Theological Parenthood, Demographic Restraints, and the Making of the Good Polygamous Teenager

William Jankowiak

Every society, in its own way, strives to transmit its beliefs, values, and life orientation essential to its cultural survival (Weber, 1993). Because religious communities draw upon an inclusive cosmology, that cosmology serves as the primary lens through which people perceive and evaluate each other's behavior as good or bad (Henrich, 2016). For religious subcultures, whose values often stand in opposition to mainstream society, successful transmission can never be assured. To this end, religious communities must remain vigilant, if they want their children to develop into a good person who shares their values (Henrich, 2016). It further provides parents with a conceptual framework for identifying the cultural standards or values their offspring need to make the right choice, as who to listen to and who to seek out for advice. Parents need the framework of religion so that they can give accurate advice and constructive discipline and, when necessary, point their children to the right spiritual advisors. In this way, the religious cosmology has a direct influence on an individual's personality and biography and, thus, their understanding of what it means to become a "good person."

In this chapter, I will focus on socialization practices found in Angel Park, a Mormon fundamentalist polygamous community situated in western intermountain USA, in order to probe how parents attempt to, in their words, "raise up the good child" into becoming a "respected and esteem adult." I want to understand how religious ideas, along with often unvoiced, secular American cultural values, shape the criteria parents use to assess who is and who is not a "good person." Fundamentalist Mormon religious beliefs and mainstream USA cultural values are often at odds with one another. This can result in a bracketing both sets of values whereby an individual can hold onto religious-inspired ideals while also embracing American cultural values, habits, and practices without fully considering that some values undermine the community's religious ideals. For example, embracing the importance

W. Jankowiak (✉)
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV, USA
e-mail: jankbill@unlv.nevada.edu

of dyadic bonding that insists on celebrating an individual wife's birthday and anniversary day through spending the day only with her husband stands in contrast to the public ideal that idealized the harmonious united plural family (i.e., one man and several wives).

My focus is the teenage years – the time when youth are more prone to doubt, if not reject, parental instruction and to question, if not defy, community ideals (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). It is a time when neither parental instruction nor community ideals are simply accepted. Exploring which ideals and cultural practices are more readily challenged provides insight into the cultural contradictions and structural restraints individuals face in their journey into adulthood.

The Setting: Opening of an Enclave Culture

There are numerous Mormon fundamentalist communities scattered throughout the southwestern parts of Canada, Mexico, and the USA. One of the oldest and largest is known as Angel Park, which is located in the intermountain western USA. Angel Park shares similar theological values, public values, and life orientations (or a person orientation toward the future) with other North American polygamous communities. Over the course of time, the various polygamous communities transformed themselves into different societies (Bennion, 1998; Bistline, 1998; Bramham, 2008). Whenever discussing a polygamous community or individual family, it is essential, therefore, to consider not only the profound variations found between different communities but also those within each community. This is critical when examining Angel Park, which, until the late 1980s, was a united community that broke apart over clan loyalty and ad hoc theological justifications (Bistline, 1998). The split resulted in two autonomous communities that are openly hostile to each other and are economically, politically, and socially independent of one another.

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 nineteenth-century American frontier experience, fundamentalist Mormonism embraces many American middle-class values: a basic frugality of means, emphasis on controlling one's destiny, a striving of upward mobility, and a belief in individual responsibility (Ulrich, 1980). In this way, the fundamentalist community resembles something of an "old middle class republic with its independent citizen adventurous and yet rooted in family, home, and community" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1991, p. 66).

A note on methods: the research was conducted between 1993 and 1999 in Angel Park. I lived, as an invited guest, in numerous Angel Park homes where I shared over dinners family members' concerns, hopes, dreams, and attitudes toward American society and their beliefs, feelings, joys, and disappointments living in a plural family. During the mid-1990s, I also met individuals who were once active in the religion or what they referred to as "the work" who now as "outsiders" were very open in sharing stories about life in Angel Park. I found they were not ashamed of their

lifestyle, but were proud and ready to explain the norms that guided their behaviors. Moreover, they were forthcoming about the plural families' strengths and, for some, the problems that are systemic to polygamous family life. During this time, it was not unusual for families to visit my home whenever they were passing through the city. While staying in the community, I attended, whenever possible, Sunday church meetings that allowed me to listen to which religious and social ideals were frequently voiced. I understood these ideals as representative of what the community's leadership wanted its membership to most aspire to. Myself, unless qualified, in the text, recorded all the quotes, in the course of ongoing conversations with Angel Park members.

