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Preface

Polygamy evokes strong reactions, and we are not in the business of judging or dictating those reactions. On the contrary, as academics, we lay out the facts as we know them, as we have discovered them in the course of several decades of careful research. We do not take sides in the current firestorm of polygamy controversy. Rather, we provide you, the reader, with enough information to form your own judgments about an ancient, complex, and malleable marital structure.

Further, we are not in the business of judging or dictating religious beliefs. Because the heart of this book is an investigation of the well-being of men, women, and children in polygamous households of the Middle East, we perforce spend a good deal of time reviewing Islamic law, which undergirds polygamy in this region. But we wish to clarify from the outset: Islamic law and Muslim people must be understood as distinct entities—the law and the people are not one and the same. Muslim people, like any other group of people, behave in myriad ways—some of which may be considered "lawful" according to Islam and some of which may not. It is human nature. Impartiality demands the distinguishing between a religion and its adherents.

We are, however, in a business; we are in the business of lending a voice to the little heard. The men, women, and children we discuss are on the margins of—if you will—*liminality*. These are the not-regarded, the silent sufferers in the system of polygamy. Their voices are indistinct, the contours blurred by others' rhetoric and reasoning. This book is meant to be a platform upon which their voices may be raised.

This is, to the best of our knowledge, the first book-length scholarly treatment of the psychosocial implications of polygamy on not only women and children, but men as well, and the first to examine the phenomenon using a mixed-methods approach, a very large population sample, and the Middle East as its touchstone. As such, it contributes to the literature in several ways: that *all* members of the polygamous household are represented in this work fills a gap in our knowledge about the effects of polygamy on men in particular; the use of quantitative *and* qualitative methodology allows for the richness of combining measurable and phenomenological data; and the choice of region opens the door to therapeutic-level knowledge of a poorly understood phenomenon—Islamic-based polygamy.

We begin at the broadest level and in Chap. 1 consider worldwide polygamy today. We note that, contrary to popular perception, polygamy is not isolated to the East, but that it has been in the recent past, and is once again a hot-button topic in the West as well. Polygamy is showing up in media of all kinds—especially social media—and is being discussed everywhere from the Internet to Ivy-League university forums. We then situate polygamy in its general economic, historical, and political frameworks.

Since our focus is on the psychosocial implications of polygamy in the Middle East, Chap. 2 offers an overview of Arab history and culture. We learn that the topography of the Arab regions contributed to the development of the nearly exclusive reliance on communal structures, with the individual heavily constrained within the nexus of the family and the tribe. We get a glimpse of how that reality has shaped the education, politics, and economics of the region.

We move in Chap. 3 to Islam itself and its relationship with polygamy: pertinent laws, marriage contracts, and marital structures. The authority of the Koran is outlined, with particular emphasis on precedents for polygamy and restrictions regarding the practice. Alternative Islamic-based marital arrangements are discussed.

In Chap. 4 we start to hear the voices to which we referred above. We read about a unique, two-part study conducted among the Bedouin Arabs of the Negev section of Israel. This study had both qualitative and quantitative components, and Chap. 4 is therefore divided into two sections. Section one introduces the quantitative element, which describes the findings regarding the well-being of men, women (first wives), and children in polygamous households as compared to their peers in monogamous households. Numerous measures of mental health, satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships were used, and these tools were validated and back-translated. Strong statistical analyses were employed, and family functioning was found to be a crucial variable for explaining poor adjustment in the polygamous as compared to monogamous Bedouin-Arab families. Section two introduces the qualitative element, in which specific patterns of familial behavior were examined for their contribution to emotional health.

Chapter 5 serves as a discussion for both the qualitative and quantitative findings. We found that all members of a polygamous family, but especially women and children, suffer: because of the specific act or resulting interpersonal relationships; because of changes in personal and social image; and especially because of psychological stress related to family functioning. Women and children experience anger and jealousy which, if unresolved, lead to intergenerational and inter-relational disengagement and conflict. In light of pathbreaking findings, we discuss how men are by no means left unscathed by polygamy.

Informed by knowledge derived from several decades of research among the Bedouin-Arab community, in Chap. 6 we propose a novel intervention model for general use with polygamous Muslim families. This model addresses a need in the field for a culturally specific psychotherapeutic regimen for this population. The approach highlights and reflects the Islamic cultural canon and represents an

example of how Islamic mores can be harnessed in the service of complicated, multifaceted treatment. A clinical stance of moral neutrality with regard to issues such as plural marriage and patriarchy is emphasized.

We conclude with a final chapter on the future of polygamy for individuals in the Middle East. Suggestions are offered for change on both upstream (macro-level) and downstream (micro-level) factors, and ways that the helping professional might contribute to a modification of current realities are discussed.

Beer-Sheva, Israel Alean Al-Krenawi, Ph.D.

About the Author

Alean Al-Krenawi is President of Achva Academic College and Professor at the Spitzer Department of Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Prof. Al-Krenawi's research interests include multicultural mental health, polygamy, political violence, and social work with indigenous populations. He conducted studies in Israel, Canada, Palestinian Authority, and other Arab countries. Among his numerous publications are books on Ethno-psychiatry among Bedouin Arabs in Israel; Multicultural Social Work in Canada: Working with Diverse Ethno-Racial Communities; Tomorrow's players: The Israeli-Palestinian Case; and Helping professional practice with Indigenous people and Bedouin health: Perspectives from Israel

Furthermore, Professor Al-Krenawi has authored numerous book chapters and academic peer-reviewed articles. Recently published works appear in the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, British Journal of Psychiatry, British Journal of Social Work, Child Abuse and Neglect, Community Mental Health Journal, Current Opinion in Psychiatry, Family Process, Health and Social Work, The Journal of Comparative Family Studies, Social Psychology, Social Psychiatry, and the World Journal of Psychiatry among other professional forums.

Contents

Chapter 1
Polygamy Today

Abstract Is polygamy enjoying a revival or is its future uncertain? This chapter is an overview of polygamy, mainly focusing in the Middle East but also in other parts of the world. Different religions and spiritual paths look upon it differently.

Polygamy has become a topic of intense cultural interest both in the East and the West. Justifications for and arguments against polygamy have varied widely.

The practice of polygamy often has as much to do with tradition and economics as with sexual gratification. It is currently being used as a political statement—a reawakening of cultural identity, especially in postcolonial situations.

The main question we will answer as the book progresses is: how do polygamous families in the Middle East fare in this particular family structure?

Some scholars believe that polygamy will not last, or will become an indulgence, practiced like *polyamorous* relationships, or only by those who insist on its religious relevance.

Polygamy is enjoying a revival. This nearly ubiquitous family structure (practiced in approximately 80 % of societies around the world) is remarkably fluid in form and pervasive in practice (Zeitzen, 2008; see also Henrich, Boyd, & Richerson, 2012). In African countries such as Benin, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria, polygamy is practiced by more than 30 % of the population, and even up to 50 % in Cameroon (Tertilt, 2005). The president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, has more than one wife—sanctioned by South African courts and government, which hold endless debates over the legal perplexities of juggling individual freedom with tribal tradition and overall human rights (Amien, 2006). Because their stated mandate is to recognize all groups who had previously been suppressed in apartheid, the government of South Africa is challenged to find just ground amongst a multitude of traditions. Further, the South African situation belies the theory that polygamy is predominantly a rural phenomenon—increasing numbers of men in the sprawling cities of Africa have polygamous arrangements of one sort or another (Kustenbauder, 2008). In a number of Middle Eastern areas (e.g., the Israeli Negev) where the number of polygamous marriages had been on the wane, it is growing

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again (Rabia, 2011). France, Germany, and other European nations are seeing an upsurge in polygamy, mainly amongst its Muslim population, and these countries have been grappling with how to deal with their native Muslim citizens who want to arrange immigration for their (multiple) wives (Selby, 2012). Even Canada and the USA have several breakaway groups from the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) who still maintain that polygamy is part of their religious duty. In North America, the story is not just the old struggle with the Mormons: an estimated 50,000–100,000 Black Muslims in the USA are in polygamous relationships, and they are becoming highly verbal about what they consider their right to live in such a family structure.

Polygamy, then, is alive and well. It has also become a topic of intense cultural interest—in the West as well as in the East. *Big Love*, NBO's drama of a fictional fundamentalist Mormon family that practiced polygamy, ran from 2006 to 2011 and was nominated for several prestigious awards. *Sister Wives*, the blockbuster reality-television drama, starred Kody Brown and his four wives, and the Middle East has the vastly popular *Girls of Riyadh* in which polygamy is featured as a plot line. The Internet abounds with polygamy resources such as polygamy personals like 2wives.com, "Where good pro-polygamy families find more wives."

Polygamy today is surrounded by a firestorm of controversy. John Witte Jr., Professor of religion and law at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, believes, according to NPR's Lisa Miller, that "polygamy is the next frontier in marriage and family law" (NPR, 2012). The Economist recently ran a piece on this topic (The Economist, 2013). Organizations such as the Stop Polygamy in Canada Society and the US-based Tapestry against Polygamy provide information and assistance in the current battle against polygamy, while the website ProPolygamy.com reports that on April 3, 2012, the founder of the US National Polygamy Rights Movement for Consenting Adults, Mark Henkel, presented a keynote speech at Yale University on decriminalization of polygamy. August 19th is National Polygamy Day in the USA.

Justifications for and arguments against polygamy have varied widely. Strong religious or cultural motivations can supersede other factors (e.g., personal and familial distress) that often result from the arrangement. But motivations can be deeply entrenched. Our main topic is polygamy in the Middle East, which is often motivated or legitimized by understandings of Islamic principles. The issues of motivation and legitimization are considered separately, as we shall see that some people practice polygamy willingly and use religion to justify their choice, while others are not self-motivated but, rather, encouraged by others to pursue the practice as a legitimate—and even mandated—duty. Thus, it will become clear that not all Muslim people believe in polygamy nor practice polygamy even if they do.

Polygamy in the Middle East represents a special case of this worldwide phenomenon. That myriad psychosocial issues—in which we are keenly interested—arise from polygamous practice does not detract one iota from the complexity of the phenomenon. As such, polygamy in the Middle East demands to be evaluated from multiple angles. In these pages, we begin that project.

Polygamy entails entering (readily or reluctantly) into a particular familial structure. The practice itself reflects an attempt to recognize and reconcile such

definitive human desires as to reproduce; to provide for oneself and family; to legitimize and care for children; to achieve sexual gratification; to meet familial and tribal demands; to leave a material and spiritual legacy; to find love and attention, care, and respect; to improve one's standing in the community and exhibit one's wealth; and to have all of these while being responsive to religious, cultural, and moral beliefs that underlie our societies. In this work, we shall evaluate the polygamous structure from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view. We shall get a sense of how men, women, and children are affected by polygamous relationships as we take both a broad, cross-cultural view and a local, particular one.

We shall begin with an overview of the literature that defines polygamy and offers a background for its practice. Second, we shall take a snapshot of Arab history, in which Islam and the tribal system developed; this information is crucial to the understanding of family life in the Middle East. We then review Islamic marriage and the many ways in which it is being experienced in this region. Enriched by this perspective, we shall come a bit closer and examine how a sampling of families in the Negev Bedouin community managed its polygamous, as compared to monogamous, relationships. We shall continue to sharpen our focus by entering the inner space of one of these polygamous households and get a sense of how intricate and culturally specific a system it is. That system was failing, as evidenced by the multiple unmet needs of its co-wives and children, and we shall go step by step through a treatment model pioneered by this author that provided the basis for a renewal of familial mental health. Finally, we shall arrive full circle and take an informed view of the psychosocial implications of polygamy for the Middle East of the future.

Much time will be spent on Islam and polygamy because Islam undergirds the practice of polygamy in this region. As indicated above, however, this is by no means a "West versus East" story. Rather, it is a story of ideals, choices, and circumstances, and we shall see how these three present serious challenges for legislators and others who wish to be inclusive vis-a-vis their communities, while defining and regulating principles of marriage and human rights that may clash with other religious viewpoints, especially in the areas of victimhood and culpability. And the heart of the story lies within our work as helping professionals: how do the polygamous families in the Middle East fare in this particular family structure?

Definition and Demographics of Polygamy

The term polygamy refers to three main types of marriage practice or union that involves a number of people sharing a common spouse, "usually, but not always, of the opposite gender" (Zeitzen, 2008, p. 17): polygyny, polyandry, and group marriage. Polygyny is the *sanctioned* marriage or union of one man to many women. Polyandry is the *sanctioned* marriage of one woman to many men. Group marriage is the *sanctioned* marriage of a number of men and women. I have italicized the word sanctioned because the term "marriage" (like the term "polygamy" and its types) is very difficult to apply categorically. There is disagreement about the

definition of "marriage" and what rites a marriage entails, just as there is disagreement about whether two people of the same gender can be *married*. As is fairly common, the word *polygamy* will be used here to mean the marriage of one man to many wives.

Zeitzen (2008) further distinguishes between de facto and de jure polygamy, which begins to take into account the fact that many people take up residence and form a common marriage of sorts in a polygamous situation, which is not officially sanctified by whichever authorities are said to be able to sanctify this. This includes polygamous arrangements that exist in countries which do not legally sanction it regardless of religious viewpoint.

Marriage means many things to many people. For some, marriage implies the communal, spiritual aspect of a relationship between men and women for the purposes of taking responsibility for each other while raising a family. Not everyone agrees: as of this writing, the United States Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case involving homosexual marriage. While the sanctioning of homosexual marriage would not necessarily lead to the sanctioning of polygamy—the two are not necessarily related (Rusin, 2012), the decision might lay to rest the idea that procreation is the basis for marriage, and highlight that commitment between adults is not predicated upon childrearing. The fluidity of the definitions become apparent as we learn that the practice of polygamy often has as much to do with tradition and economics as with sexual gratification.

Many relationships are de facto polygamous. Numerous types of relationships beg simple definitions. For example, polygamy, the marriage of one man to more than one woman, can be considered only a shade different than marriages and divorces occurring in quick succession, sometimes called serial monogamy. Proponents of polygamy have raised the question of why a man setting up house with a woman before his divorce is settled is not considered polygamy: the definitions of marriage and divorce begin to sound like formalities. In each case, an argument can be made that a man bears financial responsible for a woman, that is, the polygamous man must provide for all wives at once, and the man who marries and divorces successively might have at least as many wives to financially support. Indeed, the rights of women and children typically take center stage in the polygamy fracas. While women and children are most definitely affected by polygamy, we shall see that the practice takes its toll on a somewhat equalitarian basis.

Foundations of Polygamy

Lee (1979) and Zeitzen (2008) hold that, historically, the reasons for polygamy are legion. Limited polygamy, according to Lee (found in Europe and many Asian countries), seems related to the desire to have children—especially a son—when the first wife is unable to bear children. Where polygamy is prevalent, such as in parts of Africa, economics seem to have played a strong role for millennia. However,

neither of these is ironclad; for example, there is less farming in more-polygamous West Africa than there is in East Africa. Other factors noted by Lee were wealth, bride price (see below), availability of marriageable females, the need and desire for additional children, and the availability of productive roles for second and subsequent wives (Lee 1979, p. 704).

Lee (1979) further draws a distinction between polygamy that is practiced for power, politics, and prestige and polygamy that is practiced for production and reproduction. That is, where some may practice polygamy for more practical reasons of economy and family heritage, others wish to ostentatiously demonstrate their wealth and ensure that this wealth continues. Zeitzen (2008) breaks this idea down further. She suggests that these practices will be justified either culturally or religiously: culturally, as there is the need to keep the family and tribe strong (with all the economic, political, and sociological ideas that this entails); religiously, which has seen the practice change from a tradition to a religious dictum (p. 29). Because polygamy predates religious doctrine, anthropological historians debate the driving force behind the practice: economic necessity; the need or desire to take care of widowed women; attempts to maintain tribal strength, especially in times of war or waning population; the related dividing of spoils in victory (women being amongst desired property as their offspring would add to the strength of the victorious tribe) or a sign of power and status within a tribe. Historically, polygamy has been associated with societies which are economically (and thus politically) unsophisticated (p. 703). However, this is association is no longer valid, because—as we shall see—polygamy has gone primetime.

The practice of polygamy is particularly strong in high-context, strongly patriarchal regions such as the Middle East, where ties to family, the community, and the tradition of the extended culture have been critical for support and survival. It has tended to die off as society changes from higher- to lower-context, or from a simple to a more complex society. This is often because the framework for a polygamous marriage is too complicated, too expensive, or otherwise too difficult to maintain in a world where jobs and gender roles are not easily defined, and where each person is responsible for his or her own survival. This is seen positively in the change from larger families, which were prominent in all parts of the world in less developed areas, to smaller, nuclear families which have developed in more industrialized parts of the world. However, highly malleable as the institution is, polygamy has found a niche in industrialized, wealthy, and complex environments as an assertion of personal and cultural identity.

Yamani (2008) noted that she found exceptions for every written rule on polygamy, and many new reasons for men to choose polygamy and women to accept it (p. 209). While identifying trends in Middle Eastern polygamy, then we should recognize that each arrangement has its personal variations. Such imperatives and motivations fall under a few categories which we shall now consider: economic (mainly agricultural), heritage, and wealth (including bride wealth), sexual (legitimizing relationships, temporary marriages, and the responsibility for children), warfare (transition to Islam), and political/religious.

Economic and Environmental Considerations

The most obvious reasons for polygamy worldwide, and perhaps the most palatable to those who do not accept the practice, fall under the category of economics. White and Burton (1988) suggest we must consider three things: the need to increase labor force, the need to keep money and property within a family unit, and the need to care for women and children whose husbands are killed or die young. While these points may at first glance seem antiquated, on a worldwide scale they are very much here and now. We still see many examples of family enterprise being wholly maintained within the family: a plot of land is only tilled by the family, the craft is controlled by the family, people in the family are the most trusted and entitled to the benefits of their labor. Most families involved with agriculture have been large, whether as a result of having many children with one wife or many children with many wives. Particularly in less mechanized areas, farming demands the work of many people. Families are often encouraged to maintain and even to grow their property and thus their wealth through marriage. Multiple wives, in this case, would contribute by providing their own labor as well as having more children to keep the family economy strong and growing (Falen, 2008; Zeitzen, 2008). Contemporary examples are not hard to find. Right here, right now, Limaye (2012) notes a part of India where drought has led to polygamy amongst some farmers: "For the farmers, more wives meant more hands to carry water, because it takes at least four hours for a single person to carry two pots of water from the only well near the village"(n.p.).

Bride Price

Central to traditional polygamous marriages is "bride price." The wife is considered property—she has been paid for in some way. A man must consider whether his investment is possible: whether he can afford the price, and whether—and this is critical from an Islamic viewpoint—she can be appropriately maintained. With bride price, say detractors, wives are like chattel. This is evident in some levirate systems where, should a husband die, his wives become the financial responsibility of the brother(s). This responsibility can entail paying whatever is owed on the original bride price, as well as the duty to look after the woman. Beswick (2001) discusses the current intricacies in southern Sudan, where many young men have died in wars and those remaining are responsible for the upkeep of their brothers' wives and for outstanding bride payments. The traditional system is breaking down there for two reasons: first, polygamy had already started to fall out of practice as some women were becoming more independent before the civil wars; and, second, those who did practice were often very poor and thus entered into arrangements to pay the bride price over time rather than all at once. Surviving brothers questioned their duty and their capacity to enter into such an economic arrangement. Many women were left stranded, but some of those who were adopted by their husband's male relatives have reported horrendous living circumstances.

Marriage arrangements in villages and among the lower socioeconomic classes of urban areas tend to follow traditional patterns. When a young man is judged ready for marriage, his parents will visit the parents of a girl whom they believe to be a suitable match. In many cases, the man will have already expressed an interest in the girl and have asked his parents to begin these formalities. If the girl's parents show similar interest in the union, the conversation quickly turns to money. If there is a bride-price, that will be given to the bride's family at the time of marriage. In principle this payment is supposed to compensate the girl's family for the loss of her work potential, but in practice it is used primarily to finance the cost of the wedding. The exact sum varies according to the wealth, social position, and degree of kinship of the two families (Chapin-Metz, 1987; Yamani, 2008).

Bride price figures into polygamous marriages for another reason: alliances. Polygamy in the Middle East is often related to family alliances, and many men marry a cousin so as to keep the family name intact while not having to pay a large bride price (given to the parents or guardian) or dower (given to the bride for her own use or sometimes held back to be used upon divorce) (Hoodfar, 2009; Oman, 2010; Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2005; Yamani, 2008).

The relationship between bride price and speculation in children is a concern in polygamous contexts. Tertilt (2005) notes that bride wealth is mainly a product of polygamy, whereas dowry, where the woman's family pays the man's family, is a product of monogamy (see also Maitra, 2007). Polygamy, she says, leads to speculation in children, where all children have a value not as individuals but as economic capital: a son works and carries on the family wealth; a girl has bride wealth value (Maitra, 2007).

Inheritance and Heritage

Polygamy in the Middle East is often linked to concern for inheritance and display of wealth. If a man is prosperous, the family will wish to have many heirs and continue the economic and spiritual strength of the family. Even poor families in this area seek at least one male heir. If a woman is unable to produce a male child, rather than divorce the first wife and disappoint the families and allies, a man might take another wife (Falen, 2008). Quite a few men in the families we present in Chap. 4 cited desire for male progeny as a reason for having entered into plural marriage—though in some cases, these men had already fathered a number of male children.

Wealth is measured in many ways. In this region, a large family has historically represented a good investment. A man who is able to support many wives is able to strengthen his alliances with other families; he may have many daughters with which to negotiate wealth through bride price or to cement further alliances, and his family heritage will continue through his sons. Thus, having many wives is not simply an economic consideration; it is a sign of status in the local society (Falen, 2008; Zeitzen, 2008).

Moreover, "acquiring" wives like this controls the productivity and heritage of a tribe. Not infrequently (and in a manner reminiscent of the Mormon FLDS group), older patriarchs marry young women and leave none for younger men; they thus control who marries and whose name continues (Falen, 2008; Zeitzen, 2008). The wealth and structure of the tribe is maintained within the family by the patriarchal leader. A leader's status is absorbed by a brother and the paternal family name is more the richer. The levirate system, where it exists, also adds to the wealth in this system, as a surviving brother would "inherit" the wives. This understanding crosses urban and rural lines in the Middle East and is far from simple. The succession problem of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in Saudi Arabia demonstrates the extreme complexity that some families encounter with inheritance. Abdullah is over 80 years old, has had more than 30 wives, and fathered at least 35 children. The crown is to be kept within the initial family of brothers, but it will be particularly difficult to decide upon succession once the brothers, all of them now near at least 80 years old, die (Kéchichian, 2008). Indeed, the inheritances of children of polygamous marriages often end in vicious legal battles.

Favoritism, not just money, is often at issue. Inequitable treatment of children is rife even in simpler family structures, and we shall see throughout this work that polygamy does not ease the challenge. Not infrequently, the children of a favored wife receive better treatment by the father than do the children of the other wives. As will become evident in these accounts, Islamic laws (detailed in Chap. 3) that are meant to ensure equality within the family are exceptionally difficult to enforce.

Tribal Expectations and the "Spoils of War"

In the Middle East a tribal tradition still holds sway, and the tribe continues to make hefty demands. Its leader and dominant families continue the family name and maintain power by having many children; the tribe has traditionally needed men to fight and to strengthen the tribe's heritage; it has needed women to farm and keep house and to use as bargaining chips in alliance building. Anthropologists note the problems that befall a tribe with too few men, lost through disease or war.

Women in the Middle East (as elsewhere) have historically been taken as "spoils of war"; they work and have babies that will add to the "wealth" of the victors. Certainly, the way to control the growth or demise of a tribe is through its women. The women of a vanquished tribe may either be taken to contribute to the growth of the victorious tribe or rendered unable to have children for the vanquished tribe through rape or worse. Indeed, a woman "defiled" of her chastity, made pregnant without a proper "arrangement," will no longer be a suitable candidate, in traditional societies, for a first marriage (Beswick, 2001; Clifford, 2008; Falen, 2008; White & Burton, 1988).

Sexual and Emotional Considerations

In the Middle East, subsequent wives are often married for purposes of emotional gratification. Marital compatibility figures heavily into this equation, because in this area of the world first marriages are typically arranged by parents or elders. For example, consanguineous marriages (marriage of cousins), or equally "convenient" marriages where two men marry each other's sister, or two sisters marry two brothers, often result in one or the other being emotionally dissatisfied. With highly regulated courting structures, it is often not till the wedding night that the two truly learn anything about each other (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Al-Krenawi, Slonim-Nevo, & Graham, 2006; Slonim-Nevo, Al-Krenawi, & Yuval-Shani, 2008). In Chap. 4, we shall hear the experiences of some Arab-Muslim "first" wives; Chap. 6 allows us into the lives of all eight of the wives of a single husband.

Fertility problems, too, contribute to the polygamy picture. Zeitzen (2008) writes of introducing a surrogate partner into the marriage for reproduction. Older men who are no longer fertile may, in various cultures, marry much younger women. The older man may find a young man to live with the woman until she is impregnated. That younger man is then paid as under a contract and will go on to marry his own wife, sometimes under the beneficence of the older man. Sometimes, a sterile man will demand that his wife "admit" that she has a fertility problem, and then use this admission to justify marrying another woman (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005). Of course, he is still faced with the problem of impregnation and may have to rely on an arrangement such as described above.

Short-Term Marriages and Polygamy

Both *Shia* and *Sunni* Islam legitimize short-term marriages, which vary slightly between the religions but are designed to ensure that sexual dalliances are sanctioned so that children who result from the unions are cared for. We shall read more about these marital options in Chap. 3. Of course, such arrangements are often abused, and many consider this straightforward prostitution (Labi, 2010). On a related note, Falen (2008) writes that 90–99 % of African women believe that African husbands will cheat on their wives, and so many accept polygamy as a way to at least gain some benefit from such a reality. Vilakati (2006) adds that one of the greatest problems in combatting AIDS in Swaziland is convincing men to remain monogamous (and use condoms) (see also Falen, 2008). Proponents of polygamy make pointed and negative reference to the courtesans of European history, the "left-hand marriages" of British aristocracy or, in less polite terms, the "fooling around" of all men either in front of, or behind, their wife's back (Campbell, 2009; Falen, 2008; Moore, 2009; Yamani, 2008).

A case has been made that postpartum recovery—and sexual fidelity—is enhanced by polygamous practice. Falen (2008) refers to the practice of postpartum

abstinence as prescribed under Islam and other traditions. In this arrangement, a new father may gain sexual gratification and continue his reproductive role with a second wife while the postpartum first wife recovers from childbirth and nurses. This system, it is put forth, will help to prevent extramarital relationships. Many cultures incorporate strong postpartum sex taboos (Butt, 2010; Lee, 1979), and polygamous practice in this case can be understood as helping the first wife through the first months of being a new mother. Polygamy, Lee (1979) points out, allows the "children of one family to be more proximate, in terms of chronological spacing, without threatening one another's survival as severely since they are dependent upon different mothers" (p. 71).

Religious, Legal, and Political Considerations

We shall explore Islam and polygamy in more detail in Chap. 3. For now, we shall place polygamy within a general historical, religious, political, and legal perspective.

While Islam is often thought of as the sole religion that justifies polygamy, many religions and spiritual paths incorporate precedents for its practice.

Christianity

Though polygamists figure in the Old Testament shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and Solomon), some Christian scholars have written strongly against the practice. For example, by 420 A.D., Saint Augustine had condemned polygamy (Alexandre, 2007). Polygamy continued to be practiced, however, in medieval Christian Europe.

Many Christians take the figures of Adam and Eve in the Bible as an affirmation of monogamy as well as a repudiation of homosexuality (Armstrong, 1993). However, Falen (2008) discusses how Christian missionaries during the African colonialist period presented a romantic view of love and used the ideas of Christianity to designate nonconformers as "uncivilized." Christianity became popular first amongst indigenous women, who believed that it afforded them rights not otherwise available to them. The Christian missionaries understood this to be a repudiation of, among other things, polygamous practices (which it may have been). Conversion was also the ticket to education and to status among those aspiring to be part of the new economies. In this process, however, traditional ways of life were lost (Achebe, 1959/1994; Powell, 2008). Christianity and polygamy still do battle in some African communities with the result being either a return to traditional practice or the arising of new churches which espouse Christianity while allowing polygamy (Clarke, 2006; Falen, 2008). As mentioned, many in these groups refer to the "European hypocrisy" of preaching monogamy while chasing mistresses (Falen, p. 54).

In North America, the original Christian leader of the new Mormon Church claimed that his revelations revealed that polygamy provided a gateway to heaven. In this view, as the ties of family transcended the boundaries to heaven, a family should be as large as possible so as to gain as much access to heaven as possible, or to pass as much of heaven on to as many as possible. The creation of ideal families on earth was understood to be practical, in the sense that the wisest men of the society were to procreate with as many women as necessary to develop a family of healthy, strong individuals to contribute to and to maintain heavenly ties. Women would become sisters and wives to each other as well in an idyllic situation where all would care for each other and the children. Women could leave one marriage and move to another, and, of course, all marriages were to be sanctioned under the domain of the elders of the church and the family. In practice, this did indeed leave some men without wives for some time, as some men were favored over others. Women were supposed to have a say in marital choices, and could, in essence, work their way up to more prestigious families through remarrying. The official Mormon Church has repudiated polygamy, due, some admit, to strong legal threats made by state and federal governments. As mentioned earlier, many still recognize the legitimacy of the community of believers over that of the state; some fundamentalist elements broke away and formed communities mainly in the Midwestern agricultural parts of the USA and Canada (Harmer-Dionne, 1994; Turley, 2011).

We have already referred to the clash between African spiritual and cultural heritage and Christianity. It is possible that this is why Islam was welcomed over Christianity in some African countries—though African traditions do not seem to have drawn a limit to the number of wives allowed a man. "Christian church used by missionaries [to define]… us and them… The civilized versus the uncivilized…," also helped women from being used as chattels, stemming off beatings, random divorce, etc.; thus, women used Christianity "…for shelter from arranged marriage or sexual competition…" (Falen, 2008, p. 55). Islam both provided rights for women (at least comparatively speaking) and [still] allowed polygamy (Armstrong, 1993; Beswick, 2001).

Polygamy was permitted in some African Christian churches because missionaries and their successors had tremendous difficulty establishing monogamy as a prerequisite for entering the church (Clarke, 2006; Falen, 2008). Since women were often first to join the church, some felt it unfair to demand she confront or repudiate her polygamous husband before becoming part of the congregation. How could the church hope to gain to male converts if they required such a dramatic change first? Chinua Achebe's landmark book *Things Fall Apart* explores and politicizes this dichotomy between the loss of old ways of life and the introduction of new (Achebe, 1959/1994; Clarke, 2006; Kustenbauder, 2008). According to Falen (2008), there may be over 8,000 churches that are independent of the traditional Christian churches preaching monogamy (p. 56). "At a time when the hegemony of western missionary Christianity stifled the African personality and undermined their cultural expressions and selfhood," says Clarke (2006), "their

message of native effort, self-reliance, independence, and self-respect rang loud in the ears of Ghanaians" (p. 5). The Musama Disco Christo Church, a very large prophetic church in Ghana which permits polygamy, maintains a presence in the USA and London to serve its Ghanaian expatriates and others in the USA; it does not necessarily promote polygamy in North America, but does demonstrate how polygamy may exist "under the radar" in many countries (Falen, 2008; Musama Disco Christo Church, Ghana).

Islam

According to Islamic law, a man may be married to up to four wives at any given time, provided that he supports them financially in an equitable manner.

Mohammed addressed many issues of human relationships in his prophecies (Armstrong, 2002). While Christians, Jews, and others believed in the single God of the Old Testament, many believers around him and in his own tribe were followers of more fractured mythologies and beliefs. It is surmised, then, that Mohammed felt a calling to correct a number of misbeliefs and injustices which he felt were detrimental to social relations. Polygamy already existed by this time, and, as we shall see again and again in these types of situations, women were the first to *surrender* (a loose translation of the word *Islam*) to Mohammed and Islam, as it seemed to provide them with more rights than they were used to under the (then) current system (Al-Hibri, 1997; Armstrong, 2002). Below, we note the debate over whether Mohammed attempted to help vulnerable widowed women, and otherwise regulate polygamous practice to such an extent that it would eventually end because it was not viable or just (see Bala, 2009).

Judaism

According to the Jewish Encyclopedia (1906), monogamy represented the "ideal state of human society" from the point of view of the author of Genesis. It notes that the biblical forefathers who engaged in polygamy had to be either "cajoled or tricked" into the practice, and that there is no biblical evidence that any of the prophets practiced polygamy. Indeed, these same prophets used the metaphor of monogamy to describe the ideal union of God and the Jews, and the image of polygamy as the opposite.

The Jewish Encyclopedia goes on to note that while Mosaic law permits polygamy with many provisions (though the High Priest was allowed to marry only one wife), there is strong evidence of Rabbinic aversion to the practice; we are not told of a single rabbi named in the Talmud who engaged in polygamy.

Rabbi Gershom ben Judah (960–1028) enacted an edict prohibiting polygamy, and this prohibition was accepted by the Jews living in Northern France and

Germany. While Jews in Arab regions continued to practice polygamy, even there monogamy became the rule for them. Interestingly, in places in which polygamy was common in the general society, the Jewish marriage contract was amended to include a condition that the groom agreed to refrain from practicing polygamy (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906).

Other Religious and Spiritual Interpretations

The polyandry practiced in parts of India and Tibet is often associated with the Hindu verses in the *Mahabharata*, an epic story referred to by some as the Hindu bible (Berreman, 1962; Blumberg, 1991), "which tells of the exploits of the five Pandava brothers and their common wife Draupadi" (Berreman, 1962, p. 67). The groups who practice polyandry often claim intimate associations between themselves and the deities of this epic. However, others refer to this culture as an irrelevant fossil from the time period ruled by the Mahabharata (Berreman, 1962). The Indian government does not recognize the legitimacy of polygamy in any form. The USA has also faced challenges in this area. The polygamous practices of some Native American people and the uneasy allowances made for these practices are an example (Strasser, 2010). The Hmong, recruited by the CIA during the Vietnam War and brought to live in the USA, practice polygamy (Zeitzen, 2008), and we have already mentioned the growing Muslim polygamous practice in North America.

