

Straight is the Gate: An Ethnographic Study of the Centennial Park Polygamist Community

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### **Abstract**

The community of Centennial Park, Arizona was a small and quiet neighborhood that had one significant differentiating characteristic from other small, rural towns in Arizona; the members of the community openly believed in and lived the principle of polygamy. This study examined the cultural conversion of the community from a position of assertive separation to one of assertive accommodation. To do this, I used co-cultural theory and cultural discourse analysis as a framework. Co-cultural theory has been used to explore the cultural positioning of many different minority groups such as: women, African Americans, homosexuals, and the disabled. This study explored reasons why this population chose to practice assertive separation, what caused it to seek a greater voice in society, and how its new cultural position affected the lives of its citizens. Studying the community of Centennial Park provides a unique glimpse into a culture previously unstudied. This study found that even with a group that is well-organized and united, the process of change is highly individual and often emotionally straining. Those who adapted to this cultural change more quickly and were more open to establishing a functional relationship with the dominant culture than others, found that by opening lines of communication, they were able to effectively educate outsiders and quell misconceptions about their lifestyle.

### **Acknowledgement for Thesis**

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## Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

In mainstream America, conversations about “my first marriage” or “my second wife” are commonplace and would hardly be cause for pause. With the divorce rate in the United States around 40% (Hurley, 2005), a large number of Americans experience more than one marriage in their lives. What startles people when they speak to citizens of Centennial Park, Arizona is not that most of the men have been married more than once, but that most of them have never been divorced. In fact, in this small community the first wife must approve of the second marriage, and the second wife often moves into the house with the first wife and begins the process of assimilation into the existing family. Centennial Park Arizona is a polygamous community that traces its roots back to the early days of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). In some ways, the people of Centennial Park are different. The challenge of organizing a family dinner for dozens of people every day presents logistical challenges with which the average American household, consisting of 2.6 people, does not often deal (2005-2009 American community survey, n.d.). Also, for women in modern America, skirts and dresses are reserved for special or professional occasions, whereas women in Centennial Park are expected to wear dresses or skirts whenever they are in public. Despite these and other minor differences, the people in Centennial Park live their lives, in many ways, just like everyone else. They worry about the economy, they talk about how their kids are doing in school, and, as the old saying goes, put their pants on one leg at a time... well, the men do at least.

I described Centennial Park as a polygamous community despite the fact that a majority of its citizens did not practice polygamy at the time of this study. I do this because nearly all of the people in the community believed in the principle of polygamy and although they may not be living in a polygamous relationship at present, they expect to at some point in the future.

Since the incorporation of polygamy into the LDS Church's faith in the 1830's, there has been strong opposition to it. In the 1856 Republican Party convention (GOP convention of 1856, 1856), members of the Republican Party decided that the platform of the Republican Party would be to rid the territories of the twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery. The first law created to oppose polygamy was passed in 1862. Supporting this law and subsequent attempts to quell polygamy, most Christian religions point to the Bible to justify their opposition to the principle of plural marriage because Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12, Titus 1:6, and Ephesians 5:31(King James Version), mentions that men should be husbands to one wife. Tradition plays a large role in society's opinion of what is morally acceptable and what is not. Although some issues that have traditionally been considered immoral, such as divorce, homosexuality, and premarital sex, are gaining more wide-spread acceptance, polygamy is one that remains publically condemned by most Americans (see Appendix 1). In a 2004 Gallup poll of Americans, which measured the public opinion of moral acceptability of controversial issues, 91% of respondents believed that polygamy was morally wrong. Polygamy tied with "married men and women having extra marital affairs" as the most widely regarded issues to be immoral, and was seen as more morally wrong than cloning humans, suicide, and the death penalty (see Appendix 1). Because polygamy was considered immoral and wrong by most Americans, the people of Centennial Park saw value in communicating their perspective by creating a public relations committee to reveal aspects of their lifestyle to combat the negative stereotypes and misconceptions regarding polygamy. The community leadership created Centennial Park Action Committee (CPAC) to show the world that they should be allowed to live their lives, no matter how strange it seems to outsiders, according to the dictates of their own conscience.



Public interest in polygamy has steadily increased in the past decade as television dramas such as HBO's "Big Love," talk shows like Oprah and Dr. Phil, TLC's reality television show "Sister Wives" and news broadcasts shed light, often salaciously, on polygamous practices and beliefs that had been previously obscured (J. Darger, A. Darger, V. Darger, V. Darger, & Adams, 2011; Francis, 2011). A search of the word "polygamy" in ProQuest newspaper database in 2011 resulted in more than 25,000 newspaper articles. A majority of these articles are about Warren Jeffs (Available from ProQuest, 2011). Specifically, the raid on the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (FLDS), Yearning for Zion (YFZ) Ranch near El Dorado, Texas in 2008 captured national headlines and exposed the secret lives of this fundamentalist group (Francis, 2011). The sexually deviant behavior that came to light during the subsequent trial of FLDS leader Warren Jeffs shocked and horrified many Americans. Because of the clandestine nature of American polygamy during the past 100 years, little was known of the religion, lifestyle, attitudes, or social norms, until mainly salacious reports about Warren Jeffs' sexual misconduct surfaced in 2006. For most Americans, the daily updates of Jeffs' egregious crimes and strange behavior in the courtroom was the extent of their knowledge or understanding of the practice of plural marriage.

In fact, the FLDS Church was only one faction of fundamentalist Mormon polygamy, and comprised only approximately 8,000 to 10,000 of the estimated 21,000- 32,000 Mormon fundamentalist polygamists in the United States, Canada, and Mexico (Quinn, 1998; The primer, 2009). Because of the clandestine nature of the practice of plural marriage, it is difficult to accurately assess the number of people who live this lifestyle. In the 1980's, before the FLDS Church formally organized, the Centennial Park group split off from the Colorado City group and created its own community, literally across the street from Colorado City, the current

headquarters of the FLDS Church. There are many reasons to study this small community, some of these include understanding their lifestyle, their beliefs, how they try to differentiate themselves from the often negative reputations of the FLDS Church and its leader Warren Jeffs and other disreputable polygamous groups, and how they present their message to the outside world in order to gain acceptance in society and support in their efforts to decriminalize polygamy on both state and federal levels.

To understand why these people choose to live such a lifestyle, why they believe that polygamy is necessary to their salvation, and to explain why the practice of polygamy has survived amid strong opposition and persecution, it is necessary to understand their history and how Mormon fundamentalism fits into the religious landscape in the United States.

## **Background**

Much of this background section was taken from an in-person interview with one of the community's apostles. These seven apostles act as the religious and community leaders in Centennial Park. I included additional references to substantiate the historical facts and to add specificity.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1830's and 40's, the LDS Church was a new and growing religion. Antagonists of the Church drove the "saints," (members of the LDS Church) lead by Joseph Smith Jr., from New York, the place of its founding, to Ohio, Missouri, and finally to Nauvoo, Illinois. Persecutors hated the Church members for political reasons and because of the LDS Church's beliefs that many outsiders found strange and potentially dangerous. In 1831, the charismatic leader of the budding religion, Joseph Smith Jr., was studying the old testament and began wondering about the propriety of Abraham, Moses, and other Biblical patriarchs having many wives and concubines. In a revelation included in the LDS canon of scripture known as the

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<sup>1</sup> For a copy of the full interview transcript contact the author at aultmike@yahoo.com.

Doctrine and Covenants in section 132, The Lord explained that the principle of plural marriage, as part of a “new and everlasting covenant” was an essential principle of salvation. As such, it was imperative for Joseph Smith to restore this principle in the modern church. After receiving this revelation, Joseph Smith procrastinated the implementation of the principle because he feared a cold reception by his wife and others. Joseph Smith withheld the revelation from the general LDS Church members until 1843 when he finally broke the news and established plural marriage in the LDS church (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001). During the years between his receiving the revelation about plural marriage and its incorporation into the doctrine of the LDS Church, Joseph Smith cautiously revealed the principle of plural marriage to a few followers as an important principle of salvation. In the decades that followed, the LDS Church asked many of its members to begin the practice of plural marriage and marry additional wives (Quinn, 1998).

In Quinn’s (1998) research, he demonstrated that although many people inside and outside of the LDS Church downplayed the extent of the practice of polygamy among LDS members, in actuality between 20% and 30% of the membership were involved. Although considered unnatural and sinful by the mostly Protestant American public, many of the saints faithfully conformed to the new principle. After Joseph Smith Jr. and his brother Hyrum Smith were murdered, mobs drove the LDS Church from Illinois in February of 1846. This began the epic journey of the Mormon pioneers to the Rocky Mountains. In July of 1847, led by their new prophet Brigham Young, the first members of the LDS Church entered a barren and unpopulated valley deep in the Rocky Mountains on the banks of the Great Salt Lake and founded the new settlement of Salt Lake City. In this remote location, the saints were able to practice their religion without interference from mobs or government laws. For the next 40 years, the Church

members lived in relative peace as they established colonies throughout, what are today the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, Idaho, and Nevada. As the borders of the United States expanded to include the Mormon Settlements, anti-polygamy sentiment throughout the nation also grew.

In the spring of 1890, the Supreme Court upheld the United States government's right to seize all LDS Church financial holdings if the LDS Church did not comply with the law regarding polygamy (Altman & Ginat, 1996). With this mounting pressure from the federal government to halt the practice of polygamy in the United States, and as a prerequisite to statehood, leaders of the LDS Church drafted a manifesto designed to appease the government by discontinuing the practice of polygamy in the Utah territory and, according to fundamentalist history, presented the manifesto to then church president John Taylor in 1886 (Anderson, 1979). All fundamentalist Mormon communities trace their origins back to, what they call the "1886 revelation." According to the histories of these polygamous groups, but denied by the LDS Church, a few church leaders presented the manifesto, in 1886, to President John Taylor for ratification. After a short discussion, President John Taylor retired for the evening without a resolution to pray about the wisdom of discontinuing polygamy. During the night, John Taylor received a vision in which he was visited by Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith. Jesus Christ revealed to John Taylor that polygamy was an unalterable principle of God's kingdom and must be preserved for the fullness of the gospel to continue. In the morning, during an eight hour meeting, John Taylor related the vision to the assembled LDS Church leaders and asked them to swear to protect the sacred institution of plural marriage (Anderson, 1979). Absent at that meeting was the next president of the LDS Church, Wilford Woodruff. Three years after the 1886 meeting, John Taylor died, leaving the presidency of the Church to Wilford Woodruff who

became the fourth president of the Church. In the LDS Church's biannual General Conference in April of 1890, where leaders of the Church gathered to speak to the general Church members about issues relating to doctrine and church business, facing the threat of the confiscation of all Church lands, buildings, and all other assets, Church President Wilford Woodruff explained to LDS Church members the importance of obeying the laws of their country. He declared that he intended to submit to the laws against polygamy and encourage LDS Church members to do the same. This 1890 proclamation, commonly called "the Manifesto," effectively ended the practice of plural marriage in the LDS Church (See Appendix 2, Official Declaration 1).

According to polygamist leaders today and officially denied by the LDS church, before he was murdered, Joseph Smith created a group of men to whom he gave special power and authority to act on behalf of God in all earthly issues. This high priesthood quorum was authorized to act outside of the LDS Church's authority. This priesthood quorum governed all aspects of God's creations on the earth and was, in fact, over the Church (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011). Until 1890, the president of the Church had also acted as the president of this high priesthood quorum. After Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, he was no longer worthy to hold the office of president of the high priesthood quorum. He was removed from his office and replaced by John W. Woolley<sup>2</sup>, who was present in the 1886 meeting. Those Church leaders, who were at the meeting in 1886, lead by John W. Woolley and his son Lorin Woolley, refused to accept the manifesto and continued performing plural marriages without the official authorization of Wilford Woodruff (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> Many LDS Church leaders and fundamentalist leaders choose to include middle initials in their formal titles. Because of this, I have included them in this study

In the years following the Manifesto, mainstream Americans were skeptical of the reversal of the LDS Church's position on polygamy. In fact, many LDS Church members were skeptical of the legitimacy of Wilford Woodruff's request to cease the practice of polygamy. In a speech delivered to students at Brigham Young University, Dallin H. Oaks (1993), one of the modern members of the quorum of 12 apostles in the LDS Church explained the continuation of polygamy after the 1890 manifesto:

It is also clear that polygamy did not end suddenly with the 1890 Manifesto.

Polygamous relationships sealed before that revelation was announced continued for a generation. The performance of polygamous marriages also continued for a time outside the United States, where the application of the Manifesto was uncertain for a season. It appears that polygamous marriages also continued for about a decade in some other areas among leaders and members who took license from the ambiguities and pressures created by this high-level collision between resented laws and revered doctrines (Oaks, 1993).

Because of these ambiguities and uncertainties in the original manifesto, in 1904, LDS Church president Joseph F. Smith issued a second manifesto that unequivocally ended the performance of polygamous marriages within the LDS Church (See Appendix 3, Official Statement of Joseph F. Smith). When some members of the LDS Church again refused to comply with the direction of the prophet, the LDS Church excommunicated them. Included with those whom the LDS Church excommunicated were Apostles John W. Taylor, son of former LDS Church President John Taylor, and Matthias F. Cowley. John W. Woolley, the president of the Salt Lake Temple, and his son Lorin Woolley were subsequently excommunicated in 1914 and 1924 respectively. Despite being excommunicated from the LDS Church, John W. Woolley and Lorin Woolley, who succeeded his father as the fundamentalist prophet, encouraged their

followers to remain full members of the LDS Church because they continued to believe that it was the proper organization of God's kingdom on earth created by Joseph Smith. Before his death in 1844, Lorin Woolley called and set apart six others into the high priesthood quorum to act as stewards of the priesthood until the day when the LDS Church would once again accept the principle of plural marriage and accept the polygamists back into the fold of the Church. Because of this belief, the fundamentalist movement refused to officially organize into a religion. According to fundamentalist history (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011), for the remainder of Wilford Woodruff's presidency and during the presidencies of his successors, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith, the practice of polygamy, though officially discontinued and condemned by the Church, was tacitly promoted by some LDS Church leaders.

This tacit promotion of polygamy changed in 1846 under the LDS Church presidency of Heber J. Grant, when the LDS Church took a large step away from polygamy as it toughened its stance on the practice and assisted state and federal officials in prosecuting those associated with polygamy as well as excommunicated those who openly professed belief that the principle should be practiced in the modern church (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011; Dockstader, 2011). The fundamentalist publication "*Truth*" magazine quoted Heber J. Grant as saying, "I shall rejoice when the government officials put a few of these 'best blood,' as you call them, in the county jail or state penitentiary" (Dockstader, 2011).

After the death of LDS Church president Joseph F. Smith in 1844, fundamentalist polygamists believed that the next president, Heber J. Grant, needed to be ordained to the office of President of the LDS Church by John W. Woolley, even though John W. Woolley was not an official member of the LDS Church. John W. Woolley was, in fact, an uncle to Heber J. Grant and Heber J. Grant had grown up with Lorin Woolley and knew the Woolley family very well.

Heber J. Grant understood that he needed to receive the blessing of John W. Woolley but because of his jealousy and overinflated ego, was unwilling to accept that another person held a higher power than himself. Because Heber J. Grant rejected the ordination of John W. Woolley, the priesthood authority to lead the LDS Church was severed (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011). Beginning with this episode, fundamentalists believed that the holy priesthood ceased to be found within the LDS Church. One leader of the Centennial Park community compared the LDS Church to a body and the priesthood to the spirit (Anonymous, personal communication, July 14, 2011). Without the spirit, the body is a mere skeleton with no life. Because the followers of fundamentalism believed that the Church remained the organization of God on earth, they distinguished themselves from the LDS church by referring to their group as “The Work” and continued to refer to the LDS Church as “The Church.”

Because of the eagerness of Heber J. Grant to eradicate polygamy from the LDS Church during the 1920’s and 1930’s, the LDS Church excommunicated anybody who professed belief that polygamy should be practiced in the modern LDS Church. Those who believed in polygamy were no longer able to follow the teachings of John W. Woolley and his son Lorin Woolley, and remain full members of the LDS Church. During this period of distancing itself from polygamy, The LDS Church began helping federal agents prosecute those who practiced polygamy in the region. Most notably, Charles F. Zitting, one of the members of the fundamentalist high priesthood quorum, was arrested in 1931, on a charge of unlawful cohabitation (Dockstader, 2011). Because of the threat of prosecution, the polygamist group was forced underground. In August of 1926, Lorin Woolley sent a small number of followers to a remote desert area called “Short Creek,” which is now the twin cities of Hildale, UT and Colorado City, AZ, along the border of Utah and Arizona. Soon after, people began moving to Short Creek to live plural



marriage in peace. From this time forward, the Work maintained a congregation in Salt Lake City and one in Short Creek.