Mormon Theology: Norms for Living a Respectful Life

Angel Park's worldview is embedded in several nonnegotiable tenets. The first tenet is the belief that God is a polygamous man who loves all his children but confers on men an elevated spiritual essence, which ensures that men who live "righteously" (i.e., create a plural or polygamous family) will obtain a higher spiritual standing. Men have the potential to become, in the next life, godheads with dominion over all their descendants. Men who live in a plural family will have a higher ranking in the next life (Jankowiak & Allen, 2005). The Mormon cosmological creed provides for a "life-orientation or a total cognitive world view" (Spencer, 1979, p. 243). Accordingly, men in the role of a husband are charged with the duty to constantly expand their kingdom by entering into the institution of plural marriage (Musser, 1944). Fundamentalists believe that men and, to a lesser extent, women are a reproductive "instrument in the service of God" (Spencer, 1979, p. 247).

A second tenet holds that the father-son relationship is the core axis for the transmission of cultural and spiritual essence. First articulated by Joseph Smith in 1832, this tenet is a "theme that predominates throughout the Book of Mormon" (Clark & Clark, 1991, p. 286). The axis elevates sons over daughters because males are preordained with special essence. Mothers take this seriously and tend to treat sons, the more esteemed gender, with more tolerance for behavioral transgression than their daughters (Jankowiak & Allen, 2005).

The polygamous family's parenting expectations and styles of guidance are derived from these two theological tenets that legitimize the status of men as the religious center and authority in the family. From an organizational perspective, it is expected that serious and consistent familial attention be paid to the father as both the ultimate adjudicator of family affairs and the representative of spiritual authority. In effect, the community is anchored in a patriarchal governed family system. A man's centrality is routinely expressed and reinforced as he leads the family in Sunday school service (usually conducted in his home), conducts daily family prayers, arranges the marriages of his children, disburses the family income, and reveals his religious dreams to his wives and children (Jankowiak & Allen, 2005). A man sharing his dreams is understood to show his connection with the spiritual

world, which further legitimizes his authority. All these routine activities contribute to promoting social solidarity of the family. They also serve to uphold a nineteenth-century Victorian image of family life with its "upstanding father, and a warmly embracing mother" (Fass, 2016, p.10).

Although Angel Park members frequently acknowledge in conversation that individuals have agency or personal autonomy, mainstream American society's most esteemed value, it is not their only value. Angel Park, like seventeenth-century America, continues to value self-sacrifice, obedience, good manners, self-reliance, and being well-behaved (Ulrich, 1980), which are seen as virtues, not values. Taken together, these virtues provide members with a fixed moral compass necessary to create the proper life orientation that makes life worth living.

Variations in Parenting Socialization

In spite of the community's glorification of the patriarchy and the expression of male authority, there is a range in men's approaches to their organization of the family and how best to raise their offspring. In Angel Park, I found there are three leadership or management styles: a stern authoritarian style, an easy going diffused one, and one of indifference to any and all family leadership obligations.

Like nineteenth-century Mormon polygamous fathers, contemporary polygamous fathers inclined toward an authoritarian approach have a clear idea how best to organize their family (Hulett, 1939). In contrast, other polygamous fathers, due either to being away for long periods of time or those who feel overwhelmed by pressing family responsibilities, withdraw psychologically as heads of the family and relinquish its management to their wives or to an individual wife who takes responsibility for managing the larger plural family (Hulett, 1939). The easygoing father, like his nineteenth-century counterpart, remains active and engaged in daily family affairs while also preferring to delegate parenting authority to his wives (Hulett, 1939).