As noted above, polygamy is an anthropological phenomenon that has been either accommodated or spurned by religious doctrine, and the philosophical justifications or condemnations for it have come under intense contemporary scrutiny. Human freedom and equality of rights are the issues that drive most controversies about polygamy.

Some predominantly Muslim countries like Tunisia and Turkey have banned polygamy because they have concluded that women in polygamous relationships are treated by their husband in an inequitable manner (Alexandre, 2007; Welchman, 2007), while other countries struggle with regulations. Courts in Mauritius and India, who have other strong religious and cultural communities, reject the argument that a ban on polygamy is discriminatory or violates the freedom of religion (Bala, 2009, pp. 179–180.) However, where the practice of polygamy is recognized as a legitimate religious expression, countries find it very difficult to pass laws that regulate it. Some religious leaders go so far as to argue that regulating polygamy should not even be considered under the domain of civil society. This is true in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand (Bao, 2008; Kamaruddin & Abdullah, 2008; Nurlaelawati, 2010; Zeitzen, 2008). In Indonesia, Butt (2010) writes, "In relation to the philosophy of Pancasila, national law must guarantee the integrity of the ideology and the integration of the nation, and develop religious tolerance based on justice and civility… the national consensus, not the *Qur'an*, is the highest law" w(p. 298). Malaysia, South Africa, and some of the Arab countries have similar rules (Zeitzen, 2008). It will be interesting to see how these issues are dealt with in countries with new governments (e.g., Egypt).

There is a growing acceptance even among people who supported polygamy that the psychosocial realities that result of the practice constitute violations of international human rights laws (Bala, 2009, p. 211). Rusin (2012) points out that the efforts by some Muslims in North America and Europe to prove that the relaxation of rules regarding same sex marriages demand a relaxation of laws against polygamous marriages seem to be futile. When talking about Islam, Profanter and Cate (2009) suggest that "…conditions associated with historically gender-segregated inequalities are not based on Islamic foundations but are often the result of unchanged, traditional structures that support patriarchal, male-dominated societies" (p. 228). Many Islamic scholars now refute the need or even the justification for polygamy in the texts of the Qur'an and the hadiths (Nurlaelawati, 2010).

Political and Personal Rights

Polygamy is currently being used as a political statement—a reawakening of cultural identity, especially in postcolonial situations. Further, as the practice strays from economic necessity, polygamy is becoming an assertion of individual rights. Justifications are usually made under the guise of religious and cultural mandates.

The Nigerian musician, Fela Kuti, provides a colorful example. Kuti, in defiance of his mother's women's rights activism and his father's Christian clerical background, married—as per his tribal tradition—27 women in a single ceremony conducted by a Yoruba priest. Kuti orchestrated the ceremony in conscious and vocal defiance of colonial vestiges in Nigeria and to promote his own image as a type of spiritual leader. He suggested that all men want more than one woman and reiterated the hypocrisy of European morality:

> "A man goes for many women in the first place," Fela said later, defending his polygamy. "Like in Europe, when a man is married, when the wife is sleeping, he goes out… he should bring the women in the house, man, to live with him, and stop running around the streets. (Babcock, 1999)

South Africa's president Jacob Zuma married his sixth wife on April 20, 2012, happily "bucking the trend towards monogamy" (The Economist, 2012). Penelope Andrews' work (2007) records the precarious way in which:

> "South African law, European in origin, had to incorporate the laws and institutions of indigenous communities within the national legal framework, as part of the overall transformative legal project underway in the country since 1994" (p. 1).

A flamboyant figure in South Africa, the Telegraph in London reminded us that Zuma now has only four wives because "he divorced the now Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in 1998 while another wife, Kate Zuma, committed suicide in 2000, after writing a letter in which she described their union as "24 years of hell" (Laing, 2012, p. 1). Recognition of polygamy is addressed by Amien (2006), who discusses the South African court system and how it must deal with the burgeoning of tribal traditional primacies over the apartheid, and thus colonial, system of human rights.

It has been argued that polygamy is growing amongst the Bedouin in Israel as a form of cultural resistance to Israeli law (Abu Rabia, 2011). Others agree that polygamy is being used by tribal leaders as a form of cultural resistance, but hold that this resistance is to encroaching modernization rather than to state hegemony. Further, these researchers note that human rights groups in the Israeli-Arab sector tend to aim their criticism at those responsible for enforcement while ignoring the part played by tribal leaders in perpetuation of polygamy (Lapidot-Firilla & Elhadad, 2005). Indeed, our model for intervention described in Chap. 6 takes full advantage of the influence of these tribal authorities.

Polygamy is growing in France, the UK, and the USA, mainly among Muslim people. While it is against the law in all of these countries:

> For a time a number of Western European countries had open immigration policies for polygamist families, but they changed these policies after it became clear that there are serious social problems and costs associated with this family structure. These countries are now struggling to deal with the problems of significant polygamous populations while trying to prevent more of this type of immigration. (Bala, 2009, p. 169)

Since *Sharia* law trumps civil law for many Muslims, it is difficult to regulate such situations. Theirs are religiously sanctioned marriages which they hold do not need civil recognition. Thus, the practice can also take on a form of defiance and identity-confirmation: an affirmation that Muslims have the right to practice all aspects of their religion; however, they interpret it (Bala, 2009). When governments paint polygamy as an irresponsible practice, things get even hotter. For example, Selby (2012) cites statements made by French government officials during the Paris suburb riots of 2005 referring to poorly controlled children of polygamous families being some of the main perpetrators of the violence. This unfounded assessment, which demonized the relatively few (perhaps 40,000) polygamous families in France, angered many immigrants.

The practice of polygamy often exists, then, without state sanction. Conflict arises when the legitimacy of a secular state to regulate religious, tribal, or cultural traditions is put into question; some insist that secularism should protect all individual rights and not outlaw any (Bala, 2009; Federman, 2012; MacQueen, 2010). In this vein, it is argued (even in some Western countries such as Canada) that polygamy should be permitted, so as to protect the rights of all citizens—especially women and children—by bringing the practice out into the open (Bala, 2009; Campbell, 2009; Falen, 2008). Many Muslims (especially Muslim women) and other citizens are demanding that states resolutely ensure that this religious indulgence does not lead to mistreatment and victimization of those women (Abu-Odeh, 2004; Welchman, 2007).

Criminalization and Politics: Defining the Problems

Historically, women and children have depended upon men for financial support and have been vulnerable because of the risk of desertion. Abandonment is possible

for any number of reasons: infertility, loss of love or the finding of a new love, irresponsibility or death of the male, etc. Family laws are an attempt to protect ourselves from those who fail to fulfill proper marital duties or responsibilities. Thus, a marriage ceremony usually recognizes mutual commitments. Often it is conducted publically, requires a license of some kind, and involves similar formalities for annulment or divorce. There are economic arrangements, and the recognition of inheritance rights and responsibility for the upbringing of children.

Marriage agreements laying out certain rules and rights have existed for millennia. Legal problems of inheritance and support can be particularly knotty in polygamous households. When discussing Native American politics and law, Klein (2010) presents the concern:

> But while it is one thing to endorse marriage freedom, as a matter of principle, it is quite another actually to implement it in law. If people could simultaneously have more than one spouse, the lawyer must ask, how would things actually work, from a marital property perspective? What would happen when someone died or got divorced? A community property state that recognized plural marriage would need to adopt new rules for the division of marital property upon the death or divorce of a multiply married person, and the creation of suitable new rules requires not just minor changes of law, but the introduction of new marital property concepts. (p. 33)

Marital rules take myriad forms, and no agreement is free of flaws or potential for abuse. Campbell (2009) warns against casting Bountiful, Canada's polygamist community, as wholly misogynistic, in as much as it can function as an example of an alternative to monogamy gone wrong (p. 190). Bala (2009) takes a different view, one that highlights—as we do in this volume—the psychosocial impact of polygamy:

> [polygamy is]…a particular type of chosen behavior that is prohibited by law because of its harmful effects on women and children, and its inconsistency with the fundamental equality of men and women recognized in Canada. Prohibiting polygamy does not discriminate against individuals based on certain inherent characteristics, but rather *proscribes* (italics added by author) certain behavior. (p. 214)

Recent publicity regarding Bountiful has served to highlight worldwide legal challenges. It pitted the idea of constitutional freedoms—especially as espoused by the West, perceived as being more individualistically oriented—against religious imperatives. This case was watched internationally, and a review of the viewpoints that were represented helps to illustrate the diversity of objections to and justifications for its criminalization.

> Affidavits filed by James Oler and Winston Blackmore, who each lead congregations of about 400 fundamentalist Mormons in Bountiful, claim the law violates their constitutional rights. Blackmore, alleged to have at least 19 wives and 100 children, calls the law an "unjustifiable infringement of my congregation's and my religious freedom". (MacQueen, 2010, p. 20)

Criminalizing the practice of polygamy means pitting laws that attempt to modify behavior against the principle that people should be free to fulfill all aspects of their spiritual and cultural desires.

Rabia (2011) writes that most reformers have concluded that "…the threat of injustice will exist in nearly all cases of polygamy…" (p. 36). Most of the participants in our study described in Chap. 4—even in the high-functioning families—accepted polygamy for functional reasons, often because of the perceived futility in resisting (see also Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al-Gharaibeh, 2011). Further, we found, overall, a marked absence of tenderness between a man and his first wife. Marital justice is understood by the *Qur'an* by implying both economics and emotional commitment which, it says, the latter is probably impossible to attain in plural marriage. We have found that polygamy often represents an attempt to *mend mistakes* made in the formation of the first marriage—a repudiation of the concept of justice even for conservative scholars who see marriage as a place to set "communal peace above sensual pleasures" (Profanter & Cate, 2009, p. 226). Profanter and Cate (2009) summarize the argument:

> Condition 1: One who is able to be just and fair among women may marry up to four wives. Condition 2: One cannot be just and fair among women. Conclusion 3: One who is unable to be just and fair among women may marry only one.

Many scholars believe that "the Qur'an expressly states that polygamy results in injustice" (Al-Hibri, 2000–2001, p. 59). Chaudhry (1993) explained, although the concept of justice that is used in these two verses is not clearly defined in the Qur'an, the commentators of the Qur'an "unanimously" interpret justice—in this context—to mean equal treatment in respect to food, clothing, and housing (p. 277; See also Abu-Rabia, 2011).

It is this type of just practice that is pursued to some degree in Iran and Morocco, as well as in Indonesia, where the courts are determined to prove at least economic viability but also show an interest in the problem of shared affection—as illustrated by the rule that second marriages may only take place after permission has been granted by the first wife (Nurlaelawati, 2010, p. 104).

Women who support polygamy in situations where, for example, there are many more women than men, also refer to justice.

Parliament member Nada Ibrahim supports the idea of polygamous marriage in principle—as long as a husband treats his wives with justice. She also believes that the government should provide more support for the war widows. "Widows are often young and don't have jobs, health insurance or social security. We shouldn't encourage them only to get married," she told the BBC.

On the other hand, Hana Edwar of the Amal charity strongly opposes polygamous marriage. "It's about women's dignity," she said. "Women need to be educated about their rights" (The International Business Times, 2011).

Though recognizing that most women in polygamous relationships suffer, Khasawneh, Hijazi, and Salman (2011a, 2011b) are hesitant to condemn the practice outright as they recognize its complexity:

> The reason for not prohibiting polygamy emphatically is that there are certain circumstances which face individuals and societies in diverse places and at different periods which construct the limited practice of polygamy a healthier resolution than either separation or the hypocritical pretence of decency… (p. 585).

Polygamy Is Harmful to Women and Children…

However, research is mounting that women are more often improperly treated, and therefore suffer more, in polygamous marriages compared to monogamous marriages (Abu-Rabia, 2011; Al-Krenawi and Graham, 2006; Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al-Krenawi, 1997; Al-Krenawi et al., 2002; Beswick, 2001). Women in polygamous marriages may be considered by their families hapless victims, unentitled, and unworthy. They can feel cheated, bullied, powerless, and condemned. The women in these households frequently experience psychosocial problems that extend easily to their children—especially those who are in poor, low-functioning family situations. "Polygamy is associated with poor emotional and educational outcomes for children and children of different wives are often treated unequally" (Bala, 2009, pp. 189–190).

White and Burton (1988) write that in every way possible the position of a woman in a polygamous relationship is stratified in relation to someone else:

> The economic model of polygyny views it as having benign effects on the status of women. In that view, polygyny exists in societies where women make high subsistence contributions, particularly to agriculture… our findings provide some support for this model, but give stronger support to a model wherein polygyny is seen as associated with the expansion of male-oriented kin groups through favorable environments, facilitated by capture of women or bridewealth via warfare. Following this analysis, it is difficult to see polygyny as having benign effects upon the lives of all women… while women as well as men may seek greater advantage from polygyny; its main effect is to stratify women as well as men. (p. 864)

Objectors (of every stripe) to polygamy claim that because girls are forced to enter these arrangements, abuse and exploitation of women and children is easily overlooked. Labidoat-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) quote Ben David's (2004) position that after the 1999 outbreak of the second *intifada* (uprising) in Israel, citizenship-holding, relatively affluent Bedouin were able to marry girls and women from the poverty-ridden Palestinian Authority. An Arab-American scholar Hassouneh-Phillips (2001) in her study on abused American Muslim women relates the story of a participant: "I divorced him when he tried to marry my sister who was my ward. And she was 13. And he told me that this would be really good because my sister liked him" (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001, p. 742). Extremely problematically, women are often forced or tricked into polygamous marriages. One Arab woman reported:

> My husband cheated me. He told me that his wife is handicapped and cannot fulfill his needs, but after I married him I discovered that she is pretty and has sons and daughters. Now, what can I do? I saw her one month after my wedding and almost went crazy. But what could I do? Go back to my parents? You know we are a cruel society and no one will marry a divorced woman (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 321).

However, the prohibition of polygamy is fraught with risk. The fear of ostracizing and derogating of women who are in polygamous relationships, a grave concern in Africa, is of similar concern in Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. Especially, where polygamy may be driven underground, women can be left behind with little or no support (Butt, 2010; Campbell, 2009; Falen, 2008;

Kustenbauder, 2008). In countries such as Benin, 30 % of the population may practice polygamy, but as the law recognizes only monogamous marriages, a massive number of women are at risk of losing rights of support from their husbands, or his estate (Falen, 2008). Bala (2009) suggests that prosecution should be reserved for cases that involve coercion or marriage of minors, and that the courts should grant women leaving polygamous relationships the relief that would be offered to an unmarried cohabitant (p. 217).

In Canada, a concern has been articulated that the proscription of polygamy is based on a limited viewpoint that marginalizes women who may accept—and even promote—the practice (Campbell, 2009; MacQueen, 2010). Legislators are in the difficult position of determining whether a given woman legitimately appreciates her polygamous marriage or is being coerced into saying so. This argument questions the harm entailed if a woman agrees to admit another woman to the family to relieve her stress or even provide friendship (Beswick, 2001; Falen, 2008). Though Bala (2009) warns that interviewees in such investigations can be handpicked, the reports of many polygamous women in Bountiful refute the terror that other wives and outsiders claim exists within the community (see also Campbell, 2009). Similarly, many of Fela Kuti's wives reported that they felt honored to be part of the large family of such a charismatic man (Moore, 2009). For many, the prerogatives and demands of the family may override individual choice (Campbell, 2009, p. 195). Assistance in raising children, being supported financially when a husband is lost or divorced, and passing unwanted marital duties off to others are some of the many theoretical advantages to polygamy (Campbell, 2009; Sa`ar, 2007). Some women seem to manage well in some polygamous households; in Saudi Arabia, for example, women in polygamous marriages have the right to accumulate wealth and are given a sum of money by the husband, upon marriage, to use as they see fit (Yamani, 2008).

Tertilt (2005) offers an ironic counterpoint to this argument by suggesting that the wishes of women could be better determined if women's rights were upheld in the countries where polygamy is legal. Noting that anti-polygamy laws do not work particularly well, she claims that if women in these regions were allowed more decisive roles and were less dependent upon men for their financial security, polygamy would die out naturally. On a related note, Yamani (2008) found that, typically, Arab women do not work (out of the home), do not accumulate wealth, are forced to give some or all of their bride money to their families, and are regulated in other ways that ensure that they remain dependent upon men.

Bala (2009) suggested that women enter these situations because they are indoctrinated to believe that it is acceptable and that they have little choice. About Bountiful, he wrote: "Further, indoctrination in childhood determines a life course: through their education and upbringing, girls are prepared to be wives in polygamous marriages, and to "be sweet," that is accepting of domination by their husbands and their church" (p. 193). And Abu al-Asal (2010) found a similar sense of polygamous life-course expectation for Palestinian women: "…women in society have not adopted a critical stance towards the prevailing reading of religious doctrine which legitimizes polygamy, or have entertained the possibility of challenging it" (p. 11).

Summarizing the Bedouin communal sense of helplessness regarding polygamy, Slonim-Nevo et al. (2008) write:

> Those who argue against polygyny are uncertain about how to respond to it. Some cite education and time as the solution. Others feel helpless and hope that change will come from without. A few express ambivalence, and state that they are powerless to produce change. While they recognize the harmful aspects of the practice and say they would choose differently, they cannot see how it is possible to contest the powerful forces of the society. In a community in which the woman's role is to be married and a mother, polygyny may be preferable to remaining single, despite the hardships that accompany it. Perhaps, they say, it is better to learn how to live with it. (p. 205)

We shall see in Chaps. 4 and 6 how pervasive and far-reaching this feeling of helplessness can be.

…And Even Men

Finally—and importantly—the little research we have on the topic indicates that many polygamous men themselves suffer from their polygamous choices, as they find that their household situation is, in fact, unmanageable. They experience guilt, especially when they have been pushed by their families—despite their poverty—to marry multiple times, and they realize that they cannot meet religious and emotional demands or take proper care of their children (Al-Krenawi et al., 2006; Profanter & Cate, 2009). Profanter and Cate (2009) suggested that a polygamous (Muslim) husband would have difficulty behaving in an equitable manner to multiple wives (p. 255). Interestingly, these researchers found that while many men believed that they generally behaved in a fair manner, and thus should be allowed to marry as they pleased (p. 231), 27.4 % of the men conceded that they were unable to provide marital equality to their wives, and even more acknowledged that jealously and compatibility was a problem. The researchers noted that their statistics might have been skewed, as many men admitted as well that they feared personal and spiritual repercussions for divulging the truth about this issue (p. 238). Additionally, researchers have broached the idea that polygamy allows men to "evade difficulties encountered in married life" (Abu al-Asal, 2010, p. 6) with a subsequent deterioration in marital intimacy and loss of opportunity for personal growth (Al-Krenawi & Lev-Weisel, 2002).

Social pressure to enter into polygamous marriages can be very burdensome to men. If the number of family members amplifies one's honor and influence (Al-Krenawi, 1998, 2000, 2001), the social and psychological implications of polygamy associated with power and prestige may trump the economic disadvantages of supporting multiple households (Kressel, 1976; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2008). On the other hand, there exists the very real problem of younger men finding themselves without wives. In Bountiful, according to Bala (2009), "some of these young men have left their communities because they do not want to participate in plural marriages, but it is clear that significant numbers of adolescent and young males are

effectively being forced to leave Fundamentalist Mormon communities to ensure the "chosen" men have multiple wives" (p. 192). This echoes the situation in the Inuit population and various African populations (Zeitzen, 2008).

Ambiguous Laws

Differential morality judgments placed on monogamous men who have extramarital sexual relationships versus those who engage in openly polygamous marital relations have been questioned. Philips and Jones in *Polygamy in Islam* (2005) ask "why a male dominated society should be so opposed to polygyny when such a large number of its married members practice a form of it by engaging in illicit or casual relationships[?]"(p. 16). Indeed, modern polygamists speak of what they see as the morality inherent to the polygamous commitment to emotional and financial support of women and children. In support of this notion, Bala (2009) refers to marital laws on inheritance and responsibility and highlights that children are an expected part of the polygamous union (pp. 189–190). Researchers such as Labidoat-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) reject this line of reasoning as patriarchal and sophistic (p. 14).

In a similar fashion, the claim has been made that anti-polygamy laws are ambiguous and can wrongfully affect other forms of sexual preference that should not be outlawed. For example, *polyamorous* relationships that are not traditional marriages and not monogamous common-law marriages are found in a number of Western countries. In other words, it could almost be considered a de facto polygamous (or polyandrous, or group) marriage not recognized by law but a commitment of willing partners. If the law recognizes common-law marriages, then polyamorous marriages should be considered equally legitimate because they, too, represent a natural, social relationship—particularly if same-sex marriage is considered valid. However, people who practice a polyamorous lifestyle do not discuss this argument openly for fear that their relationship will be targeted by laws against polygamy (Bala, 2009; Bernhardt, 2009; Canadian Press, 2011; MacQueen, 2010).

A view has been put forth that polygamy and same-sex marriage should be on the same legal footing. This argument is rejected by those who say that laws permitting same-sex marriage have to do with legally granting equality to a relationship with two equally caring individuals with equal rights, whereas laws against polygamy are about trying to ensure equality for those who would not have otherwise enjoyed them in a given (polygamous) relationship (Bala, 2009; MacQueen, 2010). Bala (2009) continues that:

> …same-sex marriages serve many of the same social, economic and psychological functions as traditional opposite sex monogamous marriages, and there is no evidence that the legal recognition of these relationships is harmful. Recognition of same-sex marriage has promoted equality (p. 178).

Of course, this suggests that polygamy has been seen as harmful and so Bala reiterates that it should not be legally sanctioned.

"Imported" Laws Lack Validity

Finally, to recall some of the political arguments for the practice of polygamy, the case of South Africa demonstrates the challenge of rectifying exclusionary colonial laws by creating a constitution that recognizes in a formal manner a wide gamut of opinions. A case can be made that regions whose local inhabitants have not had a chance to develop their politics must give wide berth to all religious aspirations (while acknowledging that this freedom may marginalize women).

Similar issues have come up in North America, where the US government has had to address polygamous marriages amongst Native American tribes. The courts have needed to exercise flexibility to recognize different property rights and other variations in mainstream federal and state laws. Strasser tells us that, "As a general matter, courts have held that Native American marriages established in accord with tribal customs and usages were valid…" (Strasser, 2010, pp. 211–212).

Canada did its best to outlaw polygamous practice among its indigenous people. Carter (2008) recounts a judge's observation that would make native people in any country object:

> "Judge Alexander Cross found 'the relations of male and female in savage life' to form 'a striking contrast' to his own idealized version of marriage in a 'civilized' or Christian country. The contrasts were so marked, that Cross found he could not regard this as marriage at all, but rather as 'concubinage'" (p. 104).

There are incendiary and divisive expressions on all sides of the argument over the legitimacy and regulation of polygamy. More recently, the website of the Stop Polygamy in Canada Society quoted Canadian Chief Justice Robert Bauman saying that:

> …the harms associated with the practice [of polygamy] are endemic; they are inherent" and that the harms found in polygamous societies "are not simply the product of individual conduct; they arise inevitably out of the practice (Stop Polygamy in Canada Society, 2013).

The Chief Justice concluded: "There is no such thing as so-called 'good polygamy'" (Stop Polygamy in Canada Society, 2013). Philips and Jones (2005) would vehemently disagree:

> A strong family structure is an absolute requirement for a strong and healthy society. And, the only way that the family can remain strong and society cater to the needs of its male and female members is through the Islamic form of marriage of which polygyny is a part (p. 18).

Many jurists have found that deciding where to draw the culturally sensitive legislative line is difficult in the extreme.

The Future of Polygamy

Some scholars believe that polygamy will not last, or will become an indulgence, practiced like *polyamorous* relationships, or only by those who insist on its religious relevance. However, polygamy is nothing if not protean. As society becomes more

complex and urbanized, the justifications for polygamy are evolving and changing focus. Informal polygamy ("outside wife" and "sugar daddy" unions) is very much on the rise in urban Africa (Zeitzen, 2008), and all over the world, the act of having more than one wife is turning into a statement of self-determination.

Two distinct pictures emerge. On the one hand we have Alsanea's (2007) example of changing attitudes in the hugely popular *Girls of Riyadh*. In it, one of the Saudi Arabian heroines falls in love with a Saudi Arabian man in London. He is sophisticated and charming in London, but she is startled to learn that, upon his return to Saudi Arabia, he feels forced to marry someone else as his first wife. Almost immediately after his first marriage, the man asks the heroine to become his second, more favored, wife. She refuses. In both the book's message and personal interviews, the author puts forth the idea that both men and women in Saudi Arabia are becoming disillusioned with having marital and other personal affairs so tightly controlled by others (Alsanea, 2007; Macloed, 2007).

These contemporary dramas can cut both ways, though. We hear the Palestinian women in Al-Krenawi's (2009) study bitterly citing modern television dramas in which polygamous households are depicted as wealthy, happy, and run in an equitable fashion. The women in the study reported that their polygamous husbands threw these fantasized images in their faces, accusing them of not living up to the media standard.

The future of polygamy, then, is far from clear. As what's past is prologue (at least according to Shakespeare in "The Tempest"), we will, in the next chapter, take a step back and take a brief look at Arab history, with an eye toward understanding contemporary Arab family life. Perhaps in this history we will find hints that we may use to shape that future.

Chapter 2
Context and Change: The Structure of Arab Society

Abstract This chapter is a review of the history of Islam as well as the different groups of people within the Arab world. The only real tie in all the fractious groups is the language in which they communicate.

Tribal allegiances are of the utmost importance, from which comes the legacy of maintaining family as the unit of strength perpetuating the strength of the whole.

The history of the Arab tribes, the onslaught of Islam and the *fitnas* lead to disagreements and isolationism between the various groups, closed and fearful of foreign influences.

Being a society, closed to these foreign influences raises many issues related to government, economics, and education.

The chapter continues with a description of gender roles primary to this society that affect the way of life including modes of marriage, familial hierarchy, familial obligations, and more. These familial placements have bearing on multifamily households to be discussed further.

Section 1: Geography, Language, and History

The Tribal Tradition

The Middle East, and particularly the Arabian Peninsula, has always been home to a number of different groups of people. Though the people in Saudi Arabia might be considered among the original Arabs, we see differences between those of the high cities of Al-Abha or Tabuk, and those in the valleys of Mecca and Jizan or Jeddah, or those in the relatively new city of Riyadh where King Abdul Aziz bin Saud set up his capital upon conquering the last holdout in the central valley. Each of these cities, and the endless smaller towns in this huge country, including ancient towns such as Ha'il and Unaizah in the north center, and Medina in the hills nearer to the Red Sea, are like enclaves onto themselves. They are perched on hills or

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settled into valleys or oases. Their longevity is related to the determination of its residents to conquer the elements and protect their gains from outsiders. Saudi Arabia is now divided into many states which represent, in a way, the divisions of old; all of these kingdoms and territories and principalities had to be wooed or conquered again when Abdul Aziz bin Saud formed his kingdom between 1902 and 1932. To do so, he renewed his affiliations but also had tribulations with one of the most fundamental Islamic sects from his homeland—the Wahhabi of north central Arabia. By this time, the Wahhabi had their own religious army, coupled with the religious Muttawa police to ensure religious compliance (Commins, 2006). The precarious relations between the tribes, the royal family, the religious interpreters, and the economic realities of the region still challenge the strength of the Saudi union; the fear of losing control still great (Kéchichian, 2008; Mill, 2008).

We shall see how important tribal allegiances became as we view the challenging environmental heritage of isolation, scarcity, and severe climate; cooperation amongst people was crucial for survival and the protection of resources from others (Dwairy et al., 2006).

Geertz (2009) and Whitaker (2011) suggest that a person from these backgrounds would have been trained to engage in constant negotiation, and Goldschmidt and Davidson (2006) note that such a harsh environment would have necessitated banding together, and then further banding into larger groupings bent on survival: The Arab people of the south were:

> …organized into clans and tribes, extended families that migrated together and held their property in common. Significantly, the tribes protected their members against other nomads and the settled peoples. The Arabs were belligerent and zealous in defending their honor, on which their freedom depended… Tests of strength, such as raids and skirmishes, were common. Each tribe was governed by a council of adult men who represented the various clans or smaller family groupings. The council chose a shaykh (elder), usually the member of the tribe most respected for his bravery and generosity, except in a few tribes where the leadership was hereditary. The council decided on questions of waging war or making peace, inasmuch as the tribe increased its meager income by raiding other tribes and "protecting" the commercial caravans that plied between Syria and the Indian Ocean. (p. 21)

These people penetrated the foreboding climates and the long distances between oases and mountain streams on camels: that unique animal capable of carrying people and possessions across the desert with very little need for water and food (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006). Thus, they could move from one isolated place to another and, as we describe in a moment, eventually populate all of the Arabian Peninsula, most of the Fertile Crescent around the Mediterranean, and eventually the Mediterranean coastline of North Africa.

Through this tribal condition comes the legacy of maintaining the family as the smaller unit of strength that perpetuated the strength of the whole (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005). Such strong allegiances and dependencies have remained in many parts of the Middle East, despite the variances of interpretation and socioeconomic changes that have taken place. Many suggest that this background has shaped the ideas of individuality more than any religious or other principles that were introduced later; even the ideas of collectivity have simply imprinted themselves from simple tribal lines to more universal communities: seen in Islamic universal *ummah*

alongside Christian brotherhoods and the like (Denny, 2006). Families have always not just been keepers of the faith, but keepers of the community and the people as they identify themselves (Abudabbeh, 2005; Armstrong, 1997).

Arab people are by no means a homogeneous group. People and tribes moved between these lands in an effort to survive and, of course, to exchange their riches both in material wealth and ideas; these areas were for thousands of years the center of the world of commerce, philosophy, and religion. We have already seen how the topography and the tribal legacies, what we shall refer to as high-context societies (Hall, 1976) (versus more individualistic societies) have affected the identity of many Arab persons. There is "a slower pace of societal change and a higher sense of social stability…to a considerable extent, social status, safety from economic hardship, and potential for personal development continue to be founded upon tribal identity" (Al-Krenawi, 1998).

The Hejaz: Birthplace of Islam

The history of the Arab people really starts in the area along the Eastern shore of the Red Sea, much of it known as the Hejaz and, from the 7th century, as the birthplace of Islam. It is unclear from where exactly the Arab people originated, though they are often considered one part of the general Semitic tribes (Armstrong, 2002). Similar to these tribes of Christian, Jewish, and numerous other backgrounds, many Arab people consider themselves related to the same people and prophets of the Old Testament. In any event, the Arab peoples from the Hejaz and from the city states of what is now Yemen (south coast of the peninsula) were conquering and populating parts of Arabia and Ethiopia well before Mohammed had his revelation in about 610. These city states of Yemen had not only developed productive farming techniques watered by the lush hillside stream of the mountains between them and the desert to the west but also had established the first trade ties between India, East Africa, and Rome (Armstrong, 2002; Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006; Whitaker, 2009).

Mecca itself had already been well established by the 7th century and had been initially allied with the city state of Saba' (we may be familiar with stories of the famous queen of Sheba) in Yemen. While Mecca had been a relatively successful trading post, its greater importance lay in other realms; it was the center for a large poetry festival (perhaps the only great expression of art in this area), and the center of numerous pilgrimages and shrines. Poetry is considered a lasting legacy of the artistic expression of the Arabic language that developed in that region.

It is recorded that Muhammad worried about the future of his relatively successful Quraysh tribes in the regions of Mecca who had become fairly wealthy through their business dealings. However, they seemed to squander much of their wealth and there was much infighting amongst different groups. As far as Muhammad was concerned, Mecca was becoming vulnerable to outsiders; its people lacked the graciousness, charity, and cooperation which, despite current wealth, would ensure

their survival. In addition, women had very few rights, and there were many who had been left widowed, with children orphaned, by the wars that raged up and down the coast. As far as Muhammad could see, the tribe was falling prey to an individualism which was destroying the fabric of the society, and so he would encourage a brotherhood (*ummah*) that would consist of all who "surrendered" to Islam (Armstrong, 1997, p. 132. See also Armstrong, 2002; Denny, 2006).

In order to appeal to those around him, he used what he had. Here, we can already see a political aspect of the *Qur'an*. There had not been an Arabic scripture before; this *Qur'an* would be something around which the Arab people could rally. It is even suggested that the power of the original *Qur'an* is found as much in the sound of its lyrical Arabic poetry as it is in the message (Denny, 2006). Many had been worshipping one God along with a number of traditional spirits (Armstrong, 1997). Though a split was already forming with the Jewish tribes, Muhammad would adapt some of their rituals to make them more Muslim or Arabic. The fast which lasted 1 day on *Yom Kippur*, for example, would become during just the daylight hours for the one whole month of *Ramadan,* when Muhammad is said to have had his revelation. The Jewish *Shabbat* was replaced by a Friday congregational worship with a sermon; some dietary laws were altered or dropped (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006, p. 40). Meanwhile the square shrine of the Ka'bah (among others) already drew thousands of people as the mysterious house of many Arab deities, and it would now act as the symbol of Islam so that followers might feel their previous beliefs had not been quite so profoundly usurped (Armstrong, Islam, p. 10; Denny, 2006; Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006, p. 26).

The remainder of Muhammad's life was spent shoring up the power of the Arab people in the region of Mecca and Medina. Through various alliances and battles, Muhammad and his new religion would eventually form a great clan of people and a safer, wealthier environment throughout Mecca and Medina for Islam and its people. With the Hejaz now united under Islam, other tribes and clans, recognizing Muhammad's power, began sending delegations to Medina, which remained the capital of the new state. As a condition for his support, Muhammad required the tribes to accept Islam and even to pay taxes, a condition that the Quraysh tribe had never been able to impose (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006, p. 41. See also Kuran, 2012). Traditional accounts maintain that by 632 nearly all the Arab tribes were Muslim.

