Multi-Bonding: Polygamy, Polygyny, Polyamory

Defining and Identifying Multi-bonding

Non-monogamous relationships can take any number of forms, including, but not limited to, serial pair-bonding (known most frequently as serial monogamy), polygamy, polyandry, communal living, and "open" pair-bondings, where sexual or sexual-emotional relationships outside of the primary one are tolerated to a greater or lesser degree (cf. Robinson, 1997). *Polygyny* has been defined as "the marriage of a man to two or more women at the same time" (Moorehead, 1991: 311), or the "practice of plural marriage" (Altman and Ginat, 1996: 3). The term *polygamy* has also been used synonymously with polygyny, although it could also be used to encompass polyandry (Welch and Glick, 1981). *Polyandry* refers to the marriage of one woman to two or more husbands, while *polygynandry* contemplates a situation in which two or more women are simultaneously married to two or more men (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002). *Polygynandry* has also been used to refer to group marriage (Anon., 2004). The term *informal polygamy* has been used to describe relationships characterized by the simultaneous existence of a legal marriage of one man to one woman and an affair with a second woman that has become a stable feature of the family structure (Rivett and Street, 1993). In contrast, *polyamory* refers to "group marriage" or the existence of one or more sexual

relationships inside or outside of marriage (Munson and Stelboum, 1999).

The incidence of polygamy, used here to refer to bonded relationships between one man and multiple women or one woman and multiple men entered into in a legal or religious context, has been shown to vary across cultures. Researchers have found that in Africa, the incidence of polygamy tends to be higher in the West and less in other regions of the continent (Lesthaeghe, Kaufmann, and Meekers, 1987) and is considered a valid form of marriage in Algeria, Benin, Chad, Congo, Ghana, Togo, Tanzania (Welch and Glick, 1981), Saudi Arabia, and among the Bedouin-Arab communities of Israel. As of 1975, almost one-half of all marriages in Ibadan, Nigeria were thought to be polygamous (Ware, 1979). It has been estimated that anywhere from one-fifth to one-half of all marriages in Africa are polygamous (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1993). The incidence of polygamy among men in Zaire was estimated in 1977 to be approximately 29.8% (Pitshandege, 1978, cited in Welch III and Glick, 1981). According to the 1966 census, approximately 46,854 of 4,830,316 men in Iran, or slightly less than 1%, had multiple wives (Momeni, 1975), whereas it has been estimated that in Kuwait, between 8% and 13% of all marriages are polygamous. According to estimates derived at various points in time from 1957 through 1964, for every 1,000 men, 220 in Chad, 320 in Upper Volta, 290 in Cameroon, and 230 in Mali were in polygamous marriages (Tabutin, 1974). The percentage of younger women (ages 20 to 29) involved in polygynous unions has been found to vary widely across African nations, from 8% in Lesotho to 35% in Senegal (Lauras-Lecoh, 1990).

Origins of Multi-bonding

Numerous factors have been identified that appear to influence the occurrence of multi-bonding in human populations. (For a rela-

tively brief discussion of its evolution in bird and animal species, the reader is urged to consult Grønstøl, Byrkjedal, and Fiksen, 2003; Ptak and Lachmann, 2003). The demographic perspective posits that males may experience higher rates of mortality than females due to disease, warfare, and/or occupational dangers associated with activities such as hunting, ocean fishing, and migration labor (Dorjahn, 1959). This elevated rate of male mortality may be responsible, at least in part, for an increase in polygyny (Lee, 1979). Polygyny may also be attributable to warfare because of the resultant high rates of male mortality (Murdock, 1949) and the ability of the conquering men to capture women from the vanquished opponents (Dorjahn, 1959).

A study of the Ngwa Igbo in Nigeria identified five principal reasons for men to maintain more than one wife: because having more than one wife allows the Ngwa husband to (1) have the many children that he desires; (2) heighten his prestige and boost his ego among his peers; (3) enhance his status within his community; (4) ensure a sufficient availability of labor to perform the necessary farm work and the processing of commercial oil-palm produce; and (5) satisfy his sexual urges (Uchendu, 1965). Indian Muslim men have offered various reasons for having taken additional wives: to have a better life-partner, to be able to have a child because the first wife is barren, to ameliorate the lack of "homeness" in their homes resulting from the primary wife's long-term illness, to restore "light and laughter" to their lives, to increase the household income through the additional wife's wages from employment, and to reduce their level of frustration with the first wife that resulted from her lack of consideration and temperament (Haqqi, 1974).

A need for alliances between families and clans has also served as a motivating force behind a polygamous marriages (Hillman, 1975). As an example, "exchange marriages" have been found to be common in Bedouin-Arab communities, whereby two males marry each other's sisters. If one of the husbands takes a second wife, the

other husband may feel pressured to do the same (Al-Krenawi and Graham 1999).

Religious belief also appears to play a role in the formation of formalized polygynous unions. As an example, 92% of the population of Mali identifies as Muslim (Madhavan, 2002). Islam permits men to have as many as four wives (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba, 1994; Madhavan, 2002) and views polygamy as protecting the family from possible deviation to illegal sexual intercourse and from contracting sexually transmitted diseases (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba, 1994). Consequently, it is not surprising that 45% of Mali's married women have been found to be in polygynous unions (Madhavan, 2002). In Ghana, polygamous marriages have been found to be more frequent among Muslim women who ascribe to traditional religious beliefs (Klomegah, 1997). However, a study of polygamy among Muslims in India found that a minority were in polygamous marriages (Haqqi, 1974).