As Lorin Woolley grew older, he understood that it would be important to reorganize the high priesthood quorum since he was the sole surviving member who was selected and given power to act in this capacity by John Taylor. Before his death, Lorin Woolley called six additional men to serve in this quorum. As this pattern of calling new members of the high priesthood quorum continued in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, a series of schisms within the Work occurred, which caused several groups to claim authority and break off from the Work to create their own colonies throughout the region. One of the most dramatic examples of this fracturing of the Work occurred in 1949 after the death of, then leader, John Y. Barlow; Joseph Musser assumed the role of prophet for the fundamentalist community. As Musser became older, he suffered a series of strokes, which caused some fundamentalists to question his ability to lead. In this state, Joseph Musser reorganized the high priesthood quorum and appointed his physician, Rulon Allred the senior apostle. Many fundamentalists accepted this new organization and followed Allred after the death of Joseph Musser; however, the majority of the Work remained faithful to the original apostles.

Throughout the years, other groups became disenchanted with the fundamentalist leadership and split away causing many different factions among fundamentalists. Currently, there are more than 12 independent organized groups of fundamentalist Mormons, each claiming priesthood authority linked back to Lorin Woolley (Altman & Ginat, 1996). Despite the fracturing of the Work, the community of Short Creek continued to grow as followers from the Salt Lake City congregation were encouraged to go to Short Creek to build the infrastructure of the community. In the early days of the fundamentalist movement, many people from the LDS

Church converted to the Work, but as time passed, fewer outsiders converted to the Work. Despite the fewer numbers of converts, a high birth rate within the community caused the congregations to steadily grow through the years.

The threat of prosecution and imprisonment was ever present among those who held to the principle of plural marriage. The first of a series of government raids of Short Creek occurred in August of 1935, in which six of the community's leading citizens were arrested and three of them were convicted of "open and notorious cohabitation," with a sentence of 18-24 months in the Florence, Arizona penitentiary (Dockstader, 2011). In March of 1944, 46 men and women were arrested mainly for unlawful cohabitation and criminal conspiracy. Using the federal Mann Act (1910), which was originally created to halt interstate transportation of prostitutes, and charges of unlawful cohabitation and conspiracy to commit polygamy and unlawful cohabitation, the 1944 raid incarcerated 15 men in the Utah state prison and six men in the federal penitentiary in Tuscan, Arizona. While incarcerated in the Utah state prison, the 15 convicts were faced with a severe trial that far exceeded the physical toll of prison life. The men were presented with a document that, if signed, would allow the men to walk out of the prison as free men. The document stated in part, "that we individually and severally pledge ourselves to refrain hereafter from advocating, teaching, or countenancing the practice of plural marriages or polygamy, in violation of the laws of the state of Utah and of the United States" (Dockstader, 2011). The men met together for many hours discussing the dilemma facing them. In the end, 10 inmates decided to sign the declaration with no intention of living by it, and were soon released. The other inmates remained in prison until December of 1947 (Dockstader, 2011).

The raids of 1935 and 1944 were tremendous strains on the community and caused great pain and heartache to the faithful followers of the Work. Unfortunately, the worst still lay ahead

for the beleaguered believers. The strongest threat to the Work came in 1953 when Arizona Governor John Howard Pyle ordered Arizona state officers to drive a convoy of police vehicles and buses into Short Creek in an attempt to snuff out the perceived danger of polygamy from the state. The officers found many from the community gathered in the schoolhouse singing hymns. The residents had been tipped off about the raid and rather than hide or leave, decided to accept the consequences of their civil disobedience. The state officers kept the prisoners in the schoolhouse, but separated the men from their families while they searched for evidence in the community. When the officers were satisfied, they loaded the men into buses and took them to prison on charges relating to polygamy. The officers intended to take the children and leave the mothers, but the mothers boarded the Grey Hound busses with their children and refused to leave them.

Shortly after the raid, a state judge ruled that the raid was illegal and ordered that the men should be allowed to return to their homes while the women and children would remain scattered throughout Arizona and Utah. Most of the men lived in Short Creek alone for two years during the legal battle that followed the raid. After the two years, only first wives were allowed to return to Short Creek, while in the following years, most of the rest of the wives and children trickled back into Short Creek. Some families were separated for up to 10 years before they felt safe returning home. The fallout of the 1953 raid and the public dissatisfaction toward the way it was handled destroyed the political career of Governor Pyle. Subsequent political leaders viewed dealing with the polygamist “problem” as a political liability, and turned a blind eye to the illegal practices of the peculiar people of Short Creek (Anonymous, personal communication, July 23, 2011; Dockstader, 2011).

As a result of the years of separation and danger, the citizens of Short Creek shied away from interaction with the outside world. They had learned through hard lessons that people in the outside world would not let them live their lives in peace and were bent on the destruction of polygamy. Because of this fear, the people of Short Creek further withdrew from mainstream society and closed off contact with outsiders and when forced to interact with outsiders, they were suspicious and terse. In their isolation, the community began to grow and thrive as people's lives began to return to normal. After the 1953 raid, the leaders of the Work sought to separate themselves from the stigma people in surrounding communities associated with the name "Short Creek." The communities in Southern Utah were mainly comprised of LDS Church members who looked down on the "apostates" and characterized them as strange and antisocial people. Under President Leroy S. Johnson, the community felt that by changing its name, the Work could have a fresh start. In 1958, Short Creek officially became Colorado City.

During this time of prosperity, the community enjoyed freedom and safety that had been a scarce luxury for much of the history of the Work, leading many to refer to this time as "golden time" of Colorado City. The days of quiet serenity began to slip away with the health of Leroy S. Johnson. As Leroy S. Johnson's health declined, he was unable to attend church meetings or speak publicly. He surrounded himself with a cadre of close friends who began speaking on his behalf and, in effect, leading the community. Historically, a quorum of seven high priests led the Work. The most senior of these members is the leader of the Work and the prophet of God on earth. When the leader of the high priesthood dies, the next most senior member automatically steps into his position as the leader of the quorum. After Leroy S. Johnson's death, the succession should have fallen to J. Marion Hammon, who was the next most senior apostle.

The members of Leroy S. Johnson's entourage encouraged the idea that one man could

and should lead the Work and the community without the rest of the members of the high priesthood quorum. Because of political turmoil sponsored by those close to Leroy S. Johnson, a majority of the community believed that Rulon Jeffs, a junior member of the high priesthood quorum, should become the prophet and succeed Leroy S. Johnson as the leader of the Work. As tensions rose, a split occurred in 1986 in which one third of the community followed J. Marion Hammon and the high priesthood quorum out of Colorado City and founded Centennial Park, a community approximately three miles southeast of Colorado City. Several years after “the split,” in 1992, the citizens of Colorado City formally organized a church, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS), and after Leroy S. Johnson’s death, Rulon Jeffs became their prophet.

Despite their close proximity, the communities maintained an acrid tolerance of one another. “The split” separated families and friends by only a few miles, but severed nearly all relationships. The FLDS Church made harsh rules against associating with outsiders, even associating with those family members living in Centennial Park. While shopping at the communal supermarket in Colorado City, an FLDS brother would refuse to acknowledge his Centennial Park sibling, and adult children who moved to Centennial Park were not allowed into their parents’ homes. While the FLDS became more closed off and reclusive, the Centennial Park community began slowly opening their long shuttered windows to a world they had shunned for so many years.

In the mid 2000’s a surge of attention from local, national, and world-wide news outlets, talk-shows, and television programs made it necessary for this community to organize a committee to be the face of the Work to the outside world. This was a huge and dangerous departure for this closed society. Many of these individuals lived through the raids of the 1930’s

'40's and '50's, which had broken their families apart for up to ten years. Understandably, the Centennial Park Action Committee (CPAC) tentatively began shedding light on their lifestyle that was considered strange, unnatural, and dangerous by a majority of Americans and is against the law in both Utah and Arizona. CPAC worked with such national celebrities as Oprah and Dr. Phil in an attempt to communicate their message to the public. At the time of this study, Centennial Park was a small community of approximately 2,000 people. Like many small rural communities, the citizens of Centennial Park knew everybody they saw around town and waved at every passing vehicle. Unlike their neighbors in Colorado City, the people in Centennial Park are open to the world through new technology and are encouraged to seek higher education at Mohave Community College as well as at universities throughout the region.

By understanding the background of the people of Centennial Park, it is easier to understand why they believe that it is important for them to continue to practice the principle of polygamy, and why the community has remained closed off to outsiders for so many years. In today's society, instantaneous communication has opened the world to nearly all Americans. The internet, television, and cellular telephones are considered a necessity for the average American home. Because of the speed and availability of information, intense coverage of the FLDS raid and the Jeffs trial many Americans created a negative image of polygamy that sullied Centennial Park's image. Because of this bias, Centennial Park's attempt to reach out to mainstream America and communicate openly about the rules that govern their community, such as, girls are not allowed to marry before they are 19 years old, and the women in Centennial Park choose who they will marry instead of the men arranging marriages, as was the case with Warren Jeffs and the FLDS Church. Because mainstream Americans did not make the distinction between the Centennial Park Community and the FLDS Church, the Work ran into strong

opposition as outsiders already had strong preconceived notions about polygamy. Most people naturally lumped all polygamous communities together and assumed the atrocities that were happening in Colorado City were ubiquitous in all polygamous groups.

Because of the decades of isolationism, this polygamous community developed a unique perspective on American society and their own place within that society. The oppositional nature of the polygamists to the dominant society structure made it necessary for members of this community to develop a clear understanding of the communication structure of mainstream America so as to interact with members of general society and survive as a co-cultural group. Along with this cultural understanding of mainstream society, came cultivation and understanding of the unique structure of their own community and how it is different from mainstream America.

In their awareness of their place relative to American society, these polygamists are also aware of the perception outsiders hold of them. They understand clearly the prejudice and fear with which mainstream society relates to polygamy. Much of this fear and suspicion is the direct result of the illegal actions of Warren Jeffs and other members of the FLDS religion. Although Centennial Park maintains no affiliation with the FLDS church, they are often grouped together and treated as if they are the same group based on their lifestyle. Because of the negative reputations of the FLDS Church and other fundamentalist groups, the Centennial Park group worked to differentiate themselves from other polygamist groups so as to gain wider acceptance within mainstream culture. By differentiating themselves from these other groups, the Centennial Park community hoped to demonstrate that polygamy is not inherently dangerous, those individuals who choose to act despicably, did so, not because they were polygamists, but because they were simply social deviants who happened to practice polygamy.

The message that the Centennial Park community is separate from these groups and is a community full of good, honest, and hard-working people, often got drowned out by the din of prejudice and naïveté. Most people who live in surrounding communities are accustomed to seeing polygamists around town and believe that they are informed on the polygamous way of life. In reality, most people, even those who have dealings with polygamists, are unaware of what the message of the community really is and how these people want to be perceived. The Work recently sought out ways to disseminate their message by allowing members of their community to participate in various media presentations about the practice of polygamy in America, gatherings throughout the region specifically dealing with the issue of polygamy, and meetings with Utah and Arizona government officials to establish relationships with those who might be able to help them break down prejudice and allow them to live in peace and safety.

These polygamists' faith was grounded firmly in a belief in the sanctity of law and order. They prided themselves in being civically minded and taking an active role in creating a safe environment dictated by the creation and adherence to laws. Interestingly, these model citizens are perpetually breaking the law, which prohibits the practice of polygamy. These people reconcile their cognitive dissonance by subscribing to the ideal of civil disobedience, which advocates the right to disobey a law they feel is morally wrong (Thoreau, 1866). Unlike some who wantonly disobey laws with which they do not agree and believe that they should receive no punishment, those who truly practice civil disobedience are willing to accept the legal consequences of their actions. Through years of persecution and prejudice, many polygamists have willingly allowed themselves to be forcibly removed from their homes and incarcerated to demonstrate their firm belief in the principle of plural marriage.



## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In order to clearly organize the literature to be reviewed, I organized the literature into three categories, (a) polygamy, (b) power differentiation, and (c) co-cultural theory.

### **Polygamy**

Polygamy, or the act of marrying more than one spouse, has been a part of religious history nearly as long as there has been religious history. The practice can be found historically in Hindu and Buddhist religions as well as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam all trace their lineage through Abraham. In the Old Testament, Abraham was given Hagar, his wife Sarah's handmaid, as a wife because Sarah was barren (See Genesis 16). Other Old Testament prophets and kings practiced polygamy throughout many generations most notably Jacob, David, Solomon, and Moses. The practice of polygamy has a long history in Islamic culture and religion which continues to present times. The Quran limited the number of wives to 4 and places strict restrictions on men if they are not able to provide for the needs of each wife (see Quran 4:3). Polygamy continued in Judaism through the first millennium AD until the Rabbi Gershom ben Judah issued an edict (Herem de-Rabbenu Gershom) which substantively discontinued the practice of plural marriage with the only exception being if the man received special permission from 100 rabbis from 3 different countries. Most Jews throughout the Western World accepted the edict and with few exceptions ceased the practice. Modern Jewish polygamy is limited to Yeminite Jews (Faigin, 2009). However, as the Christian Church developed after the death of Jesus Christ, its leaders looked to the writings of Paul to settle the question of the practice of polygamy. Several references indicate that Paul taught that polygamy was not appropriate for Christians (See Titus 1:6, Ephesians 5:31, and 1 Timothy 3:2, 12).

In Europe and subsequently in North America, polygamy has been seen as a barbarous and immoral lifestyle “since the earliest of times” (Austen, 2011). Because the belief that polygamy breeds immorality and abuse is so widespread and accepted, several polygamous women felt the need to speak out about the virtues of polygamy and how it has improved their lives. In their book, Batchelor, Watson, and Wilde, (2000) compiled essays and profiles of 100 women living in polygamous relationships. These women explain the difficulties of polygamous life, but also explain the positive aspects that are only present in plural relationships. One woman explained the rewards of living plural marriage in this way, “There were over 50 children in our family and most of them are now grown and married. Over the years, many of them have come to me, as the first wife, asking how I really feel about plural marriage as I look back at each of them, I feel compelled to admit that they, alone, have been ample reward for any supposed hardships, suffering or sacrifice on my part” (Batchelor, Watson, & Wilde, 2000, p. 206).

Much of the debate about polygamy involves the question of abuse. Many people argue that spousal and child abuse is inherent in the structure of polygamy. In a court ruling on November 23, 2011 Robert J. Bauman, the court’s chief justice, ruled against the legalization of polygamy in British Columbia, Canada on the grounds that in polygamous families there are increased incidents of abuse. As stated in the 357 page ruling, “harm against women include: exploitation; commodification; social isolation; the inevitable favouritism of some women and deprecation of others within the household; discrimination; and, impoverishment. The harms against children include: the negative impacts on their development caused by discord, violence and exploitation in the marital home; competition between mothers and siblings for the limited attention of the father; diminishment of the democratic citizenship capabilities of children as a result of being

raised by mothers deprived of their basic rights; impoverishment; and, violation of their fundamental dignity. The harms against men include: the unequal distribution of spouses and related ostracism of younger men forced to compete for a scarcer supply of women; the creation of a false appetite for patriarchy; inflammation of male lust; and deprivation of the essential bond of mutuality that is unique to the marital institution. Finally, the harms to society that flow from polygamy include: threats to the social order and a greater need for social supports as women lacking education and opportunity to enhance themselves, as well as their children, find themselves impoverished upon divorce or the death of their husbands; harms to good citizenship; threats to political stability; and the undermining of human dignity and equality (Bauman, 2011). After reviewing the evidence presented about the harm of polygamy, Justice Bauman wrote about the law, “It seeks to protect against the many harms which are reasonably apprehended to arise out of the practice of polygamy.”

Modern Mormon fundamentalist polygamy, or more accurately polygyny, the marrying of one man to several women, has received limited exposure in academic research due to the difficulty in collecting accurate data from these reclusive polygamous sects. Despite the limited availability of information on modern polygamous communities, a few researchers have been able to clearly describe the issues facing modern polygamists as they attempt to live their illegal religion as well as deal with the demands of family life and financial demands of large families. Altman and Ginat (1996) produced the most comprehensive academic research regarding modern polygamy as practiced by an unspecified group of polygamists. They gathered research for over eight years in preparation of presenting an accurate picture of what life is like in a conservative fundamentalist family. Using a transactional or contextual philosophical approach, Altman and Ginat’s findings set a foundation for understanding the underlying beliefs and

purposes for practicing polygamy. Their work gave a holistic and broadly based understanding of what life was like for people in the two fundamentalist communities in which they worked.

