asked someone from the same or different family who was the favorite wife in X or Y's family, everyone named the same person.

The favorite wife's power comes from the strength of the emotional bond she forges with her husband. She is aware that her husband cannot tolerate her withdrawing or distancing herself from him. Her capacity to withhold emotional intimacy from her husband is a formidable "resource of power." She validates his identity and self-worth and is emotionally supportive of him, while fulfilling her responsibilities to manage the household and its activities.

She also embraces the religion and is a force in organizing her husband's relationship with his other wives. It is her ability to mediate family problems and diffuse potential disruption that makes her an essential player in coordinating family dynamics. Secure in her position in the family, she can be an active participant in helping a junior wife bond with her husband. She often encourages her husband to dress up and treat the junior wife as special. Because she is successful at fulfilling her duties and promoting the values of family harmony and responsibility, the favorite wife receives special considerations: more time spent with her husband, greater confidence of his support for her children, his participation in more outings (e.g., shopping, vacations) and, most importantly, a greater willingness on his part to develop an intimate bond.

Occupying favorite wife status ensures her children will receive quicker treatment. Because of financial limitations, there is a tendency in less wealthy families for some husbands to hold off on responding to a mother's concerns about her child's health. Men, reluctant to immediately bring a child to the doctor, typically advise waiting to see if the

child's condition becomes serious. In contrast, when the favorite wife requests to seek immediate medical attention, she will receive a more ready and positive response from her husband. His quick response arises from his emotional attachment to his favorite wife.

At the top of the family's hierarchy, she is able, like counterparts in other primate societies, to obtain more resources for herself and her offspring [62] (p. 70). Though the favorite wife occupies a privileged position, it is not proper or acceptable for her to publicly demonstrate or let others know of the "favoritism" she receives. To do so would be to de-legitimize the plural family's inclusive ideal and undermine any semblance of harmonious plural love. The favorite wife embraces the theological discourse that honors family cooperation while ensuring her interests are not undermined or neglected. To this end, both the husband and his favorite wife will resist any notion or suggestion of an exclusive arrangement. Her sister wives, for their part, tacitly agree not to challenge the special arrangement provided that the favorite treats them fairly and does not bully them. Unsurprisingly, and only amongst themselves, it is not unknown for low-profile wives to refer to the "favorite wife" as the "favorite right", shorthand for her high position in the family that enables to assert her opinion and, because she is always right or correct, she expects everyone to agree or follow her lead.

Because a favorite wife has a richer emotional bond with her husband, she is more vulnerable if her husband's attention turns cool or is less responsive. He may deeply love her, but she can quickly feel unloved. For example, a husband who enjoyed hunting left without informing his wives where he was going. Since he had not seen one wife for a few weeks, she was not aware he left, but his "favorite" wife was also surprised and hurt that he did not contact her about his hunting trip. Another way the favorite wife can feel threatened is if her husband talks seriously or even playfully about wanting another wife. The thought that their special bond could be disrupted can produce acute anxiety for the favorite wife more than it would for a low-profile wife who no longer seeks to establish a closer emotional bond.

In Angel Park the plural family ideal survives only through individuals' willingness to commit to upholding that ideal and find fulfillment in daily sacrifices that forge cooperative bonds that uphold and sustain the harmonious, plural home environment. Running parallel to this story is a resistant, alternative story whereby individuals publicly embrace the community's ideal of a harmonious family while they pursue personal interests that can undermine that ideal. As discussed above, the favorite wife readily expresses her devotion to living the Principle and upholding the harmonious family, while, at the same time remaining ever vigilant for what is most essential to her: retaining the emotionally exclusive bond with her husband. Overtime, that naked exclusivity can undermine the belief and hope that "things will change" and they will be also honored. If their belief and hope for a better future are undermined, low-profile wives often decide to leave the family and, in some cases, the fundamentalist religion.