Although much of what we know about multi-bonding comes to us from studies of various groups and societies in Africa (see below), the issue of multi-bonding is relevant in the United States today, despite the illegality of formal, legalized multiple unions. First, multiple marriages were not uncommon among the Cheyenne Indians during the nineteenth century. An examination of the 1880 census reveals that of 127 families, 16.5% were polygynous (from the perspective of the husbands) (Moorehead, 1991). Of the 799 persons who constituted these families, 212, or 26.5%, were members of polygynous families (Moorehead, 1991).

Several previously-existing communal societies in the U.S. embraced group marriage including, for example, the Oneida community. This community was founded by the Congregationalist minister John Humphrey Noyes in 1848 in Oneida, New York, following his hasty departure from the irate citizens of Putney, Vermont, who were displeased with his teachings and actions (Klephart and Zellner, 1998). The community adopted Noyes'

teachings of "Mutual Criticism," "Male Continence," and "Complex Marriage," meaning that marriage and private property were abolished and the community included "all property of family living and associations." Mutual Criticism meant that all members of the community were subject to criticisms of either a committee or the whole community. These criticisms, which focused on an individual's "bad traits," were intended to assure conformity to community morality. The principle of Male Continence maintained that a male and female were to engage in sexual intercourse without the male ejaculating, in order to avoid unwanted pregnancy and the waste of sperm.

Complex Marriage dictated that every man and woman were married to all others of the opposite sex in the community. A male and female could cohabit only if they obtained each other's consent through a third party. However, exclusive attachments were prohibited as selfish and idolatrous. Noyes regularly criticized the practice of monogamy:

The human heart is capable of loving any number of times and any number of persons. This is the law of nature. There is no occasion to find fault with it. Variety is in the nature of things, as beautiful and as useful in love as in eating and drinking . . . . We need love as much as we need food and clothing, and God knows it; and if we trust Him for those things, why not for love? (Quoted in Parker, 1935: 182-183).

The *Handbook* of the community explained further the concept of sex within the community:

The liberty of monogamous marriage, as commonly understood, is the liberty of a man to sleep habitually with a woman, liberty to please himself alone in his dealings with her, liberty to expose her to childbearing without care or consultation.

The term Free Love, as understood by the Oneida Community, does not mean any such freedom of sexual proceedings. The theory of sexual interchange which governs all the general measures of the Community is that which in ordinary society governs the proceedings in courtship.

It is the theory that love after marriage should be what it is before marriage—a glowing attraction on both sides, and not the odious obligation of one party, and the sensual recklessness of the other (Quoted in Kephart and Zellner, 1998: 77).

The principle of "Ascending Fellowship" helped to guide the choice of sexual partner. This principle permitted older Central Members, deemed to be closer to God, to select younger virginal sexual partners to introduce them to the concept of Complex Marriage. Female Central Members were postmenopausal in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies. The selected virginal male or female was required to accept his or her selection, being of lower order (Hillebrand, n.d.).

The Oneida community was premised, in part, on religious belief. Community members believed that Christ's second coming had occurred in A.D. 70 and that they could bring in the millennium kingdom themselves. At its peak, the community had 306 members. The community was ultimately abandoned in 1881 due to internal community conflict arising in response to the policies imposed by Dr. Theodore Noyes, the founder's agnostic son, who assumed leadership from his father in 1876.

Several writers have noted that relative scarcity of African American men available for marital partnering to African American women (Chapman, 1986; Scott, 1976; Williams, 1990), due to high homicide rates, high rates of imprisonment, high rates of military service in response to the unavailability of adequate civilian employment, and the increasing rates of marriage between African American men and non-African American women (Williams, 1990). Polygyny, signifying here the establishment of "socio-sexual and even conjugal-type relationships" between multiple women and one male, has been proposed as a solution to this dilemma (Scott, 1976; cf. Chapman, 1986). At least one writer has argued against this approach, noting the preference of most women for unions between one man and one woman; the relative economic

instability of many potentially available, marriageable African American men, thereby obviating their ability to provide for multiple households or persons; the health risks possibly associated with multiple partnering: and the existence of legal prohibitions against the recognition of multiple formalized, legal unions (Williams, 1990).

Finally, a proportion of the U.S. population today participates in various forms of multi-bonded relationships (Cloud, 1999; Strassberg, 2003), as evidenced by the number of websites, such as that for the Polyamory Society (http://www.polyamorysociety.org, last accessed December 8, 2004), and publications, such as *Loving More Magazine*, dedicated to multi-partnering. These relationships may vary in the level of commitment of each of the individuals to the relationship members, and the sexual or nonsexual nature of the interactions between each of the various individuals (Nearing, 1992; West, 1996).

Multi-bonding Across Cultures: Case Examples

As indicated, attitudes towards the bonding of multiple parties concurrently varies across cultures and societies and may range from encouragement of and support for formalized multi-party unions to the imposition of legal sanctions. Within this broad spectrum, societies may accept, tolerate, or decry less formal arrangements, such as sexual relationships outside of a primary, legally sanctioned relationship. This section examines the occurrence of multiple unions in three diverse settings and communities: Mormons in the United States and Bedouin-Arabs in Israel.