### **Power Differentiation**

To establish the foundation of critical theory and particularly co-cultural theory, it is important to understand the idea of power and why some individuals or groups have power and why others do not. American history is littered with examples of discrimination by those who were in positions of power. From the earliest days of colonization, Americans openly and unashamedly pronounced their bigotry against people who did not share their race, religion, gender, economic standing, sexual orientation, age, and national origin (Myers, 1943). The American society was built by and for those who were in authority. Throughout the generations, this mainstream group, like most people, acted in its own self-interest (van Dijk, 1989; Orbe, 1998).

Often, discrimination is discussed in terms of group versus group dynamics, for example, men versus women, Whites versus Blacks, and heterosexuals versus homosexuals. Although research shows that this is indeed a real and prominent issue, this macro level discrimination, in which discrimination is present in social systems and institutions, trickles down to the individuals that make up these larger groups (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997). Often people do not realize that the language that they use influences ways of thinking about and acting toward non-dominant group members. Although only a small minority of people openly and socially pronounces bigoted rhetoric, people often create complex and subtle ways of enacting their societal powers over others (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Bosmajian, 1983). In recent years, overt bigotry has given way to a more subtle and discreet form of discrimination.

Because discrimination has become more amorphous, it is more difficult to precisely identify and acknowledge (Camara & Orbe, 2010; Bosmajian, 1983).

In addition to combating biased language, members of peripheral or co-cultures are faced with “physical segregation and isolation from power and information” (Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997 p. 12). In other words, members of co-cultures often do not have access to people, situations, or information that would facilitate their advancement. For example, in a recent study, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) mailed 5,000 resumes to employers. They found that applicants with traditional White names needed to send on average 10 resumes to get one callback. Applicants with distinctively Black names needed to send on average 15 resumes to get one callback. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) showed that “a White name yields as many more callbacks as an additional eight years of experience” (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; p. 3). The implication of such a study is that a name like “DeShawn” carries a socio-economic penalty (Levitt & Dubner, 2005). This demonstrates that in order to combat discrimination, more is needed than merely changing traditional language.

Spender (1980), a feminist researcher, suggests that it is necessary to understand how discriminatory language operates in order to generate effectual strategies. She states that although the use of nonbiased language has increased in the past several decades, “language is a reflection of sexism in society and the language will not change until society does” (Spender, 1980). True reformation must incorporate facilitating changes to both language and structure (Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997).

When studying social inequality, it is important to realize that in many instances, there are many powerful influences at work. Social scientists are now beginning to understand the importance of studying the intersection of the many analytical categories to gain a greater

understanding of why social inequality exists (McCall, 2005). For example, instead of focusing on gender by itself, many feminists are evaluating various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, and sexual orientation and how each of these categories intersects with the others so as to gain a richer and broader understanding of an individual's experiences (Zinn, 2010; Knudsen, 2005).

In order to understand discrimination, one must first understand the concept of power (van Dijk, 1989). Although the concept of power can have different meanings in different fields of study, van Dijk (1989) summarizes several properties of power that are relevant for this study: (1) societal power is manifested through interaction. This interaction possesses an assumption of purposeful control by one group over another, which limits the social freedom of action by the subverted group; (2) in most instances, social power is wielded in an indirect way and uses influence on the minds of people rather than through physical force. A subverted group accepts the wishes, laws, or rules to act in accordance with the interests of the dominant group. The dominant group achieves this acquiescence through persuasion or other forms of discursive communication, or through fomenting fear of sanctions if the subverted group refuses to comply with the will of the dominant group; (3) the dominant group attains and retains power because of resources that socially allow the exercise of power. These resources usually consist of attributes or possessions that are socially valued, but unevenly distributed, such as wealth, rank, authority, knowledge, position, expertise, or privileges. Once power is established, mere membership in a dominant or majority group can grant power to individuals within that group; (4) in Western societies, total control is limited by the field and scope of power of people or groups. While one individual or group may wield absolute power in one or a few domains, such as politics, economics, or education, rarely is absolute power concentrated on one or a few people in all

social spheres. Often power is distributed and assigned to achieve specific goals, which dilutes the concentration of power by spreading it to several different people; (5) subverted groups nearly always possess some power. These groups may, in certain circumstances, exercise this power in various forms of resistance. By challenging the power status quo, the subverted group can weaken the power of the dominant group, or even supplant the dominant group, as in a revolution; (6) in any social structure, interaction facilitates the acquisition, confirmation, or change in the dominant ideological framework. This framework consists of socially shared, interest-related ideals shared by a group and its members (van Dijk, 1989). By understanding these elements of power, it becomes more apparent why some groups have power and some do not.

This study explores the social positioning of the Centennial Park polygamous community through the lens of co-cultural theory. To establish the foundation of co-cultural theory, it is important to explain the origins of this theory and the two main theories that contributed to co-cultural theory.

Ardener (1978) originated muted group theory as a way of describing the structural hierarchy of societies and how these hierarchies act to position some people in positions of power over others. This theory was adopted by communication scholars to describe how these hierarchies are negotiated through communication. This theory generally attempts to express the experiences of minority groups (Kramerae, 1981; Orbe, 1994). Muted group theory explains that each linguistic system has power structures that are indigenous to the language. In each society there is a dominant group that creates this linguistic system that promotes the needs of that group with little or no regard for those who are outside this select group (Orbe, 1998). Those who fit into this dominant group thrive in the system that promotes those ideals and attitudes espoused

by the dominant faction. Surrounding this dominant society there are many peripheral groups that make up the remainder of general society. Members of these muted groups are distinguished from “mainstream” culture because of race, gender, religion, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and other differentiating characteristics.

Within the society that is constructed by and for members of the dominant group, societal outsiders have little say in the construction of the communication structure of their social milieu; therefore, they are largely muted. Although the dominant communication structure often does not meet the needs of these muted groups, the standards and norms of the dominant group are nevertheless imposed on these social outsiders by mainstream society (Ardener, 1978). Those groups who do not possess the dominant position in society are relegated to existing in a society that was not designed to meet their needs. Thus, their needs often go unmet (Ardener, 1978). In modern American culture, some traditionally subverted groups have challenged the status quo and demanded that their voices be heard and their needs be addressed (Kramarae, 1981; Sugrue, 2010). For example, the success of the civil rights movement played an instrumental role in the election of Barrack Obama, the United States’ first African American president (Ward, 2011).

Standpoint theory explores the social structure through the perspective of persons in subordinate positions (Smith, 1987). Although nearly all people fit within some social group with people who share certain commonalities, each member of a group has his own unique perspective and vantage point that is different from all other group members. Because of this individual background and experience, people relate to their environment in a unique way (Orbe, 1998). A standpoint is not merely referring to a person’s social position, but rather to the social and political forces that exert pressure on that person and influence that person to engage in the struggle to construct an oppositional position to the dominant group (Hartsock, 1983).



Important to standpoint theory is the idea that a person who has constructed an oppositional position is more aware not only of her own position and role in society, but also aware of the positions and roles of those within the dominant group. For those who are not part of the dominant group, this perspective of themselves and those who are part of the dominant group is a survival technique that allows them to operate in a communication structure that is not constructed to meet their needs. This phenomenon is not true in reverse. In order to understand the standpoint of an oppressed group, one must be a member of that group, or devote enough time and energy to deeply understand that standpoint (Harding, 2009). Those within the dominant culture operate in a communication structure that was constructed specifically to meet their needs; thus, it is not a survival imperative for them to understand the perspective or position of members of peripheral groups (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

In Orbe's (1998) explanation of the origin of co-cultural theory, he explains three tenets of standpoint theory as they contribute to co-cultural theory:

(1) In order for research to accurately describe a person's standpoint, it must begin from a marginalized group member's "concrete lived experiences." Standpoint theory recognizes that an assortment of standpoints exist among and within different co-cultural groups. (2) Research must include group experiences of co-cultures because the worldviews of those with and without power significantly differ. The vast majority of existing research only represents the perspective of those within the dominant group. Standpoint theorists understand that there exist multiple understandings of everyday activities based on the standpoint of the individual interpreting the event. (3) Standpoint theory asserts that the perspectives of members of co-cultures is important because these individuals can view dominant culture from the perspective of an "outsider-within" (Orbe, 1998).

### **Co-cultural Theory**

As human beings we are trained to understand the world around us by the use of language (Foss & Littlejohn, 2011). The use of language creates a structure for interpretation of information and gives us a method of making sense of the information to which we are exposed (Ardener, 1978).

Co-cultural theory is grounded largely in two preceding theories, muted group theory (Ardener, 1978; Kramarae, 1981) and standpoint theory (Smith, 1987; Harding, 2009; Hartsock, 1983).

These theories deal primarily with feminist issues and race issues, but through the lens of co-cultural theory, the frameworks of these theories would adapt well to the polygamous culture as well. Orbe (1998) explains that the co-cultural theory is based around two specific premises: (1) Although those who do not belong to the dominant group in a society have a wide array of lived experiences, these co-cultural group members will share similar marginalized and underrepresented positions in society; and (2) for a member of a marginalized group to confront the dominant society, she must adopt certain communication orientations when communicating within the communication structure of the dominant group (Orbe, 1998).

Consistent with its grounding in standpoint theory, co-cultural theory recognizes that although members of co-cultural communities share some similarities in their backgrounds, the experiences of individual members of co-cultural groups are mostly individual. Co-cultural theory simultaneously unites and differentiates individuals who belong to co-cultural groups by identifying unifying characteristics as well as differentiating characteristics (Orbe, 1998).

In each interaction with members of the dominant group, members of co-cultures ask themselves the question, “What communication behavior will lead to the effect that I desire”

(Orbe, 1998, p. 8)? This intrapersonal communication can be conscious or subconscious, but illustrates the process by which members of co-cultures assess how their communication will affect their ultimate relationship with members of the dominant group. When asking themselves what effects they desire, generally, members of co-cultures have three outcomes from which to choose: assimilation, accommodation, and separation. Members of co-cultures choose one of these outcomes because they believe that by doing so they will be able to achieve a better life (Orbe, 1998).

Assimilation involves fully adopting the dominant culture generally at the expense of maintaining the native heritage of the co-culture. Members of co-cultures assimilate to mainstream society because they believe that in order to participate in mainstream society; they must play by the established rules of that society. Assimilationists generally believe that the dominant culture is rigid and unable or unwilling to change; therefore, the individual must change to accommodate the culture. In contrast, those who pursue accommodation believe that mainstream society is more plastic and able to adapt, to accept, and to appreciate the contributions of co-cultures. Accommodation allows for a general culture that incorporates aspects of all cultures to create a cultural collage with no dominant or non-dominant groups (Orbe, 1998).

Finally, the third alternative is separation. Those who subscribe to separation believe that creating a common bond with members of the dominant culture as well as with members of other co-cultures is futile. Working with others will yield no positive results or change. While some members of co-cultures remain rigid in their pursuit of one of these three goals, most are willing and able to adapt their goals to accommodate different situations and needs (Orbe, 1998).

Orbe (1998) explains that there exist three levels of expediency in pursuing the goals of assimilation, accommodation, and separation: nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive. Because this study focused specifically on the transition of the Centennial Park community from assertive separation to assertive accommodation, for the purposes of this study, I will only focus on assertive separation and assertive accommodation.

### **Assertive Separation**

Those co-cultures who choose the path of assertive separation are self-assured in their attempts to create a society or culture without dominant group members and without the influence of outside society. Unlike nonassertive separation, assertive separationists are not content to accept the status quo of separation that is inherent in being a co-culture; they purposefully counter hegemonic messages that separation is caused by the natural superiority and inferiority of groups. In other words, instead of accepting the ideal that the separation from dominant groups occurs due to the dominant group's natural supremacy, separation is a choice that co-cultural group members feel will yield the best possible results for them. They achieve this purposeful separation by exemplifying strengths and embracing stereotypes (Orbe, 1998).

### **Assertive Accommodation**

Those co-cultures (and their members) who subscribe to the philosophy of assertive accommodation believe that regard for the needs and rights of the dominant group does not supersede the needs of the co-culture or its members. In this stance, the assertive accommodators do not view themselves as acting in opposition to the dominant group or its members; rather, they aim to create a balance between both cultures that fosters respect and mutual understanding. They feel that through education, both the co-culture and the dominant

culture are flexible enough to adapt to the other culture; thus, creating a stronger and richer joint culture as a result (Orbe, 1998).

In America, the dominant demographics have historically been white, protestant, middle-class, heterosexual, monogamous, and male. The past 50 years has seen an increase in mainstream America's social awareness and understanding of marginalized groups. Since the civil rights movement of the 1960's, mainstream America has begun to acknowledge the benefits of inclusion and intercultural understanding (Spender, 1980). For example, the election of the first African-American as president of the United States in 2008 demonstrates racial integration. The greater representation of women in the workforce and in leadership roles in government, as well as in the private sector, shows the advancement of women. And the repeal of "don't ask don't tell" in the U.S. military and the legalization of homosexual marriage in several states demonstrate the emergence of homosexual rights as a leading issue in social acceptance. Because of the success of these co-cultures, polygamists feel that they have an opportunity to shed light on their lifestyle and eventually gain tolerance and even acceptance.

The co-culture of polygamy has withstood more than a century of persecution and degradation, and yet, it continues to exist (Dockstader, 2011). In recent years, some polygamists have begun to raise the issue of polygamists' rights to live and practice their beliefs as they choose without interference. The creation and dissemination of information regarding polygamy is paramount in affecting the perception of people who are unfamiliar with the culture. Just as African-Americans and homosexuals have battled to have their issues heard by those in the dominant structure of American society, polygamists are attempting to have their voices heard.

Based on the previous research discussed regarding polygamy, and co-cultural theory the research questions for this study are:

RQ1: What are the dominant cultural themes of the Centennial Park co-culture and how are they communicated?

RQ2: How has the co-culture of Centennial Park transitioned from assertive separation to assertive accommodation and what are the general attitudes toward the transition by individual members of the community?

## Chapter 3: Method

### Ethnography

An ethnographic approach to research allows researchers to immerse themselves into a culture and collect naturalistic data. Naturalistic data consists of real-world observations rather than under laboratory conditions (Greenhalgh & Swinglehurst, 2011). Ethnographies produce rich qualitative data that allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of what is happening. Geertz (2000) explained that the textbook definition of ethnography: a method employed by a researcher to establish rapport, select informants, transcribe texts, take genealogies, map fields, keep a diary, and so on. Instead, Geertz (2000) simplified and personalized ethnography by describing it as “an elaborate venture in,” or, as he prefers to call it, a “thick description” (pg. 6). In other words, an ethnographer is a transmitter of information as well as a skilled interpreter in presenting and representing the lives and stories of others with whom they have spent time and who have allowed their stories to be told (Madison, 2012).

One of the advantages of conducting an ethnographic study is that it allows for a more accurate understanding of communication. Each culture has innumerable conscious and subconscious communication behaviors that make up the full structure of communication. Through immersion into a culture, the ethnographer has the opportunity to gain a richer understanding of what these conscious and subconscious communication behaviors mean and why they exist in the culture. Those who do not understand this communication structure often do not have the background or understanding to interpret these messages. For example, Ryle (1971) describes ethnography by using the example of two boys. One boy has an involuntary eye twitch which causes him to periodically wink one eye. The other boy purposefully winks his eye as a method of communicating a conspiratorial message. A passive observer would notice

that the action of each boy perfectly mimics one another. Without understanding the meaning behind the action, each action could be construed as identical, but by understanding the “thick description” an observer clearly perceives the vast difference in intentions of each boy. Only by interpreting the meaning of each movement can the correct understanding be perceived. By properly utilizing ethnography a researcher is able to see beyond the simple acts of research subjects to understand the meaning or lack of meaning in each action.

Carbaugh (2007) suggests that a successful ethnographic study explores how people understand communication when it is presented in their own way, understood through their own terms, and through their own explanations. Research designed to interpret these naturalistic communication messages helps us understand the forms that communication takes within a culture. Additionally, a researcher must understand what significance and meaning communication holds for the people engaged in it. These research objectives are based on the idea that communication presumes and constitutes social realities. As people communicate, they consciously or subconsciously say things about “who they are, how they are related to each other, how they feel, what they are doing, and how they are situated in the nature of things” (Carbaugh, 2007; p. 168).

### **Cultural Discourse Analysis**

Cultural discourse analysis is a method of investigating communication ethnography. It is based on Hymes (1972) program of work and Philipsen’s theories of cultural communication (Philipsen, 2002) and communication codes (Philipsen, 1997).