Every father, regardless of his management style, repeatedly reminds his offspring, especially teenagers, of the essential difference between "natural man" and the "socially mature man." The image of the natural man, a nineteenth-century idea that holds that all humans have biological or innate drives such as sexual desire, status competitiveness, and individual aggression that requires sustain concentration to overcome what fundamentalist beleive to be our more natural inclinations. Church leaders stress the importance of self-mastery at Saturday and Sunday meetings where the membership is reminded that it is essential for an individual to master his or her innate drives. It is through controlling these drives that a person learns how to live a proper moral life necessary for becoming a good person. One young man from Angel Park vividly recalled his teenage years when his father would often take him aside and remind him of the necessity of such mastery. His father warned him that: "failure to do so meant you failed to master yourself which can also mean you are not worthy to remain in the community." The experience of felt guilt combined with the implied threat of social ostracism serves as a powerful restraint on behavior.

Angel Park has made self-sacrifice one of its primary virtues. Fathers routinely refer to and talk about the need for sacrifice whenever their wives or children request something he cannot readily provide. It is thought that to create and maintain a harmonious family, each member must "pursue the good in common" (Bellah et al., 1991, p. 9). This pursuit customarily requires making some kind of sacrifice for the plural family's well-being. To this end, fathers regularly admonish wives and children about the importance of making and sustaining a deeper more spiritual commitment to the family. Many younger men and women readily recall being deeply moved by this ideal and motivated to achieve it. Moreover, they often and easily recall how much they respected their father for his strong religious convictions combined with the daily sacrifices he made to support the family.

For example, a young father informed me that the "purpose of polygamy is to raise up for God righteous children." He elaborated on his conviction: "without righteous principles children do not have a clear path to salvation. They can easily lose their faith and be lost to the outside world. Parents have a responsibility to teach, educate their children to follow God's rules." He used the term "righteousness" and I asked him what it entails. Smiling he explained: "it is easy and it is difficult – To be righteous is to follow God's laws – you should have sex with only your wives, you should produce children who want to obey God's laws, you have to hold regular Sunday (or family) meetings - you need to guide your children and provide valuable instruction so they know what to do." I asked him how does he respond when a child, especially a teenager, misbehaves. "You need," he said, "to discipline them; you can hit them until they do the right thing" or "you can seek priesthood guidance and they can pray for [your] son or daughter." He reluctantly added that: "if they refuse to adjust and become the devil's child, then you have to reject them otherwise they will infect the entire family."

An example of a young person's religious dedication spurred on by the memory of his father's admonitions is heard in the words of a 19-year-old male: "My father would lecture us for six solid hours on the importance of making a total commitment to living together in the larger plural family. He would quote scripture and sermons and tell us stories of redemption and triumph." I noted that six hours seemed like such a long time and wondered if he might have gotten bored. With no hesitation he said: "No, [I] thought it was the best time." Afterwards he admitted that he tried to live up to values of cooperation and "be a better person when interacting with his half brothers and sisters and their mothers."

If teenagers, male or female, do not admire, respect, or fear their father, they normally reject his counsel. For example, one 30-year-old woman remembered her father telling her "to stop putting makeup on." But she refused, saying: "I just ignored him and he yelled at me, but I continued to ignore him. I did try to be more reserved when he was around, however. But in the late evenings I would secretly leave to meet with friends at parties where I would wear loose clothes, make-up, and do whatever I wanted. I was free." Her attitude is typical of those youth who feel a "real ambivalence toward fathers who had been aloof, authoritarian figures for most of their lives" (Foner, 1984, p. 116).

There is a gender difference in the way some fathers advise, counsel, and discipline their sons, having greater expectations for their sons than their daughters. Mothers, however, tend to be more tolerant of a son's challenging behavior than of a daughter's. After puberty, girls are more closely monitored. The often-unvoiced family concern is about sexuality and its control (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Given the community's Puritan mind-set, sex is regarded as an essential force, but a dangerous one. The regulation of youth's sexuality, especially that of females, is a paramount concern. One example is a typical exchange that mothers have with their daughters. When a teenage girl wants to go for an evening stroll, a mother will say, "please hold on and I will go or one of your brothers or sisters will go with you." When this happens, the girl is, in almost all cases, no longer interested in going. This tight restriction does not hold for boys, who are allowed to travel outside the community, even if just to hang out with friends.