But Islam would not be safe from tribal politics and it is likely that only some clans, factions, or persons within each tribe actually embraced Islam. A series of *fitnas* (translated loosely as troubles, civil wars, confusions, and the like) would start with Muhammad's death and the fight over succession (Armstrong, 1997, 2002). There are still strong disagreements and isolationism between tribes and thus between Islamic factions such as Shi'a, Sunni, and Druze, and its more fundamental and occasionally violent interpretations such as Wahhabism and Salafism, as well as more artistic versions as Sufism and others (Blanchard, 2008; Commins, 2006).

In fact, these *fitnas* never truly resolved the main divide in Islam, especially between the Shi'a (followers) specifically of Ali, and Sunni after the *sunna*

(customs) of Mohammad (Armstrong, 2002). The first group followed Ali, Mohammad's supposedly appointed successor, who succeeded Uthman of the Umayyad tribes and the third Caliph (based upon the term meaning a vice-regent of the messenger of god) of Islam. The others joined Aisha, Mohammad's last wife and avenger of what was perceived to be the murder of Uthman possibly by Ali or his appointees. In fact, then, Islam split into factions early in the game (Armstrong, 2002; Commins, 2006; Denny, 2006), and though Islam did serve as a unifying force for Mohammad and for the latter imperial Caliphs of Baghdad, Ghengis Khan, the Mamluks of Egypt and the Ottomans of Turkey, the religion was understood many ways, and was, indeed, adopted by non-Arab people. Though fundamentalists and nationalists may claim that outsiders were responsible for the downfall of the Arab and the Islamic world, we should remember that there were many other religions and peoples in the region who still remain, as well as many Islamic groups who do not cooperate with each other (Armstrong, 1997; Blanchard, 2008; Uhlman, 2004).

Many Arab people look back to the Golden Age with pride (though perhaps with a romanticized view), touting how many Arab people are, and have been, great thinkers and scientists. Some Arab people will talk of visiting *Al-Andalus* (rather than Spain), and of restoring the Islamic Caliphate in Istanbul or Constantinople, though it could hardly be said that the actual Caliphate had more than a symbolic power after the Golden Age. Finally, many Arab people will refer strongly to the intrusion of the West which started not in 1798 with the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon's forces, but in 1096 with the first of a series of "Christian Crusades" which ended with the Christian forces expelling Arabs from Spain in 1492 (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006).

Religion was hardly the full cause of these wars, though they were sometimes said to be so at the time. The history of the region is one of many tribes conquering each other. Genghis Khan's forces finally sacked the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad, and future conquerors which would include Genghis Khan's Mongols and the Moghuls from India and Central Asia, and the Turkish Ottomans. Surprisingly, Mongol hordes were not beaten back from Baghdad, but from Egyptian Mamluks who then enjoyed a time of independence and freedom of philosophical thought from the more fundamental views of the north.

By the fifteenth century, the Ottoman Empire that had taken over the Muslim world bordered European nations and principalities and, while there had indeed been fighting under the guise of Christianity, there were other economic and political undercurrents. The Spanish takeover of Muslim Granada saw the beginning of the consolidation of the Ottoman conquests as they captured Syria, Egypt, Mecca, and Medina (then ruled by Egyptian Islamic Mamluks). There were also a number of battles against Vienna, as capitol of the Holy Roman Empire, with Italian provinces, and later with Russia, France, and England. The Ottoman Empire spread along the Aegean through Greece and bordered the Austrian Empire. Constantinople built on the Bosporus Straits guarded passage from the Black Sea to the Aegean. This made it difficult for Russia and the others to protect their own routes to India and beyond; the Ottomans were often in their way.

Ijtihad or Taqlid?

One point of critical contemporary interest emerges from this history of struggle and the falling back of these original Arab, Islamic empires. With the fall of Grenada, Muslim rulers reverted to more fundamental laws to ensure the loyalty of those they still ruled; they relied upon only trustworthy community leaders to collect tax and control their regions. During the Golden Age, business operations were increasing in complexity, and people needed independent thinking and reasoning to cope with such complexities (Matthews, 2004). But what was once, in relative terms, an open and dynamic society became conservative, closed and fearful of foreign influences. One of the greatest Arab historians, Ibn Khaldun, had left Spain as it was beginning to fall. He had noted the failure of many regimes throughout the North of Africa as well. He saw that decay had set into the rulers in Spain—they no longer heard the people and had lost their sense of *itjihad* (free thinking and logical induction) and, so, had been overrun (Armstrong, 2002). Muslim rulers wished to safeguard the religion from "heretic" impositions and foreign interventions; scholars and intellectuals were sternly prohibited from creative thinking and discouraged from uncovering novel solutions to emerging issues (Sidani and Thornberry, 2009, p. 38. See also Armstrong, 2002; Commins, 2006; Denny, 2006). Fear of outside forces led many Muslim scholars to extreme conservatism and as a number of historians have put it, "the gate of *ijtihad"* was "closed" (Armstrong, 2002).

Several thinkers have made interesting comments on the closing of this gate. Denny (2006) refers to the importance many Muslims place upon repetition of Islamic rituals with the purpose of getting the entire ritual correct; in other words, do, rather than think. A related issue is encouraging people to think outside of mandated guidelines. Williams (2008) suggests that we can see the intense fear that came from people possibly leaving the fold and joining opposing forces in the extreme punishment for apostasy within Islamic laws:

A significant number of contemporary Islamic jurists and scholars would say that the Qur'anic pronouncements on apostasy, which have been regarded as the ground for extreme penalties, reflect a situation in which abandoning Islam was equivalent to adopting an active stance of violent hostility to the community, so that extreme penalties could be compared to provisions in other jurisdictions for punishing spies or traitors in wartime; but that this cannot be regarded as bearing on the conditions now existing in the world. (n.p.)

Falling to the Europeans, Colonial Rule, and Islamic Nationalism

The true return to nationalism and the revival of Islam came in the 20th century in retaliation for colonial rule from Europe and, later, from the USA. While these regions were often controlled by someone from outside, there could still be the

rallying calls of being the same people in religion or language or other background. More recent history served to cement the major positions taken by many Arab people in their stance towards the West and to their own development as independent people. Says Goldschmidt and Davidson (2006): "Imperialism, revolutions, and power struggles left the Middle East torn between a failed socialist past and a legacy of hostility to Western imperialism" (p. 11. See also Sidani & Thornberry, 2009; Whitaker, 2009).

By 1798, with Ottoman strength waning, the Arab people began to see the colonizing aspirations of France and other countries that had economic designs on the Arab regions. Napoleon conquered Egypt as a grand show of France's power, and the following century saw the whittling down of Ottoman influence and the outright takeover of various parts of North Africa and the Fertile Crescent. France and England, in particular, had paid for the Suez Canal in 1869 and were prepared to maintain outright control in the region against tribes that they did not know or trust (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006; Said, 1979). Meanwhile, Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco had fallen under French Control, while Lord Kitchener made his name in the conquest of the Sudan. The Italians had just started to make their mark in Libya by 1912, 5 years before the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire came in 1917. Having already used groups of Arab peoples throughout the region to weaken the Ottoman fighters on both the European and the Middle Eastern warfronts, the English and French, in particular, could easily divide the now vanquished Empire into territories through the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 (MacMillan, 2002).

By this time, oil had captured the imagination of most Western powers, making the Suez Canal even more important. 1908 saw the most significant find of oil in Persia, but the other countries sensed it was coming soon to them and the imperial rulers wanted to be sure it would be sent to the correct places (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Held & Cummings, 2011). Despite the antagonism felt towards the colonial rulers, some positive reforms were being made in these countries that were not altogether unwelcome. The fallout began in earnest during the lead up to the Second World War, especially over the complex problems caused during Jewish immigration into the area known as Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s. There has always been a particularly complex series of demands, proclamations, and hostility on all sides of this argument; however, it was becoming especially difficult for England, who was seen as duplicitous about protecting residents of any group in this territory. This duplicity was being seen elsewhere, where developing local political groups were agitating for more recognition and control over their resources and affairs. Though the purpose of the British mandates was to groom these areas for self-rule, the ruling powers were seen as meddling and dismissive of these aspirations (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Macmillan, 2002).

Perhaps the final straw was the declaration of Israel as an independent country. From an Arab point of view, the debate now became whether the colonial rulers were supporting the Arab people or the nation that threatened to displace the Arab people in the Palestinian area (Ghanim, 2011). Amidst demands for national

recognition from all quarters, Arab people lost all trust in the European powers and felt themselves manipulated by both sides of the cold war powers who threw money at any group who seemed willing to be an ally. This sentiment grew until the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, when, according to some thinkers, Arabs from the Israeli-Palestinian area in particular escaped suppression by moving away (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Gearing et al., 2012). Later, devastating wars raged throughout the Middle East: a full 10 years between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s, within Lebanon in every decade since the 1970s, the Gulf War in 1992, and the multiple wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. New oil-rich states grew with independence in the 1970s, putting oil embargoes on the Europeans and the USA during the 1970s, while poorer countries such as Yemen, Oman, and Syria almost fell to their demise (Abu-Baker, 2005; Abudabbeh, 2005; Ahmed and Reddy, 2007; Al-Krenawi, 2012; Al-Krenawi, Graham, Dean, & Eltaiba, 2004; Harel-Fisch et al., 2010).

Language

The most distinguishing feature of Arab peoples is their language. The new nationalist elements, especially of the later twentieth century, may rally around the lore of the Golden Age of Islam and the colonial Western dismissal and hatred of Islam (Matthews, 2004; Said, 1979). However, we may question this less-than-critical history. There are now three different types of Arabic language: the colloquial one spoken by most people, modern standard Arabic used by the media, and classical Arabic which is the language of the *Qur'an* and other writings of centuries ago. Only highly educated Arabs understand all three, and there are differences in the way that the colloquial is spoken across the region (Perry, 2010).

As with variations in the Arabic language, some Arab people claim to be more "Arab" than others. There is a great divide between urban, nationalistic Arabs, and those who continue to hold personal, tribal allegiances. Urbanized Arabs in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries now speak of conflict with Bedouin Arabs, who cling to a nomadic lifestyle. The Bedouin claim that they were the original inhabitants; many of them do not necessarily accept or enjoy the benefits of being full citizens in countries that seem to them only to have been designated by former Western rulers and local autocrats (Al-Krenawi, 2012). Paul Theroux commented during a 1995 trip to Jerusalem that the apparently endless variations of tribal allegiances would seem to render any attempt towards cooperation and peace futile.

So, it is that the only real tie between many of these fractious groups is the language in which these fragments are communicated. This is a complicated paradox: reforms, rights, and freedoms are desired, but only one's own kin and tradition are trusted. This condition has set the stage for perpetual dictatorial rulers and corrupt economies which are tainted by influence peddling (*wasta*) and justified by fierce religious leaders (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1994; Loewe, Blume, & Speer, 2008; Whitaker, 2011).

Section 2: Economics, Politics, and Communal Structure

Economics and Politics in a Collectivist Society

When considering the economics and politics of the Middle East, it is helpful to remember that individualism is not a byword in these areas. Business, politics, household, and religion are fully intertwined; it does not make sense to say, "it is only business;" it is not. Everything is personal (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1994; Whitaker, 2011).

Strong forces manipulate the Arab person: a religious order that attempts to address all aspects of his or her life, a political and economic system that has most often been controlled by a hierarchy subject to great corruption, and an educational system that seems determined to perpetuate this system. Add to this the immense pressure from the West or "enlightened" countries to reform, and the demands that come from global communication and involvement upon the economies and lifestyles of the average person. We see the problems of the Arab Spring: in Egypt where the two main candidates were of a potentially suppressive religious background or of the army whom many claimed had been part of the original problem; in Libya where rebel groups from many factions refuse to cooperate with new "inclusive" democratic forms; in Syria, Bahrain, and otherwise, where popular uprisings became sectarian and were violently quashed by government troops. At rock bottom, suggests Mittermaier (2012), these uprisings are motivated by poverty rather than by interpretations of "democracy and freedom."

It is challenging to define families of Arab descent, address their diversity, use appropriate theoretical frameworks to guide research, and use methods that are accessible and informative of diverse cultural experiences. The very diversity of Arab families themselves as well as the cultural blind spots of researchers who are interpreting findings adds to the complexity of trying to develop a critical body of literature that is representative of the groups under investigation and empirically sound (Beitin, Allen, & Bekheet, 2010, p. 212). Some writers highlight that reinforcing Western ideas about Arab families as a monolithic group and ignoring their religious diversity and cultural legacies maintains the colonialist domination of this region that "serves to keep families pathologized and labelled as other" (Beitin et al., 2010, p. 212). Said (1981) avers that we "cherrypick" ways to describe the Arab family so that we can catalogue certain problems and claim to know the solutions through a Western experience. Williams (2008) brings a critique regarding analytical choice offered by Maleiha Malik:

> …the appropriate temporal unit for analysis tends to be the basic action. Instead of concentrating on the history of the individual or the origins of the social practice which provides the context within which the act is performed, conduct tends to be studied as an isolated and one-off act (n.p.).

When following Malik and determining such history, we must also recognize that many aspects of these societies are changing, taking into account, as Khalaili

and Litwin (2011) report, the growth of urbanization, secularization, and individualism (p. 2). Even in this high-context region, this growth has been rapid and is influencing all aspects of family and social life (Beitin et al., 2010). The influence is perceived in a very mixed manner. Sidani and Thornberry (2009) describe how this plays out in the Bedouin community:

> …people become exposed to the conflict between their genuine Bedouin value system that emphasizes generosity, pride, and bravery, and the sedentary value system that stresses endurance, submission, and shrewdness (Ali, 1998). Zayour (1977) indicates that this duality has significant implications for the person's dynamism and activism. Such conflict leads to hesitancy, ambivalence, a fear of change, a tendency toward conservatism, and resistance to novelty. While an Arab is quick in importing innovations in technologies and consumables, he is far more reluctant in terms of importing ideas and lifestyles. (p. 39)

Indeed, this description fits well with Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad's (2005) understanding of the resistance of Negev Bedouin-Arab tribal elders to discouraging polygamy in their communities.

We will see that the hierarchy in economics and politics, maintained through *wasta*, remains instead a way to marginalize Arab people rather than to empower them (Abu-Rabia, 2011; Al-Krenawi, Slonim-Nevo, & Graham, 2006).

Prescribing Masculinity and Controlling Politics

Armstrong (2002) relates that the dictates for an Arab man is *muruwahl*: manliness, patience, courage, endurance, and absolute faith to the tribe. The tribal ethic is one of reciprocity within the tribe. Politics is extremely personal; as mentioned, Arabs do not differentiate between devotion to the tribe, economy, religion, and the individual; all are highly contextual (Rosen, 2008; Sayed, 2009). All relationships in the economy are dealt with as personal business deals, rife with *wasta*, which again causes people to consider themselves above the law (Kuran, 2012; Loewe et al., 2008; Sidani & Thornberry, 2009, p. 43). Sidani and Thornberry (2009) claim that "in every relationship between Arabs there is one who is dominating and the other who is dominated," and quote Khuri (1990) who suggests that this is a natural legacy carried on whether there is a king or not:

> Where there is no hierarchy of office, no 'kings' or 'castles,' people dominate one another through the strategic manipulation of custom. The tone of voice, the hands and the legs, the eyes, the seating order are all manipulated to assert your position as dominant or dominated," No matter how diverse the regions, each segment of society has been subject to the rule of a 'good man' if not a 'great man': a sheik, a caliph, a prophet, or a strong patriarch. In everyday circles, the mere mention of a Sheik or any other leader will rouse a chorus of 'yes, good man' (p. 44).

In this system, say Sidani and Thornberry (2009), it is critical to know your place—politically, economically, and socially. This place is known within the political and religious structure. A man carries his family heritage, economic occupation,

and place of birth with him in his name. When he changes communities, he adopts through name the new distinctions of being from elsewhere, thus classifying and reclassifying him through various societies (Rosen, 2008). Those who are designated as the leaders are relied upon to lead. Also, there are the dictates of religion and the understanding of time and fate (e.g., the phrase *Insha'Allah*—with the will of God) to determine those things a person has no control over (Darwish, 2001; Rosen, 2008, p. 35; Sidani & Thornberry, 2009). This contributes to the idea that it is not the place of some people to be anything more than what is defined for them in their immediate society: a contextualization of one's situation. Geertz (2009) refers to this resignation to one's placement:

> …selfhood is never in danger because outside the immediacies of procreation and prayer, only its coordinates are asserted. Supposedly imminent characteristics (being a Sefroui—like a San Franciscan) determining the coordinates to a hyperindividualism … it leaves the rest to be filled in by the practice of interaction itself… (p. 40)

Government in these areas is still feudal: owned and controlled by the privileged. As the grandness of the Arab Empire and the Caliphate waned, rulers began to turn in upon themselves; they relied stubbornly on fundamentalism and brutal suppression to maintain control. Not too many years later, we see the beginning of 200 years of domination from Western countries. Even after independence from these outside countries, the tumultuous regions are ruled by sects and dictators, often those originally privileged by colonial rulers. In many countries, the military and secret service support the dictatorial status quo. Underneath, however, is a sheer lack of experience (or desire) to cooperate in the development of democratic structures. Much of Arab society has never, in fact, been afforded real control over the economy or the politics of their regions (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Kuran, 2012; Whitaker, 2011).

In this region, there is no understanding of democracy in a Western, individualistic sense. The tribal style is authoritarian, not democratic, and thus we have a lag in the transition to more democratic forms of government who are even now experiencing revolutions (Dwairy et al., 2006). Kuran (2012) suggests that:

> …what makes the Arab Spring especially newsworthy is that the 21-member Arab League has lacked a single democracy. In the Muslim-majority countries of the wider region known as the Middle East and North Africa… there exists a single democracy, in Turkey, and only recently has Turkey qualified as a full electoral democracy by ending, through a referendum, the "political watchdog" role of its huge military. (p. 1087)

The Enlightenment, the Arab Spring, and the Saudi Prince

While the European Enlightenment took place more than 150 years ago, the term still resonates as a catchphrase in the Middle East. Williams (2008) offers a thought-provoking slant on this period and its ramifications. He underscores the need for religious and other ideals alongside democratic principles, suggesting that both

democracy and dictatorships need checks and balances. Examples of bad governance can be found in all countries:

> There is a bit of a risk here in the way we sometimes talk about the universal vision of post-Enlightenment politics. The great protest of the Enlightenment was against authority that appealed only to tradition and refused to justify itself by other criteria—by open reasoned argument or by standards of successful provision of goods and liberties for the greatest number. Its claim to override traditional forms of governance and custom by looking towards a universal tribunal was entirely intelligible against the background of despotism and uncritical inherited privilege which prevailed in so much of early modern Europe. The most positive aspect of this moment in our cultural history was its focus on equal levels of accountability for all and equal levels of access for all to legal process. In this respect, it was in fact largely the foregrounding and confirming of what was already encoded in longstanding legal tradition, Roman and mediaeval, which had consistently affirmed the universality and primacy of law (even over the person of the monarch). But this set of considerations alone is not adequate to deal with the realities of complex societies: it is not enough to say that citizenship as an abstract form of equal access and equal accountability is either the basis or the entirety of social identity and personal motivation. Where this has been enforced, it has proved a weak vehicle for the life of a society and has often brought violent injustice in its wake. (Williams, 2008, n.p.)

The Arab Spring has claimed to be a check on the authority of corrupt individuals, but it has clearly shown that old traditions, beliefs, and tribal claims will last a very long time. There remain important questions, especially in contemporary Egypt and Lebanon, as to whether pluralism can exist within a religious state; whether Islam can allow un-Islamic people or ideas, however defined, to exist in parallel with itself.

Meanwhile, the pursuit of numerous tribal vendettas and blood feuds cause many to support strong dictators to make the region safer (Goldschmidt and Davidson, 2006; Rosen, 2008). Examples exist throughout the region where, social influence aside, one group demands recognition over another with distressing whimsy. Bradley (2008) recounts the near-demise of traditional, but un-Islamic festivals that occur in more southern parts of Egypt. When one village decided to revive a festival honoring a traditional village soul, fundamentalist Muslims ruined the festivities by claiming to have kidnapped the mayor's son; the child had in fact simply been paid to "disappear" for a little while. Despite governmental laws, politics here is personal and funded by sympathetic tribes at home or in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or otherwise. Saudi Arabian police regularly arrest "terrorists," many of whom simply represent those sheiks who quietly oppose the rule of the Saud family (CNN, 2012; Reuters, 2012).

The European Enlightenment was, in fact, quite a brutal time. Rulers did not easily give up their domains under their own sense of divine rule. Certainly, when religion, tribal relations and politics are at question, the resulting clashes can be bloody. Baker (2010) offers his view of the contemporary situation:

> Criminal political acts were first thought out in an Islamic vocabulary of *jihad* (struggle for the faith) and *jahiliyyah* (condemnation as un-Islamic, atheist, or pagan), traceable to important Islamist thinkers such as the Pakistani Maulana Abul Ala Maududi and, even more emphatically, the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb. However, for all the power of such Islamic rationalizations, it is important to acknowledge the quite distinctive and highly distorted

> character of these readings of the sacred texts by the extremists who draw on their work. The Wassatteyya [balanced world view of Islam] condemns in clear and unequivocal terms the terrifying and indiscriminate violence of the extremists' 'war against the world'.
>
> The problem is not Islam; the problem is that Islam is so tied up with politics, both to justify dictators' efforts and to identify oneself against outsiders who are seen as interfering… (pp. 258–261).

Kuran (2012) suggests that "precisely because they were not subject to checks and balances, states remained weak. Corruption, still a characteristic of Middle Eastern economies, is among the manifestations of weak governance (p. 1094). But Kuran holds an optimistic view that these corrupt dictatorial institutions are being, or will be replaced; the tradition of dictatorship and patriarchal stewardship has become detrimental to the health of Arab countries. An intelligent ruler knows how to manage change, and Prince Saud bin Abdul Mohsan bin Abdul Aziz al Saud, a prince of the Saudi Arabian royal family (using the term *Renaissance* rather than *Enlightenment* here), summarized the challenge:

> We do not want to lose our souls and spirits and barter it with all the material gains that have swept everywhere. How we have the Renaissance which is very delicate. It's not easy, believe me. You have to balance your society… your history. And you have to balance the very turbulence… the happenings or events that are taking place around you. This is something the West has to understand… we change based on the same pace as our people. You can only change people as much as they want to be changed. It's extremely dangerous, now. What kind of change? What kind of modern? Do we want to be westernized, honestly, we don't want to be westernized; I think a lot of people in the west are sick and fed up with a lot of things that are going on in the West. We want to catch up on the scientific front, we want to catch up on the new technological front; we want to be a partner in this moving world that's moving at the speed of light even. And we have a lot to do to catch up. (Mill, 2008)

Ironically, the Saudi king sent the largest military force ever unleashed during peacetime out onto the streets to ensure that the Saudi "Day of Protest" during the Arab Spring did not happen. He later congratulated the general public for not showing up; for not falling prey to the deception that was rampant in the uprisings happening in other countries (Jackson, 2011).

Economics and wasta

The governments of these countries, with their designated colleagues and alliances, are directly involved in the vast majority of the economy, if they do not in fact own and represent the most important parts of the economy outright. Kuran (2012) claims that economies of many Arab nations support too many government workers in proportion to their citizenry. Governments are corrupt by tradition, by intent, or both. Governments and economic entities are often fiefdoms from which leaders can bestow positions as they see fit (Sidani and Thornberry, 2009, p. 45). Laws are openly flouted and the exercise of political influence and *wasta* can reach deep into the psyche of Arab economy and polity (Loewe et al., 2008; Whitaker, 2011). "Laws

enforced at low cost elsewhere do not get enforced. This culture of corruption raises the cost of making and enforcing laws. Indeed, traffic regulations, rules against littering, and tax laws are openly flaunted (sic) in the Middle East even today. This is partly because for centuries the circumvention of massively significant laws enjoyed great tolerance" (Geertz, 2009; Kuran, 2012, pp. 1092–1093).

In this context, the notion that the Arab Spring was more about poverty and corruption in an uncaring government than about the Western buzzwords of freedom and democracy rings true. Al Jazeera reported in Tunisia:

> Mohammed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old man trying to support his family by selling fruits and vegetables in the central town of Sidi Bouzid, douses himself in paint thinner and sets himself on fire in front of a local municipal office. Police had confiscated his produce cart because he lacked a permit and beat him up when he resisted. Local officials then refused his hear his complaint. He is taken to a hospital near Tunis for treatment of his third-degree burns. Bouazizi's act of desperation highlights the public's boiling frustration over living standards, police violence, rampant unemployment, and a lack of human rights. (Rifai, 2011)

Unemployment is outrageously high in the Middle East—particularly among young Arab men, where it can reach up to 30 % or more (Clark, 2011; Raphaeli, 2006; Yamani, 2010). Human rights and living standards are closely related, and the current corruption and lack of human rights can be traced back to systemic elitism and influence peddling that perpetuates this problem (Whitaker, 2011). That being said, the economies of oil-rich nations are kept afloat by the unemployed or underemployed people who come from poorer countries (Kuran, 2012). Teaching, accounting, and basic supervisory-level jobs in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE are often taken by Egyptians, Moroccans, Lebanese, Sudanese, and Syrians. Many of these jobs are not acceptable to natives, despite the high level of unemployment (Yamani, 2010). Nor is this work always well executed as they may require better education or training than those blue-collar workers from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and other more eastern regions actually have. These immigrants are also beholden to the elite who are often able to destroy the immigrant's ability to work in the country. One must be careful to have the patronage of another business person before severing the first hand that feeds you. Certainly, there are many example of immigrant employees being paid well below their worth, and unable to do anything about it (Yamani, 2010).

Unemployed or underemployed people in the Middle East often receive little or no governmental support, as the poorer governments do not tax enough (or, parenthetically, allow the citizen representation that typically accompanies sufficient levels of taxation). Whitaker (2011) suggests that Saudi Arabia and similar countries are intact because Saudi does not tax its citizens. People are always willing to work with others as long as they are not taxed; taxation crosses the jurisdiction of the tribe. He avers that Islamic law failed to produce lasting and credible constraints on government takings. Kuran (2012) continues this line of thinking, suggesting that the rate of taxation is too low in most Middle Eastern countries. Families must fend for themselves, and they become dangerously dependent upon corrupt local leaders (p. 1088).

Waqfs (tax-exempt charities) have degenerated into another system to keep money out of the hands of any government and thus the citizenry of the country. Tribal elites invest in these *waqfs* as a way of protecting money from the legislation of the state. It is now a way to keep money from anyone the person does not wish it to go to; those whom the person favors will designate that person as the administrator of those "charitable" monies (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project, 2000, 2010; Kuran, 2012, p. 1090).

Inheritance laws are particularly tangled, as whatever inheritance there is may need to be divided endlessly amongst extended family. The vestiges of traditionally dictated economic rules have worked against the development of economic rules and policy which is more conducive logistically and politically to the modern economy. Because of the tangled inheritance laws, economic partnerships are extremely limited and usually negotiated through family alliances rather than an understanding between separate people. Nepotism, like marrying within your family, is common (Kuran, 2012, p. 1093; Sidani & Thornberry, 2009).

Similarly, the direct interference or involvement of rulers or tribal elite in business dealings has not encouraged the growth of strong corporate structures. Corporations are formed to protect its investors against the whimsy of the government, the directors and managers, and the public but in the Middle East, rampant *wasta* often renders strong corporations impotent. This lack of a middle untouchable structure and the constant circumvention of laws and rules that corrupt formal business models and relationships have left the Middle East with a difficult legacy in the corporate world (Kuran, 2012; Loewe et al., 2008).

A result of this legacy is the paucity of progressive managers (Whitaker, 2011; Yamani, 2010). When everything is personal, a person must weigh his or her allegiance not to the corporation, but to the person who secured him the job. Lack of motivation is endemic and stems both from the idea that you would have your job whether or not you were good at it, and that you would not have a job if you did not know the right person. A family makes the professional choices of a young family member, leading in some situations to absurd situations wherein there is a superabundance of lawyers and business people—many poorly trained—and no plumbers (Whitaker, 2011).

A worker will not tend to take initiative, because he has been taught to leave decision making to the others:

> Since throughout his childhood and schooling he was made to submit to strong authority figures, he will be most comfortable in a group with a *Zaim* or strong leader at the top. The uniformity of the group means that the conformity he has been trained to expect will be more likely. Despite his intelligence, he will be suspicious of innovation and would prefer to keep things as they are, following the knowledge and experience of more senior persons. (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009, p. 39)

Many Arab countries have a booming population growth alongside the frightening youth unemployment rates. Youth are becoming frustrated with institutions run at top levels by expatriate experts and local elite who do not take them seriously (Yamani, 2010). As in the rest of the world, the urban populations are burgeoning, and there are not enough jobs to accommodate the new additions to the labor force.

Education

Government in this region may be an instrument of the corrupt, then, rather than a legislative equalizer in area pertaining to money, social service, inheritance, and, most crucial to our discussion, marriage. Whitaker (2011) notes a fundamental problem derived from this situation: these corrupt governments control education. We have already mentioned the distinct lack of initiative, education, and thus capacity to move beyond worker stage and participate creatively in the control and creative management of what is now Arab-owned and Arab-operated industry. For example, while the Saudi government shoves billions of dollars into education, poor management and lack of productivity is rife. The situation is aggravated by a strong desire to keep outsiders away from the system, educational, and otherwise, for fear of "non-Arabization" (Booz Allen Hamilton, 2008; Doty & Taylor, 2008).

Educational methodologies in these regions are not creative: students memorize texts, pass exams, and ignore content (Doty & Taylor, 2008). This repetition is reminiscent of the practice of "studying" the *Qur'an* in a manner in which even the utterance of the words is sufficient to invoke grace. Despite laws mandating school attendance, many children of both sexes are truant. Some are forced to work due to poverty (Sidani and Thornberry, 2009). Higher educational opportunities turn into a "taking up space," not to train for the future but to maintain one's place in society. Just as with a job or an electoral office, Sidani and Thornberry see that since education and knowledge becomes personal capital, less competent people are not eager to encourage education which would threaten their own position gained through *wasta* rather than ability.

Here, again, we encounter the conundrum: the population demands higher-quality education, but the government cannot control fundamentalist or corrupt leaders on local school boards who interpret the curriculum in their own way (Whitaker, 2011). Whitaker (2011) brings, as an example, the Syrian school system, which conceives of Islam as a unifying force in an effort to ignore divisions between the ruling Shi'a citizens and the Sunni citizens, and, even more so, to hide their Baathist interpretations which protects the Shi'a from too much questioning from the Sunni majority.

Educational texts may be centralized, but the teachers are not. They must answer to the local *imam* and sheiks, as well as to the government (Alsharif, 2009). There exists a widespread teacher patriarchy which passes on old community systems and understandings despite efforts from outsiders. Moreover, fundamentalist teachers inject their own doctrine into what might be less doctrinal texts. Some teachers are afraid, at the risk of being considered impertinent, to correct obvious errors in traditional texts (Alzaidi, 2008; Whitaker, 2011). Attempts to modify views on polygamy must take into account that a fundamentalist educational context squelches personal interpretation and critical evaluation.

System Change

Attempts are being made to change systems, and there can be endless debates over how best to do so and how best to restore what many still say are the fundamentals of true Islamic enlightenment, or *itjihad,* that can hold elitism and corruption at bay. Williams (2011) holds that it is at the discretion of a government as to which interpretation of *Sharia* they will use to control politics, the economy, law, and education:

> …when certain states impose what they refer to as *sharia* or when certain Muslim activists demand its recognition alongside secular jurisdictions, they are usually referring not to a universal and fixed code established once for all but to some particular concretisation of it at the hands of a tradition of jurists. In the hands of contemporary legal traditionalists, this means simply that the application of sharia must be governed by the judgments of representatives of the classical schools of legal interpretation. But there are a good many voices arguing for an extension of the liberty of ijtihad—basically reasoning from first principles rather than simply the collation of traditional judgments… one or two Muslim scholars that an excessively narrow understanding of sharia as simply codified rules can have the effect of actually undermining the universal claims of the Qur'an… And this implies in turn that the Muslim, even in a predominantly Muslim state, has something of a dual identity, as citizen and as believer within the community of the faithful. (n.p.)

As the Saudi prince described (Mill, 2008), this region is currently weighing multiple—and sometimes competing—goals. Yet in Syria now, as in other areas, we have seen clearly how tradition and religion have been used to manipulate public opinion: the Syrian rebels are "anti-Syrian terrorists," for example, not dissenters (BBC, 2013; Doucet, 2013). But before we smugly suggest Western style democracy, asks Baker (2010), we must ask: does the West offer a better product? Sidani and Thornberry (2009) make a point about choices: "Arab oil wealth which, if spent wisely, might have finally brought modernity, was used instead to purchase the products of modernization off the shelf. Modernity as an outcome was confused with modernity as a process (p. 36).

The Western world presents a paradox of context for modern Arabs: can they partake of the benefits of the West without partaking of the negativities that come with it? Baker (2010) notes the ambivalence "…in most Arab societies one may find values that endeavour to include modernism and follow modern lifestyle. At the same time, the influence of social values that safeguard the traditional family and social structure has a precious weight" (p. 70).

There are different ways to view modernity; in these regions, it is often associated with the destruction of the family structure, the growth of decadence, duplicity, and extreme selfishness in world events (Amin, 2006; Baker, 2006; Wilkinson, 2011). In light of this perspective, transformation within this culture must be just that: from *within* the culture, not perceived as imposed by foreign forces (Sidani and Thornberry, p. 204). So too, Beitin et al. (2010, p. 227) emphasize that as researchers it behooves us to remember that research agendas should be transparent, and that personal cultural influence and biases be considered; research with Arab families must be guided by an agenda that is informed by Arab citizens. Indeed, we shall see in Chaps. 4 and 5 a model of how that can be accomplished.