Cultural discourse analysis is used to systematically organize ways of understanding how culture is essential to, and a product of discourse systems (Carbaugh, 2007). Cultural discourse has been defined as “a historically transmitted expressive system of communication practices, of



acts, events, and styles, which are composed of specific symbols, symbolic form, norms, and their meanings” (Carbaugh, 2007; p 169).

Carbaugh’s (2007) five modes of inquiry: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical, form the basis of this investigation into the phenomena present in the Centennial Park community. Each of these modes accomplishes specific tasks that the others do not.

**The theoretical mode.** The theoretical mode attempts to explain the basic theoretical orientation of the study, and the framework used in the study. In this stage, the researcher identifies what specific phenomenon needs to be studied and by what process the researcher will analyze the phenomenon. The theory and framework of the research create a clear pathway that guides the study and helps the researcher know what to look for during the research process and explains how to understand the communication being studied. The theoretical mode is a preparatory stage of the research where the researcher conceptualizes the structure of the study and what framework will be used to focus inquiry on the particular phenomena of interest. This mode is used to guide subsequent descriptive and interpretive modes.

**The descriptive mode.** After grounding the research through the theoretical mode, the researcher searches for specific instances of the communication act of interest. In other words, the descriptive mode describes what actually happened in the real world as a practice of communication. In the field, the researcher explores events, acts, or styles that can be recorded. These recordings of communication acts make up a corpus of multiple instances of a certain communication act for study. These acts are usually transcribed for the analyst and for readers in order to differentiate the actual communication content versus the interpretation of the researcher.

**The interpretive mode.** After the communication act is observed and recorded, the interpretive mode seeks to find the significance and importance in the act. In the interpretive mode it is important to identify the premises of belief and value that are present when this particular communicative act is committed. Additionally, interpretation explains what needs to be understood about the culture or context of the communication to understand the meaning of the communication act. Later in this section, when discussing the interpretation of interviews, I will discuss the interpretive mode in greater depth.

**The comparative mode.** The comparative mode seeks to explain how the phenomenon being studied is like or unlike similar others in other cultural discourses, or in other speech communities. In this mode, the researcher is able to place communication practices side by side to identify how they are similar. The comparative mode is useful when assessing what is similar across communication practices and what is culturally distinctive. Unlike the preceding three modes, the comparative mode is not necessarily present in every cultural discourse analysis. In this study, the comparative mode did not play a large role because the goal of this study was simply to express the lifestyles and perspectives of the citizens of Centennial Park independent of communicative differences or similarities with other groups.

**The critical mode.** Finally, after an investigation of the other modes, the critical mode is employed to find if the activity favors one group or individual more than another. The goal of the critical mode is to evaluate the communication act from an ethical standpoint, while explaining what the standpoint is and what standard of judgment is being used. Although a cultural discourse analysis is presented from the standpoint of the participants, it is important to describe and interpret a communication practice before a critical appraisal. Like the comparative mode, the critical mode is not necessary to a cultural discourse analysis and was not included in

the findings of this study (Carbaugh, 2007). Although this study evaluates the Centennial Park community and communication through the lens of a critical theory, the results and conclusions of this study are only intended to illuminate a unique population as it attempts to renegotiate its position within a larger social structure. Although many of the beliefs, behaviors, and structures in this community could be considered strange by outsiders, this study intends to expose a perspective not often encountered by members of the mainstream culture. The question of whether these beliefs, behaviors, and structures are correct or even acceptable is not the expressed intent of this study; rather, I hope that the readers would be able to critically evaluate the findings and draw their own conclusions on the correctness of this lifestyle.

### **Participants**

Centennial Park is a small community of approximately 2,000 residents. Most of the inhabitants have lived in the region for all or most of their lives. Nearly 100% of Centennial Park residents are Caucasian and the Work is the only organized religion. Converts to the Work are rare and most often come from the LDS Church. According to members of the community, those converts who joined the Work from outside of polygamy either had polygamy in their ancestry from the early days of the LDS Church, and after growing up in the LDS Church, sought out polygamy, or they converted to the LDS Church and through further investigation into the teachings of the early LDS Church leaders, sought out polygamy.

Because polygamy is against the law and a felony in the state of Utah, interviewees wished to keep their identities confidential. In order to maintain this confidentiality, I only divulge general information about the community and its inhabitants in this study.

On average, each plural home had between two and three wives, but there were many men who, although they believe in the principle of plural marriage, were only married to one or

no wives. Most of these men expected to be asked by the community leaders to marry another wife sometime in the future. Contraceptives were discouraged because the Work preached that the main purpose of life on earth is to procreate and fulfill the commandment given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to “multiply and replenish the earth” (Genesis, 1:28). Thus, families in Centennial Park often have many children.

Because polygamists in Centennial Park believe that family is the most important part of their lives, it is not uncommon for one family to have more than 20 children. Although this sounds exceedingly large and overwhelming by American standards, the people in Centennial Park were quick to explain that their family members were much more than simply a number. The children contribute to the family in their own way and each member of the family is loved and appreciated individually. It is difficult to explain “typical families” in Centennial Park because, like in monogamous communities, each family is different. Although the Jones (pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis to protect confidentiality) family was not representative of all families in the community, an explanation of their family dynamic provides an interesting example of what a polygamous family could look like.

The Jones family had two wives and 24 children. The first wife bore 14 of these children including two sets of twins. The husband and first wife were married for 20 years before a second wife joined the family. In the 25 years since the second wife joined the family, the family added 10 more children. The oldest of the Jones’ children was 45 years old and the youngest was two years old. Because of the age disparity between the oldest children and the youngest children, the family never had all of the children living in the home together. At the time of this study, only nine of the children lived at the family property. Of the older 15 children not living at home, 14 remained in the Work and of these, 12 lived in Centennial Park. The child

that chose not to live the polygamous lifestyle still remained an active part of the family and maintained strong relationships with her siblings and parents. Her decision to not live the principle of plural marriage caused a great deal of emotional pain for the family, but her decision was respected and she was welcomed in all family events.

The Jones', like many families in Centennial Park, lived in a beautiful home that was large enough to accommodate the sizable family. Of the nine children still living at home, two of the older children, both in their early 20's, lived in an apartment above a detached garage as a way to establish their independence and to have their own space away from the rest of the family.

### **Procedures**

After receiving IRB approval, I arranged opportunities to observe members of the Centennial Park community in many different settings. My first experiences were formal settings with community leaders and the Centennial Park Action Committee (CPAC) which is responsible for handling issues with outsiders. This committee acted as the contact point for all outside entities wishing to gain access to Centennial Park. CPAC was responsible for organizing visits by government officials, and the media, participated in government programs to help victims of abuse receive the help they needed, and planned and organized community outreach opportunities with surrounding communities. After presenting my research design with CPAC I was allowed access to the community. The Jones family was asked by CPAC to assist me in recruiting interviewees and to provide me with lodging while I was visiting.

By living in this family's home for several days at a time over six months of data collection, I observed the family's private life and developed relationships of trust with the family members. We frequently engaged in impromptu informal interviews in which I was

allowed total freedom in asking questions and they openly explained their perspectives. These informal interviews lasted on average between two and three hours and were conducted with as few as one person and as many as eight people at a time. Five of these individuals agreed to allow me to use their comments in this study. Because of the unplanned nature of these interviews, I had to write copious field notes after the interviews. On several occasions this family invited me to participate in community events. These events included a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, a community dance, church attendance, church choir practice, a harvest celebration, and a Christmas choral concert. These opportunities allowed me to observe the community dynamic of Centennial Park and how people interacted with other families and members of the community.

In addition to the field observation and impromptu unstructured interviews, I conducted 16 formal, semi-structured interviews with members of the community. Of the 16 interviews, 15 were conducted in the upstairs living room of the Jones' detached garage. I conducted the remaining interview in the interviewee's office because it was the most convenient place for him. In total, I conducted 21 formal and informal interviews. Each interview lasted between 45 min and 2 hours. I recorded the interviews, with recorded verbal consent from the interviewees, using voice recording software and an external microphone that plugged in to my laptop computer. Each interview was transcribed in its entirety. The finished transcriptions amounted to 171 single-spaced pages.

I chose to conduct interviews as a method of collecting data to answer the research questions because interviewing; (1) allowed me to observe the participant's full range of nonverbal and verbal communications; (2) provided the opportunity for follow-up questions and clarification; (3) presented an open-ended format for the interviewees to direct the interview as

they wished; (4) removed the opportunity for participants to identify the expectation of the researcher from among a list of other options, as is the case with a questionnaire; and (5) through my giving of random continuation cues to the interviewees, diminished my influence on the interviewees with my own preconceived ideas.

To interpret the data collected in the interpretive mode, I used Carbaugh's (2007) radiants of meaning. The interpretation of the descriptive record, or the collection of the data including interview transcripts and field notes, was analyzed in order to identify cultural themes. In identifying these themes, these radiants assisted me in understanding the significance and importance of these themes to the participants. In interpersonal communication, people are constructing literal messages about the topic being discussed, but they are also constructing messages about themselves, their culture, how they feel, and how they relate to others. Within each communication practice there is a range of meanings in and about the practice. Many of these meanings may be important to the communication even if they are not consciously understood by the participants. The goal of the researcher is to understand what range of meanings is active in that practice, when it is getting done (Carbaugh, 2007). To understand these ranges of meaning, Carbaugh (2007) presents five radiants of meaning. These radiants are not intended to simply parrot back what the participant said; rather, they allow the researcher to complete the bigger picture by filling in the meaning around the words. Therefore, the interpretation is partially a report of what the participant said; thus, not compromising the participant's sense of self, and partially a creative exercise in constructing the remainder of the meanings aside from the spoken meanings. I prepared the interview questions with radiants in mind.

**(1) Meanings about being, personhood and identity.** The first radiant answers the question, who am I or who are we? In addition to the actual words communicated by participants, there is additional information that they communicate that says something about who they are. Messages about identity can be understood by the researcher on three different levels. First, the cultural level assumes that a culture is built upon commonly held beliefs. The fact that a person is a member of a certain culture allows the researcher to presume that a person subscribes to number of beliefs. These shared beliefs create a collective or cultural identity. Second, each person within a culture also maintains a social identity. Within this social identity, people's identities are influenced by the relationships they establish with other members of the culture, such as mother-daughter, husband-wife, and teacher-student. Lastly, each person within a culture possesses personal characteristics that are unique to that person. This is the personal level. Understanding these levels of identity, the researcher interprets the meaning of messages as they relate to the general culture, the social relationships, and the individual.

**(2) Meanings about relating, relationships.** This radiant answers the question, how are we being related? As people engage in communication, their relationship is actively constructed. In some instances the relationship is already established and relationship is presumed prior to the practice; in others, the relationship is not previously constructed and the communication act is the foundation for a new relationship. The purpose of this radiant is to find out how a communication practice works to relate people, one to another, or others to one. The main task in this radiant is to understand how "relationships are presumed and engaged in communication practices" (Carbaugh, 2007, p.175). Messages regarding relating can be overt and clearly coded and easily understood through relationship terms, personal idioms, and uses of relative address terms. These messages are also often covertly conveyed yet still very powerful.



**(3) Meanings about acting, action and practice.** People act explicitly or implicitly to communicate messages. By interpreting these actions a researcher can gain a richer understanding of the practice. Messages about action can often be coded explicitly through verbal messages explaining the importance of an action to the individual. Additionally, people might also express messages indicating activities in which they believe they should be engaged (Carbaugh, 2005). As people act, they engage in a meta-commentary about the actions they are performing. The cultural analyst must learn to recognize these explicit and implicit messages to fully understand the purpose behind the actions.

**(4) Meanings about feeling, emotion and affect.** From the time children are able to interpret messages, they begin learning what affect is appropriate for each situation and the extent of emotion they should express. As people communicate, the affect associated with the communication, whether explicit, through verbal messages, or implicit, through nonverbal messages, gives the researcher insight into the actual meaning of the communication message. By interpreting a participant's affect, a researcher can better understand the general feeling of a particular practice, or its tone. The way affect is communicated and structured is important in understanding the meaning of communication messages.

**(5) Meanings about dwelling, place and environment.** People identify meaning within a context of environment. Each communication action must take place in a specific place. The way they feel about that place, conveys messages about place and dwelling. Understanding the setting of dwelling, place, and environment allows a researcher to put communication about "where people are, how they are related to those places, and what should be done when inhabiting them" (Carbaugh, 2007; p. 176), in context. It is important for the researcher to

understand what the communication practices say about the people's location, how they are related to that place, and how an individual should relate to this environment when inhabiting it.

In interpreting practices by using these radiants, a researcher must understand that some of these radiants will be more salient than others in regards to a particular practice, "some more amplified as others are muted" (Carbaugh, 2007). This does not mean that one or a few radiants are more important than others. Each radiant contributes to a researcher's construction of an interpretive account of a culture's practices and communications.

I began each interview asking the interviewee to talk to me about anything they thought was important for me, as an outsider, to know. This broad question allowed a platform from which the individuals could direct the conversation as they chose. The advantage to this approach is that it gives the interviewees the freedom to express whatever they feel is important and limits the influence of the interviewer by depriving the interviewee of clues of my expectations or goals in the interview. The remainder of the interview questions referred to the radiants while being as broad and non-leading as possible. In each interview I paid close attention to clues that indicated the participant's affect. In each section of the interview, I kept notes indicating how different topics and situations changed the participant's mood and feelings. By using these radiants, I was able to construct an interpretation of communication practices by individuals in this community.

Through six months of data collection, I spent 288 hours interacting with members of the Centennial Park community observing everyday activities, interviewing participants, and participating in community events.

### **Chapter 4: Findings**

The main purpose for the community of Centennial Park's transition from assertive separation to assertive accommodation was to gain greater acceptance and understanding from the dominant culture. Polygamists have witnessed the battles of other co-cultural groups and the cultural advances that have resulted from them. Interviewee #1 referenced the advancements of African Americans and homosexuals as examples of the social progress Centennial Park seeks for polygamy:

The prejudice against Black people, from the days of my own life, I was born in the 30's and through the 40's, has gone way, way down. It's not gone, but it's gone way, way down... The same thing is happening with homosexuals in their campaign for what they think are their rights. I agree with their stance, but certainly as individual human beings, they need to be able to live their life without a social stigma placed upon them... But really, the anti-polygamy sentiment is the last bastion of open and accepted bigotry in this country socially... Where polygamy is concerned, it is still socially acceptable to be openly prejudiced against them. You can speak out and everybody will agree with you.

Polygamists believe that if people understood their culture and beliefs, like other co-cultures that have paved a way to social acceptance and justice, they would be able to emerge from the shroud of secrecy and live their lives in an open and fearless way.

#### **Centennial Park Co-culture**

Although most of the polygamists in Centennial Park were born and raised in the United States and lived their whole lives in the community, they developed their own separate and unique culture. One way that the community differentiated itself from mainstream American culture was through their dress. Modesty was the highest importance in appearance. Although

many younger polygamists dressed very conservatively, the clothes they wore were stylish and modern. An older woman in the community demonstrated the modesty standard as she pointed to her collar bone and stated, “You should be covered from here to your wrists and past your knees.” In observing the people in the community, the standard was upheld by some strictly, while others had their own interpretation of what was the standard. Interviewee #16, a man in his twenties confessed that he technically should have his sleeves buttoned at his wrists, but he preferred to have them rolled to just below the elbow. Some women wear shirts that swoop below the collarbone and ¾ length sleeves; it is up them to dress in a way that they feel comfortable. There is no penalty for small infractions of the standard, but in a CPAC meeting, some of the women were “appalled” by the low cut of one of the girls in the community’s shirt in an interview with a journalist from a national television network. The shirt was, by mainstream American standards, modest, but this community did not base its standards on those of mainstream America.

Beyond the demands of an often large family, the people of Centennial Park have extreme demands on their time and money by the Work. Tithing, one tenth of a person’s income, is a minimum donation to the cause. In addition to monetary donations to the cause, most people donate time and skills to the community as well. Many of the men in the community work in the construction industry. Young boys are trained in carpentry and building, and often work with their fathers and brothers when they are not in school. Because of the availability of skilled workers and self-employed contractors, Community buildings are generally built with donated materials and donated time.

After high school, most young men serve the community as missionaries. These missionaries do not get paid for their service, but labor in the community wherever they are

needed for two to three years. The mission provides a period of time for these young men to assess their commitment to the work and to focus on giving back to their community. In the process, these young men learn valuable life skills that can provide experience for future professions. Many people in the community commented on the skill and beauty of carpentry done by interviewee #17 in one of the community buildings. Some expressed that they found it a pity that he forwent a career in carpentry to earn a doctoral degree.