Multiple Marriage and the Church of the Latter Day Saints

The practice of multiple marriage was introduced into the Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) in the 1830s and 1840s, following

the Church's relocation from the Midwest to the Great Basin. In 1852, Brigham Young announced that plural marriage would be the official doctrine of the Church (Batchelor, Watson, and Wilde, 2000). Both Mormons and non-Mormons of this time referred to the system of a man's marriage to more than one woman as "polygamy," "celestial marriage," "plural marriage," "plurality," and "the principle," (Hardy and Erickson, 2001), while Mormons also referred to plural marriage as "The Law of Abraham" and "patriarchal marriage" (Batchelor, Watson, and Wilde, 2000). Various arguments were presented to support the practice. Sexual activity for the purpose of reproduction was encouraged, while early death would befall those who engaged in too frequent sexual intercourse or intercourse with partners who could not conceive. Brigham Young subscribed to the then-prevalent notion that men possessed a greater sexual need and capacity than did women, so that multiple wives would serve both the men and women involved in the relationship and further a life in harmony (Hardy and Erickson, 2001).

Church doctrine has also been proffered to support the practice of polygamous marriage. The *Journal of Discourses (J.D.)*, a 26-volume collection of sermons and discourses delivered by LDS leaders during the period from 1853 through 1886, advises

God never introduced the Patriarchal order of marriage with a view to please man in his carnal desires, nor to punish females for anything which they had done; but He introduced it for the express purpose of raising up to His name a royal Priesthood, a peculiar people (Brigham Young, J.D. 3:264).

Now if any of you will deny the plurality of wives, and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned; . . . (Brigham Young, J.D. 3: 266).

I want to prophesy that all men and women who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy will find themselves in darkness, the spirit of God will withdraw from them the very moment of their opposition to that principle, until they will finally go down to hell and be damned, if they do not repent (Orson Pratt, J.D. 17: 224)

Estimates place the proportion of Mormon men who ever prac-
ticed polygamy as low as 3% and as high as 30% (Kephart and
Zellner, 1998). Of those who did practice polygamy, it appears that
the majority took only one additional wife. Those that did were
most often in the upper economic strata.

Many Mormon women, as well as men, supported polygamy as
an institution. It was believed that parents' thoughts could be
passed on to their unborn child, and that women's emotions could
be imprinted on their infants during gestation and nursing.
Accordingly, some women believed that the emotional distress that
they suffered in response to their husbands' imprisonment for
polygamy would leave marks on their unborn children (Jensen,
1948).

It has been said that women who subscribe to plural marriage are
convinced of 10 basic beliefs: (1) that plural marriage is a divine
and holy law and is absolutely essential in order to receive the
promised rewards; (2) that it is essential for her to live a plural mar-
riage in this life; (3) that a monogamous marriage is insufficient for
her to achieve the promised rewards; (4) that plural marriage is the
only type of marriage that can continue beyond death; (5) that God
has provided a way for her to practice plural marriage legitimately
now; (6) that plural marriage is a holy principle; (7) that plural mar-
riage is one of the laws that God designed to help her achieve her
full potential, including her status as a goddess and her husband as
a god; (8) that plural marriage is an eternal and essential compo-
nent of the LDS religion, existing within a framework of personal
covenants with God which bind individuals and families into a
covenant people; (9) that she will receive huge rewards for living
plural marriage; and (10) that she is entitled to divine, personal
direction throughout her life (Anon., 2000: 71-72). Wives in
polygamous marriages have identified numerous advantages of this
marital arrangement as compared to monogamy, including the exis-
tence of multiple mothers to care for children, the establishment of

close relationships with the other wives, the achievement of individual happiness and fulfillment of personal goals, and avoidance of marital problems resulting from a partner's adulterous affairs (Batchelor, Watson, and Wilde, 2000).

Various pieces of federal legislation were formulated to prohibit polygamy. Ultimately, LDS members adopted a Manifesto that advised church members to refrain from engaging in polygamy and Utah adopted a state constitution prohibiting polygamy in exchange for Utah's statehood. However, the Church hierarchy continued to encourage plural marriages, which prompted congressional hearings and a refusal by Congress in 1904 to allow the newly elected Utah Senator Reed Smoot, an LDS member, to take his seat in Congress (Batchelor, Watson, and Wilde, 2000). Ultimately, Church leadership promulgated the Second Manifesto, reaffirming that no polygamous marriages would be performed with the approval or consent of the Church.

Since that time, polygamous marriages that have occurred have been entered into outside of the authority of the Church and outside of the law. A number of these relationships have resulted in the prosecution of the adults involved, as well as trials relating to the fitness of the parents to retain custody of their children (*Sanderson v. Tryon*, 1987). Current Utah law prohibits polygamous or plural marriages (Utah Const.; Utah Code Ann., 2004), marriage of a child under the age of 16, in most cases (Utah Code Ann., 2004), and imposes criminal penalties on those who engage in bigamy (Utah Code Ann., 2004). However, various newspaper articles continue to document the occurrence of "marriages" involving one husband and multiple wives, despite the existing legal prohibitions and the fact that such marriages are legally void. In addition, these accounts have noted instances of abuse of multiple wives by Fundamentalist Mormons practicing polygamy, as well as the sexual abuse of female children, who were alleged to have been forced into early marriages.

The Bedouin-Arabs

The term "Bedouin," now used to refer to all Arabic-speaking nomadic tribes in the Middle East, was once reserved as a term of reference for those people who herded camels (Kay, 1978). Although the Bedouin Arabs of the Negev region are related to Bedouin communities in other countries, they comprise a distinct national, linguistic, political, and geographic group. The majority of the Bedouin living in the Negev region are Muslims, although there are some Christian Bedouins who live outside of this area. Of the approximately 100,000 Bedouins currently living in the Negev, approximately 40% live in villages and another 60% live semi-nomadically in rural areas (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 1997).