11. The Arrival of a New Wife Can Be a Dangerous Time for Family Unity

Bedouin-Arab women research found that the youngest wife usually replaced the senior wife [63]. I did not find this pattern in Angel Park. I did listen to two women discussing the feasibility of a new wife replacing the favorite wife. One woman conceded that "she may be the new hot wife and he may need time to bring her into the family but there is no way she will become his favorite wife. Her husband is too closely bonded with her" (i.e., his present favorite wife). Before agreeing to marry, most women are aware of the family's established positions and know whether there is an opportunity to become the favorite wife.

Although the incoming wife seldom replaces a favorite wife, she can become, at least initially, the husband's preferred romantic partner, what is sometimes referred to as a "play" partner. For every family that I was familiar with or heard about, the husband's longtime favorite wife remained his best friend whose relationship continued to be based in a deep-seated comfort love, despite the fact a new incoming wife assumed, however momentarily,

a romantic 'play' role. Most Angel Park husbands, after a short or intermittent "smitten" phase, turn their attention back to their other wives, with the new bride becoming another wife among many. I was told of a few cases, however, when a man fell so in love with his youthful bride, he completely abandoned his other wives. I heard of one case in the FLDS community where a man took a 15-year-old bride as his fourth wife and informed her that he would focus his attention on her alone, provided she maintained her thin body. She did so and he abandoned his other wives. In another case, a man who had by all accounts a very good plural marriage yet fell completely in love with an eighteen-old woman and then left his other wives to be exclusively with her. He continued to see his children but had nothing to do with his other wives. I found another instance of a husband with multiple wives falling "madly in love" with a girl he was courting, the result of which was complete abandonment of his other wives to be with his new bride. He was not shy about letting it be publicly known: "I do not care what you say or do. I will not lose her. I will build a new house and I will live with her-I do not care if my other wives leave me." In the aftermath, his wives did leave him; one remarried, another decided to live by herself.

Not everyone is indifferent, I knew several men ($n = 6$) who took their obligations and the responsibility of integrating a new wife into the plural family seriously. One mature man recalled the experience of being assigned a twenty-year-old woman as awkward and anxiety producing. He told me that he had to learn "new ways to communicate and to develop new ways to respond so I can better comfort her." He understood the need to protect her against possible abuse from sister-wives while at the same time working to prevent them from reacting and withdrawing from the family. It was a balancing act to have to work with everyone, a time-consuming process that turned his family into an arena of discussion and negotiation. In the end, his labors proved successful, finding just the right touch to integrate the new wife into the family. His behavior is typical of well-functioning families, often involving a route to success that required flexibility and care. But this is not typical of dysfunctional families, where a man may take one or more wives at the same time and then pull back and tell everyone to "work it out." Whenever this kind of behavior occurs, the family becomes the site of resentment and frustration, which finds an outlet in public gossip, eliciting ridicule at the man's inability to form a harmonious family. In that kind of situation, where the husband feels overwhelmed by his duties, he will walk away or pretend, albeit unsuccessfully, that everything is fine. His general denial and success at avoiding criticism are always short-lived since the community's commentary about lack of skills is relentless.

In sum, it is the emotional volatility of passionate love that has the potential of erupting with such force that it not only can disrupt a family but destroy it. Men are acutely aware of this possibility. If a man has several wives who have created a satisfactory home environment and it has also developed over time into a unified plural family, he will be hesitant to jeopardize taking a new wife. A husband disclosed to me that he was aware that a few younger women from the community were attracted to him but was reluctant to follow up on their romantic/erotic signals. He did not want to undermine the harmony of his family. His concern for its well-being stands in sharp relief to popular views in the mainstream culture that fundamentalist men are only interested in "collecting wives for their own use."

12. The Late Thirties: A Dangerous Time for a Plural Wife

Plural marriage is a non-dyadic institution which holds that it is sinful for a wife to monopolize her husband's attention. The pull to form tacit bonds of emotional exclusivity is behavior church elders continuously lecture against. Women are urged to overcome this pull and focus on developing an environment of harmonious love within the plural family (1). The impulse to form a pair bond is present, albeit in different proportions, in all societies, even in those that discourage its formation such as those organized around the institutions of arranged marriage or the creation of a polygynous family. The impulse to

forge a dyadic husband/wife bond as discussed in the preceding chapter has the potential to undermine the noble love ethos.