Certainly, the Western world faces challenges in working with the Arab world and its growing influence. Some in the region have money, and there is a new imperialism related to this wealth, one that materializes throughout the Arab world in the growth of mosques built with Saudi and Emirati money, the purchasing of major communication systems and old Islamic schools by Qatari rulers, the proliferation of shopping malls in southern Istanbul with Saudi money, and of course, the money with attached gratitude and ideology that flows to extended families cared for by men working in the rich countries (Rubin, 2005). Everywhere in these areas is a harkening back to better times, to the glories of al-Andalus and the Ottoman Empire. These are difficult realities for the West to deal with. There are those who claim that the Western push renews Arab nationalism under its own rules, that is, uprisings can be suppressed with nostalgia and the illusion of modernity, all the while implying that the average person would not know what to do with democracy. Indeed, post-Mubarak Egypt demonstrates that total democracy can be anarchistic and confusing.

Community and Family

Sidai and Thronhill (2009) describe the interplay between each of these levels. Economic and political aspects of an Arab person's life can feel uncontrollable, and, as such, the authority of the State, even if it were nonpartisan, to organize effective, egalitarian social institutions in such a climate is questioned (see also Selby, 2011). As in the old Ottoman Empire, many government officials are corrupted by *wasta* and back up their power with a threat of violence and social exclusion (Bradley, 2008; Loewe et al., 2008; Whitaker, 2011). Thus, families and communities feel that they stand alone against bad government to find their own solutions for everyday life challenges.

The community is, then, not simply a communistic society, but a way of life based on the negotiation of strong family leaders with their own levels of influence. The community promotes a course of action and values based upon religion, tradition, and power—and demands compliance. Shame and dishonor result from the breaking of these rules (Soheilian, & Inman, 2009). This power, shame, or honor links people together and, as we are beginning to see, render people ideologically stagnant, and open to those who perpetuate old "ideals that are held by all."

As mentioned, this is a feature of high-context societies: the emphasis of the collective over the individual with a slower pace of social change in an effort to maintain social stability. Communities in the Middle East are hierarchical and patriarchal (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005; Dwairy et al., 2006). The authority and prestige of the family is measured by the demands of the community and the honor that it bestows (Abu-Baker, 2005). Such duty and honor extends past one's own household, to allied kin.

Reminiscent of the distant past, people in the Middle East continue to seek refuge from instability in larger groupings, and they bring their families with them, with the latter becoming central to their survival strategy. Both the family and the

larger collective it occupies—for example, a tribe or a sectarian group—are arranged internally as systems of power. The primal loyalty commanded by the family curbs organizational and institutional development (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009, p. 41). Saud Joseph (2009) notes that the tribal state has been revived in many parts of the Arab world and, in a poor or inequitable economy, this leads to even more fragmentation, volatility, and, sometimes, civil war (p. 283).

These bonds cannot be overstated. Whitaker (2011) offers a telling, marriage-related example. A person who breaks away from his or her family may, after living for years as an independent person, succumb to family pressure and return home to marry the person their family had originally chosen (Alsanea, 2007; Moore, 2009).

Speaking of family, the distinction made in the West between "family" and "community" is much less evident in this region. The family is assumed by the community to be the first and only support structure, but this basic support structure extends far from the nuclear family as we know it, to the extended family developed through birth and marriages alliances, to the tribal and religious congregations which are often responsible for social activity and service, at times to the *hamula* (the entire clan), and, finally (and rarely) to the state (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Baker, 2010, p. 70; Dwairy et al., 2006).

With the fallout of wars and fractious economies, it is difficult to define the typical nuclear Arab family. Young and Shami's (1997) study provides a sense of this challenge: they discovered 75 different family structures or households in squatter areas. Some are defined by whether they moved from a rural area perhaps to an urban area; whether the whole family moved or just the man; whether just the males moved for work or went off to war, were dead, or in prison. Politics, the changing economy, and even the remainder of former nomadic groups have colored the makeup of all families to some degree. The growth of immensely poor neighborhoods in these countries contrasts glaringly with the glittering modernity in other neighborhoods (Young & Shami, 1997, p. 9). Thus, Beitin et al. (2010) caution us that "future research on the cultural context of families of Arab descent must include methodologies that seek to understand issues and constructs relevant to these families" (p. 229).

As in the tribe, the typical family requires a strong leader, and this role is most often filled by a man. In turn though, he is under the rule of his father, who may even occupy the same household (Joseph, 2009). This leader is the most pervasive influence on the customs and social understandings that the others will have, often acting as the floodgate of ideas between the ideals of the community and those from outside:

> This strategic manipulation of custom, to be so pervasive, must be something that is learned early by all the actors in a society. What Arab children must learn at an early age is that the social context in which they live can, to a limited extent, be manipulated. However, custom and circumstance place a barrier in front of manipulation. Specifically what really places a limit on the manipulation of custom is the dominating position of the father in the hierarchy of the family. (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009, p. 44)

Similarly, religious law acts as a deterrent to crime and deviance but so is a strong fear of stigmatization by family and community (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press;

See also Abudabbeh, 2005; Arfken, Kubiak, & Farrag, 2009; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005; Erikson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Soheilian & Inman, 2009). Otherwise, religious and other communal institutions will provide the first source of identification and treatment of problems (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003; Alsanea, 2007). Tellingly, the research and treatment described in Chaps. 5 and 6 were executed with the express permission and assistance of Bedouin family and community leaders.

Elderly

The care of the elderly in Arab society has traditionally been the obligation of the family youth, and parents with large families consider it their privilege to be well cared for when they decide they are no longer able, or no longer wish, to work. This may be yet another reason parents get involved in their children's marriages: their future, as much as that of their children's, is at stake. This picture has been somewhat modified: more and more, older parents choose to live with children other than the eldest son and his wife, or may choose to live by themselves. The responsibility of children for physical care of elderly parents seems to be dwindling as people become more connected to society and less to family constraints (Khalaili & Litwin, 2011).

Living Arrangements

Unlike simple romantic liaisons, polygamy is a formal, highly contextual arrangement with a religious and/or civil component (Beitin et al., 2010). When there is an economic foundation to the polygamous enterprise, women may all live together in one house (as is often the case with LDS Mormon families). In the original fundamentalist Mormon church as in others, women "marry" each other and become each other's *sister wife* as well as the wife of the man. Cooperation is expected on matters of household and family enterprise as well as on children, though the psychological aspect of this is open to question (Bala, 2009; Coyne, 2010). In such economic or similar cooperative spirit, the first wife may gain status as the facilitator or controller of the family arrangement and, therefore, supervise the junior wives' activities (Butt, 2010; Slonim-Nevo, Al-Krenawi, & Yuval-Shani, 2008).

By contrast, another meaning of the Arabic word for co-wife (*dara*) is "trouble." While Islam permits polygamy under specific conditions, the Arabic term certainly appears to imply that polygamy will entail emotional challenges for the members of the polygamous household. In Chaps. 5 and 6, we shall see how strongly contemporary accounts support that assumption.

When a mutual economic enterprise is not part of the picture, women tend to live in separate quarters. In the Middle East, where a first wife does retain an alliance-related status, it is unlikely that she would agree to share a living space with another wife (irrespective of whether or not she has agreed to the new marriage) (Butt, 2010; Falen, 2008).

Gender Roles

Just as extended family and tribal support make sense in a traditional and rural world, so, too, is there a rationale underlying traditional gender roles that arise from traditional understandings of male/female relations. While many younger people now feel the desire to depart from traditional roles, they face enormous pressure from their elders, and even siblings, to remain within these roles—roles that are not totally unlike traditional roles practiced by some people in the West, especially in more religiously fundamental families (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Sabry, 2010).

Men

Though a father's rule over his sons becomes more complicated as the son matures and marries, there is nevertheless a male rather than a female in charge in most households (Rosen, 2008). The patriarch lays down rules which are often backed up by violence or the threat thereof. When the father is absent, that rule can often pass to the eldest son or to the father's brother, if the son is too young (Abudabbeh, 2005; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005; Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Young & Shami, 1997).

As was alluded to in Armstrong's (2002) definition of *muruwhal*, men in traditional Arab societies are expected to appear "strong"—even to the point of not complaining or seeking assistance in times of family stress. A man handles his affairs privately; it is a sign of poor capabilities should the father not be able to control the family (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005). The male is often outside the house and has much less contact with children than we might see in other areas (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Sidani and Thornberry, 2009). However, modernity is bringing this element to a head—we could say that while "Women's lives are an on-going process of negotiating… patriarchal context" (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005, p. 302), men, too, are negotiating their own role and the role within a community where expectations are slowly changing. Generally, though, family members are expected to be docile and keep the peace, always deferring to the husband (Abu-Baker, 2005; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005).

The acceptance of absurd justifications for divorce, polygamy, and abuse provides a hint of the strength of male domination in these societies: a man in Saudi Arabia and another in Jordan, for example, were reported recently to have divorced their wives because they were watching a popular male actor on a television serial show (Kadry, 2008). Abu al-Asal (2010) writes of the stigma borne by divorced Palestinian women. And fear of abandonment severely tempers the ability of women to complain or take action against suppression or ill-treatment. To speak out in these communities may result in further oppression or violence. Rape victims are considered unsuitable for marriage, and rape by even an extended family member may be twisted around to be considered "adulterous behavior" on the part of the woman.

Only silence can keep the honor of a woman and that of her family intact, or at least keep her husband from divorcing her or acquiring a new wife (Al-Krenawi, 2005a; Al-Krenawi et al., 2004).

The horrific topic of "honor killing" is germane to this discussion. Al-Krenawi et al. (2004) found that 10 % of women in the Israeli territories who threatened to report abuse were killed by a family member Manar Hasan's (1999) (cited in Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) seminal work on "family honor" killings in which "cultural relativism and an Orientalist approach set a forgiving behavior pattern on the part of the authorities toward men guilty of violence toward women" (p. 13). Despite strong challenges from all religions, the "right" to kill for honor persists as a belief in some authoritarian patriarchal relationships. On a related note, Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel (2002) note Shalhoub-Kevorian's (1997) view that:

> …culture, tradition, politics and power structures affect the social perception and policy towards wife abuse. Physical abuse is used in the Palestinian socio-political context to control and subordinate women, and is not therefore considered grounds for breaking up the family unit (p. 154).

Violent consequences may befall the wife or child who is perceived as being out of control in any way—sexually, religiously, or otherwise (Abu-Rabia, 2011; Abu-Ras, 2007; Elsaidi, 2011).

Women

Arab society negatively judges a woman who does not marry, and when other families as a consequence do not choose them as in-laws, her family might experience a sense of personal injury. In order not to realize such a destiny, families tend to pressure young females into marriage at an early age (Baker, 2003, p. 56). A woman is expected to become a wife, and to bear and nurture babies. It is hoped that one will be a boy to continue the family name. Many women in Palestine and other Arab countries still do not work outside the home (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press). Further, girls are not groomed to take leading social or business roles. Girls are categorized in relation to a male relative; she is the mother of somebody, or his sister, his wife, or his daughter. A girl's value is also determined by whether the family desires a decent bride price and a good alliance with another family, or whether the daughter plays a more productive role (as we see in rural situations where women take care of the farm and the children) (Hamadeh, 2009).

Women in many Arab countries endure severe restrictions on their contact with and involvement in society (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009). Men cite the safeguarding of female sexual virtue as the reason for limiting the mobility of a woman under their control. Courtships are strictly monitored and an unmarried woman is often looked after by male family members until the woman marries (Abu-Rabia, 2011; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Whitaker, 2011). In Bedouin-Arab society, premarital romantic relationships are curtailed by physical punishment of the girl involved (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2003). Women "allowed" to work may still lose their

paycheck to the family's finances without say. Many courts agree with these traditions and are prepared to uphold patriarchal law that may have no legal precedent (Whitaker, 2011; Yamani, 2008).

In Saudi Arabia, women are required to be accompanied by a male *mahram* (adult male relative) while shopping or performing rituals in the holy mosques of Mecca or Medina (see Chap. 3). Saudi Arabia strictly controls the style of *abaya* (veil) that may be worn, and every woman (regardless of dress beneath), must in public be covered by a black *burkha*. They cannot speak with males or exchange contact information in public except for business. Religious police will arrest women who digress, and will chastise their guardians who must, at best, sign an undertaking not to allow such behavior to recur (Whitaker, 2011, p. 56–57; Yamani, 2008). Justified by claims of maintaining women's safety (from men), women are not permitted to drive: there is no prohibitive legislation—officials simply refuse to issue women's licenses (Saudi Gazette, 2012; The Telegraph, 2012). Religious *ulema* recently pronounced it illegal for women to use the internet without the presence of their male *mahram* (Yamani, 2008, p. 143). Just as Saudi women need a guardian to travel, so too must women entering the country be accompanied by a male, as seen recently when plane loads of Nigerian women were refused entry to Mecca because there were no men with them (Mbamalu, 2012; Yamani, 2008). In *Polygamy in Islam* (2005), Philips and Jones explain that such restrictions are simply meant to inculcate the idea that "a woman's base should be her home" (p. 41).

Women in many Arab countries negotiate space and authority in a number of different ways. Interestingly, this can entail a greater degree of religiosity. Mahmood (2005) studied the return to Islamic fundamentalism among Egyptian women. She argued that many of them, understanding Islam to be far more favorable and equitable in marriage than the un-Islamic philandering stance many Arab men have adopted, are demanding that their husbands become more devout (see also Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005). In this vein, Philips and Jones (2005) hold that polygamy strongly supports fidelity, in that it holds polygamous men accountable for their sexual behavior (p. 17). Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel (2002), on the other hand, note that polygamy "enables Bedouin-Arab males to act according to their immediate desires when it comes to family matters" (p. 159). Erickson and Al-Timimi (2001) found that women in the Middle East may withhold work and favors from husbands and children until they show her respect. We shall see that this negotiation starts at the beginning of marriage, when it is commonly noted that women give up mobility in exchange for protection and support. Some women are frustrated by this living between two cultures or identities, with men being far freer to do as they wish. Women are consequently subject to a high risk of physical and mental distress (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005; Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press).

A man can leave the house without others knowing his objective and can stay away from home for long hours without others knowing his whereabouts. He can also spend his money as he sees fit, even while depriving his wife and children. He may choose to deviate from religious and social norms without putting his life and his marriage at risk. As for a woman, any of the above-mentioned behaviors could end in immediate divorce and the withholding of all her rights as a wife, a mother,

and a person within Arab society (Abdu, 1997; Baker, 2003, pp. 61–62; Hasan, 1999; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1997). Women must often live in specific parts of the house where it is forbidden for some men to visit and similarly is barred from visiting other parts of the house reserved only for men (Al-Krenawi, 1998). Women are often viewed as dependants, like children, and:

> Arab society has often tended to devalue feminine physical and intellectual capacities… physically and mentally weak in comparison to men [but]… have power over men since they can deceive and defeat, not by force, but by cunning and intrigue… temptation and seduction…" and there is often a reference to how close a woman can be to Satan. (Al-Krenawi, 1998, p. 3)

Most consequential is the inability of women to seek help for personal matters, as most often, this has to be done with permission and even the accompaniment of the husband or patriarch who may be part of the problem. Such stressors:

> …seem to build up within married women rather than alleviate with age, and a woman's isolation and depression can increase in bad marriages which afford them little respect or recourse to assistance; bearing in mind that voicing distress and concern may only lead to further dismissal or marginalization within the entire extended family. (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004)

These roles are not exclusively perpetuated by the patriarch, however. Baker (2003) discusses how older women maintain their social status and gain power within a polygamous marriage or an extended family by criticizing and controlling the behavior of the younger wives, reminding them that part of their job is to keep the peace and accommodating shortcomings to keep the husbands happy. Thus, while the women:

> …will therefore make the woman [a younger woman] feel they are on her side, on the one hand, while, on the other, in some cases, they will suggest solutions which in themselves become additional problems, such as another pregnancy, or surrender and silence so that the man will not marry another woman. (Baker, 2003, p. 62)

Commonly, then, women convince other women that the only way to discourage a man from taking another wife (which would result in a loss of status for all current wives) is to increase subservience to the husband. And this subservience may not end in peace. Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel's (2002) study on wife abuse in the context of women's sense of personal potency found wife abuse rates to be higher, and women's sense of personal potency to be lower, among women in polygamous relationships. Indeed, Hassouneh-Phillips's (2001) work offers a glimpse into how co-wives can sometimes function as witnesses to, and perpetrators of, wife abuse.

Children

Families in this community tend to mix parenting styles; one sees within a single family both coddling and strict rule application. Significantly, those rules might need to be followed at risk of extreme chastisement, and even brutality. Children are

inured to strong verbal criticism at home, in school, and perhaps at a church or mosque. Female children do not tend to report verbal or physical abuse, and there is suspicion that girls, like many women, may feel that they "deserve" the abuse (Dwairy et al., 2006; Rosen, 2008). Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel (2002) write that it is atypical for an abused Bedouin-Arab wife to register a spouse-abuse complaint with the local authorities.

Parenting style is something of a moot issue for fathers in these communities, however, because they leave the bulk of the parenting to the mothers. The mothers then become the communication line between the fathers (who are often unable to interpret their children's behavior) and the child. Indeed, Dwairy et al. (2006) have found that mothers in this population tend to coddle their children, and consequently, a child may remain quite dependent upon the mother. At home, as in school, children are taught to maintain the status quo:

> A good child is one "who listens to the word" of parents and other authority figures. Values of dissent, questioning, and critical inquiry are seen as signs of insubordination and lack of respect, and these are greatly discouraged. While the past few years have witnessed a growing awareness in some Arab localities of the futility of physical disciplinary measures in raising and teaching children, psychological measures are still being used (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009. p. 41).

Brothers and sisters in this community have complex relationships. Saud Joseph (2009) noted: "Sociologically, there were many household forms: nuclear families, joint, extended, duo-focal, single parent, single individual. Yet, culturally, Arab family ideals of patrilineality, patriarchy, and patrilocality were relatively strong for most residents" (p. 282). Saud attributed this to the role the brother takes in grooming his sister(s) as woman and wife. Older brothers will take this role whether or not the father is in the household. During their teenage years especially, young women will dress to impress brothers, and brothers will critique a sister's choice of apparel (p. 285). Joseph suggests that this is a way that young boys are groomed to supervise. The boys will receive the lion's share of an inheritance because they are assumed to take control of the family; this is part of their training. None of this detracts from the typically strong bond between sister and brother—the brother of one of the wives who lived in a polygamous household (described in Chap. 4) regularly bought the groceries for his impoverished sister and her children. A brother may be the first to know when there is trouble in a woman's marriage.

We shall see in the intervention model presented in Chap. 6 how we harness this brother–sister dyad for the benefit of a dysfunctional Bedouin-Arab multifamily household. Indeed, Beitin et al. (2010) remind us that:

> Research that is more congruent with understanding families of Arab descent will situate families within their relevant cultural contexts by examining within-group differences and including families from every Arab country. Future research should examine families from all countries as well as families from diverse ages, social classes, religions, and family structures. Samples need to include more men, children, and extended kin. Religion is especially important for two reasons: Studies have found differences between families with different religions, and religious identity of the participants has not been clear in many studies. Researchers must identify the religion of their participants and be clear about reporting religion in their publications. (p. 229)

Beiten and colleagues' call for culturally sensitive work including Arab men, children, and extended kin is taken up in the quantitative and qualitative sections of our study (see Chaps. 4 and 5) and our proposed intervention model (see Chap. 6).

We have raised certain problems in marriage and family life that make interdiction of polygamy difficult: the perceived need to maintain tradition—at times, against reason, and the desire to promote identity rather than succumb to unwanted Western ideals. We have mentioned the problems that individuals have with maintaining community identity in an age when collectivity is on the wane. The debate over human and individual rights for all members of the family is raging within and without the Islamic world. In the next chapter we shall take a closer look at these issues as refracted through the lens of Islam, which underpins polygamy in the Middle East.

Chapter 3
Polygamy, Islam, and Marital Justice

Abstract This chapter discusses marriage in Islam, both according to the Qur'an and according to various traditions. Yamani (Polygamy and law in contemporary Saudi Arabia. Ithaca Press, Reading, Berkshire, 2008) distinguishes between (1) laws drawn from a generally accepted current Islamic interpretation and (2) laws enacted by the "Islamic" state, imposed in the name of religion, while emanating from sources other than the traditional, some even contradicting the traditional context.

The main purposes of an Islamic marriage are long-term cohabitation, procreation, the satisfaction of physical needs and the need for companionship that God has created within humanity. It is not a spiritual union, but a civil one.

Some Arab traditions that play a central role in marriage are male dominance, bride-price, *mahr*, *kuhl*, family law, laws of inheritance, and more.

In new marriage contracts there are more negotiated matters, which if broken can be grounds for divorce. In addition there are several alternative types of marriages such as the *urfi*, *misyar*, *misyaf*, *badal*, and *hiba*. These are all discussed with their ramifications.

The acceptance, understanding, and legislation of polygamy in the Middle East is inextricably linked with the multitude of interpretations of Islam as it pertains to marital justice and the role of the state in family affairs. Traditions arising from the Old Testament, the *Qur'an*, and consequent religious rulings have recognized (and perhaps favored) the practice of polygamy. These, of course, are subject to scholarly interpretation. Simultaneously, the practice has experienced varying degrees of favor throughout various historical periods and within various national structures. While we cannot explore all of the variations of marital and family law in each Arab country, we shall introduce some foundations upon which the laws and their interpretations have been based. We shall consider some of the main facets of the Islamic marriage contract which, despite its original intent, can be, and have been, interpreted in ways which have subjugated or marginalized women—especially within their marriages.

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Islamic law (as stated in the Qur'an) allows a man to marry up to four wives, without divorcing any of the previous wives (Al-Krenawi & Lev-Wiesel, 2002). In order to do so, he must be able to financially provide for each wife and treat each one in an equitable manner.

Most people in Arab communities expect their marriage to be sanctioned by Islam, and many Arab people consider Islamic rules to have established fair marital arrangements. The main elements of the marriage contract, constituted by offer and acceptance, are very similar across the four main Sunni schools of thought and the Shi'i Muslim sect. However:

> …there are other legal discrepancies related to its validity. This state of affairs, together with the less conventional marriage contracts in existence in the Muslim world, has left certain grey areas regarding the form, validity and even religious and social acceptability of some of these contracts. Such conflicting issues are often left to the decision of the individual courts, as and when matters of proof of these marriages are needed (Yamani, 2008, p. 81).

Marriage in one form or another is still considered obligatory amongst most Arab people. Hoodfar (2009) gives voice to an elderly Egyptian woman who asks: "how could anyone choose not to follow the custom of the prophet?" (p. 262). This perspective is not limited to the elderly. A 1994 conference on population and development in Cairo which, amongst other topics, addressed "the variety of non-marital forms of union and sexuality that one can meet throughout the world" claimed categorically in its literature that "The family is the basic unit of society, and marriage is the exclusive framework for the practice of sexuality" (Fargues, 2001, p. 247. See also Yamani, 2008). Thus, while there may be younger people who do not see the need or benefits of entering into a formal (and costly) civil marriage agreement, many still feel immense pressure to do so or to engage in more surreptitious or flexible forms of "marriage" because they acknowledge the need for religious sanction—or at least its related respectability. Avoiding civil marriage, then, avoids the cost of the traditions and formalities of a proper Sharia (Islamic law) marriage contract, but not necessarily the religious sanctity.

Basic Legal Framework

The Qur'an is the most important book in the Islamic world. While it lays the foundations for gender relations in the Middle East, however, Young (2010, p. 213) reminds us that "gender relations are conditioned as much by social memory, fears, and biology as they are by interpretations of faith." The same holds true for marriage traditions: some rules may be traditional but are attributed nonetheless to the writings in the Qur'an. So it is that, as Abu-Odeh (2004) writes, the request for reform is often "met with the hurling of a Qur'anic verse or a prophetic tradition" rather than an honest attempt to consider a given problem" (p. 196). In short, if something is considered un-Islamic, it will be met with an out-of-hand rejection. It is incumbent upon helping professionals, then, to have a sense of these traditions (Ibrahim, n.d.).

Civil law in most Middle East countries is linked to Islamic *Sharia* law. Official identification as an Islamic state does not determine how important *Sharia* is to the devising and administration of a country's family law. In fact, it is said that while Egypt's laws have generally become secular (along the traditions of its former colonizers and under the later rule of secular rulers), the practice of family law has been left to the interpretation of *mullahs* and other officials or followers of Islam, perhaps as a form of appeasement to the families and tribes whose support is still invaluable to various leaders (Fargues, 2001; Hoodfar, 2009; Mashour, 2005). *Sharia* law, so apparently monolithic and inflexible in the eyes of the Western world, is actually quite complicated and is applied in various ways in different countries.

Sharia law is comprised of a number of sections, each of which holds a specific level of legislative strength. The words in the *Qur'an* are considered primary and to have been revealed to the prophet Muhammad. This is the *Qur'anic* tradition, the basic ideals of Islam.

While many acknowledge the need for interpretation of the words of the *Qur'an* (though not necessarily the ideals), there is considerable discussion regarding qualifications of interpreters, whether a given goal has been already achieved, and how liberal interpretations should be. Next, *Sharia* looks to the *Sunnah*, the practice of proper Islamic life as taught by Muhammad. This is considered the prophetic tradition. The prophet himself lived his life according to the *Qur'an*, and thus there is an understanding that he, too, needed to make changes to suit situations which may not have been dealt with correctly. The resultant *Sunnah* is passed down through various *hadiths*, which are reports or stories of the activities and teaching of the Prophet (Uhlman, 2004). To varying degrees, *Sunnah* has continued by some of Muhammad's descendants, though followers of Islam diverge in their understanding of whether Muhammad's descendants should be acknowledged or whether a group of *imams* exist (Armstrong, 2002; Denny, 2006).

Scholars have attempted to reach a consensus on what is approved practice and what is unacceptable (*haram*). This attempt is compiled in "'*ijma*' (consensus of Muslim scholars on an approved issue through the ages) and *qiyas* (analogical reasoning)." The entire corpus of this work has been compiled in massive volumes termed *usal al-fiqh* (legal methodology) (Yamani, 2008).

The major interpretations we discuss here devolve from the Golden Age of Islam. There are four major Sunni schools of law: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali. There are also many types of Shia religions: Alawite, Israeli, Druze, and others. These schools developed from the teachings of scholars from all over the Arab world, and they have been further interpreted by other scholars and charismatics. For example, while Saudi Arabia is said to follow mainly the Hanbali school of Islam, it is ruled more by the Wahhabi School (derived from the 18th century leader Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab from Duriya near what is now Riyadh (Commins, 2006). While a particularly fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, al-Wahhab did not ascribe to all of Hanbali's texts, just as many of the scholars of Islam do not strictly follow one school or other. Ironically, this was particularly true in Mecca and Medina during the Golden Age, when scholars from all over the Arab world

exchanged ideas willingly and openly even with people of other religions (Commins, 2006, pp. 128–129; see also Denny, 2006, pp. 128–129; Yamani, 2008).

That *Al-fiqh* (the law or jurisprudence) possesses a degree of internal flexibility demonstrated by the way in which it has flowed with both liberal and conservative interpretations throughout the centuries. As noted in Chap. 2, the doors to *itjihad* began to close as Islam started to lose its larger empire, and succeeding local leaders vied for rule over their principalities while the caliphs or emperors languished in Istanbul. However, rulers in all areas carried vestiges of their own interpretations of Islam alongside the tribal traditions of their own regions. Even where non-Muslim rulers did initiate change in the ancient laws of business and society, family law would often be left in its traditional form so as not to conflict immediately and completely with the average colonized citizen (Mashour, 2005). With Arab nationalism growing in the 1960s and 1970s, the desire to return to *Sharia* law as part of the greater devotion to Islam gained ground. In some cases, this signaled a return to fundamentalist interpretations of *Sharia*, as seen in the growth in influence of some *Salafi* and *Wahhabi* sectors—especially in family law (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Blanchard, 2008).

Like many legal codes, *Sharia* law is not a single group of laws that can be easily modified. Rather, it must be interpreted, much like the rule of precedent in secular countries, and we shall shortly discuss some of the new interpretations and negotiations in the changing of *Sharia* laws. Yamani's (2008) distinguishes between (1) laws drawn from a generally accepted current Islamic interpretation and (2) laws enacted by the "Islamic" state, imposed in the name of religion, while emanating from sources other than the traditional, some even contradicting the traditional context (p. 127).

Yamani (2008) highlights that personal, creative reasoning (*itjihad*) is still used as a concept in contemporary legal discussion. This signifies that, potentially, it remains part of the dynamics of *Sharia* law:

> It is also confirmed that if the interests of justice in a specific case so dictate, judges are free to adopt views from other schools in their application of the concept of *ijtihad* (personal reasoning) as long as they base these views on proper interpretive procedures from the Qur'an and Sunnah (p. 128).

Notable, however, is that in Saudi Arabia, to which Yamani (2008) refers, this *itjihad* is practiced under the domain of the "newer" fundamentalist Wahhabi thinkers who claim to reform bad practice (pp. 136–137) (see also Kéchichian, 2008; Mill, 2008).

The downfall of dictators heralds new interpretations of *Sharia* law. We have already seen signs of fracture between the tribes of Libya since liberation from Gadhafi (Jawad, 2012), a potential showdown between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Syria (something that has already happened in Lebanon) (Gardner, 2012), problems between Bedouin Arabs in Egypt and Palestine against extremists who in turn cite support from religious groups throughout Palestine, Egypt, and beyond. Every country affected by the Arab Spring of 2011 has seen the need to reassess who they

are as people and what laws control them (Al-Krenawi, 2012). It will be interesting to see which laws will be changed in the name of new legitimizations—whether progressive or regressive—and in the name of *Sharia* or not.

The Qur'an and Polygamy

Islamic scholars have debated language usage, translation, and interpretation of the *Qur'an*. Just as jurisprudence tries to relate to the intention and interpretations of law in the past and how it might apply today, Arabic scholars must grapple with the use of particular words in their context and must determine their "true" meaning (Armstrong, 1993).

Marriage is a topic addressed by many religious faiths. It is hardly unique that Muslim people look to Islam for wisdom in this sphere, just as it would not be unusual for faithful Christians to do the same with the Bible. We can already see why it is important for people to consider the second part of the legal framework of *Sharia* law, the *hadiths*, to consider how Muhammad and his descendants taught Muslims how they should live their lives and how to interpret these passages. Muhammad did practice polygamy, but here begins the controversy. Scholars debate the logic of Muhammad's actions as they occurred within a particular context and within the general spirit of the text of the *Qur'an*. If, for example, the *Qur'an* is read to imply that only in the cases of war widows and orphan girls should polygamous relationships be permitted, it could also be argued that Muhammad's polygamous practice was purely pragmatic and not intended to be exemplary. Some claim that he was obliged to marry wives to forge and cement alliances which would allow the fledging religion to take hold in a more prosperous and secure environment than it had been born in, and that his polygamy was rooted in compassion and the interests of others (Nurlaelawati, 2010). Finally, says Mashour (2005):

> …the Prophet forbade his son-in-law Ali, who was married to the Prophet's daughter Fatima, to take a second wife as long as his daughter Fatima was alive. Interestingly, this incident has never been raised when patriarchal arguments are articulated to defend polygamy. (p. 571)

Armstrong (1993) provides further support for this argument: Muhammad remained monogamous up to the death of his first, "pre-Islamic" wife, Khadija. He was quite old when he began to marry new wives. Each marriage has a particular story; each story has interpretations. For example, one of his wives, Leila Bint al Khateem, is said to have approached Muhammad with an offer of marriage. Like his first wife, she was a businesswoman, and he is reported to have accepted the offer with the *Qur'anic* verses saying that it is acceptable to do so. She would be allowed to maintain her own wealth, which sounds strikingly similar to the arrangement some women make with men: i.e., a woman marries a man simply to conduct some business on her behalf (Yamani, 2008, p. 83; see also Armstrong, 2002; Denny, 2006).

There is a tradition that Muhammad married Aisha, his final wife, when she was still a child; this was considered a political alliance (she was the daughter of an ally). Aisha was considered a master of the tenets of Islam, having been under the direct tutelage of the prophet (Armstrong, 1993; Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006). Aisha was contracted in Mecca, but that consummation was delayed due to her age at the time of marriage. Muhammad then contracted a number of marriages for what are reported to have been moral, humanitarian, political, and legislative reasons. Despite the emphasis placed in Arab society on marrying virgins, none of the Prophet's wives except Aisha was a virgin (Yamani, 2008, p. 12). Here again, marrying young girls and insisting on virginity—like polygamy—may have originally been seen as an exception rather than as a rule set forth through text and *hadith*.

Either way, it would be mistake to think that the laws of Islam are straightforward and simple. We can see that the system tolerates controversy, not against religion itself, but the ways in which it can be interpreted. This issue will resurface below, when we speak of the desire for change from outside the family structure.

The Basic Tenets of the Marriage Contract

At this point we shall explore some of the main features of an Islamic marriage, note how these may be open to interpretation and practice, and reflect briefly on how each section can be used and abused in family relationships. Finally, we shall set forth some ideas regarding clinical issues to be addressed.

Yamani (2008, p. 77) has put forth that "The main purpose of marriage in Islam is long-term cohabitation, procreation, the satisfaction of physical needs and the need for companionship that God has created within humanity." Philips and Jones (2005) add that while not everyone is suited for polygamy, "Islam has a complete marriage system which takes into account all the human variables and provides men and women with viable options" (p. 19). The Islamic marriage contract is actually a civil contract that uses the tenets of Islam as its guide. Unlike in the Christian church, marriage is not a spiritual union, but a civil union that is guided by rules understood to be laid out by Islamic law (Uhlman, 2004). It therefore varies from place to place and, we shall see, some current practices attempt to circumvent a number of these prescriptions.