Bedouin society is founded on a tribal structure. These tribes are divided into units of various sizes based on kinship and patrilineal descent. The largest unit is that of a confederation or nation, which is comprised of various tribes grouped together; although each tribe has its own settlement, this association of the tribes provides a sense of belonging. A tribe consists of a union of families who wander together and work the land together under the rule of the tribal leader. In turn, the tribes may include smaller social groups, such as numbers of extended families, or *Hamula*. The *Hamula* encompass several generations in a patrilineal line that have a common ancestor. Marriages often involve unions between members of the *Hamula*.

Each *Hamula* has a representative, usually the eldest male, in the forum that makes the decisions in the tribe. Reports indicate that the man is usually the dominant figure in the tribe, is responsible for the family's relationships with others, and is the final authority in all matters related to his family (Al-Krenawi, 1996; Al-Krenawi, Maoz, and Riecher, 1994). The society is reported to be extremely hierarchical, with males dominant over females and older age over younger age. Family members are tied together culturally, socially, economically, and emotionally and are expected to assist each other (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 1996).

Because traditional Bedouin-Arab society was organized as warrior tribes, the roles of males and females were strictly delineated. As a consequence, sons have higher status and more value than daughters. Women are referred to as *Aorah*, which means literally, "disabled." (Al-Krenawi, 1998). A woman's status in this society is dependent upon her marital status and her production of children, especially sons. Polygamy remains common and more than four wives have been known to be acquired, despite the numerical limitation imposed by the Koran (Al-Krenawi, 1996). Marriages are often arranged by a girl's family while she is still in her teens, frequently without her consultation. Women are expected to remain in the home and to forego higher education, while men are expected to be the breadwinners. Women are deemed to be the property of the man of the family; their good behavior upholds his honor (Al-Krenawi, 1998).

Divorce often results in serious emotional and economic consequences. The husband is entitled to the custody of the children in the event of divorce, regardless of the children's ages (Al-Krenawi, 1996; Mass and Al-Krenawi, 1994). A divorced woman may have no means of support other than assistance from other family members or court-ordered support payments from her ex-husband (Al-Krenawi, 1998). Once divorced, she will be able to remarry only as a second, third, or fourth wife or as the wife of an older man (Al-Krenawi, 1996).

Multi-bonding and Health

Fertility

The effect of male coupling with multiple women on fertility remains unsettled (Dodoo, 1998). A number of researchers have asserted that polygynous relationships do not result in a reduction in fertility (Lorimer, 1954; Nag, 1962), while others claim to have observed a reduction (Henin, 1968; Morgan, 1971; Ukaegbu,

1977; Van de Walle, 1968). The apparent observed reduction in fertility has been explained by the existence of a wide age disparity between male and his younger wives, such that the male's ability to procreate has declined significantly and continues to decrease, resulting in a reduction in the fertility of successive wives (Ukaegbu, 1977).

Women and Health

Scholars have variously perceived women in polygynous unions as incapable of relating to each other except through competition (Pogrebin, 1987) or as establishing cooperation and friendship in an effort to empower themselves against male control and domination (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975). However, studies of polygyny across cultures suggest that women's attitudes towards polygyny may vary within and across societies (Adams and Mburugu, 1994; Dorjahn, 1988; Kilbride, 1994; Potash, 1989; White and Burton, 1988) and that their experiences and perspectives can only be understood within a particular sociocultural and personal context (Madhavan, 2002).

Various researchers have found in their studies of African societies that polygyny may be advantageous for women in some societies because polygynous husbands tend to be wealthier, the pool of laborers available for work as a function of the larger domestic unit reduces the need for wage laborers, and co-wives may provide assistance with labor and in economic affairs (Adams and Mburugu, 1994; Dorjahn, 1988). Ware's (1979) study of Yoruba women's attitudes towards polygyny found that approximately 60% favored a polygynous arrangement because it would provide both a social opportunity to gossip and play, as well as assistance with the domestic labor. Polygynous unions may also provide an alternative to divorce in those societies in which marriage is determinative of women's status and/or divorce results in stigmatization or ostracism (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002).

Kinship, norms about friendship, and closer age of the co-wives may be critical factors in the formation of a friendship or collaborative relationship between various co-wives (Madhavan, 2002). For instance, older women may expect newer, younger wives to adapt to the status quo. Too, societal expectations regarding the nature of co-wife relationships may play an important role. As an example, the Bamanan community of Mali expects that existing wives will accept their husband's acquisition of additional wives, while the Fulbe community of Mali anticipates jealousy between co-wives and competition to keep the man (Madhavan, 2002).

Studies of polygynous relationships in Africa have also, however, documented significant difficulties. Wives may not welcome the entry of new co-wives into the relationship, fearing that their inclusion will result in a reduction in the availability of material resources for themselves and their children, a diminution in their husband's emotional availability to themselves and their children, and/or a reduction in their husband's sexual availability (Adams and Mburugu, 1994; Ware, 1979, Wittrup, 1990). Such fears or perceptions may give rise to envy and jealousy between co-wives (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1988; Fainzang and Journet, 1988; Potash, 1995). Although some reports and accounts indicate that wife order may be an important factor in women's satisfaction in their relationship (Chaleby, 1985), a study of polygamous marriages in Cameron found that wife order had a negligible effect on either life or marital satisfaction among the women (Gwanfogne, Furrow, Schumm, and Smith, 1997).