Mothers Parenting Style: Affectionate to Indifference

Although men are the patriarchs of their family, most families outside of a ritualistic setting (e.g., Sunday service and Priesthood meetings) are organized around the mother(s). While women are deeply committed to upholding patriarchal values and with it male privilege, my observations found they are also the repositories of the pragmatics of everyday nurturing – a nurturing that is more situational-based than theologically directed. Their primary goal is to raise decent, loyal, respectful children who want to live the "principle" (i.e., establish and maintain a plural family). To this end, mothers strive to keep their family together, despite the various challenges they face.

This arrangement ensures that there will be stronger emotional ties between mothers and her children than between fathers and his children (Parker, Smith, & Ginat, 1975). It goes from birth to adolescence, but is further strengthened by the fact that the arrangement remains long afterward and only lessened by the children's marriage and beginning of a family. In Angel Park, polygamous families are de facto matrifocal units embedded within the overarching ideal of a plural family. Although women endorse and uphold in public discourse their husband's position as the family's spiritual and administrative authority, in practice most focus on their own de facto matrifocal unit.

In this setting matrifocal units often arise within patriarchal social organizations (Sered, 1994).

Because a mother's primary responsibility is to provide for and morally instruct their children, they become their children's primary source of emotional support. It is a mother's ability to provide emotional nurturance that accounts for the de facto rise of matrifocal units within the larger father-centered patriarchal family. The significance of the matrifocal unit is vividly revealed whenever a person is asked about their birth order. The common response is to first provide their birth position within their mother's family and then their birth order within their father's more complex

family. For example, one man, in his 40s, epitomized this tendency when he noted: "I am my mother's second child, my father's twelfth child, and I am my father's sixth son" (Jankowiak & Diderich, 2000, p. 136).

Mormon fundamentalist women, like eighteenth-century New England women (Ulrich, 1980), are idealized as an affectionate archetype whose presence and actions modify some of the overt rigidity found in the patriarchal system that stresses discipline, obedience, and deference. My long-term observation found that the quality of the mother-child bond, however, depends on a woman's personality, her work schedule, and the number of children. During my four-year stay in the community, I noticed that a few women were simply indifferent to the daily responsibilities of childcare. Others were committed to closer relationships, but their work schedule often prevents them from being present. Some others noted that, of all their children, they were closer to their last-born because they had more time to interact with them. My sibling relationship survey found that the mother-child bond was strongest among the last-born children (Jankowiak & Diderich, 2000). As one middle-aged mother confined to me over a cup of coffee: "I just had more time with the last two children."

I also found that women who were college educated tended to have a closer relationship with their children. They were in general more open to talking, often engaging their children through the use of clever analogies and thoughtful suggestions. For example, a young man told me that he grew up in a family that encouraged discussions about theology and other matters. He felt that he could talk with his father or mother about issues and they never criticized him for asking questions about the meaning of life, God's purpose, or whether the polygamous system is a fair system. He reported that he often had long talks with his mother (and to a lesser extent with his father), but nevertheless "enjoyed discussing theology with both parents."

In other families, mothers were less knowledgeable about theological matters and, at times, apprehensive of entering into open discussions about theology. However, in these families, mothers maintained their focus on the children and remained actively involved in their development by offering encouragement, advice, and, at times, financial support. I was repeatedly told that what they desired above all else was for their offspring to remain in the community, and if this was unfeasible, they strove to maintain frequent contact with them.

Mothers in the community strive to raise a moral and good person (one and the same in fundamentalist religion) through modest living. A 45-year-old woman recalled how "my mother would try to be happy even when we had very little to eat. She would just make jokes and encourage us to sing happy songs." Mothers customarily give love and demonstrate generosity to help their children identify with proper values. A mother of seven teenagers felt strongly that loving support is essential to guide teenagers into adulthood, explaining it this way: "Kids need to see they belong. They need to realize they have love and a place and a future." Many mothers discipline their offspring by invoking religious values and expressions. For example, a 28-year-old female recalled how often religion was invoked around the house: "my mother would casually ask if my behavior was the result of the devil influencing me.