Yet, within the plural family there exists a “favorite” wife whose relationship status stands in opposition to the noble love ideal and can potentially undermine a plural family’s working. Although most low-profile wives enter the plural family with a more compliant demeanor and a willingness to defer to their older and more experienced sister wives, over time there can arise, for some of them, a lingering sense of injustice that makes their daily sacrifices no longer endurable. Dorothy Solomon recalls in her early life in a Salt Lake City plural home “hierarchy based on seniority among the women and not all women were happy with their position in the pecking order” [44] (p. 201).

I found that when a woman reaches her late thirties or early forties a low-profile wife is more inclined to adopt a more assertive persona. For the low-profile wife, this is the most dangerous stage, one when she is earnestly reevaluating her life and reconsidering her options. It is the stage in life when divorce, separation, and rejection of the polygamous lifestyle will most likely take place.

This is the recurrent theme found in the numerous publications or “autobiographies” (2000–2015) that form an “escapist literature” genre on growing up in a fundamentalist plural family provide further evidence of low-profile woman’s ability to re-conceptualize their lives and their willingness to continue to live in a plural family. In every one of these autobiographies (n = 23), the woman announces that her primary motivation for leaving is an immense dissatisfaction and disappointment with the plural family that she feels has mistreated her. Although the various co-authors/writers try to make each woman’s polygamous life appear one of abject oppression bordering on modern day slavery, the reality is most of the low-profile wives were initially enthusiastic to enter the plural family and worked diligently at becoming a virtuous family member. It is only after a decade or more that some women, especially those in low functioning families, begin to re-conceptualize their initial commitment from being acceptable to a horribly “forced” choice marriage that they should never have agreed to. Angry with themselves, their plural family arrangement and what they consider ‘lost time (i.e., their youth)’, they leave in embittered toward their husband and hostile to their former religion.

Although there are acts of co-wife consideration and kindness, most co-wife exchanges remain instrumental more than based in mutual love or affection. More significant is the community’s implicit tolerance, but not idealized approval, of dyadic intimacy that often serves as the critical spark behind co-wife competition which undermines the family’s pursuit of noble love. Or, in the words of an insightful man: “I acknowledge the theory is beautiful but somehow everyone has trouble living it.” The irony is striking: the very tolerance that the community has toward dyadic intimacy is, if not the spark that sets the competitiveness in motion, the phenomenon that exacerbates it to no end. In this situation Angel Park is not unique. As I noted, throughout history different communities (e.g., the Kerista commune, the Oneida, and so on) have embraced some form of plural love only to have to confront similar difficulties. Feeling betrayed and emotionally unfulfilled is the primary reason for women seeking a divorce or “spiritual release” in Angel Park [48], Pinesdale [39], and I suspect in other Mormon Fundamentalist communities (discuss further below).

13. Men’s Reaction, Emotional Struggles, and Ethical Dilemma

Men do embrace the religious ethos and strive to love all their wives equally but more often than not fail in their effort. For most men, there is an acute existential struggle to achieve their exalted goal: creating a harmonious, loving plural family. Husbands more than wives experience acute guilt if they do not uphold the community ideal of plural and equal love and succumb yearnings for a dyadic bond with one wife. These failures within plural or inclusive marriage demonstrate the sharp and critical difficulties that these marriages frequently hold for the individuals living in a plural love society.

Because most plural wives expect, at least initially, to develop a special relationship with their husband, their relative satisfaction or dissatisfaction will to some extent determine whether or not a family operates harmoniously, which will affect a husband's emotional well-being. Part of men's angst derives from their accord with their nineteenth century Mormon counterparts that "God required wives to submit to their husband, [while] He also expected husbands to love and care for their wives, as Christ did the Church" [42] (p. 40). To achieve the ideal, men need their wives to cooperate and hold together to form and sustain a unified plural family. For example, I went to a family dinner where the husband who sat between his wives put his arm around both while he spoke of taking one wife on a trip and the other wife on a different trip. What struck me about this exchange was the wives' reaction. Both stared straight ahead, then quickly glared at each other; not a smile was given. Their husband at once realized that his effort at expressing family unity had failed, then pulled his arms back, overwhelmed with his failure to display to a visitor the unity of his family. Later he confided to me: "it is such a burden being attentive to everyone." His observation about the seemingly endless challenge of creating unity is not usual.