Even where there exists significant social support for the institution of polygyny, women may disfavor it, feeling that it is in their best interest and the best interests of their children to oppose their husband's inclination to acquire an additional wife (Meekers and Franklin, 1995). Despite such opposition, however, women may ultimately feel powerless to prevent its occurrence (Meekers and Franklin, 1995). Women may also resign themselves to the possi-

bility that their husbands will take additional wives to avoid a more distasteful alternative: that their husbands will be legally monogamous but will engage in a series of affairs. An interview study with 250 wives in Nigeria found that three-quarters of the wives preferred that their husbands take an additional wife rather than a mistress, noting that men spend less money on their wives than their mistresses and that the position of an additional wife was more defined and controllable than that of a mistress (Ware, 1979).

Although the potential exists for women in a polygynous union to be at an economic disadvantage due to the sharing of available resources, such an adverse result may not occur. For instance, Hames (1996) found in his study of the Yanomamö Indians of Venezuela that these potential economic costs of polygyny are avoided by the provision of subsidies to polygynous households by other households in the village, as a function of the high status held by the husbands in such unions.

A study of women in an inpatient psychiatric facility in Kuwait found that almost one-quarter of the patients were members of polygamous marriages, although slightly more than one-tenth of married women in the general population were members of such marriages (Chaleby, 1985). The ratio of senior to junior wives in the psychiatric population was 2 to 1; the ratio increased to 3 to 1 when cases of mental illness arising before the second marriage were excluded from the analysis. Depression was more frequently diagnosed among polygamous than monogamous wives and among senior as compared with junior wives. Multiple explanations may have existed for these findings, however, including an increased incidence of mental illness among polygamous wives, a desire on the part of the husbands to discard the senior wives, and/or the wives' use of hospitalization as a means of escaping from restrictions and responsibilities imposed by the family structure. The increased frequency of depression among senior wives may have been attributable to older age depression associated with hormonal changes

and/or feelings of loss engendered by the husbands' acquisition of additional wives (Chaleby, 1985).

A similar study of psychiatric outpatients found that 25.4% were in polygamous marriages, compared to an estimated 11.5% of all married women based upon data from the 1975 Kuwaiti census and estimates from marriage court statistics (Chaleby, 1987). Lower levels of education and unemployment were associated with being in a polygamous marriage. Polygamous wives were more likely than those in monogamous marriages to attribute their psychiatric disorders to their marital status. Although not raised as a possibility by the researchers, one must consider whether the polygamous marriages and lack of education and employment were effects of the mental illness. It is possible, for instance, that the mental illness precluded the women from advancing educationally and securing and retaining employment. Too, the mental illness may have limited the extent to which the women could assume responsibility for the management of a household and the care of its members.

Several studies have examined the frequency of polygamy among mentally ill patients in Nigeria, where polygamy has been found to be relatively common (Makanjuola, 1987). Of 318 patients in Ilesha, it was found that 81% had been born into polygamous homes (Makanjuola, 1985). An earlier study of psychiatric disorders among the Yoruba found that mental disorder occurred more frequently among co-wives in the city, but not in the village (Leighton, Lambo, Hughes, Leighton, Murphy, and Macklin, 1963).

Not surprisingly, monogamous wives may experience greater pressure to satisfy their husbands' sexual demands than do polygamous wives. Monogamous wives may be more "yielding" due to fears that if they fail or refuse to satisfy their husbands, their husbands will take another wife or engage in extramarital affairs (Ware, 1979).

Better educated and urban women have been found to be less likely to favor polygyny (Ferraro, 1991, Klomegah, 1997; Okonjo, 1992; Ware, 1979; Wittrup, 1990). Not surprisingly, then, the proportion of marriages in Africa that are polygynous has declined due to an increase in women's education, urbanization, and changes in women's status (Madhavan, 2002). However, informal polygyny, whereby a man maintains one or more extramarital relationships, has become increasingly common (Potash, 1995).

One must necessarily inquire about the relevance of these findings in African societies to relationship dynamics in the United States, where multiple legal marriage remains illegal. An interview study with 17 American Muslim women of diverse backgrounds reported similar difficulties (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2000). The women, many of whom were first wives, became unwilling participants in polygamous relationships. The women reported unequal distributions of time, financial support, and affection among wives. Although a number of the marriages involved physical abuse by the husbands, co-wives did not attempt to intervene to assist each other in such circumstances and, in some instances, were co-perpetrators of the abuse.

It is possible that the illegal status of polygamous relationships in the United States may also play a role in the effect of the relationship structure on women's mental health. One woman who left a fundamentalist Mormon community that practiced polygamy wrote:

In the polygamous culture, personal identity is hard to come by. Social boundaries around the religious group keep out the larger world, but inside the group, personal boundaries are discouraged and readily breached. The secrecy imposed by an illegal lifestyle further undermines individual development, increasing the likelihood of abuse and exploitation. Focus on the self is actively discouraged . . . (Solomon, 2003: 13).

Men's Health

Little attention has focused specifically on the effect of multiple-bonded partnerships on the health of the males involved in these partnerships. An early study of Yoruba men found that married men with more than one wife were less likely to be mentally ill than those who had only one wife (Leighton, Lambo, Hughes, Leighton, Murphy, and Macklin, 1963). The researchers hypothesized that having only one wife was an effect, rather than a cause, of mental illness and that a degree of premorbid instability made these men less able to attract potential spouses.

Child Development

Relatively few studies of child development in the context of multi-bonding, regardless of its form, are available. Despite extensive theorizing about the negative impact of a polygamous family structure on the behavioral, emotional, and academic adjustment of children (Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine, and Abu-Saad, 2002), we actually have very little empirical data related to these questions.

Researchers have hypothesized that polygyny represents a male reproductive strategy that permits men to maximize the number of children, while minimizing their investment in each child (White, 1988). As a result, various investigations have been conducted in an attempt to discern differences in child development as a function of the marital structure of the family.