I hated when she did this, but I did modify my behavior." Smiling, she added: "at least for a while." While it is typical for mothers to discipline their offspring by referring to religious maxims, the parenting style of a mother in the community depends on her level of education, the degree to which she embraces the role of nurturer, and whether or not she has sufficient time to be present in her child's life.

Both males and females model themselves on their father's and mother's everyday behavior and will bring their assimilation of that behavior into their own marriage. If their mother or father was passive-aggressive in seeking resources, they are often similarly inclined. Further, when the family environment is contentious and openly hostile, individuals are prone to negatively critique the community's cultural practices. On the other hand, if their mother or father customarily sought to be a conciliator and bring sister/co-wives together, they also adopted that approach, even when they lacked their parents' skills to be successful. The pull of influence is so strong, so dominant, that children will emulate the same parenting despite it going against the grain of their personality.

Public Education and Cultural Transmission of Religious Values

If fathers are the public voice of community values, the local public- and privately operated religious schools act as a secondary institution that further serves to reinforce the community's core values. Because the overwhelming majority of the teachers, administrative staff, and students are from the community, the typical restraints on actively and forcefully voicing theological convictions in a public school are overlooked. Youth recall that they were often lectured in their classrooms about the importance of living God's law to form a plural family. They are regularly reminded that the devil is constantly active in the world and always trying to seduce them away from their religion.

Many young people remember school-wide assemblies where they were warned against romantic love because of its implied expectation of, and desire for, exclusivity. Romantic love would only intensify the jealousy that they would likely experience when they join a plural family. They were instructed in the need to adapt to the limited time with their husband as well as the competing needs and expectations of the other wives. To successfully do this, they were encouraged to make a renewed dedication to live God's law and complete his "work" (i.e., form a polygamous family). Everyone believed that the Devil would try to undermine the ability to live up to religious ideals, which in many community members resulted in palpable fear. Taken together, schoolteachers, administrators, and parents formed a unified cluster or group in stressing the importance of upholding the Mormon fundamentalist doctrine. To date, their efforts are highly effective, as evidenced by the fact that the community continues to see a great majority of daughters marrying into a plural family (Quin, 1991).

Although schools are guardians of the community's stated values, youth learn from their peers that there are other, often unvoiced, values or modes of thought that stand in opposition to the community's religious-inspired values. In bringing youth from different families together in one place on a routine basis, high school offers and provides, for some youth, support for the outward expression of alternative values. In 1999, the leadership of a rival sect, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, fearing its youth would become spiritually "contaminated" or "sullied" through contact with unbelievers or sinners, decided to pull their children out of the local public school in favor of homeschooling. In the process, the community maintained a firm hold on its historically based insistence that there are only two stages of life: childhood and adulthood. In contrast, Angel Park's leadership continued to promote the benefits of extended education that, albeit tacitly, also recognized adolescence as a distinct life stage.

Although community leaders, teachers, and parents set goals and boundaries, siblings also act as a significant socializing agent, though they themselves are overall loosely supervised by adults. In this community, children tend to raise each other (Weisner, 1982). Older siblings neither indulge nor coddle younger siblings. They are allowed to explore, but the strong preference is for younger children to stay within their own family compound and play there. The dynamic of this child-rearing is conducive to the formations of an implicit hierarchy where the older children influence younger who are more inclined to look up to older children than to their parents for guidance and direction. In this way, they learn valuable behavior that allows them to culturally survive through imitating the behavior of same-sex siblings. For example, a youth recalled when he was five years old he was hit by his nine-year-old brother for being "pushy" (that is, not knowing his place): "I learned my place and the importance of not challenging those who are higher in the pecking order." Another youth remembers with fondness the enjoyment of spending time with his family: "we would make our football teams from the larger family, we would go to the barn and hang out, that was the fun years." In contrast, Floria Jessop, who lived in the Fundamentalist of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), a different fundamentalist community, recalls: "The rivalry among kids is intense where you have to hustle and fight for everything" (Jessop & Brown, 2009, p. 38). In this setting, children learn that life is a struggle and that competition is more "the law of the land" (their term for American legal jurisprudence) than cooperation. The reality of sibling rivalry goes against the community's cherished ideals, which heightens a teenager's suspicion that the community's cherished ideals may not only be unattainable but are also less than desirable.