Negotiating a Contract: General Rules and the Bride's *wali* (Guardian)

The practice of guardianship has spurred some of the most heated debates regarding Islamic practice. In most areas of this region, a woman is considered under the guardianship of her family, and in particular the oldest male of the family, that is, if the father is not present, the guardianship moves to the oldest brother or even

grandfather or uncle. The conditions of the marriage are usually negotiated by both mother and father (when present) but, regardless of arrangement, it remains for the oldest male to provide approval of the contract. While consent of the bride is generally asked, silence on her part is sometimes construed as consent (Hanna, 2009). Various *hadiths* state that "no marriage is concluded without a guardian" or *wali* (Yamani, 2008, p. 83), and, naturally, there are situations in which a guardian exercises power rather than compassion over his charge.

Female consent to offers of marriage is another hot topic in the area of Islamic marriage. Instances have been recorded in which consent has been given under duress, and even by imposters. The *wali* has been known to refuse to give permission to anyone because he would rather commandeer income from a working woman than accept the bride price of the suitor (Yamani, 2008). Tradition has allowed a girl to be married at an extremely young age, perhaps to secure a family alliance or to ensure her marriage before she grows too old to be desirable. Many question the ability of an immature young girl to give properly considered consent (Roudi-Fahimi, 2010; MENA, 2007; Welchman, 2007). Finally, the idea that a man of sound mind and maturity may express his marital choices more freely than may a woman is being called into question, as is the tradition that permission must be obtained from a guardian for a marriage to take place (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press).

Witnesses

Some of the above-described abuses can be avoided by the presence of witnesses, and, as in other legal systems, this is usually a requirement of an Islamic marriage. However, this requirement is not well-enforced, and "the difference between the permitted and the prohibited is the sound of the drums [announcing and celebrating] a marriage" (Yamani, 2008, p. 83). Many instances of marriages without witnesses have been noted, particularly in questionable marriages which still abound and which leave many women in difficult situations (Yamani, 2008).

The Dower

The *dower* (*mahr*)—not to be confused with a bride price—is an important factor in Islamic marriages. In a proper *Sharia* marriage, the woman is entitled to a sum of money that is specifically earmarked for her use before, during, or after a marriage (should it end in divorce). *Mahr* is stipulated in the *Qur'an*, but we shall see how this is difficult to enforce due to statements suggesting that a man can accept the return of such money during the marriage or in cases where the woman wants to give up her *mahr* to obtain a divorce (*al-khul*). Further, if this money has been given to the family of the bride rather than to the bride herself, the woman becomes like chattel and is left destitute in cases of divorce or death of the husband (Oman, 2010; Yamani, 2008).

How *mahr* is meted out varies from country to country and interpretation to interpretation. Often stipulated is *mu'akhar sadak* (the retention of some money in trust to be paid to the woman should the man decide to divorce her). While the *Qur'an* states that a woman is entitled to maintenance upon divorce, it is difficult to enforce this law. The *sadak* stipulation is sometimes considered an obstacle to male abuse of divorce laws (Yamani, 2008).

Interestingly, however, the *mahr* sometimes discourages marriage altogether. Hoodfar (2009) theorizes that expensive *mahr* was instituted to constrain the practice of polygamy in places where a wife can divorce the man if he marries another wife. This would make sense, as few women set out to be the first of a series of wives. In Hoodfar's view, the large sum given at the start of the marriage and the large sum reserved in case of divorce ensures the wife marital leverage (p. 271).

This view of *mahr* fits well in cases in which a woman is legally able to obtain a divorce on the basis of her husband marrying a second wife; this is, however, infrequently the situation (Uhlman, 2004; Welchman, 2007). Further, while this deferred dowry section of a marriage contract may make some men to think twice before engaging in polygamy, Yamani (2008) has noted that it has caused many men and women to pursue other forms of marriage, and driven some men to seek more financially accessible wives elsewhere.

Marital Obligations: Duty, Obedience, and the Right to Punish

In an Islamic marriage, both men and women contract for specific obligations. Some of the sections in these contracts are quite controversial today. Yamani (2008) offers an overview:

> The contract gives each party the right to the (physical) enjoyment of the other party with one specific difference: that the wife may only enjoy one husband exclusively at the same time, whereas a husband may seek pleasure and enjoyment legally from up to four wives. Additionally, a husband's conjugal rights to this pleasure are continuous while those of the wife are ambiguously undefined amongst the array of jurists' opinions… according to Wahhabi interpretation, the wife, in return for her sexual duties towards her husband, and for providing him with offspring and being obedient towards him is entitled to continuous financial support from him *throughout the duration of the marriage* (author's italics) (p. 82).

This is considered true for nearly all *Sharia* marriages, but we shall see that contemporary work practices of women and other such changes have challenged the legitimacy of what seems to be rather a rather limited understanding. Armstrong (1997) and Rehman (2007) offer a historical context and suggest that while this is currently interpreted as patriarchal and limiting, it may well have represented an enlightened approach relative to treatment of women prior to the establishment of the guideline. Rehman (2007) says:

> …the *Sharia* and Islamic family laws that eventually emerged during the second and third centuries of the Muslim calendar were heavily influenced by the socio-economic, political,

> and indigenous tribal values of the prevailing times. In the development of the classical legal schools, the Islamic jurists frequently adopted male-centric approaches towards women's rights and family laws. A cardinal mistake in the subsequent history of Islam was an insistence upon *Taqlid* or imitation. (p. 123)

Controversy in this area has focused on a woman's duty towards even straightforward things like housework: something that can easily be shared these days but which is raised as a "problem" area. Critically, the restrictions placed upon women's mobility seem related to the idea suggested in the marriage contract and elsewhere that the man is responsible for the sexual virtue of the woman and the best way to ensure that is to keep the woman away from "threatening" public areas (Hoodfar, 2009; Mashour, 2005; 20; Yamani, 2008).

We shall soon discuss how such obligations will be further defined in marriage contracts. Other obligations may be imposed at a later date by the court. For example, a wife may make a claim during the course of the marriage that the man is not meeting his obligations of providing proper support or the like, something which happens frequently in both monogamous and polygamous marriages (Mashour, 2005; Yamani, 2008).

The most contentious section of the *Qur'an* deals with statements that grant a husband the prerogative of punishing his wife. Many modern Muslim interpreters do not legitimize this punishment, and they hold that it contradicts thought within the bounds of *Sharia* law itself: that is, they use the secondary and tertiary elements of *Sharia* law to supersede the initial guidelines. This is summarized by Yamani (2008):

> Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the others, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Allah is high, supreme. (p. 132)

Philips and Jones (2005) understand statements such as the ones summarized above as referring to the Islamic permissibility of light physical admonishment (excluding, for example, face slaps) toward the goal of "bring[ing] the wife back to her senses and re-establish[ing] authority" (p. 26). These authors hold that the "epidemic" of wife abuse in the Western world has confused Muslim people who did not grow up with Islam and do not understand its authentic position on wife abuse. Their suggestion, however, does not speak to the wife abuse (noted throughout this work) that is being documented in a growing body of research within native Islamic communities. In short, despite attempts to interpret the above-quoted passage against physical violence, a belief persists in the Islamic world that men have the right to physically attack their wives, sons, and daughters for "justifiable" reasons. The violence is psychological, and the violence is physical; witness the practice of "honor killing," wherein these lines are used to justify killing for the sake of a man and family retaining their honor they feel is threatened by the behavior of a wife or other family member (Abu-Baker, 2003; Abu-Rabia, 2011; Elsaidi, 2011).

On the other hand, Elsaidi (2011) holds that there is every reason to believe that the restrictive words in the *Qur'an* about when to hit a woman was an attempt to provide a stepping stone to outlawing beating one's wife altogether. In Elsadi's view, since violence towards women was prevalent at the time, Muhammad's hope was that he could regulate it, towards the goal of eradicating it. He quotes El-Fadl who says that in:

> …studying the *Qur'an* it becomes clear that the *Qur'an* is educating Muslims on how to make incremental but lasting improvements in the condition of women that can only be described as progressive for their time and place…. the *Qur'an* recognizes both the human ability to constantly evolve and improve and its need to do so over time" (p. 18).

Mashour (2005) agrees and offers the parallel of the Islamic prohibition of drinking alcohol; alcohol only slowly became prohibited because Muhammad knew that he could not instantly expect people to stop drinking.

Inheritance and Right to Personal Wealth

Generally, a divorced woman can no longer lay claim to her former husband's estate—there is an understanding that the wife has already been financially taken care of. Children above a certain age are considered the responsibility (or even the property) of a father under *Sharia* law (usually, sons from the age of seven and daughters from the age of nine) and thus they may have rights to his inheritance. A mother is not technically obligated to provide financial support for her children after this age (Yamani, 2008, p. 98).

Even when the wife is still married to the husband at the time of his death, there is some debate over her entitlement, as the *Qur'an* specifies that a wife is entitled to half of the amount of what is left to the eldest male who would become the official guardian. There are allowances made for variances in the age of the children, the financial need of the woman, and the wealth of the extended family. However, in cases of polygamy, this allotment becomes immediately divided into halves, thirds, quarters, or more as the children of second, third, or fourth marriages grow older (Yamani, 2008, p. 133).

It is clear from the *Qur'an* that women should be allowed to keep her wealth in a marriage, as was borne out in Muhammad's marriage to the businesswomen. A man may, however, choose to "defend the honor of the family" and the "virtue of the woman" by restricting his wife's employment and other activities. So it can be that women—sometimes specifically because of the marital contract—will remain poor within a family that may otherwise be relatively well-off because the man controls the money. Some religious councils will overturn marital agreements seen to be against the understanding of Islam, and husbands have sought to change their contract by quoting the demands of proprietorship over family virtue and sentencing their wives to be cloistered (Uhlman 2004; Yamani, 2008).

We shall see in Chap. 6 the profound effect of this isolation on a woman's well-being: she may not even be permitted to visit people, including doctors and

therapists. Different countries do permit various degrees of freedom, and even in areas of Saudi Arabia in which the greatest number and degree of restrictions are found, such restrictions are generally attributed to tradition rather than to *Qur'anic* dictates (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press).

The Problem of Divorce

In most Arabic countries that honor *Sharia* law, it is much more difficult for women to gain a divorce than for a man, and the consequences for a woman are, as a rule, more painful. Feelings of intense shame accompany divorce for Muslim women, and typically, her socioeconomic status plummets (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1998). Women often agree to polygamous marriages simply because there are few acceptable alternatives; it may be easier to comply than complain. Since the husband has authority over children at a very early age, the woman may be more concerned with maintaining ties with her children than taking care of her own problems (Al-Krenawi, 2004; Hoodfar, 2009; Yamani, 2008).

For a period of time, Egyptian law permitted a woman to divorce her husband upon discovering that he had married another woman. The number of divorces skyrocketed, a situation that was considered unacceptable. To curtail this immediate recourse to divorce, a law was introduced which stipulated that the first wife had to prove that the second marriage was injurious to her. The number of divorces dropped precipitously, as it was difficult to demonstrate injury to what many perceived was a disinclined court system (Mashour, 2005; Welchman, 2007).

Uhlman (2004) found that it is very easy for a man to engage in plural marriage, even without the knowledge of his first wife. It has also been found that it is simple for a man to divorce a woman. For the most part, the man has the right to divorce through repudiation, that is, unilaterally divorcing a woman (*talaq*). In some Arab countries, a man may divorce by sending his wife three text messages saying in each "I divorce you" (RT News, 2012; The Indian Express, 2009).

Sharia permits a woman to question whether she has been dealt with fairly, and in marriages in which alliance or money have played a part a husband may have to answer to his wife's family. Indeed, one of wives we meet in Chap. 4 attributed her relatively strong standing in her polygamous household to her "strong father." *Tafriq*, in which there is "…physical or emotional injury, irreconcilable differences, discovery after marriage that the husband has an incurable physical defect (i.e., impotence), failure to pay maintenance to the wife, and imprisonment or absence of the husband without reason, for over one year" is an Islamic legal category (Embassy of the United States. See also Oman, 2010). However, Yamani (2008, p. 98) has found that cases attempting to adjudicate fairness can drag on indefinitely in the courts, and women may decide to comply with their husband's wishes rather than be abandoned altogether. This latter exigency is not uncommon. Hoodfar (2009, p. 263) has found that many men not only expect that their wives will be compliant,

they also expect repudiation rights with no consequence. And the silencing of women's voices does not end at the door to the courthouse. Disturbingly, sources from within the court system report that many judges still find the voice of a female plaintiff offensive. Women in Saudi Arabian courts are often abruptly and harshly instructed to stop speaking, stand in a far corner, and let the men handle the course of justice (Yamani, 2008, p. 142).

In many Arab countries, it is difficult for a woman to divorce and remain unscathed, either because the law is not convinced of her peril or because the system will not support her afterwards. Rehman (2007) points out:

> There is also an absence of a social-security network within contemporary Islamic States to prevent the exploitation of economically dependent, vulnerable divorced women. Modern constitutional and State laws must advance sufficiently to close the socio-economic gap. Until complete equality between men and women is reached, polygamy as an institution could arguably serve to protect those women who would otherwise be condemned, discarded, or abandoned in that society through the operation of divorce or nullity laws. (p. 115).

Courts not infrequently question a woman's claims of ill-treatment. In fact, in some schools of Islam, a wife is unable to divorce even in cases of maltreatment, cruelty or the husband's inability to support her (Rehman, 2007, p. 118).

Wives who do not work out of the at home are particularly vulnerable in situations of divorce. A divorced woman is typically left with little money and no claim on the collective wealth of the couple after divorce (Abudabbeh, 2005, pp. 591–592). An ironic reality, then, is that a woman may agree to polygamy to avoid divorce because her only recourse in the case of divorce is to become a second or third wife herself for maintenance purposes (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008a, 2008b).

Khul

In parallel to "no-fault divorce" in the West, *Sharia* law has a provision for *Khul* based upon the prophet Muhammad's permission to a woman to divorce her husband as long as she returns the dower and any other personal presents she had been given during the marriage. The case in the *Qur'an* seems to involve a woman who was independently wealthy enough to return the plot of land which had been her dower. It was, in essence, a faultless absolution of the marriage with no economic consequences. This provision has positive and negative ramifications, as it can serve to absolve men of responsibility. If the purpose of *mahr* is to maintain a marriage, a man may refuse a divorce until his wife becomes desperate enough to agree to a *khul* arrangement. Practically, then, *khul* is not the practice of self-sufficient women, but the final resolution of desperate women. Yamani's (2008) finding that one-half of marriages in Saudi Arabia end this way should be a spur to thought (p. 98; see also Hoodfar, 2009; Oman, 2010).

Newer Contract Stipulations: Other Negotiated Rules

Hoodfar (2009) notes other sections that may be written into contemporary marriage contracts. For example, if there is no stipulation to the contrary, a man maintains absolute control over his finances, and there would be a temptation for him to mete out money based upon his expectations rather than good sense and need—and do whatever he likes with the remainder. Therefore, he may contract to contribute a certain sum for housekeeping expenses (Hoodfar, 2009; Mahmood, 2005). Women have begun to negotiate other contractual marital rights as well. For example, a man may wish his wife to wear a veil but also allow her to work out of the home. Thus, a clause in the contract might state that the woman does not need to wear a veil at work but is expected to wear one otherwise. Mahmoud writes that negotiations such as these represent an effort by women to gain cooperation from their husbands.

Breaking any of these conditions can be grounds for divorce. Involvement of the extended families can be, as we have seen, instrumental in encouraging both husband and wife to fulfill their respective obligations, but this is not always possible. These negotiations are contingent upon family status, strength of influence, and the degree of social stigma that each feels he or she must avoid (Soheilian & Inman, 2009).

Paradoxically, marital negotiations can work to a woman's disadvantage. Negotiations, especially in first marriages, are often kept to a minimum due to concerns of scaring off potential suitors (Hoodfar, 2009, p. 277; Yamani, 2008). Further, while provisions that a woman inserts in a marriage contract may be jettisoned, provisions that a man inserts to control his wife may be retained. Yamani reminds us that, short of demonstrated duress, contracts retain their validity despite one party entering into it from a disadvantaged position (p. 100). Later she adds:

> These examples of previously optional restrictions on women (most of which depended on individual family or tribal custom and tradition) have more recently become imposed from a legally enacted source. These have, in many cases, influenced women to accept disadvantaged marital arrangements, in order to seek salvation from a more difficult situation such as a divorced status, spinsterhood, an unhappy family situation, financial difficulties imposed through lack of work opportunities, or a lack of financial and social independence… even when armed with knowledge, determination and inner strength, unmarried females in Saudi Arabia have very little room for independent manoeuvring (pp. 155–156).

Just as they place great emphasis upon the suitability of a bride or groom entering into marriage, families have been known to break up marriages about which they deem they were not properly consulted. There have been instances in which an entire family sets out to destroy a marriage despite the will of the bride and groom involved (Fargues, 2001; Yamani, 2008).

These problems of contracts and divorces are a sign of transition between newer and older interpretations of male and female roles and rights, and the place or purpose of marriage in contemporary communities. Welchman (2007) writes that people's economies now seem to be taking the place of other equally important aspects of marital law and obligations; that people are too often worried about finances than the rights and feelings of each individual. Abu-Odeh (2004) suggests that there needs to be more trade-off between men and women. He holds that it is unrealistic

to enforce dependency on women, and that there must be more recognition of the financial role that a working wife makes to the marriage, as well as more recognition of the emotional obligations of husbands and fathers.

The notion that marriage must be sanctified by Islamic principles coupled with the enforcement of interpretations of *Sharia* laws that have made conventional marriages so cumbersome has resulted in an unsurprising push towards alternative forms of marriage which many claim maintain the sanctity of Islam (Yamani, 2008, p. 93).

Negotiating Islam's Sanctity: Newer Forms of Marriages and Older Ones Revived

When considering the current state of conventional marriage and newer marriage practices that have arisen as a result, Yamani (2008) says we must consider the:

> …inseparable link between the religious and the legal forces jointly affecting it [marriage], the social circumstances that have created a need for these 'parallel' marriages, and the extent to which these 'new' marriages have often diverged from the socio-religious understanding of the standard Muslim marriage as representing a lifelong partnership, and on the overall lack of social stability caused by this divergence (p. 81).

This panoply of marital structures can be a quagmire for women and children. Polygamous marriages can exist without the knowledge of the state; men may have made these arrangements without the awareness of their other wives and the related families; the woman may have been duped into thinking there were no other wives. On the positive side, some of these newer forms of marriage attempt to recognize the professional and modern rights of women. It is possible, for example, that a woman with a career may not wish to be a full-time wife (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Sa'ar, 2007) nor be straddled with such traditional legal obligations.

A word about love. It would be absurd to say that love was not a factor in arranged marriages of previous generations, but currently young people have begun to insist that it be a preexisting condition, before marital terms are negotiated. Added to this is the fact that many more women and men are enrolling in institutions of higher education and do not wish to have their pursuits hampered. In fact, it is now through these colleges and similar social circles that a woman in particular may try to recruit more suitable, loving candidates for marriage rather than allow her family to find a person of their choosing (Hoodfar, 2009). As women become more self-sufficient and empowered, marrying for love versus marrying to fulfill family obligations has become an increasingly vehement debate.

Alternative Forms of Marriage

One of the more prevalent forms of traditional alternative marriage practiced in Egypt (and similar to other forms practiced elsewhere) is the *Urfi* marriages. These

marriages are not legally contracted, and are, thus, not legally binding. *Urfi* marriages are chosen for many reasons, but often are the result of emotional commitment which has not been sanctioned by families or other institutions (Fargues, 2001; Hoodfar, 2009). This is done when there is objection to one being married to the other, or when the price to be married officially is too high (Fargues, 2001; Hoodfar, 2009).

Hoodfar (2009) discusses how the *mahr* can be lowered to allow a marriage to proceed, and arrangements may be made to allow both women and men to finish their college programs so as to discourage *urfi* marriages. Interestingly, many women in *urfi* marriages change their mind later, when their husbands find themselves with few negotiated responsibilities (Hoodfar, 2009). Many women want their daughters to marry in the conventional, arranged way to a man who is ready to take care of his family, especially when they see those women from "love" arrangements treated poorly or divorced with even less recourse to *mahr* money and support.

Urfi marriages can also be second marriages where a man does not want his first wife to learn of his second marriage. Were he to pursue a legal second marriage, he might have to supply the name(s) and residential address(es) of the existing wife (or wives) who would be notified by the court that their husband was to be married again. As mentioned, an existing wife may be entitled to seek divorce (an expensive proposition) within 1 year of being notified of her husband's subsequent new marriage. Thus, *Urfi* marriage is an attempt to circumvent the court and *Sharia* dictates, as well as possibly those of the family (Hoodfar, 2009; Yamani, 2008).

Misyar marriages, undertaken by men particularly in the Gulf regions of the Middle East, are another type of traditional alternative relationship. In this case (more than in *Urfi* marriage), the intention is most often to circumvent responsibilities to either the first wife or the subsequent wives. The arrangement usually hurts the first wife most, as she is the one who is left without recourse. *Misyar* marriages typically take place when the first wife is past the childbearing years; she is usually very dependent on her husband, and the deflated value of her *mahr* over the years has made it unprofitable to sue for divorce. Women find it very difficult to prove *misyar* marriage in court, as the only "proof" may be the claim that the man's attitude has changed; because *misyar* marriages are not registered, there is no solid evidence of polygamy (Yamani, 2008).

Welchman (2007) and Yamani (2008) agree that *misyar* is typically a flaunting of power and wealth for men; men may be seeking love and emotional support, but, more often, they are seeking sexual gratification. How much women suffer in these alternative arrangements is an open question. A woman relinquishes many rights: to expect her husband to spend time in the household, to, in fact, gain a household, or to ensure security for children that may result from such arrangement (Welchman, 2007). However, researchers have found that some women prefer *misyar* marriage, not only as an alternative to regular marriage—which may have evaded them—but as a convenience wherein they negotiate some financial support, gain some company, and possibly support for children (if they exist and possibly from another marriage), and "only have to cook twice a week" (Hoodfar, 2009, p. 276. See also Khalaf & Khalaf 2009; Sa'ar, 2007). Other women are professionals and do not

wish to be full-time wives (Sa'ar, 2007; Yaqub, 2004). Welchman (2007) reminds us that *misyar* marriages may suit older women who cannot have or did not want babies, but still wish to enjoy marital relationships (p. 103).

Another (more temporary) type of alternative marriage is called *misyaf* ("summer holiday") marriage. For businessmen, it is considered a marriage of convenience when he travels and cannot take his wife. Instead, he employs the legalized company of what those in the West might call a female escort to accompany him to important dinners and other social functions (Al-Krenawi, 1998). Typically, the intentions of these liaisons are questioned. Women may negotiate arrangements like this where, for example, they cannot negotiate banking or other business dealings by themselves and they do not have the support of, or the inclination to get, a male family member involved (Yamani, 2008). This type of marriage is negotiated as one of convenience, similar to a marriage negotiated to get immigration rights into a country; the marriage is to be absolved once the business is finished (not necessarily consummated) (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Sa'ar, 2007).

These marriages borrow their religious legality from their historical origin, so that the parties involved enjoy the peace of mind of operating within the framework of religion (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Sa'ar, 2007). Many of these marriages take place between men from Arab Gulf countries and women from lower financial backgrounds in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. A thriving business is thus created in many countries, involving the guardians of the girls, the marriage contractors, the hotels, and even the taxi drivers (Yamani, 2008, p. 105). These marriages are usually registered, and sometimes problematically, the ensuing offspring will carry the nationality of their father. According to the laws of some of their countries of birth (for example, Egypt), children of these marriages are not eligible to enjoy the benefits of social services, and even education, available to local children.

These elaborate arrangements play out as an attempt to legitimize and administer prostitution. Tunis has gone as far as to allow prostitution to take place legally in sanctioned neighborhoods, as they suggest that the best way to help women in this situation is to create some safer environments for them to practice (Bradley, 2010).

Misyaf is very similar to the practice of *Mut'a* marriage which occurs especially in Shi'a countries like Iran. This is even more like a form of prostitution; in fact women have been accused of practicing it under cover of *Mut'a* (Bata, n.d.; Labi, 2010; Persson, 2004). *Mut'a* is understood to have been expressly forbidden by the Prophet, but the practice is still sanctioned by some *imams* and others. Similar to *misyar* and the others, such arrangements are understood as beneficial to some women who use it to find some form of support when there would otherwise be none. Persson (2004) documents a particularly compelling story of a woman whose husband was jailed and who became a heroin addict and a prostitute. Her salvation appeared to come through a series of *Mut'a* marriages wherein she (eventually) achieved abstinence and received financial support for her child (see also Bradley, 2010; Labi, 2010).

It has been suggested that limiting the number of wives permitted to one man may have been the first step towards curbing the practice of polygamy, and so *Sharia* law can slowly work towards outlawing it altogether (Al-Hibri 1997; Khasawneh,

Hijazi, & Salman, 2011a, 2011b; Mashour, 2005; Profanter & Cate, 2009; Rabia, 2011). It is understandable that this would take time but, Mashour (2005) questions why it is that *mut'a* and *misyar* marriages are generally outlawed, that slavery is outlawed, that physical violence to women is often frowned upon, but polygamy remains relatively unchallenged by most states (p. 585).

Yamani (2008) brings an account of *badal* marriage (marriage by exchange), wherein a man gives his own daughter or related woman as a bride to the father of the woman that he wishes to marry, or brothers marry each other's sisters. In this exchange of women, no other *mahr* is involved (Slomin Nevo & Al Krenawi, 2006). In *Hiba* marriages, a woman offers herself to a man as a marital partner (a way in which the prophet Muhammad himself is reported to have obtained one of his wives). A *mahr* has not always been necessary to cement this marriage contract either, though it is often required now. However, a *wali* (guardian) is not needed. A *hiba* marriage is one way in which secret marriages, such as some *urfi* or *misyar* marriages, are later legitimized. Other forms of marriage may exist in these regions, especially given the number of travelers, including expatriates from many countries who might suggest non-Islamic forms of marriage or simply taking up residence together (Yamani, 2008).

The workings of Islamic marriages, both within and without the law, have increased the difficulty of address completely the issue of polygamy. Many Arab states have already recognized that women encounter financial, social, and personal problems in polygamous relationships. Challengingly, it is essentially impossible to enforce laws that seek to apply even the one marital rule upon which all Muslims agree: that if there is to be a polygamous marriage, each woman should be treated fairly and equitably.

In the next section I shall offer a quick sampling of family law in the Middle East (MENA, 2007; Rosen, 2008; Welchman, 2007).

Review of Laws

Family laws in many Middle Eastern countries are in such disarray that enforcement is unfathomable (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; MENA, 2007; The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007; Welchman, 2007). A woman has the right, in some countries, to divorce a husband who takes another wife (Abudabbeh 2005); in others, these women must prove "veritable distress." There are 19 different recognized religious or cultural groups in Lebanon, a situation which makes any consistent enforcement of family laws practically impossible (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007). Polygamy is generally prohibited in Syria and in Iraq, but it is not abolished (Abudabbeh 2005; Layish, 1979).

Regime changes can alter much, and not always for the better. Due to the number of war widows, some in Iraq are once again encouraging polygamy (Ayoubi, 2011; International Business Times, 2011). Libya was recently liberated from a dictator who relied on tribal allegiances and traditionalist platitudes for power; however,

fundamentalists in Libya persuaded the government to pass laws in October, 2012, laws to make it easier for men to practice polygamy. The new government in Tunisia is being extensively pressured by Islamist groups to reintroduce polygamy (Al Arabiya, 2012).

Even where secular institutions exist to control personal laws, these laws are often reviewed by similar *uluma* organizations. All countries in the Middle East debate whether, despite there being many Western-style laws left over from colonial rule, there can, or should ever, be a completely secular approach towards laws controlling marriage and the family, or whether a reversal into full *taqlid* (strict unthinking following of the rules) should take place (Abu-Odeh, 2004). Because of the difficulty of defining and applying some of these *Sharia* rules justly (at least by many people's definitions), those who agitate for reform have had to grapple with the question of how society can maintain religious devotion and the essence of *Sharia*—which is meant to guide a Muslim person's life—when that life is more and more being understood as beyond the realm of religious text and traditional practice.

Welchman (2007) holds that the *qadi* (loosely, the court) seeks to support the powerless, but that this goal is contingent upon the whims of the people serving on them (Welchman, p. 23; see also Yamani, 2008). A different but related question is: how does one construct a single code of law between Sunni and Shi'a groups in Bahrain, or Saudi Arabia, or any other place where two or more interpretations of Islam exists?

Abu-Odeh (2004) writes that Egypt's cultural identity is profoundly dependent on family law. Many attempts at family reform have been made, but fear of Western ideals has led to reform being dropped (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Baker, 2010). Egypt, then, represents another case of keeping family law under Islam's *Sharia* law as a cultural response to the West (p. 183). Some reform-minded individuals are afraid to even bring marriage into the discussion as it seems one of the totems of resiliency in the Arab world over the "decadent" West and the vestiges of colonialism (Abu-Odeh, 2004). Welchman (2007) says:

> …it is a prominent point of difference between what are presented as the values of the West and the text based principles of Islamic family law. The classical law left the conclusion of a polygamous marriage formally un-regulated by the courts, while developing principles on the rights of co-wives vis-à-vis their husbands on the side… [as one commentator suggested], don't attack the *shari'a*—that is for the West to do. (p. 75)

The following brief review of laws will provide a sense of the number of people that realize the detrimental effects of polygamy, and, for fear of reprisal, are unable to outlaw, or even regulate, it.

The UAE has tried to ameliorate some of the harm done to women in polygamous households. They may, for example, attempt to convince people to divorce from bad subsequent marriages, as well as increase dowries to protect women from or during divorce. Morocco has seen an increase in polygamy, possibly attributable to the discouraging of de facto polygamy (i.e., those that are not registered) (Welchman, 2007, p. 79) which helps children born "out of wedlock." Both Syria and the Eastern Africa areas have laws that limit polygamy to those men whose

first wives have a chronic illness which might prevent her from performing her "wifely duties." Jordan pursues a strict scrutiny of the man's economic means before sanctioning subsequent marriages (Khasawneh et al., 2011a, 2011b). Iran and Iraq, on the other hand, have alleged that since there is a surplus of women, there should be few restrictions to polygamy (Ayoubi, 2011; Davis, 2010; International Business Times, 2011).

Whether the first wife must be informed of the impending subsequent marriage, and what recourse she may have once informed, is a particularly thorny issue. For example, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya require the first wife be notified; Jordan, Qatar, and Yemen do not (Welchman, 2007, pp. 82–83. See also MENA, 2007). Thus, it is possible that, though the man's means may be evaluated, the first wife might never know. This divergence is also related to what recourse is available to the woman. We noted the situation in Egypt, wherein women had originally been allowed to divorce immediately but now have to prove emotional or financial distress (Fargues, 2001). Finally, it is important to note the overall social reality. Rabia (2011) tells the moving story of a Bedouin-Arab woman:

> [When] Samira, a Bedouin woman from one of the villages in the Naqab desert of Israel, found out about her husband's intentions to marry a second wife, she decided to resist her polygamous husband. Samira filed a complaint at the Israeli police station. The Bedouin policeman refused to register her complaint, saying: 'Do you want to get me into trouble with your tribe? She went to the head of the police station, an Israeli (Jew) that told her, 'I cannot do anything about it, it is an internal matter I suggest you to talk with the Sheikh.' She went to the Sheikh and was told, 'I don't understand what do you want from me, your husband can marry more than one wife. He is a Muslim, isn't he?' (p. 1)

We begin to glimpse the many paradoxes that enter into the polygamy debate in the Middle East; the discouraging of informal polygamy may result in an increase of formal polygamy, governmental change can result in a *more* fundamentalist cultural and legal approach, and modernity brings in its wake a retrenchment of patriarchal control.

Relationship with the West

There exists an overall feeling that Islam has not been given a chance to work (this, whether or not one agrees that *itjihad* floundered at the start of the second millennium). There is a tendency to view the hundreds of years of colonial rule as an attempt to redefine—and possibly squelch—Arab identity. The new nationalism has garnered many traditional elements, especially religious practice, as being exemplary of the difference between the Arab people and the old conquerors. Thus, it is demanded of Islam to be viable, and the attempts to rule by *Sharia* law must be successful if Arab people are to be free from outside influence. This challenge has been embraced, spurned, and used as an excuse for fanaticism, all according to the bent of those involved.

Indeed, critics of the West have exerted a powerful influence in this region. Abu-Odeh (2004) holds strongly that if only the West would back away, there might be great reform in the Islamic states:

> I firmly believe that the reasons for the power status of women in our societies and the lack of opportunities for progress afforded to them are not dues to Islam but rather to certain economic and political forces, namely, those of foreign imperialism operating mainly from the outside and of the reactionary classes operating from the inside. (p. 188)

Sabry (2010) concurs, and quotes Laroui (1974) who suggests that many people in the Middle East feel the only way to combat Western modernization is by enforced *traditionalization*. The somewhat mythic explanation goes as follows: the Arab people were great before the West came, Islam was part of that Arab identity; therefore, it can be great once again if we revitalize it properly:

> In a traditional society the obstacle to progress is not entirely internal; rather it is a resultant, composed of an outside influence, always manifested as a threat, and a reaction peculiar to the society in question. If the outside pressure persists or intensifies, traditionalisation also intensifies. That is why all the static models proposed by the sociologists—models that do not take into account this factor of outside pressure—must show tradition as an insurmountable obstacle (cited in Sabry, 2010, p. 123).