A number of recent studies have centered on a comparison of polygamous and monogamous Bedouin-Arab families in Israel (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Al-Krenawi, 1997; Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Al-Krenawi and Lightman, 2000; Elbedour, Bart, and Hektner, 2000, 2003). Comparisons of the children's development by family structure have yielded conflicting findings. A study of adolescents from polygamous and monogamous Bedouin-Arab families in the Negev area of Israel found no signifi-

cant differences in adolescent intelligence measures (Elbedour, Bart, and Hektner, 2003) or in scholastic achievement (Elbedour, Bart, and Hektner, 2000). However, other researchers have reported comparatively lower academic achievement levels among children from polygamous families (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Al-Krenawi, 1997; Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Al-Krenawi and Lightman, 2000; Cherian, 1989). At least one research group attributed the reduced academic achievement in polygamous households to a reduced level of parental interest in their children, regardless of the form of marriage (Cherian, 1993).

Adolescent levels of self-esteem have been found to be diminished (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Owuamanam, 1984), levels of depression have been found to be higher (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002), and behavioral difficulties in school more frequent (Minde, 1975) in children of polygynous unions as compared to those of monogamous unions. Investigators have hypothesized that the difficulties experienced by adolescents of polygynous unions with respect to self-esteem and self-identity may be related both to the tensions between their mothers, other co-wives, and their father and to a perceived or real lack of attention from their fathers (Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Owuamanam, 1984; Oyefoso and Adegoke, 1992). An investigation of the psychological adjustment of 116 Yoruba adolescents found that among males, but not among females, psychological adjustment as measured by the Psychological Adjustment Scale was significantly worse for those in polygynous households as compared with those in monogamous families (Oyefoso and Adegoke, 1992).

A case study of two situations involving informal polygamy focused on a child's behavioral problems. The therapists involved ultimately concluded that the difficulties experienced by the "problem child" in each family were not attributable to the family structure, but instead resulted from factors such as parental

inconsistencies and a lack of contact between the one family, consisting of the man and his legal wife, and the second family, consisting of the same man and the family resulting from his informal polygamous union (Rivett and Street, 1993).

Implications for Research and Practice

This chapter examined various forms of multi-bonding, with a particular focus on formalized polygyny. This brief review underscores our relative lack of knowledge with respect to many basic questions. These include: Why does there appear, at least in some instances, to be a higher proportion of wives in polygamous, as opposed to monogamous, relationships among mentally ill patients? Why does increased education appear to decrease women's willingness to enter into polygamous unions? What are the effects of multi-bonding on men's physical and mental health? What environmental factors impact the success or failure of individuals' effort to engage in multi-bonding? How do these same environmental factors affect the adjustment of children raised in multi-bonded families?

Multi-bonding raises critical issues in the clinical context, as well. Many practitioners might assume that a "married" man or woman, at least in the United States, is "married" to only one individual. In fact, various partnering configurations may potentially exist. In most cases, it is likely that a patient or client would not be willing to disclose the fact of such alternative arrangements to a clinician, unless there had developed a basis for trust and mutual respect. It is critical, then, that practitioners, regardless of their discipline, attempt to understand the social, cultural, and religious context in which their patient or client operates and engage the patient or client in discussion of his or her situation in that context. This clearly becomes increasingly difficult as the time available for patient examinations and client appointments continues to be diminished due to the constraints imposed by managed care health care systems.

References

Adams, B., Mburugu, E. (1994). Kikuyu bridewealth and polygyny today. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 25(2): 159-166.

Al-Krenawi, A. (1998). Family therapy with a multiparental/multi-spousal family. *Family Process* 37: 65-81.

Al-Krenawi, A. (1996). Group work with Bedouin widows of the Negev in a medical clinic. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 11: 303-318.

Al-Krenawi, A., Graham, R.J. (1996). Social work among the Bedouin of the Negev, Israel. *International Social Work* 39: 177-188.

Al-Krenawi, A., Graham, R.J. (1997). Spirit possession and exorcism: The integration of modern and traditional mental health care systems in the treatment of a Bedouin patient. *Clinical Social Work Journal* 25: 211-222.

Al-Krenawi, A., Graham, J.R., Al-Krenawi, S. (1997). Social work practice with polygamous families. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(6): 445-458.

Al-Krenawi, A., Graham, J.R., Slonim-Nevo, V. (2002). Mental health aspects of Arab-Israeli adolescents from polygamous versus monogamous families. *Journal of Social Psychology* 142(4): 446-460.

Al-Krenawi, A., Lightman, E.S. (2000). Learning achievement, social adjustment, and family conflict among Bedouin-Arab children from polygamous and monogamous families. *Journal of Social Psychology* 140(3): 345-355.

Al-Krewnawi, A., Maoz, B., Riecher, B. (1994). Familial and cultural issues in the brief strategic treatment of Israeli Bedouin. Family Systems Medicine 12: 415-425.

Altman, I., Ginat, J. (1996). *Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Anon. (2004). Group marriage. Wikipedia. Available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Group_marriage. Last accessed August 17, 2004.

Anon. (2000). Why do women choose plural marriage?: A guest essay by an anonymous plural wife. In M. Batchelor, M. Watson, A. Wilde (Eds.). *Voices in Harmony: Contemporary Women Celebrate Plural Marriage* (pp. 70-74). Salt Lake City, Utah: Principle Voices.

Batchelor, M., Watson, M., Wilde, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Voices in Harmony: Contemporary Women Celebrate Plural Marriage*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Principle Voices.