Another example of this disappointment in the LeBaron community is a husband who repeatedly told one of his wives: "this is hard on me, too. Don't think it doesn't tear me up to see you unhappy. I'd never do it if God hadn't commanded it . . . I can't even keep two wives' content, let alone three" [58] (p. 167). Often when some incident of family disunity happens, men experience the same kind of anxiety and sometimes angst that leaders in other areas of life experience. In the case of polygamous husbands, they have persistent doubts that they are not worthy of forming a harmonious family or do not have the capacity or skills to do so.

Besides having to render material support, men are often overwhelmed in trying to reassure his wives of their dedication, commitment, and love. The community's folk ideal holds that the best marriages are formed when the husband develops a bond that is best suited to each wife. To achieve this, a husband will adopt a different persona or personal approach for each wife. These personas vary greatly but many involve interacting as a sensitive counselor, pragmatic psychologist, stern theologian and thoughtful lover, or some combination of them all. But men find adopting a different persona with each wife to be exhausting and an almost impossible task. This near impossibility is echoed by Henry who recently had taken a second wife: "I thought I could focus on the new wife and reassure her until I could see both together. Now I realize I cannot. In a way each wife is an [emotional] bottomless pit where you need to spend quality time with each of them." Angel Park men agree with Palestinian men who acknowledge the Quran which states that a man who wants to form a polygynous marriage must treat all his wives "absolutely equal—it is a stipulation that many have noted is practically impossible to meet except by a saint" [64] (p. 232).

Kody Brown, the lead actor, and husband, in the popular TV series *Sister Wives* would agree. Although the Brown family receives a significant monthly payment for the TV crew's access to their lives, the plural family, after twelfth seasons, is no longer willing to sustain, in public, a harmonious front. Increasingly the media reports a growing rift between Kody and his four wives. Christian now wants to divorce him, while Janelle and Meri are considering leaving too. Only his fourth wife intends to remain. Moreover, Kody admits he is disinterested in an emotional relationship with three of his four wives [65]. Like many Angel Park husbands, Kody Brown is emotionally exhausted and burned out managing his plural family.

Because sustaining cooperation is "the central problem of social existence" [49] (p. 20), there is always "some tension between self-interest and collective, between Me and Us that is [continuously] in danger of eroding" [49] (p. 21). The fundamentalists are not alone in their struggle to maintain a cooperative spirit within a plural family structure that is filled with self-reflective individuals. In this setting, the husband is more responsible for resolving tensions that arise within the family. It is a task that requires everyone's support,

but, whether he receives or does not receive the family's full support, it is the husband who, in the end, is either admired or disdained, appreciated, or derided, for his ability or inability to form and maintain a harmonious family.

The tension implicit within this role duty is illustrated in a deeply religious man's, reflection on how best to achieve this end goal. Dave believed that, if he was fair and righteous in leading his family, his wives would willingly cooperate and work together in the joint task of creating a workable plural family. After he married a second wife he reported: "I discovered that each family has its own history—I was naive—at first I wanted to combine my wives together and create a new history together. But we are unable to—primarily because they are unable or refuse to work together—so, I now have two families and drift between them." His realization of the difficulty with previously formed families is not unusual. He thought that part of his difficulties stem from the family not being able to live together. The availability of large houses is limited. Wives who live in a separate house develop a different family history than those who live together in a large house. A husband whose wives do not all live together suffers in his sense of belonging, lessening his chances of the complete connection needed for a successful marriage and harmonious household. I did not find, and contrary to the man's conviction "big house" polygamy to be more harmonious. The desire to form a closer more sustainable couple intimacy, regardless of housing size, is relentless in Angel Park's plural families.