Fargues (2001) gives the impression that family laws have in fact been changing dramatically, straying from traditional *Sharia* rules, yet marriage as an institution has actually been getting stronger rather than falling apart, as it has in the West. However, anti-Western legislators and critics often argue that, should such changes occurs, the institution of marriage will fall just as has happened in the West. That quite the opposite has happened is explained by the position that Arab people remain different from Westerners (Abu-Odeh, 2004). Like the willing adoption of *hijab* in defiance of Western sexual decadence, marriage has become a symbol of "Arabness" and/or of the superiority of the Arab way of life (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press). Abu-Odeh (2004) completes the thought: "There is a fundamental difference between West and East—Christian, materialistic versus spiritual—family has disintegrated and sexual prohibitions have collapsed (while our family is tight and our women have honour)…" (p. 189).

The argument is complex. Despite evidence to the contrary, there is still reluctance to change family law for fear that it could spark a decline into "Western decadence." "Mainstream feminists are [considered] agents of the West," explains Abu-Odeh (2004), and women's efforts too often must be channelled into "having to defend Islam against its detractors…" (p. 198). However, Abu-Odeh holds that this sanctimonious image of the Muslim family is a myth. It is probably as much of a myth as the images of the Western world portrayed by the television programs and other such communications that infiltrate the psyche of the average Arab citizen (Said, 1989).

This media portrayal presents a serious psychological dilemma for Islamic youth. They are exposed through the media to the full gamut of sexual relationships, yet they are taught that to pursue any such lifestyle—to consider any goal other than marriage—would somehow make them decadent, sacrilegious, and traitorous (Bradley, 2010; Sabry, 2010; Whitaker, 2006).

Sabry's (2010) fascinating study of young people in Morocco documents the musings of young people who feel obligated by this matrimonial mandate. He found that these youth are embroiled in a negotiation of how to be modern within a world which also demands one proudly display one's unique identity (contrived though that may be). One of his respondents says:

> How can I now suddenly wear the hijab after 24 years of Western influence? Young people are afraid of growing beards and talking about Islam. You say American and Western film has an influence on us. We take from the Americans; they never ask us to. They never impose things on us. I am going to be frank here, I will touch on a point many of my brothers and sisters ignored, or are maybe shy to talk about… There's an enigmatic and contradictory relationship between our culture, tradition and our nature as human beings. We are taught that to be true Muslims we have to wear the *Hijab*, hide our head, our legs and whatever may be attractive to a man. We cannot have sex until we are married. Having sex beforehand is a big sin . . . Most of those who marry do so in their 30s (have to get good jobs first)… If you have a sexual relationship beforehand, society points its finger at you. Our society is against us; our tradition is clearly not helping, so where do we go? (p. 132)

Sabry (2010) is recording a profound philosophical suspicion: that the segregation of men and women under strict traditional guidelines, the vilification of people who cross personal and sexual boundaries imposed by local custom, smacks of anti-humanism. That is, that true and free individual love between a man and a woman (in this case) is as unmanageable and thus as unwanted and unacceptable as a sexual encounter between them. These youth are concerned with individuality and personal emotions, and this poses a serious problem for religious leaders. Such a change in mentality suggests the desire to leave the confines of the group (and religious) ethic and function with greater individual thought; a move from the idea of freedom expressed within the dictates of tribal mandates to a more anarchistic individualism.

This illustrates a moral and practical problem: at what point are we trying too hard to control people? Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) note that oftentimes polygamous marriages are used to quell rebellion in adolescent Bedouin-Arab girls—such a girl may be precipitously married off to a man with other wives. And Abu-Odeh (2004) quotes Nawal Saadawi who says that "sexual oppression is at the heart of patriarchy—the obsession with a woman's virginity [is an example]…" (p. 188), and certainly it becomes difficult to promote a fundamental ideal of virtue in the midst of conflicting and often more attractive ideals. Even if the West were to keep its distance, the Middle East would, nonetheless, find itself compelled deal with the ideas communicated from the "outside."

Even the messages from globalization, however, are mixed. While secularism is the watchword of the West, we still hear an insistence that people should be free to pursue their beliefs, and that compromise can be found. Is there a willingness to put up with *Sharia* if it can be reconciled with rights? What constitutes equality in a world where we acknowledge that none of us are particularly good at practicing what we preach?

Changing within Islamic Principles?

Sabry (2010) and Yamani (2010) write that the vilification of relationships between women and men that is found in the Middle East is confusing to young people and cannot, in this global age, remain as part of a viable system. There are feminist movements in Arab countries who are interested in the fate of women in marriages, polygamous, or otherwise. Even the most oppressive regimes claim that policy and reforms, in whatever guise, within marriage laws are to be made for the benefit of women's rights and freedoms. Yet, there is also no doubt that, in some countries in particular, women remain so entirely dependent upon the male population who are supported by acquiescent courts that they are unable to extricate themselves from bad and/or polygamous marriages. Otherwise, they seem relegated to enter alternative, often polygamous forms of marriage simply by virtue of wishing to pursue personal ambition: wishing to pursue an education, or a business, or some other profession, or something other than the well-defined role of the good wife (Yamani, 2008). This imposed lack of interaction with the outside world has reduced most women to a state of total financial dependence. Its consequences are most evident in cases where marriage either does not materialize (Yamani, 2008, p. 113) or ends in an unhappy state of polygamy or divorce (p. 151).

Baker (2010) suggests a contemporary predicament due to governmental tyranny and anticolonial sentiment. This argument runs that it is more than anti-Western sentiment that threatens marriage reform; it is the understanding that marriage may be the only thing over which there is some personal control when dictatorships kill free expression:

> …Ordinary people throughout the region are struggling resolutely every day using whatever means available to them to create better lives for themselves and their children. They actively yearn for more just economic and political systems. They seek to create societies rooted in inherited Islamic values but open to the world, pluralistic and tolerant, and with greater freedoms and more widely shared prosperity… In the conditions in which Muslim peoples find themselves it is precisely these perfectly understandable battles for normalcy that foster resistance, including the forceful resistance that so many in the West find baffling. These are national and not civil rights struggles. The occupiers leave no room for nonviolent resistance. There is no constitution or even shared values to appeal to, as the occupiers no less than the local dictators routinely ignore international human rights law. How can one live a normal life in the face of such tyranny and degrading oppression? Does it make any sense at all to fault Arab citizens and the movements they support for the duality of their commitments, at once to the fulfillment of quite common everyday dreams of adequate food, shelter, health care, and education for their children while at the same time fostering resistance to local tyrants and foreign invaders, using force as circumstances require? (p. 260)

The power of the Islamic identity is difficult to measure in the usual ways, Baker continues, and is not tied to the dictates of any particular individual, movement, organization, or state, "…though its deepest reservoir throughout the ages has been the Islamic mainstream. Islam is unpredictable in both the timing and locus of its actions and reactions. Islamist theorists explain Islam in the world as a living rather than mechanical entity" (p. 263).

But things must change, and, as Baker notes above, many thinkers believe that Islam, despite its apparent inflexibility, is a living, breathing entity. The discussion in the Middle East may not be loud, but it is incessant, and it is changing the way people look at things all the time. Traditionalists will quote verses to back up conservative viewpoints just as relativists and liberal thinkers will do the same to back up new ideas or reinterpret ideas so that original questions are kept alive. Here, we shall briefly review the main argument of the right, the center, and the more liberal ideas that are seeking to redefine or maintain family structures and relationships.

On the conservative side are those thinkers who remind us how freedom, rights, respect, and obligations are conceived in a high-context society. Abu-Odeh (2004) quotes Nadia Hijab:

> Islam protects the Muslim woman who is decent and who respects her home, her husband and children. Islam does not give rights to the woman who rebels, and who is *nashiz*… *Nashiz* is a woman who leaves her husband's house and refuses to return. People can be different but have the right to be treated in a just way that respects and acknowledges their gender and social difference. Society is comprised of 'transactional reciprocity' (p. 187); each according to who they are and their capacity and need.

A more centrist approach adopted by many feminist reformers acknowledges, at least to some extent, the validity of certain ideas important in the West. Here, it seems, many advances in women's law are the result of compromise: the willingness to accept certain conditions laid out in a marriage contract for concessions (Hoodfar, 2009; Mahmood, 2005; Yamani, 2008). Many people will accept that marriage laws should fall within the confines of Islamic *Sharia* law. However, others argue that this in itself is a desperate concession to Islam caused by the perpetual state of dependency in which many women find themselves stuck. Abu-Odeh (2004) summarizes this paradox:

> Islam, the West, and patriarchy represent the defining ends of the triangle within Egyptian feminism finds itself trapped today. Toward each it has developed a response. In relation to the first (Islam), it is modernizing (when its interlocutor is a religious adversary). In relation to the second (the West), it is an apologist (when its interlocutor is Western). In relation to the third (patriarchy), it is liberal. (p. 199)

Further, according to Abu-Odeh (2004), there are few reformers who call themselves liberal and Muslim who feel they can advocate the laws of marriage being taken out of the context of *Sharia*.

Bala (2009) holds that "…the fact that predominantly Muslim countries like Tunisia and Turkey have prohibited polygamy reveals that such a prohibition is not inconsistent with Islam" (p. 204). Many Muslims argue that Mohammed's words were of a time, and "polygamy is no longer necessary or applicable to Islam" (Alexandre, 2007, p. 13). In Indonesia, for example, courts often remind polygamists that polygamy was not *created* by Islam but, rather, that restrictions were *defined* by Islam. Thus, if Islam is to be the justification for polygamy, it is incumbent upon civil law to very carefully regulate it to ensure the strictures of both *Sharia* and civil liberty and rights are followed (Butt, 2010, p. 294).

An interesting idea sometimes put forth is that the West may espouse worthwhile values, and only the manner in which colonization came to be played out is

objectionable. It is here that ideological compromise can be found; perhaps, free of what some see as historic Western invasion, Islam and the West would have found (and may still find) common ground. This builds on the idea, put forth even by relatively objective commentators, that Islam was originally a reforming religion and has within it the ability to modify itself. Thus, the argument goes: if it was hijacked by patriarchs, reformists must hijack it back.

In his (2009) study on Palestinian women's experiences of polygamy, Al-Krenawi (2012) calls for a reform of the Palestinian Personal Status Law based on *ijtihaad* and modern interpretations of *Shar'ia*. This researcher notes that in Palestine, a husband is permitted to conceal subsequent marriages from his first wife, and that "polygamy in Palestine thrives on the arrogance of the men who take advantage of the current state of chaos in the PA's judicial and legislative systems."

This call for reform is not confined to the Middle East. Nurlaelawati (2010) reminds us that in Indonesia:

> …polygyny is tolerated only on the grounds of necessity, for example, for the protection of widows and orphans after a war, which is exactly what had happened in the time of the Prophet. The stipulation which is laid down in the Qur'an insisting that all wives should be treated equally seems to stress that polygyny is basically discouraged, as it is believed to be difficult for a man to fulfill such a demand. In this context it is stressed that Muhammad was married to a number of women, as an example of his self-sacrifice and self-denial, instead of his seeking of enjoyment and pleasure (p. 105).

The debate over the survival and development of marriage and the family rages on, and we will learn in Chap. 6 some ways to support emotional health in these structures. Recent changes in the Middle East have moved the issue further, as women and men have fought alongside each other in countries like Tunis and Egypt. Their views of what it means to be free, equal, democratic, Arab, and pious are all being tested. No region—even one that is high-context—is ineluctably tied to the traditions of the past. The worldwide flow of ideas reaches all.

Regardless of where one stands on the polygamy/monogamy divide, the practice of polygamy is very much alive. A core concern, embedded throughout both rhetoric and reasoning, is the effect of polygamy on the men, women, and children in polygamous households. Chapters 4–6, rooted in our research on Bedouin-Arab families in southern Israel, will add many dimensions to the discussion.

Chapter 4
The Call for Different Perspectives: Methodology

Abstract This chapter is a statistical analysis of the dynamics of polygamy, which focuses on the children, wives, *and* men in these complex family structures. The research was carried out in the Bedouin-Arab community in southern Israel.

In this first quantitative section, we highlight how the variable "family functioning" was found to be crucial in explaining poor adjustment of children, men, and women in Bedouin-Arab polygamous families as compared with monogamous families. A regression analysis showed this variable to be the best predictor of all symptoms, explaining from 15.1 % to 26 % of the variance.

In the second qualitative section of this chapter, we present Part 2 of the project, in which specific patterns of relationship were analyzed for their contribution to emotional functioning. This second section is based on research done by Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi (Fam Process 45(3):311–330, 2006).

In response to the call for quantitative and qualitative inquiry into the dynamics of polygamy, including children's perceptions of familial discord, degree of marital mutual respect, and parental involvement (Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine, & Abu-Saad, 2002), the call for investigations of the effects of multi-bonding on men's physical and mental health (Loue, 2005), and the call for culturally conscious research on Arab families (Beitin, Allen, & Bekheet, 2010), we now present an unusual two-part research project carried out in the Bedouin-Arab community in southern Israel by Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo in 2002. Part 1 of this project was quantitative, while Part 2 was qualitative. This study is unique in several ways. First, it was comprehensive in terms of both number of participants (approximately 1,000 polygamous and monogamous subjects) and number of measures which were used (family member well-being was assessed by many mental health, satisfaction, and interpersonal relationship measures). Second, it allowed for a direct comparison of polygamous and monogamous family members. Third, rather than focusing exclusively on women or children, it examined the well-being of women (first wives), children, *and* men in polygamous households as compared to their cohorts in monogamous households. The results of this project were reported in three

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segments: Al-Krenawi, Slonim-Nevo & Graham, 2006; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008a; and Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008b. The latter paper was described by Shepard (2012) in her review of prevalence research on the mental health of polygamous women as "an example for future replication" (p. 8). Specifically, she notes the large sample, the attempt at random sampling, the minimizing of bias by specifying exposure to polygamy, the use of strong, validated, back-translated, and specific measurement tools, and the employment of strong statistical analyses (p. 8).

In this first quantitative section, we shall highlight how the variable "family functioning" was found to be crucial in explaining poor adjustment of children, men, and women in Bedouin-Arab polygamous families as compared with monogamous families. A regression analysis showed this variable to be the best predictor of all symptoms, explaining from 15.1 % to 26 % of the variance.

In the second qualitative section of this chapter, we present Part 2 of the project, in which specific patterns of relationships were analyzed for their contribution to emotional functioning. This second section is based on research done by Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi (2006).

The Bedouin Arab

The Bedouin Arab is one of several thousand indigenous communities found throughout the world.

Traditionally, the Bedouin Arabs, who are Muslim, were nomadic and raised sheep and camels in the deserts of the Middle East. The anthropologist Kay notes that "The word 'Bedouin' is the Western version of the Arabic word *badawiyin* which means 'inhabitants of the desert,' the *Badia*" (Kay, 1978, p. 7). The Bedouin Arabs have lived "in Arab countries along the north of Africa, from Morocco to Egypt, and extending into the Arabian Peninsula from Israel, Jordan and Syria to Saudi Arabia" (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2009). These communities predate Christianity and Islam.

Approximately 200,000 Bedouin Arabs live in the Negev (southern Israel). More than 50 % live in one of the region's seven recognized Bedouin-Arab villages (the remainder live in a number of unrecognized villages). This community is very young; 25 % of the Bedouin-Arab children are under age 4 (as compared to 10.3 % in the general population). More than half of the population of recognized localities is younger than 18, and only 1.3 % of the Bedouin Arabs are elderly, as compared to 9.8 % in the general population (Statistical Yearbook of the Negev Bedouin, 2004, p. 185).

The Bedouin Arabs are undergoing a rapid and dramatic process of transition and change caused by sedentarization, urbanization, and the influences of modernization. Traditional economies have given way to industrialization, tents have given way to houses, and health care, social services, and educational opportunities have been transforming Bedouin-Arab life.

Polygamy is still a widespread practice in Bedouin society in the Negev. In fact, according to Ben David (2004), polygamy has been increasing in this population regardless of age, education, and socioeconomic standing—at the rate of 1 % per year, reaching a level of about 30–35 %.

Section 1

Part 1: The Quantitative Study

Husbands' Sample

The fathers' (husbands) sample included 315 from the Negev region of Israel. 178 were from polygamous families and 174 were from monogamous families. The names of the men were obtained through their children who were interviewed for another study looking at children from monogamous and polygamous families (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2002). The participants' ages ranged from 31 to 78 (Mean = 45.19, SD = 8.29) and their education ranged from 0 to 16 years of study (Mean = 5.88, SD = 4.49). Most men were unemployed (51 %), 44 % employed, and 5 % retired. Number of wives—2 to 5—(Mean = 2.19, SD = 0.56) (see Table 4.1).

Socio-demographic Characteristics

Table 4.1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in both groups of men. The results show that men from these monogamous families were significantly more educated than their counterparts from polygamous families ($p < 0.05$). Nonetheless, the educational level of the participants in both groups was very low (the average was 6.4 years among monogamous men and 5.35 years among polygamous men).

As we have seen, the mean age of men and the mean age of their first wives in a polygamous family were higher than among men and their wives in a monogamous marriage ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively). In fact, the length of time a first wife had been in a polygamous marriage was related to her age; that is, the mean age of the first wife is 42.5 years compared to the second wife whose mean age is 31.30.

Men in the polygamous marriages we studied had more sons and daughters than their monogamous counterparts ($p < 0.001$); this is as we might expect, since the polygamous family is significantly larger than the monogamous family. While the number of sons borne, on average, by a woman in a polygamous marriage may have been different than the number borne by women in monogamous marriages, a polygamous man will have more sons, 7.06 boys on average as compared to 4.60, and more daughters, 7.33 girls as compared to 4.15. The first wife usually had more adolescents than second wives and a polygamous man has approximately the same

Table 4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of both men's groups

Variable	Values	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=174$
Age of the man***		$X=45.19$, SD = 8.29	$X=46.69$, SD = 8.78	$X=43.69$, SD = 7.50
Age of man when married		$X=21.12$, SD = 4.4	$X=20.8$, SD = 4.50	$X=21.6$, SD = 4.2
Age of first wife*		$X=41.05$, SD = 7.60	$X=42.5$, SD = 7.9	$X=39.4$, SD = 6.8
Age of second wife			$X=31.30$, SD = 6.06	
Age of third wife			$S=27.24$, SD = 4.6	
Age of fourth wife			$X=24.67$, SD = 3.72	
Men's years of education**		$X=5.88$, SD = 4.49	$X=5.35$, SD = 4.4	$X=6.40$, SD = 4.5
Number of wives			$X=2.19$, SD = 0.56	
Number of sons		$X=5.85$, SD = 2.74	$X=7.06$, SD = 2.78	$X=4.60$, SD = 2.06
Sons from 1st wife			$X=4.5$, SD = 2.0	
Sons from 2nd wife**			$X=2.4$, SD = 17	
Sons from 3rd wife			$X=1.0$, SD = 1.0	
Sons from 4th wife			$X=0.7$, SD = 0.8	
Total daughters		$X=5.78$, SD = 3.18	$X=7.33$, SD = 3.36	$X=4.15$, SD = 1.92
Daughters from 1st wife			$X=4.7$, SD = 2.25	
Daughters from 2nd wife			$X=2.6$, SD = 2.0	
Daughters from 3rd wife			$X=1.0$, SD = 1.4	
Daughters from 4th wife			$X=0.1$, SD = 0.4	
Number of years married till second wife taken			$X=13.6$, SD = 5.7	
Husband's employment	Unemployed	51	57	46
	Employed in profession	41	32	49
	Employed not in his profession	3	4	1
	Retired	5	7	4
Economic situation***	Excellent/very good	22	24	21
	Good/nearly good	63	63	62
	Not good/not good at all	15	13	17

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

number of boys and girls from their first wives as would a monogamous man. The length of time that the first wife had been in the marriage is directly reflected in the number of adolescents she has.

More polygamous men we studied were unemployed than the monogamous men, 57 % compared to 46 %, yet there are no significant differences in economic status between the two groups with surprisingly just a few more monogamous families being less well off than polygamous. More polygamous men had polygamous fathers themselves than did monogamous men ($p<0.05$). Finally, it is notable that polygamous men generally reported that the economic status of their first wife was just as good as that of their second wife.

Children and Adolescents

In the first stage of sampling, we collected the names of 1,000 children of first wives of polygamous families and 1,000 children of monogamous families. Children were in seventh through ninth grade. The lists of names came from 11 junior high schools in the Negev.

In the second stage, we deleted names of siblings from the list to ensure that only one child would represent each family. Of those remaining, SPSS software randomly selected 380 children to participate. Of these randomly chosen participants, 2 children refused to fill out the questionnaires, and 9 were absent on the day we administered the questionnaires. In all, 17 questionnaires were disqualified: 8 because they were completed by children of second wives, 6 because they had been filled out by children of a dead parent, 2 because they were blank, and 1 because it was filled out incorrectly.

The final sample consisted of 352 students, 174 from monogamous families and 178 from polygamous families, divided by gender and family status. The boys' group comprised 47 % of the polygamous group and 50 % of the monogamous group. The girls' group comprised 53 % of the polygamous group and 50 % of the monogamous group. Ages ranged from 13 to 15 years ($M=14.05$ years, SD = 0.83 years) (See Table 4.2).

Mothers' Sample

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Women's Groups

The sample consisted of 315 women: 156 from polygamous families and 159 from monogamous families. The names of the participants were obtained from their children, who were interviewed for a different study in various schools in the Negev. After receiving permission from the Ministry of Education, the children were sampled randomly by SPSS software. Mothers who were contacted by phone in order to obtain parental consent for the children's study received information about the

Table 4.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of both children groups

Variable	Values	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=174$
Gender	Male	49	47	50
	Female	51	53	50
Age		$X=14.05$, SD = 0.85	$X=14.17$, SD = 0.82	$X=13.93$, SD = 0.80
Father's years of education**		$X=7.62$, SD = 4.15	$X=6.99$, SD = 4.20	$X=8.19$, SD = 4.04
Mother's years of education**		$X=5.11$, SD = 4.40	$X=4.20$, SD = 4.20	$X=6.05$, SD = 4.40
Father's employment**	Unemployed	40	46	34
	Employed in his profession	49	42	56
	Employed not in his profession	3	2	5
	Retired	8	10	5
Mother's employment	Unemployed	73	77	69
	Employed in her profession	11	9	14
	Employed not in her profession	1	1	1
	Retired	15	13	16
Types of family	Polygamous	51		
	Monogamous	49		
Number of siblings (excluding participant)***			$X=13.37$, SD = 5.26	$X=8.30$, SD = 2.77
School equipment	Has	96	95	97
	Doesn't have	4	5	3
Religious observance*	Practising	89	86	92
	Non-practicing	11	14	8
Types of housing	Stone/concrete house	74	73	74
	Hut/tent	26	27	26
Economic situation***	Excellent/good	53	45	62
	Good/adequate	40	44	35
	Not good/not at all	7	11	3
Primary aliments	Sweets	7	5	10
	Dairy	11	11	11
	Meat	13	14	12
	Fruit and vegetables	22	26	18
	Bread, pasta, potatoes, rice	45	42	48
	Other	2	2	1

present research. Of those contacted in this way, 319 consented to participate and scheduled a meeting with the interviewers. All of the women from the polygamous families were their husband's first wives.

No man in our study had more than two wives. Four women refused to complete the questionnaire while meeting with the interviewers; hence, they were not included in the sample. On average, 13 years had elapsed between the husband's two marriages. In the sample as a whole, the women's ages ranged from 28 to 58 ($M = 40.76$, $SD = 6.12$) and their education ranged from 0 to 16 years of schooling ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 3.93$). Only 4 % of the women worked outside of the home. 69 % lived in a stone or concrete house and 315 in a hut or tent (see Table 4.3).

As we can see from Table 4.3 below, there were many differences between women in the polygamous relationships and those in the monogamous relationships. For example, the wives' mean age is higher by 2.53 years, while the husbands' mean age is higher by 2.54 years. On the other hand, while the polygamous husbands' mean age at marriage is lower by 1.18 years than that of the monogamous husbands, there was no significant difference in the mean ages of the wives. While the educational level in both samples was very low, both the women and men in polygamous marriages had significantly less education than their cohorts in monogamous marriages: a mean difference of 1.49 years for the women and 1.59 for the men. Finally, the economic status of polygamous families was generally worse than that of monogamous families.

Data Collection

We discussed with the Bedouin-Arab teachers the quality of the Arabic versions of the research instruments, and we spoke with the Arabic-language teachers in the participating schools about each child's literacy. Next, the students gave their agreement to participate in the research. The students were asked for their address and phone number as part of their consent. We obtained informed consent for the study from the Ministry of Education and parents of the students in the sample.

The children received self-report questionnaires in Arabic, containing closed questions and standard research instruments. Male and female Arab university students were available to answer questions as the participants filled in the questionnaires. The Arab university students provided assistance to those participants who had difficulties understanding some of the questions. (Male students helped male participants, and female students helped female participants.) This method made it possible to include in the sample both illiterate and literate students.

Permission was obtained through telephone conversations with mothers and fathers for the students to participate in the study with adolescents. Three hundred and nineteen Bedouin-Arab university students met with the mothers, interviewed the women in their homes, and, when necessary, read the questions aloud and recorded the participant's answers to the questionnaire (i.e., with illiterate subjects). For cultural reasons, all of the interviews in this part of the study were conducted by

Table 4.3 Socio-demographic characteristics of both mother's groups

Variable	Values	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=174$
Age of the woman***		$X=40.76$, SD = 6.12	$X=42.05$, SD = 6.18	$X=39.52$, SD = 5.82
Age of her husband*		$X=43.99$, SD = 7.69	$X=45.3$, SD = 7.38	$X=42.76$, SD = 7.79
Age of woman when married		$X=18.1$, SD = 2.38	$X=18.08$, SD = 2.43	$X=18.14$, SD = 2.35
Age of her husband when married*		$X=21.4$, SD = 4.35	$X=20.79$	$X=21.97$, SD = 4.89
Woman's years of education**		$X=5.11$, SD = 4.40	$X=4.20$, SD = 4.20	$X=6.05$, SD = 4.40
Husband's years of education**		$X=5.88$, SD = 4.43	$X=5.07$, SD = 4.23	$X=6.66$, SD = 4.48
Number of boys		$X=4.52$, SD = 1.97	$X=4.39$, SD = 2.16	$X=3.97$, SD = 1.9
Number of girls**		$X=4.35$, SD = 2.07	$X=4.73$, SD = 2.16	$X=3.97$, SD = 1.9
Number husband's wives			$X=2.19$, SD = 0.51	
Number of children from other wives			$X=5.23$, SD = 3.69	
Years married before second wife taken			$X=13.79$, SD = 6.49	
Woman's employment**	Unemployed	96 %	97 %	94 %
	Employed	4 %	3 %	6 %
Husband's employment	Unemployed	47 %	50 %	44 %
	Employed in his profession	42 %	38 %	46 %
	Employed not in profession	5 %	3 %	6 %
	Retired	6 %	9 %	4 %
Religious observance*	Practising	99.4 %	99 %	100 %
	Non-practicing	0.6 %	1 %	
Type of housing	Stone/concrete house	69 %	65 %	73 %
	Hut/tent	31 %	35 %	27 %
Economic situation***	Excellent/very good	21 %	17 %	25 %
	Good/nearly good	63 %	63 %	63 %
	Not good/not good at all	16 %	20 %	12 %
Primary aliments	Sweets	1 %	1 %	1 %
	Dairy	6 %	12 %	6 %
	Meat	24 %	17 %	31 %
	Fruit and vegetables	12 %	9 %	15 %
	Bread, pasta, potatoes, rice	54 %	61 %	47 %

$p<0.05$, $^{**}p<0.01$, $^{***}p<0.001$

female Bedouin-Arab students. The women were informed that their names would be disclosed in the research. The same procedure was used for fathers, except that male students were used and fewer participated.

The data were analyzed using the SPSS computer program. Univariate and bivariate analyses were initially performed to depict the sample and observe relations between the variables. Multiple regressions were then performed to examine the research hypotheses. In the first stage all of the variables were inserted (full model) and in the second stage a hierarchy regression was conducted in order to determine the best predictive model (best model).

Difficulties in Data Collection

Most mothers made their participation contingent upon their husbands' consent, and we had difficulty obtaining this permission as many husbands were difficult to locate. Some men agreed that their wives could be interviewed, and, after learning of the content of the interview from their wife, refused to complete the interview—despite being allowed the opportunity to see the questionnaire before giving their consent to the wife to participate.

It was often necessary to ask tribal leaders to convince parents to participate in the research. For this reason, we employed people from the tribe or *hammula* to conduct the interviews. Further, we found it very difficult to locate some of the families, particularly those who live in unrecognized villages.

All of the research instruments were translated into Arabic by a professional translator, fluent in both Arabic and English, and were then independently translated back into English to ensure accuracy of translation.

Research Instruments

Independent Variables: Socio-Demographic

A questionnaire was used to assess the socio-demographic characteristics of each participant:

- *Adolescents* answered questions about gender, age, father's education, mother's education, father's employment status, mother's employment status, family type (polygamous or monogamous), number of siblings, family's economic status, and type of housing (e.g., apartment, tent, shack).
- *Women* answered questions about their age and husband's age, age at marriage, number of years of schooling, employment status, and economic status as well as the number of male and female children. The polygamous wives were also asked how many other wives their husbands had, how many children he had with these wives, and how many years they had been married before he took a second wife.

- *Men* answered questions about their age, their wife's or wives' ages, and how old each was at the time of marriage to each other. Men were also asked their number of years of schooling, employment status, and economic status as well as the number of male and female children in their first marriage. The polygamous men were also asked how many children they had with other wives and how many years they had been married to the first wife before taking a second wife.

Dependent Variables

Psychological Functioning

Self-Esteem

In studies with three levels of participants, we used the Rosenberg (1979) self-esteem scale (SE) which consists of ten items. Scores range from 1 to 4, where higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The scale is simple to complete, and it has a high internal reliability (using Gutman's measurement of reconstruction = 0.92) and a high test–retest reliability ($r = 0.85$).

The scale has high validity in several ways, including high concurrent and construct validity. The scale has been used before with Jewish adolescents (Slonim-Nevo & Shraga, 2000) and indicated a reasonable level of internal reliability (Cronabach's $\alpha = 0.75$, $N = 145$). In this study, the internal reliability for each group of people was moderate: among the Bedouin-Arab adolescents (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.62$, $N = 317$), among the population of Bedouin-Arab men (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$, $N = 293$), and among Bedouin-Arab women (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$, $n = 299$).

Mental Health

The Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) is a screening instrument that measures psychiatric symptomatology (Canetti et al., 1994; Derogatis & Spencer, 1982). We used the shortened version of the better-known Hopkins Symptom Checklist (H-SCL-90) which is made up of 53 items self-reported items on different perceptions of mental health symptoms. It measures nine dimensions of mental functioning: somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, obsession–compulsion, depression, anxiety, hostility, panic (phobic anxiety), paranoid ideation, and psychotism.

The BSI was translated into Arabic by the method of back-translation. The internal reliability of the nine subscales is adequate (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$–0.81) and the test–retest reliability is satisfactory ($r = 0.60$–0.90). The measure also has a moderate level of validity, which was measured by comparison to the Minnesota MultiPhasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) test.

In addition, the scale provides a General Severity Index (GSI), a Positive Symptom Index (PSDI), and a Positive Symptoms Total (PST). The scale is from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating more problems in mental health.

Men

The level of reliability of the psychological functioning among participants in this study was as follows: somatization: $a = 0.83$, $N = 288$; obsession–compulsion: $a = 0.69$, $N = 292$; interpersonal sensitivity: $a = 0.56$, $N = 292$; depression: $a = 0.77$, $N = 198$; anxiety: $a = 0.72$, $N = 287$; hostility: $a = 0.66$, $N = 281$; panic (phobic anxiety): $a = 0.64$, $N = 286$; paranoid ideation: $a = 0.78$, $N = 281$; psychotism: $a = 0.59$, $N = 286$; and all the dimensions together: $a = 0.95$, $N = 149$.

Adolescents

The internal reliability of the present measure and its subscales was measured in a Jewish research population (Slonim-Nevo & Shraga, 2000) with reasonable results (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.62$–0.96). The level of reliability of the subscales in this study was: Somatization ($\alpha = 0.73$, $N = 309$), Obsession–compulsion ($\alpha = 0.73$, $N = 302$), Interpersonal sensitivity ($\alpha = 0.59$, $N = 326$), Depression ($\alpha = 0.74$, $N = 320$), Anxiety ($\alpha = 0.48$, $N = 320$), Hostility ($\alpha = 0.69$, $N = 312$), Panic (phobic anxiety; $\alpha = 0.65$, $N = 315$), Paranoid ideation ($\alpha = 0.64$, $N = 331$), psychotism ($\alpha = 0.67$, $N = 323$), and all the items together ($\alpha = 0.94$, $N = 185$).

Women

The internal reliability of the Arabic version of the scale as a whole and of its nine subscales, as measured among a sample of Bedouin-Arab women in Israel (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2004), was reasonable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.63$–0.86). The level of reliability of the subscales in this study was: somatization: $a = 0.87$, $n = 296$; obsession–compulsion: $a = 0.86$, $n = 296$; interpersonal sensitivity: alpha = 0.72, $n = 300$; depression: alpha = 0.74, $n = 177$; anxiety: alpha = 0.86, $n = 296$; hostility: alpha = 0.76, $n = 299$; panic (phobic anxiety): alpha = 0.78, $n = 291$; paranoid ideation: alpha = 0.71, $n = 305$; psychotism: alpha = 0.77, $n = 303$; all the dimensions together: alpha = 0.97, $n = 131$.

Family Functioning

The McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD), developed by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop (1983), assesses perceptions about familial relationships and family communication patterns. The scale contains 60 items and assesses seven dimensions of family functioning. All subscales range from 1 to 4, with higher scores

indicating more problematic situations (Epstein et al., 1983; Miller, Epstein, Bishop, & Keitner, 1985). Cutoff points discriminating between clinical and normal families in American populations are available, though none exist for Israeli families.

The scale has satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72–0.92$), good test–retest reliability ($r = 0.66$), and a high level of validity, as indicated by comparing the scale's scores with other measures of the same matters (Epstein et al., 1983; Miller et al., 1985). Ridenour et al. (1999) suggests that the best use of the FAD is to employ only the general functioning subscale as it provides a satisfactory general picture of family functioning: there is no need to use all 60 questions.