In a conversation with interviewee #20, she described how the community pulls together when a family is in need. She told of when a member of the community passed away, the women cooked meals, tended children, and provided powerful emotional support to the family. “The entire community pulls together to ease the suffering of that family.” Some people complained that in this community, everyone knows everyone else’s business, but they also said that when you really need something, there is always someone there for you. Each person feels a stake in others’ well-being. These sacrifices do not seem to bother the people of Centennial Park. They see the benefits of their sacrifices and feel like they are following the direction of Jesus in giving of themselves for a greater cause.

One of the greatest sources of pride in the community is the education of their young people. Nearly every person that I met informed me that the Masada Charter School (kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade) earned the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Award in 2008 for excellence in education. People in Centennial Park are aware of a stereotype that polygamists are uneducated. In contrast to this idea, of the 21 interviewees in this study, at least 12 earned post-secondary degrees, two were taking college classes and all finished high school. People in Centennial Park expect their children to become educated so they can contribute to

their community and help their own children become well-rounded and “comprehensively literate” members of the community.

The people of Centennial Park recognized that the stigma associated with the polygamous lifestyle created a barrier between themselves and the rest of America. While the polygamous community practiced assertive separation, the bias against polygamy was reciprocated by the polygamists, and the polygamous co-culture remained intact. The lifestyle and culture was the target of overt attacks by government agencies and covert bigotry by average citizens. This relationship with outsiders only encouraged the polygamists to reinforce their desire to maintain assertive separation from mainstream culture. As the community began the process of breaking down some of their barriers and open a line of communication with the dominant culture, they found that during their years of silence, the dominant culture had constructed its own definition of what polygamy was with only a limited understanding of who these people truly were. In talking with people in Centennial Park, I asked many of them, what they wanted people outside of the community to know about them. Mostly, these people wanted outsiders to see that they are normal people who happen to live a different lifestyle. Interviewee #4 described her community this way:

The greatest message that I would like to get across to an outsider that came into our society is that we are just normal people living our lives on a much larger scale. But our lives are so much like your lives. Up in the morning and going about our daily lives, and meals, and taking students to school, and projects, and building, and doing the yard and laundry and all those things that anybody else in the world does. You know, we have to have three square meals a day just like everyone else.

While members of the Centennial Park community recognized that there are differences between their way of life and the way people in mainstream America live, they believe that outsiders do not view them as real people. Interviewee #4 continued:

For some reason, I don't perceive that the outside world looks at polygamists as real people. Because they feel like we're law breakers or felons, we're just not the standard that they view society, we don't live at that standard, and we do. And so, I always try to help people see that even though I look different than you, I'm basically just the same kind of person you are, same basic needs, same basic desires- to live a happy life.



**Figure 1.** Homemade bread for the Jones family.

Interviewee #4 represented well the sentiment of many people in Centennial Park, that without their input, society had relegated them to an inferior “other.”

In many ways the Centennial Park community celebrated the differences they perceived from modern society and was grateful for not being “normal.” Although interviewee #6 was in most ways a typical young adult who enjoyed sports and entertainment, when asked if he considered himself to be normal, he said:

Being from a different background myself, I don't look at the rest of the world as a norm because everywhere you go it's different, so it's hard to say one thing is normal... I don't think anyone is normal, I have yet to meet a normal person... In order to answer that question, first, you have to say what normal is.

Like Interviewee #6, the people of Centennial Park recognize what differentiates them from mainstream culture. For them, these differences should be embraced and celebrated not subverted or considered shameful.

Unlike ephemeral fads and styles, polygamy has lasted and in many ways thrived as it withstood the world's persecution because of the “deep belief” of those who adhere to the principle. Living in plural marriage is difficult; Interviewee #8 said that “it goes against the grain of human nature.” So why did this group of people voluntarily ostracize themselves from the rest of American society, endure ridicule and even imprisonment for this lifestyle? Because they believed that they were becoming more like God by practicing polygamy. Their religion is based on the idea that a person is a “god in embryo,” which means that each person has the potential to become a god. When people achieve godhood, they are able to create their own worlds and have endless posterity. All of the interviewees passionately stated that their main reason for practicing plural marriage was because they believed that God lives plural marriage. Interviewee #15 emphatically testified of the importance his marriages have to him in an eternal and spiritual sense:



Ours are spiritual marriages. And our associations are motivated by spiritual beliefs and commitments that extend beyond this life. So they are very real to us and eternal to us.

And when you consider the ramifications of that, it's a powerful commitment to be married to one woman for forty-six years and to another woman for twenty-six years.

And we consider it just the beginning of our relationship.

Because of the eternal nature of their relationships, polygamists did not expect their lives to be simple or intend them to be such. Their belief that they are gaining experience and earning eternal rewards that are predicated on learning and overcoming obstacles in their lives allowed them to withstand tremendous pressure and hardship. One major obstacle for the community in its attempt to educate outsiders about their lifestyle and beliefs was that most outsiders do not differentiate Centennial Park from other polygamous groups.

The exposure of Warren Jeffs' sexual improprieties and abuse of power during his 2011 trial promoted the idea that polygamy is nothing more than a thinly veiled excuse for sexual misbehavior. Interviewee #15 emphatically discounted that idea:

Well, what I see mostly on the blog... is that we are in it for lust or for deviant sexual behavior. And all of these things that we get accused of, which is really the wrong way to go if you are in it for that, because there is too much work involved in raising a family (laughter). You know? So why would we go through all of this and build a place for our family and try to take care of them, nurture them, teach them... It's a lot involved here in being responsible. And so that misconception is troublesome. When we see so much immorality out there (mainstream America) and we say why are you pointing at us?

These polygamists felt strongly that they were doing what is right, and when discussing the outsiders' opinions of them, there was often an underlying feeling of frustration at being

treated like inferiors when they felt like they were living a higher standard. Because of this frustration at being misrepresented in the media, and in mainstream society, they decided that they needed to confront the stereotypes and let people know about them from the source instead of from outside and often under-informed outlets.

Because of this desire to represent themselves more openly and dispel common misconceptions about the lifestyle and particularly about the community, the identity of the community and individuals within the community was in a process of change. For decades there were no spokespeople for the community to the outside world. As Centennial Park began opening itself up to scrutiny, people within the community took on new and foreign responsibilities. In order to better understand how to organize the community to effect the change they desired, the polygamous group sought counsel from an unlikely source. CPAC invited a proponent of lesbian rights to meet with them to give advice about how to properly communicate their message and with whom to share it.

### **Male and Female Roles**

Although the Centennial Park community strove for greater acceptance and respect in mainstream culture through adopting assertive accommodation, there were many barriers and standards that the community was unwilling to alter to achieve this goal. The positions and roles of each gender were considered important and even sacred. People in Centennial Park believe that in mainstream culture, the line distinguishing gender roles became blurred.

In an attempt to simplify the explanation of plural living, I separated the roles of Centennial Park citizens into mainly male roles and mainly female roles. Of course, whenever an attempt is made to interpret roles for an entire population, there are people who do not adhere

to the general trends. This study is no different. Although many of these roles are strictly male or female, some roles are played by both genders, but by one gender more than the other.

Because of the strong distinction between gender roles in plural marriage, one of the common criticisms of polygamy is that the women are at a higher risk of abuse because the system is organized to give power and authority to men. Women are seen as subservient to the adult males in their lives and are treated as property instead of people (Bauman, 2011). Being aware of this criticism when I began this project, I was surprised during my first visit to Centennial Park to meet a polygamist woman who openly described herself as a feminist. She explained that in Centennial Park, they believe in an equality of sexes; however, they do not believe that equality means “sameness.” Men and women perform very different roles, yet these roles are considered to be of equal value. Because Centennial Park lived in assertive separation for so long, the outside world could not clearly understand the lifestyle or the values of the community. Reeducation of outsiders about the values, beliefs, and norm of the co-culture is one of the hallmarks of assertive accommodation. By adopting assertive accommodation, the Centennial Park community hoped to be able to dispel some of these incorrect stereotypes through educating outsiders about the true motivations of living plural marriage. Interviewee #15 challenged the stereotype that women are subservient to men by explaining why he believes it does not accurately describe his relationships with his wives:

...the men get accused of dominating and abusing their wives; not allowing them to have anything, or critical thinking, or involvement in decision-making or in any of the organization or welfare of their lives, which is totally wrong. These women are powerful women. They are decision-makers, and we work together in trying to live our religion, and it's a partnership.

He explained that because of the strength of his wives, he felt the need to become stronger and more worthy in fulfilling his responsibilities as a father, husband, and priesthood holder.

Interviewee #15's second wife, interviewee # 20 reinforced this ideal in a presentation as she expressed her independence and ability to make her own decisions:

You may see my husband ask me to do something, and without hearing me go through the mental process of examining his request or examining my desire to bless our family and reach for my ideals, you may label my response as subjugation or compulsion. It is neither of those things. I only have one life. I intend to live it deliberately, fully responsible for my actions and choices. When I act, my actions are my own.

She further explained that the community, women are not merely encouraged to think for themselves, in Centennial Park, "Women have the responsibility to think, and reason, and counsel, to know right from wrong." She did not serve her husband out of fear, brainwashing, or coercion; she chose to serve out of love, respect, and a desire to promote harmony in the home.

In Centennial Park, a man's role is to preside in the home. This means that in addition to providing for the temporal and emotional needs of the family, he is responsible to preside in the home, act as the priesthood leader for his family, and make sure each member of the family's needs are fulfilled. This does not mean that he personally provides for all of the needs for his family; rather, he acts more like a family manager. In this capacity, he evaluates the needs of each member of the family and delegates responsibilities in child rearing, education, providing income, and anything else of which the family stands in need. The increased size of a family increases the needs, but also increases the number of helping hands to provide for those needs. Depending on the needs of the family, some wives are given the responsibility to raise the children and take care of the house while other wives enter the workforce to supplement the

family's income. These decisions are agreed upon by the husband and wives based on each person's preference and the needs of the family.

"Home mothers" divide the responsibilities and further delegate duties to the children. Sitting on a porch swing enjoying a few minutes of relaxation, interviewee #20 explained to me that, given the increased scale of plural families, she would be a very poor parent if she attempted to fulfill every need of all nine of her children living at home herself. As an example, she stated that at that moment, the youngest child was being bathed and prepared for bed by one of his older sisters. Even though he was not receiving this service from his mother, he was still having his needs met, the sister was receiving valuable experience in raising children, and a strong familial bond was being forged between the two children.

Beyond the physical needs of family members, having additional adults in the family also broadens the experience and expertise within a family. Interviewee #2 talked about growing up feeling the effects of a wide generational gap with her biological mother and the comfort of having another mother figure to who she could better relate:

I had a lot of issues with my own mother. My birthmother, if you will. Our personalities clashed. I think because we are so much alike that she saw things in me that she didn't like about herself... And I had a hard time dealing with her. She had a hard time dealing with me... I was fortunate enough, and blessed enough to have another mother that I could identify with. That I felt like I could open up to when I couldn't open up to my own mother.

She further explained that in a monogamous family, children in this situation would have to seek help from role models outside of the home or simply go without the help that they need. Interviewee #4 believed that "every mother plays a vital role in our children's lives." Although

she saw the benefits of having multiple mothers in a family, she also explained that sometimes it was difficult to watch one of her biological children go to other mothers to get their needs met:

Sometimes that almost hurts a little to see that they don't need me, they need her for that, and yet her children turn to me when they need their paper edited or when their finger's cut then I'm the one they'll come to.

By having more adults in a home, it frees up time for each parent to contribute their unique strengths to the family. One wife may be gifted in music and because she has another wife to prepare a meal and make sure the house is running smoothly, she is able to pursue her interests and teach the children. Interviewee #4 expressed that she "think(s) children in plural cultures are far more well-rounded as adults because of their exposure to all those different personalities in their lives growing up." Interviewee # 14 supported this idea when he said:

I had more people skills when I was 12 than most people get in a lifetime by dealing with different people, having to work things out with multiple personalities, and actually having multiple personalities raising me and presiding over me, so to speak. So I think that it makes a better human.

Each wife takes her turn with the household responsibilities so that the others can be engaged with the children or in developing their own personal interests.

This liberation can allow for each person to be able to pursue goals for which they otherwise would not have time. For example, Interviewee #20 wanted to further her education and earn a master's degree in education. The family met together and discussed the situation and what responsibilities would need to be completed by others while she was engaged in school work. Everyone agreed to pick up the slack so that she could have the time to devote to her studies. For the entire duration of her master's program, this mother did not need to cook, clean,

or engage in other housework. Because of this, she earned her degree in one year instead of the typical two years. In many ways, each family acts as an autonomous community in itself. The members contribute in their own ways to make the family stronger and to make the home function.

### **Relationship with America**

In a presentation given to various political and government agency officials and service organizations, a member of CPAC expressed how she felt she was treated by outsiders:

Growing up in a plural home, I was aware of a separation from general society- a society which, in an attitude of cultural imperialism, assumed a moral “superiority,” reducing my life to the pre-defined state of the inferior “other.” Sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly, but always forcefully, the message was that a monogamist culture is superior to a plural one- that, “for their own good,” these poor women and children need to be rescued and shown the errors of their ways.

Because of this separation, there arose a feeling of “us versus them” in outsiders and polygamists. Since Centennial Park began adopting an assertive accommodation stance toward mainstream America, the fear has retreated somewhat. This opened up limited opportunities for interaction, but there remained strong suspicion on both sides.

My first exposure to the community of Centennial Park, as a whole, was a celebration of the fourth of July. Like many communities throughout the United States, Centennial Park held a day-long celebration honoring the founding fathers and their native country. In the afternoon, members of the community performed a program that highlighted the virtues of being American and bore witness to the hand of God in guiding the creation of this “land of the free and home of the brave.” The praise of the high ideals that the nation was founded upon conflicted sharply

with the people's feeling of disappointment in the hypocrisy of the nation that claimed to grant people the "inalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," while these people felt like they were being deprived of these very rights. Even though much of the content of the program was typical Fourth of July material, the presentation of commonly held ideals painted a picture of how they felt the country should be, not necessarily how they viewed it at present.

After the program, I had the opportunity to discuss with one of the wives and an adult son from the Jones family about their feelings about and relationship with the United States. They responded with ambivalence and initially described their love of their homeland. They deeply respected the founding fathers and even many of the modern civic and social leaders of the country. When asked if they would consider moving to Canada if the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that the ban on polygamy was against the Canadian constitution, the mother said that she would prefer to "stay here and fight for change in [her] own home country."

They explained that for the past 50 years, the government has mostly left the polygamist communities of the Arizona Strip alone on the condition that they did not create any problems. The present attorney general, Mark Shurtleff, maintained the tacit agreement with the polygamists that they would not be prosecuted as long as they were "good." However, if there were any other laws broken, polygamy would certainly be added to the prosecution. Although the Jones family did not feel as if they were in imminent danger of prosecution, this mother compared the attorney general to a giant with a hammer poised over their heads ready to smash them, all the while promising that they were perfectly safe and should not feel uncomfortable with the arrangement. This mother expressed her belief that the attorney general did not have much interest in arresting polygamists at that time, but she said, "His promises are only as good as yesterday, things could change at any time." Even though at this time most of the members of



the Centennial Park community felt safe from government intervention in their lives, the members of the community understood that by living a lifestyle that is against the law, they were at risk of not being allowed to live their lives in peace.

One major obstacle to the community in renegotiating their relationship with mainstream culture and gaining a level of acceptance from the dominant group is the fact that these polygamists openly and knowingly live a lifestyle that is against the law. The Articles of Faith, written by LDS Church founder Joseph Smith, unequivocally stated that these people believe in “obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law (Smith, 1842).” In an interview with interviewee #1, a religious leader, he agreed that his community believed in obeying the laws of the land as long as those laws are in harmony with the teachings of God:

We reconcile that the same way Daniel did. He prayed to his God, and there was a law against that. He said that the laws of God are more important than the laws of men. We say the same thing. Plural marriage was revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith, it didn't come from him, it came from God... We believe that the laws of God supersede the laws of men, and we believe that strongly enough in the case of plural marriage to engage in civil disobedience.

He further explained that in every other way, the people of Centennial Park believe in obeying the laws of the land, but plural marriage is so important that it warrants living outside of the law.

The law against plural marriage was a source of great agitation in the community. Interviewee #2 called it archaic and stupid. Critics of polygamy argued that polygamy promotes the abuse of women and children, but Interviewee #5 explained that she believed that the law prohibiting plural marriage actually promoted the instances of abuse because the women and children were too afraid to come forward and expose the abuse. She clearly stated that she

believed that abuse was rare in their community, but because of the distrust of the dominant culture and especially leadership figures, polygamists often did not see appealing to police or social programs as an option to escape from abusive situations. She believed that by legalizing polygamy those women and children who need help would be able to come forward and find the support that they need.