The pressure on men to effectively manage their families can be intense. Having to move between houses has a negative impact on men too. Every Angel Park man that I knew who shuttled between households did not have his own bedroom but stayed in his wife's bedroom. This pattern of moving from bed-to-bed accounts, in part, for their being less psychologically invested in their homes. A plural wife told me that "my husband sometimes forgets where he is or who is the person next to him. He often forgets where he left his clothes" [40] (p. 2). Brent Jeffs, living in a different community than Angel Park, recognized the emotional toll his father experienced moving between his wives' households [61]. I spoke with Mike who disliked the arrangement of having to go from one house to another. He thought that all his wives should live together in one big house. The shuttling back and forth produced an emotional detachment in which his wives would treat him like "a visiting relative home for a few days" rather than as "the master of the family." Angel Park men, like those in Allred and FLDS who rotated between households, feel little or "no emotional attachment to their home" [47] (p. 258). Given the difficulty of achieving a sense of belonging, Angel Park men believe it is better to live together in one big house. In contrast, the LeBaron community believes that each wife needs her own house and discourages them from living together. The community leadership there believes that a wife is more content having her own home because it relieves some of the pressure on her husband to satisfy her wants. In the LeBaron community, it is understood that the "best" marriages are those where the wife is the more satisfied spouse.

Another factor that contributes to men feeling at times overwhelmed is the lack of privacy or personal space. Although the common places of public understanding stress the value of in-group harmony, fundamentalists are more like mainstream American culture that socialized its youth to be independent, discouraging interdependency. This makes the need of polygamous men for privacy or occasional solitude a pressing issue. William who had several wives told me that "sometimes you can be overwhelmed by the whole situation." A mature man complained that "*I can never be alone*—it is so time consuming being with my wives and children all the time. Do not get me wrong, I love my wives, but sometimes I just want to be alone." Some men seek solitude by going on long walks or hiking in the mountains. Others retreat into their "man cave" to play computer games or watch TV, while avoiding interaction with their children and wives. The research of Altman and Ginat [47] found this a common response of men in living another fundamentalist community.

Another source of stress is not being able to truly relax even within the domain of intimacy. Men fear, as Edward acknowledged, that "what you tell one wife (in secret) will

always come back to you in the future. You must always be deliberate, careful in your choice of words." He elaborates for me: "This is what is meant for a man to sacrifice and build character." Typically left unspoken is the pressure or need to always remain guarded in expressing fears, doubts, concerns. The good husband must keep his own counsel and not seek emotional support from his wives, who may use their disclosures of emotion as information that in other contexts undermines his family authority.

In the effort to reduce family pressure, husbands often respond to their wives' complaints with indifference or denial. The common response—often a refrain for some men—to "work it out" may be a wise or effective approach in resolving minor family disagreements, but it also allows men to ignore or avoid the larger issue: not facing up to the structural and personal difficulties in trying to live God's law. Some men will do almost anything to escape the drama of plural family living [40]. Women, for their part, routinely talk about the details of family living. Husbands detach themselves from the daily grind of plural family management and typically leave such problems as a child's illness, absence of sufficient food and proper clothing, or a car in need of repair to their wives. Husbands can look past these problems because they know their wives will solve them. Husbands will rationalize their lack of participation, often making remarks such as "women engage in silly quarrels." In some cases their explanation is more elaborate. Dave caught the feeling of it all when he told me: "I'm so sick of listening to other women bitch about other women's kids. I just do not want to hear about it." There is a layered burden in everyday living where husbands can feel overloaded with problems and responsibilities. Some can grow more and more removed from their families.

The pressure of plural living sometimes can break out into spousal abuse. A wife's resistance or defiance can present a challenge to a man's ideal as a good provider and leader of his family. In these situations, he will take on an inflexible authoritarian persona or retreat entirely from the family with feelings of anger, resentment, and disillusionment. I knew several men who were adamant about not physically abusing any of their wives. Drew explained his perspective: "I never, never hit my wife. That is pure physical abuse. I don't believe in that. Just because men are responsible—he is the caregiver and protector and not someone who takes or uses physical force to impose his will on someone else." The church leaders, as noted, often criticize its members for not being able to control their anger and abusing their wives. The leaders take an active role in addressing the problem by providing counseling for married couples as well as individuals as needed. I found that the more educated a spouse, especially husbands, the more comfortable he or she was in talking about whatever concerns they had and, in the case of husbands, talking through a wife's complaints rather than using physical force.