Social Structural Realities and the Devaluation of the Plural Family

Most Mormon fundamentalist youth have internalized and accepted the community's core values and its life orientation. A 22-year-old male's life goal is highly representative: "to live in spiritual peacefulness, marry, have children, a family, and

to support that family." It is the life goal that Angel Park parents strive to instill in their offspring. To this end, everyone endeavors to raise a "good child" who has the awareness, ability, and dedication to achieve the community's highest ideal: living a decent life through the creation of God's ideal family, which is a polygamous family. The community recognizes that not everyone has the talent or dedication to achieve this ideal. It is well known that many are called but fewer receive God's blessing, and there is the understanding and expectation that most efforts to form a plural family will fail.

Angel Park youth are aware of the community's expectations and subsequent critical judgment if they cannot achieve its most cherished ideal. They take seriously the belief that rejection of community norms will "result in their going to Hell because God has rejected you." Whenever youth secretly gather together, the issue of whether they want, or are able, to form a plural family is a recurrent topic. These gatherings are ad hoc, are always secret, and take place at midnight outside the community. Young men and women from different school cliques and families attend. With them they create an anti-structure or nonhierarchal liminal zone where the use of drugs and alcohol are intertwined with intense discussions about their parents' behavior, co-wife interaction, the validity of their religion, and overall what makes life worth living. A 28-year-old woman recalls: "when I was 14-years-old we would meet secretly and discuss sexual attractions and what it meant to be a moral person – our talks last entire nights." She adds that: "We discussed our love crushes we had or what we observed of our friends." At these gatherings youth are not above expressing their personal exasperation, often making fun of religious ideals and what they consider parental hypocritical behavior. One angry female told her peers of an incident where her mother asked what she is going to do for the day and she yelled out: "I will stay home all day and praise the Lord." Her peers laughed and identified with the experience.

The community strongly condemns these midnight gatherings where youth freely interact. It is not unknown for youth to become romantically involved and want to marry an age mate. If such marriage occurs, it results in the woman being removed from the marriage pool. Angel Park is keenly aware that frequent peer group gatherings are a threat to the community's placement marriage family system, whereby the religious elite, or, the Priesthood Council, are believed to have special insight into who God wants a person to marry. Community members believe that if teenagers have opportunity to freely socialize without adult supervision, some will decide to marry without Priesthood Council's advice, which could result in making a mistake that will result in having less than satisfactory marriage. The tacit opposition of Mormon fundamentalist communities toward male adolescents is derived from the reality that there is always an insufficient number of females to support a polygamous community. Their ambivalent attitude toward unmarried male youth is typical of polygamous communities around the world where "old men often have hostility toward young unmarried men" (Foner, 1984, p. 33). In turn, young men often are "bursting over with envy and resentment toward the older [men who are] in control" (Foner, 1984, p. 22; also see Schlegel & Barry, 1993). The intergenerational antagonism is symbolically played out every Thanksgiving when the married

men play a pickup football game against the unmarried male youth in what locals refer to as the Turkey Bowl. In the game, onlookers report the bachelors are noticeably more physically aggressive than the married men.

Mormon fundamentalist youth do have a deep-seated commitment to their faith while simultaneously harboring a suspicion that the plural family is an institution with serious problems. Young males who are from a low-ranking family are seldom given a wife and thus most leave the community to find a mate, which inevitability results in her refusal to move to the polygamous community. Once a youth has left the community, there is a revision of how they conceptualize their childhood. Having an intimate understanding of the plural family's difficulties, they come to define themselves in opposition to the community's faith-based norms. However, when a youth comes from a highly functioning family (i.e., home stress is reduced or relatively slight), or part of an elite family, he recognizes that he will indeed be assigned a mate and tends to be less drawn to leaving the community. The ability of elite families to hold on to more of their sons arises from a form of "clan cannibalism," whereby elite males attract daughters from non-elite family who prefer to marry into the more elite families (Chagnon, 2013).