Interviewee #2 expressed her opinion that in order for the law to change, the social opinion of polygamy needed to change first. In attempting to adopt an assertive accommodation relationship with the outside world, there was a great deal of trauma that people in the community needed to overcome. Dealing with this trauma was very personal and difficult for many people. At the time of the 1953 raid on the community of Short Creek, Interviewee #9, the first wife in the Jones family, was a seven year old girl who was taken from her home and separated from her father by Arizona officers under the orders of Governor Pyle. She related her experience:

At about four in the morning there was about 100 cars of officers that came in from Mesa and Phoenix, I guess it was every officer they could possibly find. Two officers came to our door and pounded on it and said, "Open up or we'll break the door down." It was just my mother and three little girls. I remember getting up out of our bunk bed and she (mother) opened the door and the officers came in and started ratching (rummaging) through all our stuff. They were looking for evidence against my father to put him in jail. Through the course of the day, they told us we needed to go down to the school. The officers were there and they put my father, and all the fathers, and locked them up in our school kitchen... I remember standing on an old table that was outside the window. The

kitchen window had a screen that was broken and I stood there and held his hand and he said, "Always remember that I love you, and always remember to say your prayers."

After hours of anxious waiting, she, her two sisters, her eight-month pregnant mother, and the rest of the women and children were loaded onto Greyhound busses and shipped from Short Creek to Phoenix along dirt roads with no food or bathroom stops. She emotionally related the rest of the ordeal:

After we got to Phoenix, they pulled all the women and children aside and they told my mother to get on a milk truck. This guy was delivering milk and would deliver us to the home where we were going to stay. So we just rode with the milk man until we got to the people's residence, they were called Rogers. We walked up to the door and knocked on the door and Mrs. Rogers opened the door and she just took one look at us and there was my mother eight months along and three little girls and the first thing she said was, "oh, I ordered a boy."

They (government officials) told us that we were very deprived and neglected children and that they were going to take us to a safer environment. And we were taken to some stranger's and given a little shed as our home that was outside their home. And it barely fit two single beds in it... Just three weeks after we got there, my mother went into labor. Mrs. Rogers just took her to the hospital and dropped her off at the steps of the hospital and said, "Sorry I can't do any more for you, you'll have to go in on your own from here," and she (mother) had never been into the city before. She went in and she was in labor so they put her out (unconscious)... so that she wasn't aware when the baby was born. And they didn't allow her to see our baby sister for 48 hours. She kept asking them why... We found out a week later (from a lawyer) that the reason was that they

planned to destroy all the paperwork and adopt all the kids out and they didn't want her to get attached to the baby.

In all, this young mother and her small girls moved around Arizona and Northern Utah for 10 years before they were able to return to live with the rest of their family in Short Creek. Even after nearly 60 years, the 1953 raid plays a powerful role in the community.

Because of the trauma of being separated from their families in such a harsh manner, many of the people in Centennial Park harbored a deep distrust of the government and people outside their community. Even though younger generations did not have to experience the ordeal of the 1953 raid and its aftermath, the fear and distrust was deeply imbedded. Interviewee #2, one of Interviewee #9's daughters, explained growing up hearing stories from the raid:

So we had all her stories living over us all the time. She told us the stories nonstop so we had all of that background and the fear of sharing too much about our family that might get our...that our dad might go to jail. As a child I was constantly concerned about that... I remember being afraid that I had spilled the beans to my dentist because I was celebrating a new baby sister that I had and one of the assistants, he had been our dentist for years, and one of the assistant said, "Well, I thought your mom's youngest were Susan and Katie?" And our youngest were far older than a brand new baby. And I remember thinking, "Oh my goodness, our dad's going to go to jail. I just, ah!" And you know, the stress on a child, I did live in those types of fears.

Some in the community questioned the wisdom of adopting assertive accommodation as this fear and distrust of the outside world was reinforced in 2007. Like many other people throughout the country and world, the people of Centennial Park watched polygamists from the FLDS Church forcibly removed from their homes in their YFZ Ranch near El Dorado, Texas.

Several of the people in Centennial Park recognized former friends and family members, from before the split, in news footage. Although many of the younger generation believed that episodes like the 1953 raid would not be repeated in modern America, the raid on the YFZ Ranch made the threat more realistic. Interviewee #4 described how that raid affected the Centennial Park community:

I don't think the world would ever know what an impact that had on our community here, because rumors would fly that they were going to come to Colorado City and raid Colorado City... And my own children who had never experienced that kind of fear that I grew up with, now all of a sudden had their own experience of fear. I remember my youngest sleeping on my floor for days, he didn't want to stay in his own room because he kept saying, "Mom are they going to come take me from you?" And they're watching all those children and mothers loaded on the busses in Texas, "Are they going to do that to us? Are we next?" It was huge. I had mothers in the community here in Centennial Park call me and say "do you think we need to get backpacks packed for all of our kids and have an escape plan for when they come in?" And how do you tell them no? Because the unknown is always what we fear, and it was a big unknown what they would do to us. So it had a big impact on our lives here in the community. And those children in Texas will never be the same. And it will last for generations, and I wasn't even born and the raid (1953) had such an impact and to this day the '53 raid has an impact on me and how I feel about life.

Much like their relationship with government, these polygamists related to people outside their community with uncertainty. Many of these polygamists shared stories of being mistreated or discriminated against because of their practice of plural marriage. Some incidents were of

rude comments or offensive behavior, Interviewee #2 related an incident while she was shopping:

I was in an aisle all by myself... and all the sudden out of nowhere these two kids jumped out the aisle on each side of me one with a video camera and one with a can of the string spray. (One) sprayed it all over me while the other one was recording it. And I was so freaked out because it just happened all the sudden that it didn't register to me until afterwards the comments they made as they were recording about how they accosted this polygamist. And I was so frustrated that this would happen right there. I mean, if I hadn't been so caught off guard and so hurt and so emotional after the exchange, I would have gone to Wal-Mart and said, "That this could happen in your store is appalling..." We can't even shop in safety. And I saw it happen to other people while I was there. But I was really shook up after that, and I mean there's hundreds and hundreds of stories I could tell.

While experiences like these exacerbate feelings of persecution, one story demonstrated the intense hatred that this lifestyle can arouse in some people. Interviewee #19 was drafted as a young man to fight in Vietnam. During basic training he was careful to keep his polygamous background from becoming common knowledge around his company. After developing some close relationships with his fellow soldiers, he disclosed his "secret." To his surprise and disappointment, the information quickly spread to other people whom he did not intend to include. One soldier in particular continuously harassed him and on one occasion found the interviewee when he was alone and stated, "I am going to kill you." After all of the persecution he had endured, this interviewee replied, "If you're going to do it, then do it already." To this, the antagonist explained, "I won't do it here where there are consequences, but once we get to

Vietnam, you're dead." Although this interviewee never encountered this soldier after basic training, this abuse left an indelible mark on this man that lasted for decades and contributed to his desire to live in an insulated community separate from outsiders who did not understand his beliefs.

Because of the fear of discrimination, polygamists learned from an early age that they needed to keep their lifestyle secret. Interviewee #4 was born two years after the 1953 raid and lived for eight years in Provo, away from her father, who still lived in Colorado City. Her mother inculcated the need for secrecy constantly:

I remember vividly how my mother would tell us to never call him daddy in public. My birth certificate to this day has a false name on it for my father. So I would run outside and say, "Daddy!" Then I would stop right there and say, "Uncle Edson's here, Uncle Edson's here." And I always knew I was different because I attended kindergarten, and first, and second grade in the city. I knew I was different than them. I didn't fit in because I was living a secret, hidden life. So I couldn't just have my friends over. I couldn't just be one of the kids and go to birthday parties. I didn't feel like I fit in with society ever.... All because of the lifestyle we had lived and because of the law that was hanging over our heads. And we were always told that if we gave out information our fathers could be put in jail. ....to protect him from the time we were small, we were taught to answer questions with an, "I don't know." Which kind of makes you feel like, okay, why can't I be honest? Because we loved our families. We were proud of our families. I don't ever remember feeling ashamed of our lifestyle. I just knew that I had to keep it a secret.

Recent national news regarding prominent celebrities increased the bitterness and feelings of victimization for many people in Centennial Park. Interviewee #15 emphatically voiced his displeasure with the hypocrisy he saw in national headlines:

My father spent two years in a federal penitentiary because he chose to live with his family and raise them as a family rather than cavort in an illicit affair... He was charged for the Mann Act<sup>3</sup> for taking one of his families across the state line where Governor Elliott Spitzer spent a week in Washington, D.C. crossing four state lines with a high priced prostitute with six thousand dollars of the state of New York's money and all he got was "boys will be boys!" So, we say there is huge hypocrisy in our government and the way laws are enforced.

Other people pointed out that Charlie Sheen living with his "goddesses" and Hugh Hefner living with his "playmates" were violations of anti-polygamy laws, and yet, from the perspective of these polygamists, these men were venerated as "men's men." It was difficult for these Centennial Park people to witness the blatant flaunting and sexualization of what they consider sacred, while they feel like they cannot openly live polygamy in a committed and religious form.

Although nearly all of the polygamists in this study had some experience with discrimination, they also nearly all had positive experiences and relationships outside of the community. Especially the younger members of the community found that outsiders are generally tolerant and even accepting of the polygamist lifestyle. Interviewee #3 explained that she had developed many relationships with people outside of the community and found that

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<sup>3</sup> The Mann Act (1910) was created to halt the interstate transportation of prostitutes.



people were generally accepting of her lifestyle. She described her friends' reactions to her lifestyle as:

You do what you do, and I do what I do, and we'll be friends. So it's not a problem... they're fine with it. They know two of my moms and they love them so they're fine with it. Like before, when I was like "I have more than one mom". And they were like, "What's wrong with you?" But now that they've actually had a relationship with them, they're like, "That's really cool."

Interviewee #6 also explained that he had many relatives and friends that live outside of the community and he felt comfortable with those people because although his religion is a large part of his life, he has other interests that make the relationship functional even if the person does not agree with his lifestyle:

The only time I feel like I get treated differently is when people are asking specifically about my religion, but if we're just talking about a movie or basketball or something, then I get treated exactly the same as everyone else. Anyone that I meet face-to-face is respectful.

Others were not so open about their lifestyle. Many worked in neighboring communities and cities with monogamists and found their relationships with them to be rewarding and positive, but at the beginning of the relationship, both parties were often wary of the other. Depending on the circumstances, some polygamists felt it necessary to hide their lifestyle choice from their employers for years out of fear of retribution. Interviewee #2 explained:

...he [her husband] cannot speak out because his livelihood depends on it. And that's not just a what-if. We know already many, many situations where people have lost their jobs because of being associated and affiliated with the plural lifestyle.

Dealing with people outside of the community who do not understand the lifestyle or reasons behind living the principle of plural marriage can be very difficult. For some, like Interviewee #3, opening up to outsiders about their lifestyle was an opportunity to discuss and explore different perspectives, for others, being open about their lives and beliefs brought serious and detrimental consequences. In a CPAC meeting, the members explained that they do not see outsiders as bad people, most are simply misinformed and undereducated about polygamy and Centennial Park in particular. By opening their community up to the outside world for scrutiny, they felt like they were becoming vulnerable, but that by showing what they are really like, they hoped that people would begin to understand them and eventually accept them as “normal people who are just trying to do better.”

### **Marital Relationships**

Unlike mainstream American relationships that are left up to the individuals to choose proper mates through a process of dating, romantic relationships in Centennial Park include the input of many members of the community. The decision about who to marry is a very spiritual experience that involves more than just the man and woman. Dating is discouraged in Centennial Park because, for young people, dating can cloud judgments and lead individuals to not be open to the input of God in with whom they should spend eternity. For those men who are already married, dating is viewed as inappropriate because men should be active and present in their existing relationships, not seeking additional wives. Men should rely on the inspiration of their religious leaders to decide when they should receive another wife into their family.

Inconsistent with the stereotype that women are not allowed to make decisions in polygamous relationships, the bride-to-be has the most input in who she will marry. The process of marriage begins when the woman feels she is ready. Often, she will meet with a member of

the priesthood council and tell him that she feels ready to marry. Generally, the woman will have an idea of who she would like to marry and will discuss this with the priesthood leader. She, her priesthood leader, and her parents will take time to pray about the decision so as to better understand the will of the Lord in this important decision. After taking time to sufficiently ponder the decision, these parties will reconvene and discuss each person's perspective and feelings on the issue. If any of the parties feel uncomfortable with the choice, the process repeats until all are in agreement. Once the decision is made, the man is then contacted and asked to take the woman as a wife. This request is not viewed as coming from the woman, her parents, or the priesthood leaders, but rather from God. Consequently, very few of these requests are refused.

One young man, interviewee #18, was one that when the request came to marry a young lady, felt like he was not prepared. Although it was a difficult decision for him, he decided it was best to refuse the offer and wait until he was ready for the commitment marriage requires. His decision, while not agreeable to some in the community, was respected.

Because the Work is divided between two congregations, one in Centennial Park and one in Salt Lake City, it can happen that the bride and groom are not even acquainted before becoming engaged. Engagements are usually short, approximately four to six weeks, during which time the couple can get to know one another through telephone conversations and infrequent meetings. Courting is still important in a polygamous relationship, but it is reserved mostly for after the couple is married. In any instance, both husband and wife place their trust in God and their religious leaders to assist them in creating a new family and learning to love each other.

The transition of accepting a new woman into the family is a period of growth and adjustment. In some families the transition is relatively smooth. Interviewee #2 describes her experience as she entered an established family after her marriage:

Of course I was nervous. I was excited. I wanted to be able to lend my talents, my abilities, my... anything that I could to the efforts of this family and to contribute in any way that I could. I was really nervous about stepping on toes, you know. You go into a home that's already established and it's not like I'm picking out colors and I'm setting up, picking out the dishes, setting out the design of the home or anything like that. It's there. And it's not that I couldn't contribute to it, because I can and I did... But I was really nervous about, you know, are they going to like me? Am I going to like them...? I felt like everyone was open to working together for that, and expanding for me. And that was just huge.

For women moving into an established home, there is a great deal of stress associated with moving in. Interviewee #13, a man who went through the process of accepting new wives multiple times, described this period of adjustment as "fruit basket upset." The stress of adding another lady to a home is a stressful period not only for the women involved, but also for the husband. It is a tremendous task to balance the demands of multiple wives and their expectations of their husband. In a light-hearted moment, Interviewee #13 only half-jokingly quipped that men with only one wife have it easy. In plural relationships, instead of only having one wife mad at you for doing something stupid, as a polygamist husband, he has three wives mad at him. More seriously, he said:

There were elements of my character that didn't even show up until there was another lady. It's funny because, my first wife, after about six months to a year of marriage (to

the second wife), she said, I don't even know you anymore. She perceived that I had changed so much because of that new relationship that she didn't recognize me as the same person that we had grown together in our relationship.

In addition to the personal change he experienced in forming a second marital relationship, interviewee #13 also expressed the emotional impact of beginning a new relationship with his second wife. Having grown up in a plural family, he knew that what he was doing was right. He had faith that God wanted him to accept this woman and love her the same way he loved his first wife, but he explained that understanding intellectually and understanding emotionally are different:

It seems natural for that to occur (accepting a second wife), but then all the human emotions come into play, and that's where the true application of the principles of the gospel, forgiveness and charity and love unfeigned and all of those things come in because if you're not using those, you'll become bitter, angry, resentful, hateful, and it just doesn't work for you... For me there was this forbidden mystery as I started building that relationship, not in the presence of my first wife, obviously, because you're not going to be intimate with, it's not an orgy, this lifestyle. In fact, it's about the furthest thing from that... So yeah, I dealt with those emotions, but I would say, much less so for me than for my first wife and eventually my second.

In recollecting the transition from a monogamous relationship to a polygamous relationship, interviewee #4 sympathized with her husband:

I look back now and the poor husband, he's so green... But you think of that, coming home and there's two ladies sitting at the table. Who are you going to give a kiss to first? And is it going to matter?

So many variables and emotions are involved in each relationship that without each person sacrificing, the relationships do not mesh well. No matter how easy or hard the transition is to add another woman to the family, the fact that she simply exists in the family and in the home changes the individuals involved as well as the existing relationships forever.