Men think that their wives have it easier as they can withdraw from family life, while their husband, the mediator in all things, should not since it is considered a breach of responsibility to not comfort and talk through family issues. The withdrawals can last a few minutes, a couple of hours, or months on end. William admitted what bothered him the most was not being able to satisfy the needs of all his wives. I found that he had many wives who needed his presence, often at the same time. With some exasperation, he said, "it troubles me so much that the kids need me, my wives need me—who should I see first. How can I reassure them? This bothers me a lot. Alas, other men just walk away angrily, commanding: "Deal with it." Others will simply go into their bedroom, while others will seek out their favorite wife, pulling away from the continual onus of managing the larger family and seeking sympathy and understanding from their favorite wives.

Angel Park women readily state that in their view it is more difficult for men than women to live the fullness of the Principle or achieve the religious goals of being just, kind, and creating a harmonious plural family. Pinesdale men report being frequently frustrated in their roles as father and husbands. In trying to juggle the several relationships and provide for so many people, many found the experience overwhelming [38]. Janet Bennion estimated that 65 percent of the women she knew were satisfied with plural living, whereas 72 percent of the men were dissatisfied [43]. I found Angel Park men shared many similar

concerns with the Pinesdale community men, but the percentage of satisfied Angel Park women is lower (65 out of 130 or 50%). But 60 of the 65 women who were satisfied were the favorite wives. Still, it is striking that so many men admit being dissatisfied.

Dawn Porter, a journalist, who visited different fundamentalist communities, found that husbands also felt weighed down trying to cope with their wives' emotional uneasiness. She described one case where a husband would return home from work and, before going inside, sit in his car thinking: "OK, which one is going to be mad at me now" [20] (p. A1)? I knew of a similar case where an Angel Park man with two wives acknowledged becoming "overwhelmed by the whole situation . . . I sometimes wondered about this life and then I recall my children and what they mean to me and then I just soldier on."

A man's offspring are aware of their father's burden and its impact on his well-being. One said, in a gentle and affectionate tone, "My mother always defended Dad. She would say: 'you do not understand the pressure he's under.' Or would say: 'When you are older, you will understand his reasons.' My mother never criticized Dad in front of me. She always stood up for him." He elaborated: "When I left the community and later returned I asked my father how he can handle all his family obligations. He sighed, 'You have to keep your faith. You have to believe this is the way God wants you to live.' He then smiled and added: 'if I lived a different way, I would never have had you.'" Another woman told me about a man who had several wives and over fifteen children: "He had an epiphany. He called his family together to inform them that he did not want any more children. He knew he could no longer meet his financial and instructional responsibilities. He realized he had made a mistake in forming a plural family, but they would remain in the community as an independent family that is no longer affiliated with the church. For emphasis, he said: 'Plural family may work for some, but it does not work for me or this family.'" "I think," she continued, "that he must have been suffering a long time trying to decide what to do." Though this is an extreme case, the pressures being the same for husbands as for wives as they mount; suffering is clearly not a female monopoly. Plural marriage can be a hard lifestyle for everyone.

14. Conclusion: How Representative Is the Angel Park Fundamentalist Community?

Some Anthropologists believe that the polygynous family system is as sexually and emotionally satisfying as a monogamous one [66]. Ethnographic accounts of 69 polygynous systems, however, provide compelling evidence that the majority of co-wives in a polygynous family prefer pragmatic co-operation with one another while maintaining a respectful distance. Moreover, there often is a deep-seated feeling of angst that arises over competing for access to their mutual husband. Co-wife conflict in the early years of marriage is pervasive, and often marked by outbursts of verbal or physical violence. Cross-cultural data suggest that the majority of young women react to the arrival of a new co-wife with feelings of fear, anger, sadness, and loss. This sentiment is expressed through a variety of culturally acknowledged and measurable behaviors; for example, witchcraft accusations, statements of concern for the welfare of children, accusations of favoritism, demands of greater access to the husband, complaints of being sexually ignored, outbreaks of physical or verbal abuse, and expressing an intention to divorce or actually doing so. Overwhelmingly, researchers report that whereas material wealth may be divided more or less equally, a husband's sexual attention (a primary source for increased fertility) and affection cannot always be equitably distributed, there is ongoing and contentious rivalry among co-wives [15].