Whatever the quality of a youth's home life or his father's social rank, there are other social structural factors that contribute to a limited marriage market. It is telling that the community adopts a blind eye to the reality of the shortage of females. In avoiding the structural deficiency inherent in a plural family system, the community finds solace in its nineteenth-century metaphysical perspective that puts the inability to find a mate on the individual's lack of character or weak moral fiber (Hulett, 1939). For the community, the youth who leave represent God's rejection of them as suitable candidates for living in "God's chosen community." In the common parlance of the community, a youth is either a "good" person or a "devil" person. The distinction is common in many fundamentalist communities who habitually, constantly, draw lines between the "elect" and the "damned" or unsaved (Williams, 1991, p. 811). A youth's departure is regarded as a simple example of one "losing the spirit of the Lord" and therefore "losing the spirit of the Work."

Females, in contrast, have no worries about finding a spouse. They are concerned about the quality of their future husband – whether or not he is a decent man and if he is too old. This does not mean that some females do not have occasional existential doubts about the viability and suitability of forming a plural family. Unlike males, however, they have safety: certainty that they can always return and be immediately honored for doing so. Nonetheless, many females struggle with the existential decision to stay or leave. A number of them admit to having been "wild" as teenagers and, in their words, "sinned often." Some girls will leave the community and take up with a boyfriend, drink in excess, and, surprisingly, join in sex parties only to discover later in their early twenties that they truly belong in the community and leaving was a mistake.

For example, one young woman wrote a letter to her mother praising the polygamous family, admitting she got close to being damned but now wishes to return to become a plural wife, stating that she feels refreshed and fulfilled in the prospect of doing so. She thanked her mother for her love and never abandoning the hope that

she would return. In Angel Park, prodigal daughters are warmly invited back and immediately married in another family. There is less desire and less willingness to accept youthful prodigal sons who, unable to find a wife from inside the community, must look outside the community to find a spouse. When this occurs, most seldom return. When the community does welcome back a male, he is always middle-aged (fortyish), and if he wants a wife, he is often given a postmenopausal widow.

Conclusion

The critical issues that polygamous parents must deal with include: (1) lack of nurturing or bonding between half-siblings, (2) anxiety over possible co-wives' aggression directed toward their own children, and (3) the doubts about their offspring's ability to live the work (i.e., form a polygamous family). Although parents respond in their own way to these issues, they often do so in a different voice, rooted for the most part in gender. Men, as the real or symbolic head of the family, tend to talk in moral axioms and religious dogma, whereas women respond with greater variation, making pragmatic adjustments that take account of situational factors. This is due, in large part, to mothers being more involved with their own natal offspring because of their daily interaction. This is not unique to Angel Park, but can be found in other polygamous communities where "women often have stronger ties of affection to children and grandchildren than men do" (Foner, 1984, p.115). The behavior pattern, however, is not unique. Nineteenth-century diaries, for example, are filled with entries of women thinking about the strength of their involvement with their offspring (Ulrich, 2017).

Most Angel Park women, like many women in other polygamous cultures, do not oppose the system from which they gain such an honorable position (Lindholm, 2002), that is, a position of meaningful status. They believe their ideal place is in the home and derive esteem from upholding the family system. It is rare that anyone who remains active in the religion to publicly reject the official doctrine of plural love. It remains an ideal worth striving for, if only in people's imagination. For most, it is an ideal best left in the abstract realm while one works at doing one's best in day-to-day life. Most men tend to ignore the contradiction and think of the plural loving family as a goal they can someday achieve if not in this life, then in the next life. The fundamentalists' communitarian impulse is for everyone to live in the spiritually unified and socially harmonious plural family. To do so, however, requires overcoming structural tensions and restraints common to plural family living. In addition, there are demographic factors that are often too powerful for most males to overcome. This is common to every polygamous community. For example, Bennion (2012) reports that 65 percent of the males in her Montana community left over the inability to find a mate. Families that strive to raise a "good person" must take into account more than just a straightforward application of church doctrine. The demographic realities ensure there will always be a skewed ratio of more males wanting a wife than there are potential wives available. This skewing further