### **Sister-wife Relationships**

When a man is asked to accept a new wife, it is not seen as only his decision. Every wife plays an integral part in the process. If a wife has reservations, they are openly discussed and addressed. Maintaining family harmony is very important. Interviewee #4 described it this way, “In a plural family, every wife is like a piece of the puzzle, and they bring a different aspect into the family.” For the other wives, the process of accepting a new wife is a life-changing ordeal that drastically alters the family dynamic. This change contains many difficulties and also many rewards. Interviewee #8 described the process as one of growth. She originally struggled when a second wife joined the family. She explained that her original paradigm of what love was included common mainstream beliefs that a husband should be faithful to his wife and should not have other love interests. Although she intellectually believed that he was being faithful to the marriages, it was emotionally painful to accept that her relationship was not his only marital relationship:

So when that loyalty to me comes in conflict with the loyalty to somebody else, what do you do? You have to work that out and you have to come to a deeper ability to lend yourself to accommodate those that you're living with.

Over time, each person settles into their roles and becomes a full member of the family. Because of the increased scale of plural families, there are more personalities that need to mesh in order to have a functional home. Just like with any other relationship, each person must learn

to handle the things that bother them about another person. Sister-wives do not always get along; when this happens, each woman must evaluate her own needs and work out the issues. Much like interviewee #13, Interviewee #4 commented that there were aspects of her personality and character that she did not know existed until another sister-wife joined the family and exposed a different perspective:

You learn to pick your fights, so to speak... I learned early on not to make a big deal over little tiny things because you could make a big deal about anything you want... The more people in your home, the more you do have to communicate, the more often you have to communicate. You just have to work things out... but some things just aren't worth hashing over.

Although women who practice plural marriage understand that they should not feel jealousy when they see their husband kiss another wife, it is a human response. When asked if she experienced jealousy in her relationship, Interviewee #4 exclaimed:

Am I human? Yes! I am very human. That is where I started finding out stuff about myself that I didn't know was there. All of a sudden I thought, wow! I have a lot of things that I need to work on. I didn't even know that I had those traits. Jealousy is absolutely a human trait.

Despite all of the difficulties associated with the relationships between sister-wives, the women grow to love and respect each other. When talking of one of her sister-wives, Interviewee #4 simply said "I feel comfortable when she's in the home. I miss her when she's gone." In the relationships with some of the younger sister-wives, one of her major roles is as a mentor. She helps these young women understand how to better deal with issues that arise with raising children, dealing with other sister-wives, and strengthening their relationships with their

husband. Some of the young sister-wives even called her “Mom” for a while as they matured in their roles as wives and mothers.

There are no relationships in monogamous culture that are the same as that of a sister-wife. She is a friend, a sister, a confidant, and a role model. In many ways a sister-wife can understand frustrations and challenges better than anyone else because she is married to the same man, often lives in the same home, and is part of the same family.

### **Community Events**

In the early years of the LDS Church, leaders taught a principle of gathering. As people converted to the LDS faith, they were asked to move from their homes and gather with the Saints first in Ohio, then Missouri, then Illinois, and finally in Utah. Thousands of people immigrated to these locations from England, Ireland, Scandinavia, Canada, and other nations around the globe, as well as from all parts of the United States. The purpose of the gathering was to concentrate the believers and allow them to create a society with others who believed as they did. By living with others with the same faith, members were strengthened in their faith and felt like they belonged. As the LDS Church grew, congregations developed throughout the world and the principle of the gathering was suspended.

In fundamentalist communities like Centennial Park, the principle of the gathering is still followed. Although the Work maintains two congregations, one in Centennial Park and one in Salt Lake City, the members are expected to settle in one of these communities. This makes the community much closer than typical communities because the people with whom you grow up remain in your community for your whole life. In addition to creating a strong bond within the community, this gathering allows uniformity in standards throughout the Work. In Centennial Park, there are many opportunities for community members to gather together. Most of these



gatherings are for religious purposes, but other community events are simply to get away from the daily work and have fun.

One of the ways that the Centennial Park community maintained its co-cultural identity was through regular community events. These events provided a way for community members to solidify their relationships with others, support one another, and share common interests. The pressures of living plural marriage are often intense and difficult to manage without steady support. Gathering together provided community members the opportunity to have fun, share experiences, offer encouragement, and sometimes commiserate with each other.

Some events, such as religious services, were formal ways for community members to engage with each other, while summer baseball games, evening dances, and community parties provided a relaxed and informal venue for community involvement. Regardless of the type of community event, the community grew closer together and reaffirmed their co-cultural identity. One experience illustrated well how a community event exemplifies the values of Centennial Park. One summer evening, I was invited to an outdoor community dance. Men dressed in ties and most of them wore suit jackets. Women were in long dresses and skirts. Unlike dances on college campuses, in dance clubs, or on television programs, this community dance was appropriate for all ages. A piano from the nearby community center was wheeled onto the basketball court and waltzes, two-steps, and line dances instead of grinding and breakdancing created a family friendly atmosphere where all participated. I felt as if I had stepped back in time as young men extended a hand to young ladies and politely asked them to dance, while parents kept close eyes on their children to make sure they were not dancing too close. Everyone knew the dance steps and the only breaks in the evening were to give the pianist a rest.

Other events were centered on holidays. A Christmas choral concert provided a way for the community to celebrate the holiday together. Choirs of young children, high school aged children, and adults provided a mixture of traditional hymns and secular songs to invite a fun and warm atmosphere as the community celebrated the birth of Christ. These events were meant to give the people of Centennial Park an opportunity to relax and find happiness as a family and with other members of the community.

### **Church**

Every interviewee affirmed that the purpose of their community's existence was the shared religion of the community members. Their religion was the cause of their separation from mainstream culture and was the strongest influence in creating their co-culture. Although there are people who live in the community who choose not to attend religious services, a majority of families faithfully gather to worship. Because of the importance of religion in the community, the weekly meetings were an integral part of the community culture.

In Centennial Park, Saturday nights were reserved for priesthood meeting. In this meeting, men met together to hear lessons from the high priesthood quorum and other priesthood holders. This meeting was reserved only for priesthood holders; consequently, I was not invited to attend. The main religious service was conducted on Sundays. For this meeting many members arrived more than an hour early to get good seats, study Holy Scriptures, and listen to the choir practice the songs for the service. From this time until the end of the service, the congregation remained quiet and only spoke in whispers. Meetings lasted up to three hours without breaks. On my first experience attending church in Centennial Park, I was impressed as a row of young boys sat quietly and reverently for nearly four hours without any horseplay, laughing, joking, teasing, or any other typical boy behavior. One young man had just turned

eight years old and was baptized that morning. On his lap was a journal that he had received as a baptismal present. Throughout the meeting, he kept meticulous notes of what the speakers said. When I mentioned this to one of the adult women in the congregation, she answered by explaining that in Centennial Park, they take their religion and worship very seriously, and they instill in their children a reverence for the word of God.

The Sunday meetings began with song and prayer. The apostle assigned to conduct the meeting then outlined who would speak to the congregation. Often members of the congregation were asked, without prior warning, to testify of their beliefs and share any experiences that had strengthened their faith. Each of the apostles in attendance delivered an extemporaneous sermon on the topic that he felt inspired to deliver. Like many other Christian services, some topics of sermons included increasing faith, treating others the way Jesus would treat them, and being good to family members and neighbors. Some sermons were unique to polygamy. They focused on the history of the Work and the hardships that their ancestors endured because of their beliefs, how sister-wives should treat each other, and the divinity of the practice of polygamy. Other sermons affirmed the congregation's belief that they were a chosen and unique people as the priesthood leaders, often passionately, proclaimed the inferiority of other religions when compared to the full truthfulness and authority contained in the Work.

The LDS Church was criticized for abandoning critical principles of the gospel instigated by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. The speaker also criticized LDS Church members for being too passive in their faith and not understanding the teachings of their religion. In one particularly passionate sermon, one apostle recounted the entire experience of the split with the people in Colorado City, who later became the FLDS Church. He recalled a church meeting that exploded into a community feud as unworthy men attempted to "hijack the priesthood" from the

rightful succession. As proof that the people of Centennial Park had chosen wisely to follow their leaders to a new community, the speaker referenced the abuses Warren Jeffs perpetrated and the chaos and uncertainty his imprisonment caused in that community. During his sermon, I noticed a fervor running through the congregation. People were energized by hearing the drama of “the split.”

These sermons comparing the Work to other people were effective in uniting the people and strengthening the bonds within to community. Even though all of the people with whom I spoke unequivocally expressed gratitude that they chose to be a part of Centennial Park instead of staying with the Colorado City group or leaving the community to join mainstream America, it felt good to them to hear somebody that they respected validate their beliefs and decisions. In adopting a more open relationship with mainstream America, the leaders of the Work were determined to maintain their beliefs and standards. By consistently reminding the people of the history, beliefs, and standards of the culture, the leaders tried to establish boundaries for the community’s assertive accommodation. While some parts of their co-culture unavoidably changed as they pursued assertive accommodation, for example, the adoption of more mainstream clothing fashion and hair styles for some members of the community, they established the stability of their religious beliefs as non-negotiable.

### **Centennial Park**

Centennial Park is located approximately four miles south of the Utah border on State Route 389. After the split from the Colorado City group, the Centennial Park group sought to establish their own community. The leadership organized funds and purchased land approximately three miles south of Colorado City on the other side of the highway. Centennial Park lies in a high desert at the foot of beautiful sandstone cliffs. Originally, the community of

Short Creek was founded in that area because nobody else wanted to live there (See figure 2). The people who moved to Short Creek found the climate difficult, but sufficiently isolated. There they believed they could practice their religion in relative peace and safety. Centennial Park was located on a highway that leads to the major recreational areas of Lake Powell and The Grand Canyon. Outsiders pass through Colorado City and Centennial Park every day and do not realize that they are driving through polygamous communities. When asked if he felt secluded or isolated from the outside world, Interviewee #1 exclaimed:

Absolutely not! The day they built that highway, the brethren saw it coming and they warned the people. “This highway will draw you into the world and you better be careful.” And that’s where we are today. Not that it isn’t a separate community...but de facto tourists are coming through, the highway’s out there, we’re up and down and people have facility, it’s easy to get out.



**Figure 2.** View west of Centennial Park

Beginning with the construction of the highway and more noticeably with the availability of instant communication through mobile telephones, internet, and satellite television the distance between Centennial Park and the outside world closed dramatically. The availability of information about the outside world contributed to the community beginning the process of assertive accommodation. The people of Centennial Park benefited from adopting technological advances from the outside world and were able to quickly adapt to outside trends and news. They often traveled the 20-30 minutes to larger towns and cities in Southern Utah for shopping, recreation, and entertainment.

Although all of the interviewees felt that the community was not isolated from the outside world due to communication technology and ease of transportation, the citizens of Centennial Park felt safe in their environment. The sentiments of interviewee #15 represent well the feelings of others in the community:

I feel safer here than I would in Salt Lake City... We don't have any drive-by shootings. We don't have gangs. You know, bank robberies and you see it every night on the news up there. Crimmony, there's all kinds of murders in the city. We are very grateful... for our security and our safety here. And I attribute that to the commitment of the people... we don't want those crimes. We want a place where we can raise our children. We don't have crime and we don't have drugs.

Aside from the security of living in a small community with people they know and love, people in Centennial Park feel a strong connection to where they live. Interviewee #9 emotionally spoke of her feelings toward the area in which she lived, "I was born here; I was born in a tent with a dirt floor right there below the mountains. This is home to me and I know that it is a special place."

One of the things that make this area special for the Fundamentalist Mormons who live there is their belief that after Jesus Christ's resurrection, he visited the American continent and its inhabitants in a land called Bountiful. The people of Colorado City and Centennial Park believe that the land Bountiful was where their communities stand today.

In their attempt to renegotiate their relationship with the dominant culture, the people of Centennial Park encountered a major roadblock because of their proximity of the FLDS Church in Colorado City. Not very many people in the surrounding communities knew that Centennial Park is a separate and independent group from the FLDS Church. Because the communities lie only a few miles from each other, they share the same belief about plural marriage, and they were once united, they were often confused as being the same. During the trial of FLDS leader Warren Jeffs, many conversations around Centennial Park centered on his crimes. Without exception, each person vehemently condemned his actions, but worried that the stigma of his actions would negatively impact the Centennial Park community. Although Interviewee #14 asserted that the FLDS people are "perfectly harmless," many people in the community agree that being so close to the FLDS is probably a hindrance to their progress in building relationships with people outside the community.

Because the people of Centennial Park wished to increase understanding about their community and culture, it was important to them to make the distinction between themselves and other polygamous groups with unfavorable reputations.

In the process of adapting to a new orientation toward the dominant culture, Centennial Park has found that this process is a long and slow process. Even after making the decision intellectually to be more integrated into mainstream culture, it is vastly more difficult to change the emotions within the co-culture as well as the emotions of the people outside of it.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The goals of this study were to gain a deep understanding of the people of the Centennial Park polygamous community and to examine the process the Centennial Park co-culture underwent as it attempted to reestablish its position within the greater society. These goals were achieved through extensive public and private interaction and through interviews. These interactions yielded a wealth of information about a culture that had not been scientifically studied. As a co-cultural group, the Centennial Park polygamous community began the difficult challenge of changing its fundamental relationship with the dominant culture through increased transparency and greater public contact. Because of the availability and accessibility of information and communication, the polygamous community was able to study the progress of other co-cultural groups in finding acceptance and respect within the dominant cultural structure. Surprisingly, the Centennial Park community began abandoning decades of isolation and separation to pursue an attitude of assertive accommodation with mainstream America.

The process of change has been difficult and inconsistent. As with any organization or group, there were those who adapted to the changes slower than others. Many people in the Centennial Park community did not speak out or initiate relationships with outsiders. In speaking with many people within the community, there were many who verbally supported assertive accommodation, but personally and perhaps subconsciously resisted the change. Those in the culture who maintained their position of assertive separation believed that by opening their community up to scrutiny, they were inviting danger into their midst. Those who embraced the community's new position of assertive accommodation viewed the change as an opportunity to emerge from the shroud of secrecy and fear and show the world the beauty of plural living.



It is impossible to understand the people of Centennial Park without understanding their religion and the beliefs about the principle of plural marriage. The community of Centennial Park is centered on the religion that simultaneously unites its citizens with each other and alienates them from the outside world. Their religion teaches that the purpose of life is to become like God. They believe that God practices the principle of plural marriage, and by living it themselves, they are fulfilling part of their purpose on Earth. Plural marriage is only a part of their quest to become like God. They believe that learning is an eternal process that leads an individual to becoming a god. Without continual progress and improvement, people degenerate into ungodly and unworthy individuals. With this principle in mind, the people of Centennial Park place a great deal of focus on understanding who God is and how they can become more like him. They readily admit that they often fall short of this lofty goal, but they believe that through continual learning and improvement they will one day achieve godhood.

The practice of their religion coupled with the years of assertive separation from the dominant American culture gave the people of Centennial Park an identity. Each person from Centennial Park shared experiences with others within their co-culture; these shared experiences created strong bonds, a feeling of safety, and cultural belonging. Likewise, negative experiences outside the community justified and promoted the need to retreat further from the mainstream culture. The process of opening up the community somewhat to outsiders was more difficult than simply sending invitations and letting people browse through the community. A fundamental shift in the people of Centennial Park was necessary to allow the community to adopt an assertive accommodation stance.

By interacting with members of Centennial Park, I was able to see to what extent this process of change had been adopted by individuals. At the beginning of this study, CPAC had

been organized for five years. Despite this amount of time, the process of shifting from assertive separation to assertive accommodation was not complete and not uniform throughout the community. I noticed that for those from the older generation this adaptation was generally slower and more difficult. For those who grew up in the community before instant communication, and before the highway was built, assertive separation was comfortable. They were taught through personal experience and community history that the outside world was dangerous and scary. Even with greater exposure to the outside world, it is difficult for many of the older generation to release their feelings of foreboding and fear as they witness their community exposed to the scrutiny of outsiders. Admittedly, this observation is a generalization and there were many older members of the community that embraced the new cultural position and there were young people who preferred assertive separation. The following account indicates the differences in opinion and comfort with the community's newly adopted openness even within a family.

On one occasion, I was invited to have dinner with six of the widows of one man. After the passing of their husband, these women continued living together. The youngest of the widows at this dinner was in her 50s while the oldest was in her 80s. The conversation was light and pleasant for the first couple of hours while they warmed up to me, but as we got to know each other our conversation took on a deeper tone. One of the adult daughters of the family took me to the backyard where she told stories of playing with her brothers and sisters when they were growing up. She also emotionally explained that one of her sisters had been killed in a recent car accident and the family buried her in the family cemetery in this backyard. One of the advantages of plural marriage, according to her, is that even though this woman's children lost their mother, they have a tremendous amount of support and love from their other mothers.