Chaleby, K. (1985). Women of polygamous marriages in an inpatient psychiatric services in Kuwait. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 173(1): 56-58.

Chaleby, K. (1987). Women of polygamous marriages in outpatient psychiatric services in Kuwait. *International Journal of Family Psychiatry* 8(1): 25-34.

Chapman, A. (1986). *Man Sharing, Dilemma or Choice: A Radical New Way of Relating to the Men in Your Life*. New York: William Morrow.

Cherian, V.I. (1989). Academic achievement of children from monogamous and polygynous families. *Journal of Social Psychology* 130(1): 117-119.

Cherian, V.I. (1993). The relationship between parental interest and academic achievement of Xhosa children from monogamous and polygynous families. *Journal of Social Psychology* 133(5): 733-736.

Cloud, J. (1999). Henry & Mary & Janet & . . . . *Time Magazine*, Nov. 15, 154(20).

Dodoo, F.N.A. (1998). Marriage type and reproductive decisions: A comparative study in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 232-242.

Dorjahn, V.R. (1988). Changes in Temne polygyny. *Ethnology* 27: 367-390.

Dorjahn, V.R. (1959). The factor of polygyny in African demography. In W.R. Bascom, M.J. Herskovits (Eds.). *Continuity and Change in African Cultures* (pp. 87-112). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eichenbaum, L., Orbach, S. (1988). *Between Women: Love, Envy, and Competition in Women's Friendships*. New York: Viking Press.

El Azayem G.A., Hedayat-Diba, Z. (1994). The psychological aspects of Islam: Basic principles of Islam and their psychological corollary. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 4(1): 41-50.

Elbedour, S., Bart, W.M., Hektner, J.M. (2003). Intelligence and family marital structure: The case of adolescents from monogamous and polygamous families among Bedouin Arabs in Israel. *Journal of Social Psychology* 143(1): 95-110.

Elbedour, S., Bart, W.M., Hektner, J.M. (2000). Scholastic achievement and family marital structure: Bedouin-Arab adolescents from monogamous and polygamous families in Israel. *Journal of Social Psychology* 140(4): 503-514.

Elbedour, S., Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Caridine, C., Abu-Saad, H. (2002). The effect of polygamous marital structure on behavioral, emotional, and academic adjustment in children: A comprehensive review of the literature. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 5(4): 255-271.

Fainzang, S., Journet, O. (1988). La Femme de Mon Mari. Paris. Cited in S. Madhavan. Best of friends and worst of enemies: Competition and collaboration in polygyny. *Ethnology* 41(1): 69-84.

Ferraro, G.P. (1991). Marriage and conjugal roles in Swaziland: Persistence and change. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 21(2): 89-128.

Grønstøol, G.B., Byrkjedal, I., Fiksen, Ø. (2003). Predicting polygynous settlement while incorporating varying female competitive strength. *Behavioral Ecology* 14(2): 257-267.

Gwanfoghe, P.N., Furrow, J.L., Schumm, W.R., Smith, M. (1997). Polygamy and marital life satisfaction: An exploratory study from rural Cameroon. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 28(1): 55-71.

Hames, R. (1996). Costs and benefits of monogamy and polygyny for Yanomamö women. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 17: 181-199.

Haqqi, S.A.H. (1974). Polygamy among Indian Muslims: A case study. *Indian Journal of Politics* 8: 143-152.

Hardy, R.C., Erickson, D. (2001). "Regeneration—Now and evermore": Mormon polygamy and the physical rehabilitation of mankind. *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10(1): 40-61.

Hassouneh-Phillips, D. (2001). Polygamy and wife-abuse: A qualitative study of Muslim women in America. *Health Care for Women International* 22: 735-748.

Henin, R.A. (1968). Fertility differentials in the Sudan. *Population Studies* 12: 147-161.

Hillebrand, R. (n.d.). The Oneida community. New York History Net. Available at http://www.nyhistory.com/central/oneida,htm. Last accessed August 16, 2004.

Hillman, E. (1975). *Polygyny Reconsidered*. New York: Orbis Books.

Jensen J.B. (1948). *Little God Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life*. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Kephart, W.M., Zellner, W.W. (1998). *Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Kilbride, P. (1994). *Plural Marriage for Our Times: A Reinvented Option*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Klomegah, R. (1997). Socio-economic characteristics of Ghanaian women in polygamous marriages. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 28: 73-89.

Lauras-Lecoh, T. (1990). Family trends and demographic transition in Africa. *International Social Science Journal* 42(4): 475-492.

Lee, G.R. (1979). Marital structure and economic systems. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41: 701-713.

Leighton, A.H., Lambo, T.A., Hughes, C.C., Leighton, D.C., Murphy, J.M., Macklin, H.B. (1963). *Psychiatric Disorder among the Yoruba*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Lesthaeghe, R., Kaufmann, G., Meekers, D. (1987). Marriage patterns and change in Sub-Saharan Africa. In J.A. Ebigbola, E. Van de Walle (Eds.). The Cultural Roots of African Fertility Regimes. University of Ile-Ife and University of Pennsylvania. Cited in T. Lauras-Lecoh. (1990). Family trends and demographic transition in Africa. *International Social Science Journal* 42(4): 475-492.

Lorimer, F. (Ed.). (1954). *Culture and Human Fertility*. Paris: UNESCO.

Madhavan, S. (2002). Best of friends and worst of enemies: Competition and collaboration in polygyny. *Ethnology* 41(1): 69-84.