accounts for young males' acute anxiety over whether they can marry and thus remain in the community. It is the sociological factor that leads youth to engage in serious, and often internal, reflection on the viability of their religion. As a result, successful adolescence socialization depends upon more than effective parent-child interaction, a necessary but insufficient condition for producing what the community deems its major spiritual and cultural ideal: the production of men and women not only *capable* of forming a plural family, but those who actually *do it*.

References

Bellah, R., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. (1991). *The good society*. New York: Knopf.

Bennion, J. (1998). *Women of principle: Female networking in contemporary Mormon polygyny*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bennion, J. (2012). *Polygamous primetime*. Boston: Brandies University Press.

Bistline, B. (1998). *A history of Colorado City*. Colorado City, AZ: Ben Bistline and Associates.

Bramham, D. (2008). *The secret lives of saints: Child brides and lost boys in Canada's polygamous Mormon sect*. Toronto, Canada: Vintage Canada.

Chagnon, N. (2013). *Noble savages: My life among two dangerous tribes – The Yanomamo and the anthropologists*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Clark, A., & Clark, I. (1991). *Fathers and sons in the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Books.

Fass, P. (2016). The End of American Childhood: A History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Foner, N. (1984). *Ages in conflict: A cross-cultural perspective on inequality between old and young*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Henrich, J. (2016). *The secret of our success*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hulett, J. (1939). *The sociological and social psychological aspects of the Mormon polygamous family* (Doctoral dissertation, University Wisconsin).

Jankowiak, W., & Allen, E. (2005). "In the name of the father": Theology, kinship and charisma in an American polygamous community. In A. Lehmann, J. Meyres, & P. Moro (Eds.), *Magic, witchcraft and religion: An anthropological study of the supernatural* (6th ed., pp. 382–391). New York: McGraw Hill.

Jankowiak, W., & Diderich, M. (2000). Sibling solidarity in a polygamous community in the USA: Unpacking inclusive fitness. *Evolution and Human Behavior, 21*, 125–140. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138(00)00027-1

Jessop, F., & Brown, P. (2009). Church of Lies. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lindholm, C. (2002). Cultural Identity. New York: McGraw Hill.

Musser, J. (1944). Celestial or Plural Marriage. Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing Co.

Parker, S., Smith, J., & Ginat, J. (1975). Father absence and cross-sex identity: The puberty rites controversy revisited. *American Ethnology, 2*, 687–706. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1975.2.4.02a00070

Quin, M. (1991). Plural marriage and Mormon fundamentalism. In M. Marty & R. Appleby (Eds.), *Fundamentalisms and society* (pp. 240–293). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schlegel, A., & Barry, H. (1991). *Adolescent: An anthropological inquiry*. New York: Free Press.

Schlegel, A., & Barry, H. (1993). Adolescence: An Anthropological Inquiry. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Sered, S. (1994). *Priestess, mother, and sacred sister: Religion dominated by women*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Spencer, M. (1979). The social psychology of Max Weber. *Sociological Analysis, 40*, 240–255. https://doi.org/10.2307/3710241

Ulrich, L. (1980). *Good wives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ulrich, L. (2017). *House full of females*. New York: Random House.

Weber, M. (1993). *Sociology of religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Weisner, T. (1982). Sibling interdependence and child caretaking: A cross-cultural view. In M. E. Lamb & B. Sutton-Smith (Eds.), *Sibling relationships: Their nature and significance across the life span* (pp. 305–432). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Press.

Williams, R. (1991). Movement dynamics and social change. In M. Marty & S. Appleby (Eds.), *Fundamentalisms and society* (pp. 181–224). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

William Jankowiak   is professor of anthropology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. His research interests include human universals, Chinese society, and polygamous family.