Although nothing can replace the loss of a parent, the loss was made easier because of the strength of the family and the closeness of the community. After returning to the other dinner guests, we all talked about their family, faith, and experiences. In recollecting her memories of her life and experiences, one of the women unequivocally stated that when she was asked to have me over for dinner, she was against the idea. Her sister wives and daughter had to persuade her to meet me. She was uncomfortable with a stranger entering her house and trying to find things out about her. In contrast, another wife was immediately open to having me for dinner and warmly welcomed me into the home. She openly discussed her life and unreservedly answered any questions I had. Both women were from the same generation and shared many of the same experiences through decades of living as sister-wives.

Within this one family and within the same generation, there were several contrasting perspectives and opinions about the path and role of the community. For the wary wife, her life was private and should remain that way. For others in the family, allowing outsiders to examine the community provided an opportunity to quell suspicions, show off the important aspects of their lives, of which they were very proud, and open a dialog with the outside world.

Although the community in general decided to open up to me and a select few others from the outside, this dinner demonstrated that overcoming decades of inculcation of silence and avoidance with outsiders can be very emotionally difficult for some people, even when they intellectually understand and agree with the transition from assertive separation to assertive accommodation. On a different occasion, Interviewee #2 said that although she decided to open up about her lifestyle and engage outsiders in open and honest discussion about the rights and desires of the polygamist community, others in her family are more wary, "I might speak out for my lifestyle, but my family doesn't. My husband does not. My sister wives do not. And... my

husband supports what I'm doing because he wants to see it happen." In speaking to her about her openness, she described the empowerment she felt by letting her voice be heard and not passively allowing others to concoct salacious stories for the purpose of selling newspapers or filling air time. The people who embraced an active accommodation mentality understood that there are benefits to sharing parts of themselves with the outside that isolation cannot provide, and likewise, they believe that there are benefits for the outside world in interacting and adopting aspects of the polygamous culture. These and other experiences demonstrated the disparity between those who were open to assertive accommodation and those who wanted to maintain assertive separation.

In order to understand the behavior of the people of Centennial Park, it is imperative to understand their fundamental assumptions about the world and humanity. People in the mainstream culture often dismiss behaviors and beliefs of co-cultures as strange or irrational simply because they do not understand the sequence of events and decisions that led to where the co-culture finds itself. Decades of persecution and discrimination presented a choice for the community. The bias of the mainstream culture led to raids on the community that attempted to stamp out the practice of polygamy and divide families. This bias made it impossible for polygamists to assimilate into that culture; therefore, the polygamists in Centennial Park made a series of rational decisions that they believed to be the most beneficial for themselves and their families. These decisions led to the adoption of a mentality of assertive separation. These polygamists from Centennial Park chose to separate themselves from the mainstream group and create their own society in order to live their lifestyle without intervention from outsiders.

During these years of assertive separation, the people of Centennial Park felt stigmatized and stereotyped by the media, the government, and people in communities around Centennial

Park. These polygamists considered themselves to be good people and it was emotionally painful for them when they felt unfairly characterized by people who were ignorant of their culture or actively and knowingly misrepresented the culture for their own personal gains.

Polygamists often traveled to surrounding communities for entertainment, recreation, and shopping. When sojourning outside of their community, most polygamists were easily recognized because of their dress and appearance. They knew that they stood out, and because of this, they knew they were potential targets of discrimination. Negative stereotypes about polygamy were ubiquitous in the region and polygamists felt that these stereotypes influenced most outsiders to regard all polygamous men as abusers of women and children, perpetrators of tax and welfare fraud, and violent outlaws, and all polygamous women as weak and deluded sex slaves that blindly submitted to the wishes of the dominant males.

These misrepresentations and incorrect stereotypes caused members in the community to question the wisdom of maintaining assertive separation and allowing others to speak for Centennial Park without any input from the community.

The location of Centennial Park was well known by government officials and by people in surrounding areas. The lifestyle was not a secret and many of the people who practice plural marriage demonstrated their religion and lifestyle through their dress and appearance. If people in the government really wanted to arrest and prosecute polygamists, it would not be difficult to find them. However, simply because polygamists were not being prosecuted at the time of this study was not enough for the people of Centennial Park. They desperately wanted to follow the laws of the land and be accepted as productive members of society. They felt that they should not have to choose between following the laws of the land and following the laws of God. In order for them to reconcile these two desires, they decided that they needed to find their voice.

They understood that the process of, first, changing the mentalities of their own citizens and, second, changing the perceptions of outsiders would be a very long and difficult challenge. Deep-seated feelings of resentment, fear, and uncertainty were harbored by both polygamists and outsiders, but the people of Centennial Park understood that without dialog, these feelings would never change and they would have to continue to live in the fringes of society with fear of having their families torn apart.

Several interviewees were guarded and calculated in their communication because they were worried that they might say something wrong or something that could be taken out of context and exploited for sensationalized media. Interviewee #8 explained that when they began inviting people into their community, the polygamists were open and willing to share their beliefs, but often the content got twisted and manipulated to create salacious stories that would boost media consumption and sell advertising space. In conversations with polygamists, they often marveled at the attention their community received from the media and how interested people were in their lives. Although they were proud of their community and religion, and believed that they are an extraordinary people, to them, simply living the principle of plural marriage did not warrant the attention that erupted in the past few years. None of the interviewees or anyone else with whom I had contact expressed any desire to become famous, but rather they wanted the media attention to show people that polygamists are human. With the manipulation of this message by the media, the polygamists felt that they were turned into a spectacle instead of humanized. These experiences reinforced the fears and stereotypes the people of Centennial Park had about the outsiders. They believed that outsiders were manipulative and unscrupulous people who had little regard for the truth or who they hurt while trying to get ahead. Although all of the people in Centennial Park recognized that there were

good people outside of their community, the risk for some was too great and they decided not to participate in disseminating the community's message.

Through this difficult process of shifting from assertive separation to assertive accommodation, the people of Centennial Park became savvier in the way they communicate with outsiders and how they relate to government officials. They began learning who to trust and how to protect themselves while continuing to promote their interests and educate people about themselves and their lifestyle. Although polygamists readily admit that their lifestyle is not for everyone, they want their choices to be understood and respected.

Even for some people who grew up living in a plural home, living plural marriage is not appealing. The demands of the religion and the lifestyle act to polarize the community. Those who are not fully committed to the religion often enter the mainstream culture and cease the practice of plural marriage. In Centennial Park, people are not forced to leave the community, but those who choose to leave remain members of the family and are free to return to the faith if they choose. Because those with less conviction often leave the community, those who remain demonstrate powerful conviction. Most of the people I interviewed had fathers or grandfathers who had served prison sentences because of their practice of polygamy and the interviewees asserted that if they were forced to choose between prison and abandoning plural marriage, they would not hesitate to go to prison.

Co-cultural theory explores the relationship between those people who have power and those who do not. The majority of co-cultural studies focus on large and often heterogeneous groups that share a few common characteristics, but also maintain individual characteristics as well. For example, individual women may have similar experiences in the workplace or in relationships, but because there are so many people who associate with the feminist co-culture, it

is difficult for them to unite with one voice. Because traditionally studied co-cultures maintain close contact with the dominant group, it can be difficult to understand how the mainstream communication structure does not cater to their needs.

This population serves as a wonderful opportunity to test the robustness of co-cultural theory because it applies the principles of co-cultural theory in a smaller and more homogeneous culture that has not been previously studied. This culture is valuable to study through the lens of co-cultural theory for three main reasons; (1) in reaction to intense persecution the community retreated into a cultural assertive separation. They maintained this separation through physical distance as well as social insulation. Although this insulation diminished with the construction of a major highway linking the community to mainstream culture and technological advances in communication, the social isolation continued to knit the community together. Because of the separation from the dominant culture, these people developed a strong communicative structure independent of the dominant group's structure. As Centennial Park attempted to slowly accommodate that culture, it encountered radical differences in meaning which caused clashes in understanding. (2) In most critical research, it can be difficult to clearly mark a starting point for a co-culture's transition from one stage to another because most co-cultures are large and often unorganized in their attempts to bridge the gap to the mainstream culture. This study offers a unique opportunity to view a small and well-organized co-cultural group as it was in the process of renegotiating its status and position within the greater society. Because the Centennial Park community chose to open dialog with the dominant culture, there was an opportunity to study the process of changing the co-cultural orientation from assertive separation to assertive accommodation. (3) Because of the separation from mainstream society, polygamous culture has



largely remained unstudied. The emergence of this culture allows for a greater understanding of the beliefs, norms, and lifestyle of a unique and interesting culture.

Consistent with all participant observation studies where the participants know that the researcher is present, the presence of the researcher altered the behavior of the participants to some extent. Because this community was trying to improve public opinion of polygamy and specifically of Centennial Park and become more accepted by the dominant culture, some of the participants felt obliged to highlight some aspects of their lifestyle, religion, or values and deemphasize less flattering ones, often called the Hawthorne effect (Machol, 1975), in order to promote this goal. By conducting structured and unstructured interviews with 21 individuals and by living in the community for 288 hours spread over six months, I was able to compare answers and find commonalities that gave a clearer understanding of reality rather than relying too heavily on one person's opinion or perspective. This cross-referencing of interviews and observations limited the influence of the personal bias each person exhibited and strengthened my ability to interpret the results of the interviews and observations. While individual bias certainly was present in some personal communication, public settings such as religious services or community events were obviously less influenced by my presence. Religious sermons addressed topics that showed the difficulties of living their lifestyle. Women were chastised for allowing jealousy to negatively impact their relationships with their husbands, sister-wives, and children, and welfare and tax fraud were addressed as real issues in the community and harshly condemned. These issues, while not flattering, were the realities of the community and were not disguised or avoided due to my presence. Even with potential bias caused by my presence that could mask their behavior, this study offered a valuable insight into the image that the Centennial Park community wished to convey to the outside world.

This study opens the door to a great deal of interesting questions that warrant further research. Centennial Park is only one small portion of the fundamentalist Mormon polygamist movement. There are at least 12 organized fundamentalist groups throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Many of these groups maintain strict separation from mainstream culture, while other groups are much more integrated into mainstream culture than Centennial Park. Further research could examine different fundamentalist populations to see if the results described in this study are common among other polygamous populations. Additional research might separate polygamy from Mormon fundamentalism and study the differences and similarities between the findings of this study and relationships that are not founded on religious beliefs. Although not often considered polygamy, extra-marital affairs technically constitute polygamous relationships. For example, a study examining the lifestyle, goals, and values of a relationship structure where one man has one family while simultaneously maintaining a relationship with a mistress could explore the role of religion and religiously sanctioned polygamy versus an individual deciding to pursue this lifestyle without that influence.

This study revealed the lifestyle, beliefs, and goals of the Centennial Park polygamist community. It demonstrated the intense power and influence religion played in the lives of Centennial Park's citizens. The lifestyle of polygamy is not one that is going away. The people who believe in this principle have defied laws, governments, and mainstream culture for more than a century. The lifestyle is certainly not easily lived, but the promised eternal rewards of living the principle empower its adherents to go to any lengths to maintain its practice. The people of Centennial Park were proud that they are a peculiar people. Their ultimate goal was not to fully assimilate into mainstream society; rather, they merely wanted to procure for themselves the rights that were promised them by America's founding fathers to life, liberty, and

the pursuit of happiness. They wished to live their lives without interference or persecution. These goals pushed the people in the community to break down long-standing barriers and allow themselves to become vulnerable.

### **Researcher Position**

Several factors influenced the relationship between the community, as the subject of research, and me, as the researcher. Some of these factors helped me to develop relationships of trust with participants while some factors potentially hindered the process. One of the main factors that helped to establish a common understanding of the lifestyle of polygamy was the fact that I am a member of the LDS Church. While the fundamentalist movement separated from the LDS Church over 120 years ago, there are still many commonly held beliefs, jargon, and scriptures that streamlined the understanding of each party's position.

In the past, the Centennial Park community reached out to outsiders to try to tell their story only to have the media distort the message and create a salacious story. Because of this, the community is very wary of to whom it allows access. Many aspects of my background may have convinced them that I was less of a threat to them. Potentially, because I represented a university that was very familiar to them, I grew up in the region where they lived, I was a student instead of a professional researcher, and I was the same ethnicity as them, I was viewed as more similar and consequently more trustworthy.

While many of these characteristics may have helped me to garner trust, many of these same characteristics could have caused some discomfort with some people. Because of the history between the LDS Church and fundamentalists, and especially the relationship between the local people in the communities of Southern Utah and polygamists, the LDS Church was often vilified and condemned. Because I was a member of the LDS Church and a local resident

of Southern Utah, there could have been some hesitation by participants to fully disclose their true feelings and experiences because they could have had some fears that my motives were malignant.

This study did not only require a great deal of time and commitment from me, it also necessitated coordination and work from many members of the community. Because I was a student and not a professional researcher, there could have been some apprehension about the quality of the research. If the community committed to help me, they wanted a quality product at the end. These apprehensions

### **Participant Check**

After the completion and defense of this thesis, the Centennial Park community requested a copy of this study and an opportunity to discuss the findings with me. Six members of CPAC, one of the religious apostles, and my community liaison read this thesis and entered the meeting with questions and critiques. The majority of the critiques corrected minor historical inaccuracies, name and place misspellings and other small issues that did not affect the results or interpretation of the findings of this study. These corrections have been included in this final draft.

One issue that was important to the community was the clarity of the distinction between the Centennial Park community and the FLDS Church. This delegation wanted it made clear that although the two communities were close in proximity to one another, religiously, socially, and in all other ways the communities have no affiliation. The Centennial Park community vehemently condemned the sexual misconduct of Warren Jeffs.

Participants in this meeting expressed particular appreciation for and affirmation of sections describing the relationships within the community and the relationship between the

community and outside world. These sections expressed well the feelings of the community and verbalized some of the important issues affecting this community. They considered the explanation of their community as a fair portrayal of their lives, beliefs, and norms.

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**Chapter 7: Appendix 1****SUMMARY TABLE: MORAL ACCEPTABILITY OF ISSUES**

2004 May 2-4 (sorted by "morally acceptable")	Morally acceptable %	Morally wrong %
Divorce	66	26
Gambling	66	30
The death penalty	65	28
Buying and wearing clothing made of animal fur	63	31
Medical testing on animals	62	32
Sex between an unmarried man and woman	60	36
Medical research using stem cells obtained from human embryos	54	37
Doctor-assisted suicide	53	41
Having a baby outside of marriage	49	45
Homosexual behavior	42	54
Abortion	40	50
Cloning animals	32	64
Suicide	15	79
Cloning humans	9	88
Married men and women having an affair	7	91
Polygamy, when one husband has more than one wife at the same time	7	91

**Appendix 2****Official Declaration-1**

To Whom It May Concern:

Press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, Which have been widely published, to the effect that the Utah Commission , in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted in Utah since last June or during the past year, also that in public discourses the leaders of the Church have taught, encouraged and urged the continuance of the practice of polygamy-

I, therefore, as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false. We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, and I deny that either forty or any other number of plural marriages have during that period been solemnized in our Temples or in any other place in the Territory.

One case has been reported, in which the parties allege that the marriage was performed in the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City, in the Spring of 1889, but I have not been able to learn who performed the ceremony; whatever was done in this matter was without my knowledge. In consequence of this alleged occurrence the Endowment House was, by my instructions, taken down without delay.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproved. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

Wilford Woodruff

President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

President Lorenzo Snow offered the following:

“I move that, recognizing Wilford Woodruff as the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the only man on the earth at the present time who holds the keys of the sealing ordinances, we consider him fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the Manifesto which has been read in our hearing, and which is dated September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1890, and that as a Church in General Conference assembled, we accept his declaration concerning plural marriages as authoritative and binding.”

The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous.

Salt Lake City, Utah, October 6, 1890

**Appendix 3****Official Statement by Joseph F. Smith**

Inasmuch as there are numerous reports in circulation that plural marriages have been entered into, contrary to the official declaration of President Woodruff of September 24, 1890, commonly called the manifesto, which was issued by President Woodruff, and adopted by the Church at its general conference, October 6, 1890, which forbade any marriages violative of the law of the land, I, Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereby affirm and declare that no such marriages have been solemnized with the sanction, consent, or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And I hereby announce that all such marriages are prohibited, and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage, he will be deemed in transgression against the Church, and will be liable to be dealt with according to the rules and regulations thereof and excommunicated therefrom.

JOSEPH F. SMITH,

President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.