In exploring the Angel Park complex family reveals underlying patterns, recurrent themes, and readily identifiable core features Mormon Fundamentalist associate with imagining, maintaining, and being love. A prevalent theme is co-wives' dissatisfaction that there is a favorite wife who occupies most of their husband's attention. Another feature of the Angel Park's plural ideology is women's refusal to engage in group celebrations at the expense of celebrating their individualized rites of passage. For example, most women prefer to celebrate their anniversary date and birthday with only their husband

and not with their sister-wives. Another theme is men who, for their part, enter into plural marriages in good faith and in spite of their best intentions often become psychologically overwhelmed trying to manage their wives' emotions and competing interests. Lastly, the favorite wife is a byproduct of men's, as much as women's, desire to form an exclusive love bond.

Around the globe the impulse to form a dyadic love bond is relentless. In the Mormon Fundamentalist communities where we have ethnographic data, this impulse forms almost a subtext that operates within the more formal theological framework organized around the promotion of duty over a desire for dyadic intimacy. My research finds that the core existential dilemma embedded in Angel Park, if not in every Mormon Fundamentalist community, is an individual's inability to overcome his or her yearning to form a sustained dyadic love bond.

Given the proclivity to form exclusive dyadic bonds, we are left with a critical question: can contemporary American polygamous families endure over time? Their success will depend to a large extent on whether their members can uphold another equally salient and very human capability: sustaining a commitment to a cosmologically inspired ideal that says plural love is superior to monogamous love. This presents something of a paradox: humans are both a pair-bond species who desire to form dyadic unions, even when they are not culturally sanctioned, and who also have an adaptive cognitive capacity to create alternative ways of living based in an ideology of plural love. The issue is not whether humans are capable of entering into plural love arrangements but rather how long can they stay living in one.

The ideal of salvation or entrance into heaven of the individual, the family, and the congregation living within the fundamentalist polygamous creed is Angel Park's metaphysical bedrock of legitimacy. But, for most, managing conflicting desires within the ethical commitment to the plural family is seldom easy. It remains one of life's puzzles, one that each person strives to resolve in her or his own way, although, it should be said, not without the support of spouses, family members, and the church itself. Consequently, the fundamentalist polygamous family remains a volatile center, with its own distinct challenges and stresses, where the existential problems of living remain on full display in action and in belief.

15. Ennotes: Background Clarifications and Local Historical Details

(1). The community refers to its style of life as "polygamy," not polygyny that is the more academic term. Polygamy refers to having multiple spouses simultaneously, which can be either one man with several wives or one woman with several husbands. Polygyny refers to marriages with one man and multiple women.

(2). Mormon Fundamentalists prefer using the word polygamy over polygyny. They also use a variety of words to refer to plural or polygynous marriage. These range from "Plural Family," "The Work," "The Principle," or "Celestial Marriage" [39,46].

(3). Polygyny has been studied primarily from a structural perspective, which seeks to understand its evolution as a form of adaptation to certain ecological restraints. With the notable exceptions of [53] and Bohannan [31], analysis of an individual's experiences in a polygamous household is, for the most part, overlooked.

(4) Angel Park is a sectarian religious community situated in western North America and northern Mexico. Like other fundamentalist communities, it is separately governed and sustains nominal, if any, contact with other fundamentalist groups. The population of Angel Park is around twenty-seven hundred, with over half of it under the age of twelve years old. It is an intentional community in which members live, or expect to live, in a plural family. Unlike nineteenth-century Mormonism, where an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the families were polygamous, more than 45 percent of the Angel Park families in the 1990s formed polygamous households.