The test was translated and back-translated into Arabic. For the men in this study, the reliability of the "general functioning" subscale in the current study was satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$, $N = 273$). The scale was used in studies among Jewish adolescents (Slonim-Nevo & Shraga, 1997), where it indicated moderate internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.36–0.82$), and in Israeli Jewish and Arab adolescents (Al-Krenawi, Slonim-Nevo, et al., 2001), where it indicated satisfactory levels of internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72–0.92$; for general functioning, $\alpha = 0.82$). The reliability of the subscale in this study was relatively low (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.50$, $N = 302$). Finally, a high level of internal consistency was achieved in a study by Al-Krenawi & Graham (2004) among Bedouin-Arab women in Israel (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$, $n = 189$). The reliability of the general functioning subscale in this current study was also satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$, $n = 280$).

Dependent Variables in the Samples of Mothers and of Fathers

Behavioral Variables

Mothers

We assessed number of meals per day the family ate, opinions about polygamy, opinions about her sons and daughters engaging in polygamy, whether the husband is present in the house at night, whether the husband plays with the children, whether the couple goes out with their children, whether the couple goes out alone, and whether she makes use of the health clinic.

Polygamous women were also asked about conflict with the children of the husband's second/last wife, conflict with the husband's second/last wife, relationships with the children of the second/last wife, conflict between her children and the children of other wives, conflict with the husband about his second/last wife, whether the husband spends the night at her house, and whether the husband discriminates among his different wives.

Fathers

We assessed how many meals per day the family ate, opinions about polygamy, opinions about his sons and daughters engaging in polygamy, whether he is present in the house at nights, whether he plays with the children, whether the couple goes

out with their children, whether the couple goes out alone, and whether he makes use of the health clinic.

Polygamous men were also asked about whether he is present in the second/last wife's house at night, if he plays with the second/last wife's children, if he goes out with the second/last wife's and her children, if he goes out alone with his second/last wife, conflict between his different wives, his relationship with his first wife, his relationship with his second/last wife, relationships with the first wife's children, relationships with the second/last wife's children, relationships between these children of different wives, disagreements between children of different wives, disagreements with the first wife about his relationship with the second/last wife, disagreements with the second/last wife about his relationship with the first wife, whether he spends the night in the first wife's house, whether he spends the night in the second/last wife's house, and whether he discriminates among the different wives.

Marital Satisfaction

The ENRICH questionnaire measures the degree of satisfaction experienced in married life and adjustment to marriage. The original items of the questionnaire were developed by Fournier & Olson (1986) following a review in the literature about problems in married life and interpersonal conflicts (Fournier & Olson, 1986, cited in Lavee et al., 1987). The original questionnaire is made up of 8 parts, each containing 10 items. The questionnaire was translated into Hebrew and adapted by Dr. Lavee of Haifa University. It now has 95 statements used for clinical discrimination. Answers are rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating less satisfaction in marriage. The ENRICH questionnaire has high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88–0.89$) (Fournier Olson & Dmckman, 1983, cited in Lavee et al., 1987).

Past research using the instrument among the Arabs in Israel (Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 1999) found a satisfactory level of internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, $N = 291$). In our study we used the shortened version of the Enrich questionnaire, which consists of 10 items. For the men, the internal reliability of the shortened version in our study is high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, $N = 286$), and for the women, the internal reliability was very high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$, $n = 291$).

Parent–Child relationships. The Index of Parental Attitudes developed by Hudson (1982) is used to measure paternal–child and maternal–child relationships. The index examines the extent, severity, and implications of problems in parent–child relationships according to the parents' report. The questionnaire contains 25 items and the scale ranges from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating more problematic relationships. The internal reliability of the instrument is very high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.97$), and it demonstrates construct validity and discriminative validity (Hudson, 1982).

The father or mother was asked to rate relations with the son or daughter who was selected for the original study on the effects of polygamy/monogamy on children (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2002). Internal reliability in this study for

the father–child relationship was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, $N = 285$). For the mother–child relationship in this study, the internal reliability was satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$, $n = 283$).

Behavioral Variables: Children

General Behavior

This study measured school truancy, conflict with teachers, conflict with friends, conflict with siblings of the same mother, conflict with mother, conflict with father, conflict with siblings of other wives, conflict with father's wives, relationship with father's wives, relationship with siblings from other wives, plans to continue studying in high school and in the future, student's after-school job, school, smoking, nutrition, and opinions about polygamous marriage.

Social Functioning

Adolescents were asked multiple-choice questions about their peers.

We measured peer group functioning with a standard instrument consisting of 25 questions (Hudson, 1982). It is suitable for respondents aged 12 years and older. Hudson found high internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$) and a low standard measure error (4.44).

The measure also has high validity and is able to discriminate between clinical and normal populations. (The scale ranges 0–100, with a cutting point of 35.) Slonim-Nevo and Shraga (2000) also found the internal reliability of the measure to be high in an Israeli study of Jewish adolescents (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$, $N = 146$). For the purpose of this study, we translated the instrument into Arabic using the method of back-translation. Its internal reliability among the Bedouin-Arab adolescents in this sample was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, $N = 256$).

Father–child relationships and mother–child relationships. Both father–child and mother–child relationships were assessed using the Hudson (1982) scale of father–child or mother–child relationships as perceived by the respondent. The scales contain 25 items and are suitable for respondents aged 12 years and older. Scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating a more problematic relationship with the father or mother. Generally, these scales have high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$), a low standard error (4.56), and a high test–retest reliability ($r = 0.96$).

In the study of father–child relationships, the internal reliability among the Bedouin-Arab adolescents was reasonable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.71$, $N = 242$). In this study of mother–child relationships, the internal reliability among the Bedouin-Arab adolescents was high (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$, $N = 265$).

Adolescent's academic achievement. We assessed the children's academic level by calculating the mean of their grades in four subjects—English, Arabic, Hebrew, and arithmetic—over three semesters. We obtained these grades from their school records.

Findings

Adolescent Sample: Socio-demographic Characteristics

The socio-demographic characteristics of adolescents from both the polygamous and the monogamous families were shown in Table 4.4. Parents of the adolescents from monogamous families generally tended to be more educated than those from the polygamous families (though the educational levels in both groups, especially the mothers, were low). While there was a high rate of unemployment in both groups, again especially among the mothers, it seems the parents in the polygamous relationships were more likely to be unemployed than those in monogamous relationships

Both groups had large families, but we note that an average child from a polygamous family had approximately five more siblings than did adolescents in monogamous families ($M = 13.37$, SD = 5.26; $M = 8.30$, SD = 2.77, respectively).

Notably, the economic situation reported by adolescents of polygamous families was worse than that reported by their counterparts in monogamous homes. In fact, 62 % of the adolescents of monogamous families reported that their family's economic situation was good where only 45 % of those in polygamous families reported the same. That being said, it is also notable that 26 % or more of adolescents from both polygamous and monogamous families lived in a hut or tent.

It is evident from Table 4.3 above that adolescents from the polygamous marriages tended to fight more often with their siblings and their fathers. Fully one-third of the adolescents from polygamous families fought with their father's other wives and with their adolescents. This is more interesting when we compare these adolescents with those from monogamous families: adolescents from polygamous marriages fight with their own siblings more often than those from monogamous marriages, 17 % versus 13 %, and almost twice as often, 31 %, with siblings from the father's other families. Tellingly, over 30 % of the adolescents from polygamous families report good, or very good, relations with their fathers' other wives.

Behavioral Characteristics and Academic Achievement

Adolescents from the polygamous families had serious academic issues. For example, we see from Table 4.5 that more than one-quarter, 27 %, of the adolescents from polygamous families expected not to finish high school compared to 16 % of those from monogamous families. Twice as many adolescents from polygamous families had no expectations to study in university compared to those in monogamous families (44 % versus 22 %). Table 4.5 also showed that adolescents from the polygamous families we studied received lower marks on average than those from monogamous families. A particular example is the first trimester's average, where adolescents from polygamous families achieved fully 10 % lower average grades than those from monogamous families.

Table 4.4 Behavioral characteristics of both children's groups

Variable	Values	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=174$
Conflict with teachers in last 2 months	No	65 %	63 %	67 %
	Yes	35 %	37 %	33 %
Absences from school in the last 3 months	No	36 %	36 %	33 %
	Yes	64 %	64 %	67 %
Conflict with friends in the last 3 months	No	59 %	59 %	60 %
	Yes	41 %	41 %	40 %
Conflict with siblings of the same mother in the last 3 months	No	61 %	56 %	67 %
	Yes	15 %	17 %	13 %
Conflict with the mother in the last 3 months	No	85 %	83 %	87 %
	Yes	15 %	17 %	13 %
Conflict with the fathers in the last 3 months	No	82 %	78 %	87 %
	Yes	18 %	22 %	13 %
Conflict with siblings of different mother in the last 3 months	No		69 %	
	Yes		31 %	
Conflict with other wives last 3 months	No		70 %	
	Yes		30 %	
Relationships with father's other wives	Very good/good		69 %	
	Intermediate		19 %	
	Not good/not good at all		12 %	
Relationships with siblings of different mothers	Very good/good		90 %	
	Intermediate		6 %	
	Not good not good at all		4 %	
Plans to continue studying in high school	Graduate with complete diploma	79 %	73 %	84 %
	Will not graduate	21 %	27 %	16 %
Plans to continue studying in the future	In university	67 %	56 %	78 %
	Not in university	33 %	44 %	22 %
Having breakfast before going to school	Never/rarely	22 %	23 %	20 %
	Sometimes	33 %	32 %	35 %
	Often/always	45 %	46 %	45 %
Having a light meal while in school	Never/rarely	26 %	30 %	22 %
	Sometimes	28 %	22 %	34 %
	Often/always	46 %	48 %	44 %
Having three meals a day	Never/rarely	17 %	17 %	17 %
	Sometimes	26 %	25 %	27 %
	Often/always	57 %	58 %	56 %
Attitude towards polygamous marriage	Very supportive/ supportive	14 %	16 %	13 %
	Indifferent	13 %	14 %	12 %
	Doesn't support/doesn't support at all	73 %	70 %	75 %
Perception of polygamous marriage as appropriate	Not appropriate/not appropriate at all	76 %	73 %	80 %
	Indifferent	14 %	14 %	13 %
	Appropriate/very appropriate	10 %	13 %	7 %

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

Table 4.5 Academic achievement of both children's groups

Scale[a]	Reliability	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=159$	T-test values
Average in English**	0.92 $N=317$	$X=67.06$, SD = 21.57	$X=63.69$, SD = 21.55	$X=70.47$, SD = 21.10	$T=2.92$
Average in Arabic**	0.96 $N=318$	$X=68.70$, SD = 21.25	$X=64.92$, SD = 22.50	$X=72.49$, SD = 21.40	$T=3.17$
Average in Hebrew**	0.94 $N=305$	$X=67.76$, SD = 21.84	$X=63.86$, SD = 21.48	$X=71.70$, SD = 21.74	$T=3.34$
Average in Maths***	0.93 $N=308$	$X=67.12$, SD = 23.23	$X=63.08$, SD = 24.02	$X=71.17$, SD = 21.74	$T=3.24$
Average in 4 primary subjects***	0.93 $N=335$	$X=67.68$, SD = 20.16	$X=63.89$, SD = 20.06	$X=71.47$, SD = 19.59	$T=1.09$
Average all subjects: first trimester***		$X=69.72$, SD = 18.85	$X=64.47$, SD = 19.02	$X=74.74$, SD = 17.32	$T=4.89$
Average all subjects: second trimester***		$X=70.74$, SD = 19.62	$X=65.48$, SD = 20.04	$X=75.69$, SD = 17.91	$T=4.62$
Average all subjects: third trimester***		$X=71.12$, SD = 20.25	$X=65.57$, SD = 21.36	$X=76.18$, SD = 17.81	$T=4.47$
General average, all trimesters total	0.96 $N=277$	$X=70.45$, SD = 18.93	$X=65.04$, SD = 19.09	$X=75.61$, SD = 17.32	$T=5.02$

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

[a]The scales range from 0 to 100 with higher values indicating better academic achievement

Psychological, Social, and Family Functioning

Table 4.6 below makes it clear that that the adolescents of first wives from the polygamous families experienced significantly more psychological distress than those from the monogamous families. In fact, with only one exception (that of anxiety), adolescents from polygamous families scored significantly higher on all the BSI subscales including somatization, obsession–compulsion, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychotism. Their GSI, PSDI, and PST were all higher.

Adolescents from the polygamous families we studied also reported significantly more problems in peer relationships than those from the monogamous families. Further, they reported a significantly higher number of poor relationships with their fathers and poorer family functioning. In short, adolescents from the polygamous families reported more difficulties than did their cohorts from the monogamous families in every dimension: psychological, social, educational, and familial.

Regression Analysis

We decided to test for mediating factors that would explain the difficulties experienced by the adolescents from polygamous families. The data show, for example,

Table 4.6 Psychological, social, and family functioning of both children groups

Scale		Reliability	Whole sample $N=352$	Polygamous $N=178$	Monogamous $N=174$	T-test values
Mental health[a]	Somatization**	0.73 $N=309$	$X=0.85$, SD = 0.68	$X=0.96$, SD = 0.70	$X=0.75$, SD = 0.65	$T=2.95$
	Obsessive–compulsive***	0.73 $N=302$	$X=1.11$, SD = 0.76	$X=1.24$, SD = 0.82	$X=0.98$, SD = 0.65	$T=3.29$
	Depression**	0.74 $N=320$	$X=1.00$, SD = 0.75	$X=1.11$, SD = 0.82	$X=0.90$, SD = 0.65	$T=2.66$
	Interpersonal sensitivity***	0.59 $N=326$	$X=1.02$, SD = 0.81	$X=1.16$, SD = 0.85	$X=0.89$, SD = 0.75	$T=3.23$
	Anxiety	0.47 $N=330$	$X=1.34$, SD = 0.68	$X=1.37$, SD = 0.71	$X=1.31$, SD = 0.66	$T=0.86$
	Hostility**	0.69 $N=312$	$X=1.08$, SD = 0.79	$X=1.21$, SD = 0.84	$X=0.95$, SD = 0.72	$T=3.18$
	Phobic anxiety (panic)***	0.65 $N=315$	$X=1.03$, SD = 0.79	$X=1.18$, SD = 0.81	$X=0.86$, SD = 0.73	$T=3.89$
	Paranoid ideation*	0.64 $N=331$	$X=1.05$, SD = 0.76	$X=1.18$, SD = 0.78	$X=1.02$, SD = 0.73	$T=1.98$
	Psychotism***	0.67 $N=323$	$X=1.05$, SD = 0.78	$X=1.19$, SD = 0.83	$X=0.91$, SD = 0.71	$T=3.30$
	GSI***	0.95 $N=185$	$X=1.07$, SD = 0.59	$X=1.17$, SD = 0.61	$X=0.96$, SD = 0.56	$T=3.39$
	PST*		$X=29.70$, SD = 0.53	$X=30.99$, SD = 11.60	$X=28.37$, SD = 11.76	$T=2.10$
	PSDI***		$X=1.81$, SD = 0.53	$X=1.89$, SD = 0.56	$X=1.72$, SD = 0.49	$T=3.03$
Self-esteem[b]		0.62 $N=3.17$	$X=2.98$, SD = 0.41	$X=2.95$, SD = 0.42	$X=3.01$, SD = 0.39	$T=1.34$
Family functioning[c]		0.50 $N=302$	$X=2.16$, SD = 0.43	$X=2.23$, SD = 0.42	$X=2.097$, SD = 0.42	$T=2.91$
Relations with peers[d]		0.89 $N=256$	$X=26.30$, SD = 16.23	$X=28.54$, SD = 16.44	$X=24.05$, SD = 15.75	$T=2.60$
Relations with father[e]		0.71 $N=242$	$X=32.03$, SD = 11.81	$X=34.12$, SD = 12.08	$X=29.95$, SD = 11.20	$T=3.33$
Relations with mother[f]		0.84 $N=265$	$X=20.1$, SD = 14.15	$X=21.23$, SD = 13.36	$X=18.99$, SD = 14.83	$T=2.91$

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

[a]The scale ranges from 0 to 4 with higher value indicating more mental problems

[b]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating better self-esteem

[c]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating more problems in family functioning

[d]The scale ranges from 0 to 100 with higher value indicating more problems in relationships with friends

[e]The scale ranges from 0 to 100 with higher value indicating more problems in relationships with the father

that adolescents of first wives from polygamous families function less well than do adolescents from monogamous families. We therefore hypothesized that family functioning could mediate the impact of family structure on the adolescents' psychosocial functioning. To establish the mediating effect of family functioning, the four-step model presented by Baron and Kenny (1986) was followed (as cited in Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998).

First, a significant effect of the independent variable (family structure) on the outcome variables had to be established. Regression analysis was used to establish this effect and the analysis was performed twice: first, the effect of family structure was assessed while controlling for different socio-demographic variables (*full model*) and, second, a stepwise regression was performed to achieve the best predictive model (*best model*). As Table 4.7 shows, family structure was a significant predictor of peer relations, six of nine BSI dimensions, and the GSI. Thus, we conclude that the adolescents of first wives from the polygamous families we studied had poorer peer relationships and mental health functioning when compared with adolescents from the monogamous families.

Second, the effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable was examined. Again, a best and full regression analysis was performed. Table 4.8 presents the effects of family structure on general family functioning, controlling for socio-demographic variables. Family structure was determined to be a significant predictor. Adolescents of first wives from the polygamous families perceived more difficulties in their family functioning than did adolescents from the monogamous families.

Psychological and Family Functioning and Marital Satisfaction for Women

As can be seen in Table 4.9, wives in the polygamous marriages suffered from more emotional problems than those in the monogamous marriages. In fact, they reported significantly higher levels of somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, and paranoid ideation. As well, the GSI (general severity index) was greater. Wives in the polygamous marriages also reported more problematic family functioning and less marital satisfaction than the wives in the monogamous marriages. These women also had a much lower level of self-esteem than the women in the monogamous marriages (Table 4.10).

Monogamous husbands in our study were at home more than polygamous husbands and played with their children more ($p < 0.0001$). As well, monogamous husbands went out with their spouse and their families more. We see as a possible result that almost half of the women in polygamous families fought with their husbands about the relationship with the second wife. Approximately one-third of polygamous mothers reported conflict with the second or last wife while one-fifth reported conflict with the children of the second or last wife. More than one-third of the women in the polygamous marriages thought that their husband discriminated between the wives, while only 41 % said that this was not the case. Many did not express an opinion on this subject.

Table 4.7 Regression analyses in the children sample (family functioning as an independent variable)

	Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)								
	Family functioning	Age	Gender	Economic situation	Mother's education	Father's education	Polygamy/ monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	−0.33****	−0.06	0.11	0.17*	0.03	0.06	−0.04	0.192****	0.168[a]
Relationships with peers	0.31****	0.01	−0.15*	−0.05	0.09	−0.10	−0.09	0.160****	0.139[b]
Somatization	0.30****	−0.04	−0.06	0.12	0.01	−0.03	−0.09	0.146****	0.133[a]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.31****	0.01	0.01	−0.13	−0.09	−0.03	−0.06	0.160****	0.143[a]
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.23***	−0.04	0.05	−0.14	0.04	−0.12	−0.10	0.124****	0.101[a]
Depression	0.27***	0.01	−0.10	−0.17*	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05	0.145****	0.126[a]
Anxiety	0.18*	0.05	0.15*	−0.13	−0.09	0.04	0.05	0.079*	0.057[b]
Hostility	0.16	0.06	−0.10	−0.04	−0.07	−0.01	−0.09	0.106***	0.075[a]
Phobic anxiety	0.23****	−0.07	0.06	−0.07	−0.10	0.04	−0.15*	0.112***	0.096[c]
Paranoid ideation	0.21***	0.04	0.09	−0.11	0.04	−0.07	−0.02	0.088*	0.057[d]
Psychotism	0.24***	−0.05	−0.04	−0.16*	0.03	−0.06	−0.11	0.129***	0.113[a]
GSI	0.31****	−0.01	0.03	−0.16*	−0.05	−0.04	−0.08	0.167****	0.153[a]

*$p<0.05$ **$p<0.01$ ***$p<0.005$ ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6–excellent
[a]Family functioning, polygamy/monogamy
[b]Family functioning
[c]Family functioning age
[d]Family functioning, economic situation

Table 4.8 Regression analyses in the children sample (family functioning as a dependent variable)

	Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)							
	Age	Gender	Economic situation	Mother's education	Father's education	Polygamy/monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	−0.05	0.12	0.23***	−0.04	0.06	0.00	0.060*	0.057[a]
Relationships with peers	0.00	−0.16*	−0.10	0.08	−0.10	−0.12	0.067*	0.047[b]
Somatization	0.05	−0.06	0.17*	0.00	−0.03	−0.12	0.063*	0.040[a]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.00	0.01	−0.19**	−0.09	−0.03	−0.10	0.070*	0.040[a]
Interpersonal sensitivity	−0.05	0.04	−0.18*	0.03	−0.12	−0.13	0.073*	0.044[a]
Depression	0.00	0.10	−0.21***	−0.06	−0.04	−0.08	0.078*	0.055[a]
Anxiety	0.04	0.15*	−0.16*	−0.09	0.04	0.03	0.050	0.042[c]
Hostility	0.06	−0.10	−0.17*	−0.07	−0.01	−0.11	0.081**	0.044[a]
Phobic anxiety	−0.07	0.06	−0.11	−0.10	0.04	−0.17*	0.064*	0.042[d]
Paranoid ideation	0.04	0.08	−0.15*	−0.04	−0.07	−0.05	0.046	0.027[a]
Psychotism	−0.05	−0.05	−0.20**	0.02	−0.05	−0.14	0.077*	0.053[a]
GSI	−0.02	0.02	−0.21***	−0.06	−0.03	−0.12	−0.79*	0.056[a]
Family functioning	−0.02	−0.02	−0.18*	−0.03	0.01	−0.11	0.055	0.040[a]

*$p<0.05$ **$p<0.01$ ***$p<0.005$ ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6—excellent
[a]Economic situation
[b]Polygamy/monogamy, gender
[c]Economic situation, gender
[d]Polygamy/monogamy

Table 4.9 Psychological and familial functioning and marital satisfaction for both mother's groups

Scale		Reliability	Whole Sample $N=315$	Polygamous $N=156$	Monogamous $N=159$	T-test values
Mental health[a]	Somatization**	0.87 N=296	$X=1.15$, SD=0.93	$X=1.25$, SD=0.92	X=1.05, SD=0.92	$T=1.93$
	Obsessive–compulsive***	0.86 S=296	$X=0.09$, SD=0.92	$X=0.95$, SD=0.87	$X=0.87$, SD=0.93	$T=0.77$
	Depression**	0.74 $N=177$	$X=0.71$, SD=0.8	$X=0.79$, SD=0.8	$X=0.63$, SD=0.79	$T=1.73$
	Interpersonal sensitivity***	0.72 S=300	$X=1.07$, SD=0.87	$X=1.12$, SD=0.84	$X=1.02$, SD=0.9	$T=1.00$
	Anxiety	0.86 $N=296$	$X=1.13$, SD=0.98	$X=1.25$, SD=1.01	$X=1.02$, SD=0.93	$T=2.10$
	Hostility**	0.76 $N=299$	$X=0.87$, SD=0.81	$X=0.95$, SD=0.8	$X=0.78$, SD=0.82	$T=1.85$
	Phobic anxiety (panic)***	0.78 $N=291$	$X=0.79$, SD=0.81	$X=0.83$, SD=0.87	$X=0.74$, SD=0.85	$T=0.99$
	Paranoid ideation*	0.71 $N=305$	$X=1.02$, SD=0.85	$X=1.12$, SD=0.88	$X=0.93$, SD=0.82	$T=2.02$
	Psychoticism***	0.77 $N=303$	$X=0.72$, SD=0.83	$X=0.77$, SD=0.82	$X=0.68$, SD=0.83	$T=0.99$
	GSI***	0.97 $N=131$	$X=0.94$, SD=0.74	$X=1.01$, SD=0.72	$X=0.68$, SD=0.83	$T=1.79$
	PST*		$X=23.42$, SD=0.74	$X=25.15$, SD=13.35	$X=21.71$, SD=14.18	$T=2.22$
	PSDI***		$X=1.89$, SD=0.58	$X=1.95$, SD=0.55	$X=1.82$, SD=0.59	$T=2.05$
Self-esteem***[b]		0.70 $N=299$	$X=1.74$, SD=0.42	$X=3.17$, SD=0.43	$X=3.43$, SD=0.4	$T=-3.60$
Family functioning***[c]		0.80 $N=299$	$X=2.15$, SD=0.57	$X=2.35$, SD=0.58	$X=1.96$, SD=0.49	$T=6.28$
Marital satisfaction***[d]		0.94 $N=291$	$X=2.01$, SD=1.12	$X=2.6$, SD=1.22	$X=1.61$, SD=0.73	$T=8.55$
Parent–child relationship[e]		0.81 $N=283$	$X=1.92$, SD=6.45	$X=2.32$, SD=6.8	$X=1.52$, SD=6.06	$T=1.09$

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

[a]The scale ranges from 0 to 4 with higher value indicating more mental problems

[b]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating better self-esteem

[c]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating more problems in family functioning

[d]The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with higher value indicating less satisfaction with marriage

[e]The scale ranges from 1 to7 with higher value indicating more problems in parent–child relationship

Table 4.10 Behavioral characteristics of both mother's groups

Variable	Value	Whole sample $N=315$	Polygamous $N=156$	Monogamous $N=159$
Have 3 meals a day	Never/rarely	13 %	16 %	11 %
	Sometimes	10 %	13 %	7 %
	Often/always	77 %	71 %	82 %
Visits health clinic	Yes	99 %	99 %	99 %
	No	1 %	1 %	1 %
Attitudes towards polygamous marriage***	Very supportive/supportive	8 %	10 %	6 %
	Indifferent	8 %	11 %	6 %
	Doesn't support/no support at all	84 %	79 %	88 %
Attitudes towards daughters entering polygamous marriage***	Very supportive/supportive	2 %	3 %	1 %
	Indifferent	3 %	4 %	2 %
	Doesn't support/no support at all	95 %	93 %	97 %
Attitudes towards sons entering polygamous marriage***	Very supportive/supportive	2 %	3 %	1 %
	Indifferent	5 %	5 %	4 %
	Doesn't support/no support at all	93 %	92 %	95 %
Is husband present in home at night?***	Yes	93 %	85 %	100 %
	No	7 %	15 %	–
Does husband play with children?***	Yes	94 %	88 %	99 %
	No	6 %	12 %	1 %
Do spouses go out with their children?***	Yes	50 %	30 %	69 %
	No	50 %	70 %	31 %
Do husband and first wife go out alone?**	Yes	35 %	28 %	43 %
	No	65 %	72 %	57 %
Disagreements with children of husband's second/last wife in last 3 months	Yes		81 %	
	No		19 %	
Disagreements between with husband's second/last wife in last 3 months	Yes		71 %	
	No		29 %	
Relationship with husband's second/last wife	Very good/good		53 %	
	Adequate		18 %	
	Not good/not good at all		29 %	
Relationship with children of husband's second/last wife	Very good/good		79 %	
	Adequate		14 %	
	Not good/not good at all		7 %	
Disagreements between her children and children of second/last wife in last 3 months	Yes		80 %	
	No		20 %	
Fights with the husband over his second/last wife	Yes		47 %	
	No		53 %	
Does the husband stay the night at her (second wife's) house?	Yes		78 %	
	No		22 %	
Does the husband discriminate among his wives?	Doesn't much/not at all		41 %	
	Intermediate		23 %	
	Discriminates often/very much		36 %	

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

Linear Regression: Multivariate Analyses

Two linear regression analyses were performed using continued variables so as to determine the effect of polygamous or monogamous family structure and that of other socio-demographic variables on the women's emotional health and family functioning. We first used the full model, in which all the independent variables were entered into the regression and the contribution of each variable to the prediction of the outcome variables was examined. Then, the best model was used with only the most predictive variables. This enabled us to affirm the contributions made to the variance of each of the dependent variables assessed. Two sets of these regressions were carried out: one set with family functioning as an independent variable and one set with family functioning as an outcome variable.

Table 4.11, in which family functioning serves as an independent variable, shows both the full model and best model predictions of the women's self-esteem and other psychological symptoms. The most significant contribution to the outcome variables was made by the family functioning variable. In fact, this variable contributed significantly, either alone or in conjunction with other, to every outcome variable. Notably, the family functioning variable seems to explain up to 21 % of the variance in a woman's self-esteem: as family's functioning became worse, so too did the woman's self-esteem.

Furthermore, family functioning was the lone variable that caused a 13–23 % variance in six of the nine mental health dimensions examined. Again, the more problematic family functioning was the higher the levels of interpersonal sensitivity, depression, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychotism. Women in polygamous marriages wherein family functioning and family structure were both poor also showed up to 18 % higher levels in obsession–compulsion and 24 % higher levels in the GSI which measures general psychological distress. Older age and poor family functioning together explains up to a 22 % increase in anxiety levels. Finally, poor family functioning and worsening economic status together explain up to a 22 % higher level of somatization.

The finding that women in these polygamous marriages had more emotional problems was also borne out in Table 4.12, where family functioning is the outcome variable. We see again the full model and best model predictions of the women's self-esteem, psychological symptoms, and family functioning and can see that 21 % of the variance in family functioning is explained mainly by the combination of economic status and mainly family structure. Here we see that the worse the family's economic status was, the poorer its family functioning was likely to be. However, we should note that family structure only contributes significantly as well to self-esteem, where the variance is only about 5 %. However, in addition to affecting family functioning, economic status becomes a significant predictor of self-esteem, somatization, obsession–compulsion, depression, hostility, paranoid ideation, psychotism, and the GSI.

Table 4.11 Regression analyses in the mothers sample (family functioning as an independent variable)

		Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)					
	Family functioning	Age	Economic situation	Woman's education	Polygamy/monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	−0.45****	−0.03	0.02	0.00	−0.06	0.212****	0.209[a]
Somatization	0.39****	0.14*	−0.16***	−0.07	0.09	0.227****	0.219[b]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.45****	0.07	−0.01	0.05	0.11*	0.191****	0.185[c]
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.39****	0.03	−0.05	0.06	0.08	0.161****	0.149[a]
Depression	0.44****	0.11*	−0.04	0.05	0.07	0.209****	0.192[a]
Anxiety	0.46****	0.13*	−0.05	0.03	0.06	0.229****	0.223[d]
Hostility	0.37****	−0.02	−0.02	0.07	0.04	0.199****	0.187[a]
Phobic anxiety	0.39****	0.10	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.144****	0.128[a]
Paranoid ideation	0.43****	0.09	−0.02	0.07	0.04	0.199****	0.187[a]
Psychotism	0.49****	0.08	−0.03	0.06	0.12*	0.238****	0.229[a]
GSI	0.49****	0.10*	−0.06	0.05	0.08	0.260****	0.242[c]

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.005$, ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6—excellent
[a]Family functioning
[b]Family function, economic situation
[c]Family functioning, polygamy/monogamy
[d]Family functioning, age

Table 4.12 Regression analyses in the mothers sample (family functioning as a dependent variable)

	Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)					
	Age	Economic situation	Woman's education	Polygamy/ monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	0.02	−0.12*	0.03	−0.19***	0.054***	0.053[a]
Somatization	0.14*	−0.28****	−0.04	−0.03	0.107****	0.105[b]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.07	−0.15*	0.08	−0.02	0.032*	0.021[c]
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.04	−0.17	0.09	−0.04	0.038*	0.028[c]
Depression	0.12*	−0.18***	0.08	−0.06	0.055****	0.047[b]
Anxiety	0.14	−0.19	0.06	−0.08	0.065****	0.058[b]
Hostility	−0.01	−0.13*	0.13*	−0.11	0.042*	0.019[c]
Phobic anxiety	0.11	−0.09	0.07	−0.03	0.024	–
Paranoid ideation	0.10	−0.15**	0.10	−0.09	0.050***	0.025[c]
Psychotism	0.09	−0.18***	0.10	−0.09	0.050***	0.025[c]
GSI	0.11	−0.21****	0.09	0.09	0.067****	0.057[b]
Family functioning	0.02	−0.31***	0.07	−0.30***	0.211****	0.206[a]

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.005$, ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6—excellent
[a]Economic situation, polygamy/monogamy
[b]Economic situation, age
[c]Economic situation

Psychological and Familial Functioning and Marital Satisfaction

Table 4.13 presents the emotional and familial functioning, as well as the satisfaction with marriage, of both study groups. The results indicate that men from the polygamous families we studied had more psychological problems than the men from the monogamous families. Polygamous men reported higher levels on all mental health categories including somatization ($p<0.05$), obsession–compulsion ($p<0.01$), depression ($p<0.01$), interpersonal sensitivity ($p<0.001$), anxiety ($p<0.05$), paranoid ideation ($p<0.05$), psychotism ($p<0.001$), GSI—general severity ($p<0.001$), PST ($p<0.01$), and PSDI ($p<0.01$). The one exception was hostility. These findings indicate that men from the polygamous families experienced more problematic psychological functioning than their peers in the monogamous families. Men from the polygamous families, as compared to their counterparts from monogamous families, also perceived their family functioning as more problematic ($p<0.001$), their marital satisfaction as lower ($p<0.001$), and they had more problematic relationships with their adolescents ($p<0.05$).