Makanjuola, R.O.A. (1985). Clinical and sociocultural parameters in Nigerian psychiatric patients: A prospective study. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavia* 72: 512-521.

Makanjuola, R.O.A. (1987). The Nigerian psychiatric patient and his family. *International Journal of Family Psychiatry* 8(4): 363-373.

Mass, M., Al-Krenawi, A. (1994). When a man encounters a woman, Satan is also present: Clinical relationships in Bedouin society. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 64: 357-367.

Meekers, D., Franklin, N. (1995). Women's perceptions of polygyny among the Kaguru of Tanzania. *Ethnology* 34(4): 315-329.

Minde, K.K. (1975). Psychological problems in Ugandan school children: A controlled evaluation. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 16: 49-59.

Misovich, S.J., Fisher, J.D., Fisher, W.A. (1997). Close relationships and elevated risk behavior: Evidence and possibly underlying psychological processes. *Review of General Psychology* 1(1): 72-107.

Momeni, D.A. (1975). Polygyny in Iran. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37(2): 453-456.

Moorehead, J. H. (1991). The developmental cycle of Cheyenne polygyny. *American Indian Quarterly* 15(3): 311-328.

Munson, M., Stelboum J. Introduction. In M. Munson, J.P. Stelboum (Eds.). *The Lesbian Polyamory Reader: Open Relationships, Non-Monogamy, and Casual Sex* (pp. 1-7). New York: Haworth Press, Inc., 1999.

Murdock, G.P. (1949). *Social Structure.* New York: Macmillan.

Nag, M. (1962). *Factors Affecting Fertility in Non-Industrial Societies: A Cross-Cultural Study.* New Haven: Yale University Publications in Anthropology.

Nearing, R. (1992). *Loving More: The Polyfidelity Primer.* Hawaii: PEP Publications.

Okonjo, K. (1992). Aspects of continuity and change in mate-selection among the Igbo west of the Niger River. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 23(3): 339-360.

Oyefoso, A.O., Adegoke, A.R. (1992). Psychological adjustment of Yoruba adolescents as influenced by family type: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 33(4): 785-788.

Owuamanam, D.O. (1984). Adolescents' perception of polygamous family and its relationship to self-concept. *International Journal of Psychology* 19: 593-598.

Parker, R. (1935). *Yankee Saint: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community.* New York: Putnam.

Pitshandege, N. (1978). De la polygamie et fécondité dans la sociéteé zaîroise: L'example des Yaka de la zone de Popokabaka. Working Paper

No. 57, Département de Démographie, Université Catholique de Louvain. Cited in C.E. Welch III & P.C. Glick (1981). The incidence of polygamy in contemporary Africa: A research note. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 43(1):191-193.

Potash, B. (1989). Gender relations in Sub-Saharan Africa. In S. Morgan (Ed.). *Gender and Anthropology: Critical Reviews for Teaching and Research* (pp. 189-227). Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.

Potash, B. (1995). Women in the changing African family. M.J. Hay, S. Stichter (Eds.). *African Women: South of the Sahara* (pp. 69-92). Essex, U.K.: Addison-Wesley.

Ptak, S.E., Lachmann, L. (2003). On the evolution of polygyny: A theoretical examination of the polygyny threshold model. *Behavioral Ecology* 14(2): 201-211.

Rivett, M., Street, E. (1993). 'Informal polygamy': A suitable case for treatment? *Journal of Family Therapy* 15: 71-79.

Sanderson v. Tryon, 739 P.2d 623 (S. Ct. 1987).

Scott, J.W. (1976). Polygamy: A futuristic family arrangement for African-American. *Black Books Bulletin* 4(2): 13-19.

Smith-Rosenberg, C. (1975). The female world of love and ritual: Relations between women in nineteenth century America. *Sign* 1: 1-29.

Solomon, D.A. (2003). *Predators, Prey, and Other Kinfolk: Growing Up in Polygamy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Strassberg, M.I. (2003). The challenge of post-modern polygamy: Considering polyamory. *Capital University Law Review* 31: 439-563.

Tabutin, D. (1974). La polygamie en Algérie. *Population* 29: 313-326.

Uchendu, V.C. (1965). Concubinage among the Ngwa Igbo of Southern Nigeria. *Journal of the International African Institute* 35: 187-197.

Ukaegbu, A.O. (1977). Fertility of women of polygynous unions in rural Eastern Nigeria. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39(2): 397-404.

Utah Code Ann. §§ 30-1-2, 76-7-101 (2004).

Utah Const. Art. III and Ordinance (2004).

Van de Walle, E. (1968). Marriage in African censuses and inquiries. In W. Brass, A.J. Coale, P. Demeny, D.F. Heisel, F. Lorimer, A.

Romaniuk, & E. Van de Walle (Eds.). *The Demography of Tropical Africa* (pp. 183-238). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Ware, H. (1979). Polygyny: Women's views in a transitional society, Nigeria 1975. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41(2): 185-195.

Welch III, C.E., Glick, P.C. (1981). The incidence of polygamy in contemporary Africa: A research note. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 43(1):191-193.

West, C. (1996). *Lesbian Polyfidelity.* San Francisco: Booklegger Publications.

White, D.R., Burton, M.L. (1988). Causes of polygyny: Ecology, economy, kinship, and warfare. *American Anthropologist* 90(4): 871-887.

Williams, M.W. (1990). Polygamy and the declining male to female ratio in black communities: A social inquiry. *Black Families* (Jan.): 171-193.

Wittrup, I. (1990). Me and my husband's wife: An analysis of polygyny among Mandinka in the Gambia. *Folk* 32: 117-142.