Like many small American rural communities, all of Angel Park's main roads are paved, its side streets not. Its houses, however, are anything but typical of rural com-

munities. “The Big House” (or their ideal house) is for the entire polygamous family to live together. The houses range in size from three-bedroom mobile trailers to huge 35,000-square-foot mansions. Many are forever undergoing renovation.

The realities of insufficient materials often undercut deeply felt theological axioms. For example, many polygamous communities need outside funding to build, expand, or renovate, and this compels women to seek work outside the community. Jobs for these women range from simple service work to school administrators and teachers, nurses, lawyers, and local police. Others pursue college education, obtaining professional degrees to earn higher salaries. Angel Park places more value on education, encouraging its children to graduate from high school and, if the interest is there, to attend college. In this goal, they have been successful: a local community college is composed of 70 percent females and 30 percent males, all from polygamous families.

Although the residents of Angel Park feel that certain aspects of the larger culture are immoral (e.g., premarital sex, abortion, X-rated movies), there are other cultural activities in which they do participate, and, at times, the participation includes discussion and criticism of national and international events. Several polygamous families have even appeared on various talk shows to defend their religion and lifestyle. Others have discussed their lifestyle with magazine and television reporters. Contemporary fundamentalists in general are not like the Hutterites; they disapprove of mainstream American culture and seek to minimize their interaction with it. For most Angel Park’s residents, life is to be enjoyed, and they do not hesitate to partake of some of its many delights (e.g., drink coffee and alcohol, visit the national parks, shop at a nearby mall, and feast at all-you-can-eat \$16.99 buffets). Significantly, whenever Angel Park’s more liberal family members “go to town,” they seek to avoid being singled out but instead try to blend in by changing their clothes from the everyday, more conservative community dress to mainstream culture’s dress. More conservative members avoid the issue of “proper” wear by simply not leaving their community. For families that allow or encourage dinner conversations regularly, they discuss topics that range from religious issues, current events, the entertainment value of *Saving Private Ryan*, the representativeness of *Little Women*, to I expect the 2022 national elections and its reflection of American culture and the benefits of flaxseed oil for preventing illness. The community celebrates the Fourth of July and Pioneer Day (24 July), the latter holiday when Mormon pioneers settled in 1847 in the Salt Lake Valley.

Politically, Angel Park, like other small rural Mormon communities, is a closed community organized in a male-governed theocratic political system [39]. Few town officials are selected without proper religious credentials [50] (p. 693). Angel Park leadership espoused an orthodox-liberal stance, which maintains adherence to a strict interpretation of the fundamentalist doctrine of governance by a collective priesthood and a more open attitude toward interactions with mainstream society. The leadership affirms personal agency and responsibility, which is contrary to other fundamentalist communities who insist on a firm to absolute obedience to religious authority. The orthodox-liberal faction is not only more educated but smaller, with a sizable number of businessmen interacting regularly with outsiders. Moreover, the leadership, when establishing community rules or changing them, favors consensus to unqualified obedience. For example, the fundamentalist reactionary-conservative leadership prefers to end a sermon with “Obey,” whereas the Angel Park leadership typically ends its sermons with “Think about it.” The FLDS community believes that their leader is a god who requires them to stand up whenever he walks into a building. Angel Park does not believe that leaders are gods but are instead called by God. When the leadership walks into church, members do not stand. Regardless of different beliefs and attitudes toward mainstream society, every fundamentalist community remains a theologically governed society.

The need to improve their economic conditions often compels fundamentalist communities “to go public” more than many members may want. Because of its location, Angel Park’s economy cannot support all its residents. Most are required to work outside the community in a variety of professions. Most men are employed in currently booming regional

construction and interstate trucking industries. Women and other men work in various jobs such as accountants, architects, janitors, masseuses, caretakers, principals, teachers, nurses, bed and breakfast hotels, and mechanics. Although there are a few wealthy families living in Angel Park, it is not, overall, a wealthy town. Although its average median income is higher than Appalachia's \$8595, it still has one of the lowest median incomes in the western United States [67].

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