As with the women and adolescents, a series of linear regression analyses were performed in order to examine which variables affect the participants' level of emotional and familial functioning. As with the others, all of the predictive variables

Table 4.13 Psychological and familial functioning and marital satisfaction for both groups of men

Scale		Reliability	Whole Sample $N=315$	Polygamous $N=156$	Monogamous $N=159$	T-test values
Mental health[a]	Somatization**	0.83 $N=288$	$X=0.64$, SD $=0.68$	$X=0.72$, SD $=0.70$	$X=0.55$, SD $=0.64$	$T=2.20$
	Obsessive–compulsive***	0.69 SN $=292$	$X=0.68$, SD $=0.60$	$X=0.76$, SD $=0.61$	$X=0.58$, SD $=0.59$	$T=2.61$
	Depression**	0.77 $N=198$	$X=0.53$, SD $=0.59$	$X=0.62$, SD $=0.65$	$X=0.44$, SD $=0.50$	$T=2.57$
	Interpersonal sensitivity***	0.56 $X=292$	$X=0.64$, SD $=0.63$	$X=0.78$, SD $=0.66$	$X=0.48$, SD $=0.55$	$T=4.14$
	Anxiety	0.72 $N=287$	$X=0.66$, SD $=0.62$	$X=0.73$, SD $=0.57$	$X=0.57$, SD $=0.61$	$T=2.22$
	Hostility**	0.66 $N=281$	$X=0.65$, SD $=0.62$	$X=0.70$, SD $=0.63$	$X=0.59$, SD $=0.9$	$T=1.63$
	Phobic anxiety (panic)***	0.64 $N=286$	$X=0.56$, SD $=0.63$	$X=0.61$, SD $=0.69$	$X=0.49$, SD $=0.56$	$T=1.70$
	Paranoid ideation*	0.78 $N=281$	$X=0.85$, SD $=0.77$	$X=0.98$, SD $=0.79$	$X=0.69$, SD $=0.71$	$T=3.40$
	Psychotism***	0.59 $N=286$	$X=0.54$, SD $=0.55$	$X=0.65$, SD $=0.59$	$X=0.43$, SD $=0.50$	$T=3.58$
	GSI***	0.95 $N=149$	$X=0.66$, SD $=0.51$	$X=0.75$, SD $=0.50$	$X=0.55$, SD $=0.48$	$T=3.40$
	PST*		$X=20.24$, SD $=13.65$	$X=22.47$, SD $=14.07$	$X=17.61$, SD $=12.72$	$T=3.16$
	PSDI***		$X=1.63$, SD $=0.51$	$X=1.70$, SD $=0.55$	$X=1.56$, SD $=0.46$	$T=2.40$
Self-esteem***[b]		0.70 $N=293$	$X=3.26$, SD $=0.41$	$X=3.25$, SD $=0.42$	$X=3.28$, SD $=0.4$	$T=0.70$
Family Functioning***[c]		0.74 $N=273$	$X=1.96$, SD $=0.43$	$X=2.10$, SD $=0.45$	$X=1.82$, SD $=0.41$	$T=5.58$
Marital satisfaction***[d]		0.87 $N=286$	$X=1.75$, SD $=0.64$	$X=1.95$, SD $=0.72$	$X=1.55$, SD $=0.47$	$T=5.74$
Parent–child relationship[e]		0.89 $N=285$	$X=2.84$, SD $=7.85$	$X=3.69$, SD $=8.17$	$X=1.86$, SD $=7.31$	$T=2.04$

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

[a]The scale ranges from 0 to 4 with higher value indicating more mental problems

[b]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating better self-esteem

[c]The scale ranges from 1 to 4 with higher value indicating more problems in family functioning

[d]The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with higher value indicating less satisfaction with marriage

[e]The scale ranges from 1 to 7 with higher value indicating more problems in father–child relationship

were included in this model. The contributions of each variable to the prediction of outcome variables were examined and a stepwise regression was used to select the best model. The family functioning variable was included as a predictor or independent variable and then as an outcome or dependent variable.

Linear Regression: Multivariate Analyses

In Table 4.14, family functioning was presented as an independent variable. The results show that family functioning and level of education explain 15 % of the variance of self-esteem: the more problematic family functioning is perceived and the lower the man's education, the lower the man's self-esteem. Regarding emotional functioning, family functioning alone explains the variance of 3 out of 10 dimensions of mental health (ranging from 5 % to 11 % explained variance). Men who reported more problematic family functioning also reported higher levels of depression, hostility, and obsession–compulsion.

The variables family functioning, economic status, and age explain 11 % of the variance in the dimension somatization: the older a man becomes, the worse his economic status and his perceived family functioning, leading to a greater tendency to report a higher level of somatization. The variables polygamy/monogamy and family functioning explain 13 % of the variance of interpersonal sensitivity and 12 % of psychotism. Men from the lower-functioning polygamous families reported higher levels of interpersonal sensitivity and psychotism. Age and family functioning explain 5–14 % of the variance of anxiety, phobic anxiety, and GSI, which includes all of the dimensions together. Older men who perceived their family's functioning as problematic tended to report higher levels of anxiety, phobic anxiety, and more problematic psychological functioning in general. Family functioning and economic status explain 18 % of the variance of the phobic ideation and report higher levels of phobic ideation. In sum, the variable family functioning contributed significantly to the prediction of all mental health dimensions (the dependent variables).

Table 4.15 presents family functioning as a dependent variable. Family structure (polygamy/monogamy) alone explains 10 % of the variance of the family functioning variable. Polygamous men reported more problematic family functioning. However, when family functioning is not counted as a predictor, the variable family structure contributes significantly to explaining most of the dependent variables, except for self-esteem, somatization, hostility, and phobic anxiety.

Section 2

Part 2: The Qualitative Section

Researchers such as Elbedour et al. (2002) have noted that studies on polygamy have tended to examine the phenomenon on a cultural level and that there exists a great need to "enter" this marital structure and see it from the inside. These

Table 4.14 Regression analyses in the fathers sample (family functioning as an independent variable)

		Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)					
	Family	Age	Economic situation	Man's education	Polygamy/monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	−0.37***	−0.06	0.10	0.10	−0.07	0.163****	0.147[a]
Somatization	0.18***	0.19**	−0.12*	−0.03	−0.05	0.117****	0.114[b]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.25****	0.06	−0.03	−0.02	−0.07	0.089****	0.077[c]
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.31****	0.02	−0.08	−0.05	−0.13*	0.139****	0.133[b]
Depression	0.31****	0.08	−0.10	−0.03	−0.04	0.125****	0.112[c]
Anxiety	0.26****	0.09	−0.05	−0.02	−0.04	0.098****	0.094[d]
Hostility	0.21***	0.06	−0.10	−0.01	−0.02	0.064***	0.048[c]
Phobic anxiety	0.18***	0.12	0.08	−0.01	−0.04	−0.062***	0.054[d]
Paranoid ideation	0.37****	0.02	−0.15*	0.03	−0.08	0.182****	0.175[e]
Psychotism	0.27****	−0.01	0.06	−0.10	−0.11	0.125****	0.116[b]
GSI	0.32****	0.10	−0.07	−00.02	−0.08	0.152****	0.141[d]

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.005$, ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6—excellent
[a]Family functioning education
[b]Family functioning polygamy/monogamy
[c]Family functioning
[d]Family functioning age
[e]Family functioning, ececonomic situation
[f]Family functioning, age, economic situation

Table 4.15 Regression analyses in the fathers sample (family functioning as a dependent variable)

	Independent variables in the linear regression model (Betas)					
	Age	Economic situation	Man's education	Polygamy/ monogamy	R2 full model	R2 best model
Self-esteem	–0.06	0.08	0.13*	0.05	0.043*	0.0311
Somatization	0.19***	–0.11	–0.05	–0.11	0.087****	0.074[c]
Obsessive–compulsive	0.06	–0.02	–0.04	–0.15*	0.033*	0.026[a]
Interpersonal sensitivity	0.01	–0.06	0.02	–0.22***	0.053***	0.049[a]
Depression	0.08	0.00	–0.06	–0.14*	0.038*	0.026[a]
Anxiety	0.09	–0.04	–0.04	–0.12*	0.036*	0.079[a]
Hostility	0.06	–0.07	–0.03	–0.08	0.024	–
Phobic anxiety	0.12	0.09	–0.02	–0.10	0.035*	0.017[d]
Paranoid ideation	0.01	–0.14*	–0.01	–0.20***	0.059***	0.059[c]
Psychotism	–0.01	0.07	–0.12	–0.20***	0.059***	0.044[a]
GSI	0.09	–0.06	–0.04	–0.18***	0.062***	0.056[b]
Family functioning	–0.01	0.05	–0.09	–0.31***	0.108****	0.100[a]

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.005$, ****$p<0.0001$
Family functioning: higher value indicates more difficulty
Age: age of the respondents
Polygamy/monogamy: 0—polygamy; 1—monogamy
Economic situation: 1—not good at all,…, 6—excellent

researchers have called for thorough, in-depth investigations of how polygamous family members function and feel. As noted above, we therefore decided to pursue a qualitative element to this study in an effort to get closer to the lived experiences of many different people in polygamous households. The following section is based on Slonim-Nevo and Al-Krenawi (2006).

Method

From the larger samples described at the beginning of this chapter, we chose ten polygamous families with whom to do in-depth interviews. The families lived in a Bedouin-Arab town in southern Israel: each family consisted of one husband, two wives, and children. The first and second wives, the eldest child of first and second wives, and the husband were interviewed. The eldest child was included because he or she was assumed to be the child most able to speak in detail about the family.

The study was divided between 5 families we designated as "high-functioning" and 5 we designated as "low-functioning." We used the following information for designation: (1) school reports; (2) applications for assistance to local welfare agencies; and (3) whether the families were known in the community as high- or low-functioning.

Once the family was recruited, a social worker conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews in Arabic with each designated member in a private setting. The private setting helped to avoid interference during the interview from other people in the family. Topics included parenting style, discipline, handling of emotions, marital

relationships, relationships with the extended family, relationships between the wives, relationships among siblings of different mothers, relationships between wives and children of other wives, use of leisure time and holiday activities, and family finances.

The interviews were transcribed and then analytic induction and constant comparison strategies were used to detect patterns of behavior in the family associated with success or failure. Data were scanned to discover common themes. Developing categories were noted, and these were then combined into typologies (Ben David & Lavee, 1994; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Moon, Dilon, & Sprenkle, 1990). By combining inductive categories with a simultaneous comparison of all observed cases, we were able to achieve constant comparison. Researchers read through all the transcribed material and coded common themes. They then looked for similar instances throughout data to identify and record categories of behavioral and interaction patterns. All interviews were constantly compared with one another. Finally, data were organized into working hypotheses which in turn were refined until all instances of contradictions, similarities, and differences were explained. Hypotheses were continually modified to accommodate new circumstances that arose but had not been encountered in the study population.

Men

Because the final decision to engage in plural marriage belongs to the man, we will start with the husband's perspective. The husbands cited a number of reasons for taking a second wife. Here we review some of these, alongside the husbands' relationships with both wives and children.

We found that husbands from both high- and low-functioning families had similar perspectives on the decision to engage in polygamy. Notable is the strong role played by the extended family (at least from the point of view of the husband and wives) and the social honor that contextualizes many of the husband's actions.

More Sons, Stronger Family

The desire to sire sons was the highest-ranking reason cited by men for engaging in polygamy. Two husbands from high-functioning families stand out. The first, Abu-Ibrahim, was 60 years old at the time of the interview. He had four years of education, worked, and supported his first wife, then 55, and her eight children, and his second wife, then 40, and her six children. Both he and his first wife were from polygamous families, and his second wife was from a monogamous family. Neither wife had been to school. Despite the fact that his first wife gave birth to multiple children, Abu-Ibrahim stated that since his first wife could not bear many sons, there was a need for a "backup" so that he could ensure that the family would continue to be powerful. In a somewhat similar statement, another husband said that society demands, "marry, many, marry" and so his second marriage was a

result of this pressure. His family worried that his first wife may not, like some in her family, be able to bear many children. Though his second marriage was contracted with the consent of his first wife to "correct" the possible problem, he considered it a mistake.

Husbands in the low-functioning families also cited the siring of many sons as a reason for their polygamy. Shachde, 43 years old at time of interview, was from a polygamous family and had ten years education. He was unemployed, and the fourteen-person family lived on public subsidies. According to Shadche, his first wife, then 39 years old with ten years of education and from a monogamous family, became sick after the birth of her fourth child and her uterus was removed. She had only had one son and there seemed to be the need to marry another wife so that he might sire more sons. Like the men described above, Shachde said that this may have been a mistake because the second wife began to treat the first wife badly—something he did not wish to have happen. This he attributed to the fact that, against his first wife's wishes, he married his cousin (i.e., a member of the family). The second wife was from a polygamous family with only 4 years of education. She thought herself superior to the first wife because she had produced seven sons.

A tragedy in the immediate or extended family sometimes influenced the decision of a number of our male participants to marry a second wife. Abed, who was thirty-five years old and had ten years of education, is an example. Abed was one of three brothers from a monogamous family, and the only fertile son of his father who died when Abed was 8 years old. Abed's first wife, then 34 years old, was raised in a polygamous family and had had no schooling. Though she and Abed had eleven children, Abed felt it was his responsibility to continue the family name since his father and brothers were not able to do so. He married a second 28-year-old wife. She had four years of education and, like the first wife, was from a polygamous family. She and Abed had seven children together.

Abed was the husband in a household that was considered high-functioning, despite the fact that he was unemployed and all twenty-one people in his household lived on public subsidies. Plural marriage related to family tragedies was also a theme that emerged for husbands of low-functioning families. Musa, then 34 years old, was raised in a monogamous family and had twelve years of education. His first wife, 32 years old and raised in a polygamous family with only three years of education, gave birth to five children, four of whom suffered from genetic mental retardation. Musa took a second 28-year-old wife, who was from a monogamous family who had nine years of education. She and Musa had four healthy children. All twelve people lived on public subsidies.

Protecting Family Honor

Badel marriage (as described in Chap. 3) was another reason cited by our male participants for plural marriage. When one man takes a second wife, however, the other man will feel that he must do the same to protect family honor, to balance the family size, and to avenge the "insult." As one man said, my wife's brother, "with no

justification, took another wife… This was an attack on us and you know in such cases I must react, so I married again and everyone supported me." This man described himself as having had no choice but to remarry.

Forty-year-old Eimen provided another example of plural marriage related to honor. He had four children with his first wife who was also 40 years old, and three with his second who was 39 years old at the time of interview. Eimen worked to support his families. Both he and his wives were raised in monogamous families. He had twelve years of schooling while both wives had seven years each. Eimen was the husband in a high-functioning family. He tells his story:

> We were two brothers and six daughters. We were very close, like twins, we married at the same day with two women who were cousins, we lived in the same building, and our wives gave birth in the same week. A year after marriage my brother died in a car accident; I lost a dear brother overnight. After the mourning, her family took her [his dead brother's wife] right away to prevent rumors; she was 19 years old with a baby. My parents went mad; she and her son were all that remained from my brother. They begged me to marry her . . . I married her for their sake and for my brother and my little nephew. (p. 316).

Common, too, is to marry a second (or third or fourth) wife as a way to protect the honor or even the safety of unmarried women in the family. Hamed, a husband from a low-functioning family, described this situation when he and his unmarried brother took sister brides who were mature but remained unmarried. Hamed was 34 years old at the time of interview and had four children with his first wife, who was 28 years old, and four with his second wife, who was 24 years old. Hamed worked and supported his families. He and his wives were raised in monogamous families; he had eight years of school, his first wife had four, and his second wife had no school. In a comment that brings to mind Hassan's reports on "honor killing," Hamed stated that his second wife feared that the family was about to murder the three sisters because they were mature but unmarried: "Each of us would take a second wife," he said, "so that we could protect our women and not allow rumors." The women had no say in the matter. Hamed suspected that his brother planned to abandon this second wife, while he was obliged to live with the other sisters, who argued incessantly.

Romantic Love

Two husbands in the group said that they remarried because of love. One such husband was Muchamd, who was 50 years old, like his first wife with whom he has had nine children. Muchamd had eight years of education, as has had his 33-year-old second wife, whom he had met on a trip to Jordan and with whom he has had two children. His first wife never went to school. He and his first wife were raised in polygamous families. Though they are considered a high-functioning family, Muchamd was unemployed and all lived on public subsidies.

Thirty-three-year-old Yaser married his 32-year-old first wife in a *badel* marriage. They had six children, but, because the marriage was arranged, there was no sense of love between them. Therefore, Yaser explained, he married his

32-year-old second wife, with six years education and also from a polygamous family, and they have had four children. Yaser had eight years of education, while his first wife had twelve years. He was unemployed and the family (13 people) lived on public subsidies.

Many of the men we studied stated that they engaged in plural marriage so as to resist acting on extramarital sexual temptation. This decision would be related to honor rather than love.

Controlling the First Wife

Family and social pressure underlie each of the reasons cited by the men. One final form of family pressure was mentioned by many of the husbands: some extended family members believe that a man should not be "controlled" by a first wife. In order to curtail this potential, men are counselled to take a second wife so as to be in a better position to control the first one.

Post-marriage Reaction

Husbands in high-functioning families usually gained their first wife's consent before taking a second wife and even included them the wedding arrangements. Conversely, husbands in low-functioning families paid little attention to what the first wife felt or needed. In fact, some of these husbands went so far as to finalize all the second-marriage wedding arrangements before the first wife was even aware that the second marriage was to take place. In other cases, the husband had told his first wife of the impending second marriage, but she played no part in the transition.

Those who had discussed their polygamy plans with their first wife stated that they did this as a sign of respect for them. As the religious dictate requires that a man should respect his wives and treat them equitably, they felt the first wife should at least be given deference in accordance with her position as first wife, even if this deference was symbolic. In fact, those who did consult with the first wife attributed the success of their second marriages to this willingness to work with and respect the first wife.

The men who exhibited respect for their first wives also tended to be more involved with their children. They reported paying attention to their children's emotional needs and encouraged their education. One respondent described at length his equitable treatment of his wives:

> "I don't differentiate between [my wives]. Whatever I buy here, I buy there, I sleep here, I sleep there. When I go on a trip, I take them both…I respect women, not like those who belittle them. A good woman is a joy in life. The woman is the man's other half and he can't do without them… They accept one another, [which is] good for us all" (Slonim-Nevo, Al-Krenawi, 2006, & Yuval-Shani, 2008, p. 200).

The higher-functioning families in our studies were distinguished by a sense that the husband—though usually admitting to complicated financial and emotional lives—attributed his success to his respect for both wives "as God would have it." Eimen stated that he never "…made a difference between them financially, I slept with each of them, the children are all my children, I live with them according to what God tells us and we are doing fine." Abu-Ibrahim stated similarly that he treated them equally even to the point of building each house for each wife with the same plan: "I am a religious man and I know where God is" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, p. 317).

Seventy-five-year-old Hasan's report was similar to that of Abu-Ibrahim's. His first wife was 65 years old and his second wife was 40 years old. He had eight children with each. All were raised in polygamous families and none of them attended school. Though the entire group lived on public subsidies, they were considered a high-functioning family. We have already met Abed who also said that he was in tune with his wives' needs. When he realized that tensions resulted from having his two wives and growing families in the same house, he built a second house and the situation was resolved.

These reports, then, function as exemplars of what Philips and Jones (2005) might have had in mind when they wrote that "…the man must live with all of his wives on a footing of equality and kindness. In fact, the whole question of permissibility of plural marriages in Islam is tied to a given man's ability to deal justly with all his wives in terms of his time and wealth" (p. 56).

Conversely, we found that husbands from the low-functioning families could rarely provide details as to how they treated their wives in an equitable manner, even though they claimed that they did. Not one of the husbands from the low-functioning families we studied mentioned that he respected his wives. Thirty-nine-year-old Uda was raised in a polygamous family and had six years of school, unlike his first wife who was 45 years old, was raised in a monogamous family, and never went to school. They had seven children together. Uda's 38-year-old second wife was also raised in a monogamous family but had twelve years of schooling. Though he had five children with the second wife, he complained that she was the biggest mistake of his life; he would have to live with this woman, who seemed initially "an angel" but who had proven to be "a Satan with an angel's face" who "drives him crazy." Shachde also stated that his originally quiet life had been completely changed to a life with "…shouting all day long, crying, fighting; it is terrible" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 317).

Behavior of fathers toward children also tended to diverge along lines of functioning. As mentioned, husbands from high-functioning families were relatively involved with their children; those from low-functioning families often showed evidence of having little or no idea about how their children were doing. One husband in a high-functioning family, for example, spoke of how well each of his ten children was doing in school. By way of contrast, when one husband from the low-functioning family group was asked about how he treated his children, he reported that when he sat with them on a couch, he treated them in an undifferentiated kind of way, making no distinction between one child and another.

A final, telling observation: Nearly without exception, the husbands refrained from suggesting polygamy as a future family structure for their children. For the most part, they acknowledged that the tremendous financial and emotional difficulties of caring for two wives and many children made polygamy undesirable overall.

First Wives: Perceptions About Second Marriage, Husbands' Conduct, and Relationships with Second Wives

Though the wives in both the high- and low-functioning families experienced pain around the issue of polygamy, the wives in the high-functioning families seemed relatively accepting of their lives, while the wives from the low-functioning families were perceptibly angry. On a related note, the first wives in the high-functioning families generally had distant but working relationships with the second wives; the wives in the low-functioning families were openly hostile toward one another. This might be explained by the following: husbands in high-functioning families generally shared with their wives their decision to marry again, supported their first wives throughout the wedding process, and tried to behave in an equitable fashion thereafter. Conversely, husbands in low-functioning families generally surprised their first wives with the decision to remarry, ignored their feelings during the second wedding process, and continued to ignore their feelings after the marriage. This flies directly in the face of the caution expressed by Philips and Jones (2005):

> He should not flaunt his excitement or pleasure of anticipation in front of the wife or wives to whom he is already married, but should behave with decorum and show his love and respect for her/them by considering her/their feelings (p. 94).

Acceptance of Second Marriage

We shall highlight the experiences of two wives from the high-functioning families. They both expressed pain, but also an acceptance of their husband's second marriage. For example, Muchamd's wife said that her husband acted "like a teenager in love." Suggesting that his sexual acting out was inevitable, she voiced the opinion that allowing a second marriage would be better for the family's reputation and possibly kept Muchamd from leaving altogether: "he is a respected man and has a reputation, we did not wish that he will destroy it all, so let him marry." (p. 318). This perspective was noted by Loue: "Women may resign themselves to the possibility that their husbands will take additional wives to avoid an even more distasteful alternative: that their husbands will be legally monogamous but will engage in a series of affairs" (pp. 40–41). Eimen's first wife reminded us of the tragedy that befell her husband's family with the death of his brother. Marrying his brother's wife was a matter of duty to his brother and his family; we were forced, she said, "…to accept and be silent" (p. 318). Eimen's wife stated that if she were to be angry at all, it should be at fate. The Qur'an helped her, she said, because in it, it is written

that it was Eimen's duty to remarry and that there was comfort in the Qur'an. This woman cried during the interview and reported that this was the first time she had discussed the tragedy and the resulting polygamy.

Wives in the low-functioning families were far more upset than their peers in high-functioning families with their husband's decision to take another wife. Most believed that the decision was rooted in sexual desire that had not been dealt with properly. Musa's wife said that she could not trust men and felt that she had been thrown away "like an old banana peel." Yaser's wife, too, blamed her husband's second marriage on desire. "If he could have gotten her without marriage, he would not have married." Worse, she said, Musa took a third wife and abandoned the second one. She stated she had not let her husband near her since the second marriage and called him a "dog that cannot control his impulses."

Whereas Philips and Jones (2005) caution their readers that a man "should not pursue his second or third wife in the fashion that men in the West pursue girlfriends and mistresses" (p. 94), Uda's wife told us that her husband acted as though he was looking for a new car rather than a new wife. She, too, referred to her husband as a teenager forgetting his age and running after impulses. She seemed to draw pleasure from the fact that Uda's new wife "drives him crazy" and was comfortable with leaving him alone to deal on his own with this woman. Revealingly, Hamed's wife stated that the story of protecting the honor of the sisters in the threatening household environment was a ruse. She believed he destroyed the first family for a fictitious reason and stated that now Hamed verbally and physically abused her, which he had never done so before. This she blamed on the second wife.

Sharing the Decision to Marry: The First Wife's Role During Second Marriage

As mentioned above, the husbands in the high-functioning families were likely to share their decision to remarry with their first wives and solicit their agreement. In addition, they made an attempt to be supportive of their first wives during the wedding process. Eimen's wife was impressed that his husband's parents asked her opinion about the second marriage first before they spoke of it to Eimen. Her mother-in-law had raised Eimen's wife after her own mother had died and the brother-in-law's baby was a living memory of her brother-in-law. She felt that she could not prevent Eimen from marrying the widow and raising his brother's son. Later, she talked about Eimen's sensitivity toward her during the second wedding. Eimen had actually spent much of the wedding night with her, and they had cried together over the loss of his brother. She described the experience as one of mutual mourning.

Hasan's first wife initiated the move toward polygamy. Recognizing that she had borne him only one son, she encouraged Hasan to remarry so that her children could have another brother. She told us ". . . sons give power, and I only had little Muhammad." She believed that her son Muhammad needed "backup." Abed's wife told us of how Abed had tried not to hurt her and had consulted with her on everything. She chose clothing for the new wife and reported that Abed was with her before he went in for the first time to be with the second wife.

Wives from the low-functioning families spoke very differently. These women went as far as to secure a guarantee from the second wife's family that the second wife would not come near the first wife. Most believed that they had been forced to reconcile themselves to their husbands' choice. Hamed's wife told us:

> "I fought with him, went to my parents . . . I prayed to God for help . . . I felt like burning fire, a fire that ate me . . . but I wanted to show them that I am strong so I went with them to bring her, baked bread for her dinner, I was like a chicken that was beheaded, its neck is bleeding and it raises its head up and runs as if it is not dying, this was the most terrible event in my life, when he was with her the first night, I tore up my clothes, my sister held me, he betrayed me in front of my eyes, I wish that no one will suffer as I did" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 319).

Yaser's wife story revealed deep emotional pain. She spoke of her sense of agony during the second wedding that was held nearby. Her husband had come home, taken a shower, and gone to the party; she fainted on the night of his wedding. Uda's wife told us that her husband had hidden the marriage from her for a week after the wedding. In fact, she said, he had informed her parents of his polygamy plans before he informed her. We hear in this the result of not heeding advice such as "He should…not allow her/them to hear the news of his impending marriage from neighbours, friends or the intended wife herself before hearing it from him" (*Polygamy in Islam*, p. 94).

Sharing of Resources Among Wives

Perhaps as a result of their husbands' attempts to behave in an equitable manner, first and second wives in high-functioning families seemed to get along better than those in the low-functioning families. Abu-Ibrahim's wife told us that he alternated between the wives' houses on an equal basis. He claimed total equality between the wives and the children and has taken both wives to Mecca; the first wife before the second "as should be the case." Hasan's wife's report was similar: that if her husband behaved equitably with both wives, she believed that things would work out. Abed's wife stated that Abed visited with each wife every day. He did not neglect either wife, bought the same things for each house, and even went as far as to keep the same clothes in each house: that "he makes sure that if you buy a pair of pants you buy two, one for here and one for there" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 320).

Equitable division of resources was not at all evident in the low-functioning families. Shachde's wife referred specifically to their financial problems, saying that she had to rely on her sisters often for money to support her children. Shachde's second wife had many younger children, and it seemed to his first wife that all of his money went to purchase milk and diapers for them. Uda's wife reported that her oldest brother bought food for her when he went shopping for his own family. Philips and Jones (2005) warn very explicitly against this: "If a man is experiencing difficulty meeting the basic socio-economic requirements necessary for one wife and family, he should not further strain his financial and emotional abilities by marrying another…" (p. 86).

Relationships with Second Wives

First wives in high-functioning families we studied—in stark contrast with those in low-functioning families—had fairly good relations with the second wives. While everyone experienced pain, wives in the high-functioning families seemed to accept their situation worked to improve their family functioning. These first wives worked together with the second wives to avoid major problems. In fact, some of these first wives were friendly with the second wife, and many looked after each other's children. Rather than use words like *dura,* with its connotation of trouble, first wives in these family often described the second wife as a friend or even a sister. This more harmonious arrangement, found as it was in households in which the husband tried not to engage in favoritism, echoes the description given by Zeitzen (2008):

> "Co-wife jealousy tends to be lessened by such factors as adequate financial maintenance of all wives, shared domestic responsibilities such as cooking and childrearing, and, most importantly perhaps, the enforcement of strict rules for the husband's sleeping schedule" (p. 33).

While one woman actually went to the family of the second wife and brought her the marital money, most spoke of small arguments, but at the same time how they managed to get along. Eimen's wife stressed that the two wives tried not to talk of the fate that put them together or speak in ways that would hurt each other. Muchamd's wife spoke of occasional problems that were generally resolved within the families and often without involving Muchamd. Hasan's wife stated that the women had occasional arguments and that the children sometimes fought among themselves. However, the two wives saw themselves as good neighbors.

The first wives in the low-functioning families behaved very differently with the second wives in their households. They maintained as much distance as possible from the second wife, and they were angry and hostile with them. Most would not refer to the second wife by name and used derogatory language when discussing them. Yaser's wife was particularly hostile, saying that she would have killed the second wife given the opportunity. She believed that the second wife deliberately tried to provoke her by marrying Yaser. She described one gruesome incident where she attacked the second wife in her mother-in-law's house and "would have aborted her baby inside her" had the two not been separated (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 321). This scene is reminiscent of the one reported by Hassouneh-Phillips (2001):

> "We were sitting around together in the living room and then I went out of the room and then I came back into the room and she turned her face like she was making fun of me. After that I felt bad, you know, what is she trying to make fun of? She used to make little sarcastic remarks and things in front of me. But anyway whatever she did, did not matter to me so much as how he reacted. Because he was the one that was supposed to be fair. He was the one that was supposed to be religious, I mean the leader of the family and he was the one that was responsible. I did not marry her. I married him and expected him to behave properly in Islam…. It was his night to stay with me, and so he came back and we were sitting and…he said to me, 'You act as if we are your enemies.' ..I cried and then he said, 'I am going out.' And then I said, 'Don't go,' and I took a hold of the door. I said, 'Do not go out

> and I will sleep in one room and you sleep in the other room.' Then she came. She started saying things to me, pushing, pulling at me. And she hit me with her fist here on the side. She hit me twice. He did not say anything to her. He did not even say, 'Stop'" (p. 745).

Shachde's wife also described hatred, saying that the second wife "barks like a dog and in the evening everyone is angry with her" (p. 321). According to her, Shachde's second wife cursed and spit in an effort to provoke her into fights. She attributed the second wife's behavior to the instigation of other women to be confrontational, but she claimed to be able to ignore her. Musa's wife spoke in a similar way: that there were problems in the family which were ignored and thus grew. Both of Uda's wives experienced themselves as having been deceived: Uda's second wife claimed that she was unaware that Uda was married when he married her, but Uda's first wife did not believe this. Uda's first wife claimed that the second wife wanted to leave her parents' house at any cost and stated that the second wife destroyed everyone's life.

Second Wives: Perceptions About Marriage, Husbands' Conduct, and Relationships with First Wife

Behavior of the second wives in the polygamous relationships was related to whether they were in high- or low-functioning households. Second wives in the high-functioning families generally ignored minor issues and disagreements; they tried to make relationships between the wives run smoothly. Many of the second wives in this group, echoing the sentiments of the first wife, referred to the second wife as "sister." They thought of the two families of the same husband as somehow united.

The second wives in the low-functioning families were, like the first wives, hateful toward the other wife. One second wife declared that she hated her co-wife and that nobody in the village neighborhood liked her because she did not practice basic personal hygiene and because she was self-absorbed.

On Becoming a Second Wife

No woman, across group, reported any desire to become a second wife. Polygamy was attributed to fate, though most described being a second wife had been forced upon them. All spoke of deception, family pressure, and pain.

Eimen's second wife, for example, stated that she had been left with "two bad options": to marry Eimen and keep her son or to (hopefully) marry someone else and lose custody of her son. She realized that Eimen loved his first wife and children and she did not want to take that away from him. She claimed that she held off sexual activity with Eimen until she felt she could no longer because the neighbors would talk about why she and he had had no children (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 321). Muchamd's second wife was from a high-functioning family and claimed she had always been against polygamy. Muchamd was one of the husbands who said he married his second wife for love, and the statement of this wife bore

this out to some extent in that she decided to marry him despite the fact that she assured us that women do not want to share their husbands. Abed's wife blamed her father for forcing her into becoming a second wife. She had been a good student and had had other plans, but her father told her that she had no choice in the matter.

These stories are very reminiscent of the ones told by the second wives in the low-functioning families. Like Hamed's second wife, Abed's second wife also blamed her father, who made a deal with his brothers that each of the daughters would be married to a cousin. They took the girls out of school when they were seventeen years old and forced them to marry. Uda's second wife claimed that Uda cheated her by telling her that the first wife was handicapped. Uda kept this marriage a secret for a week afterwards, and only after the wedding did she discover that Uda's first wife had borne him both sons and daughters. Then she felt stuck: she could not go back to her parents, and she would be unable to marry again if she divorced Uda. "You know we are a cruel society…" she said.

Relationships with the First Wife

Expectedly, there were differences in relationships between wives in high- and low-functioning families. We found that second wives in the high-functioning families had reasonably cooperative relationships with the first wife. For example, Abu-Ibrahim's second wife told us that they acted as guests in each other's house and granted each other respect. She claimed support from her father who, she explained, is a "strong man" and can fight on her behalf if it is necessary. She felt that there was no reason to look to the past and wish for another situation; she realized that she must share Abu-Ibrahim and was thankful that the first wife did not become overly concerned about small problems. Abed's second wife reported that she felt it important to respect Abed's first wife. Rather than becoming the butt of jokes, honor was kept through this respect and the second wife kept in mind that the first wife was a good woman.

The second wives in the low-functioning families spoke with bitterness of their lives. Like the first wives, they reported rage-filled exchanges between the two wives. Shachde's second wife saw his first wife as greedy and believed that she wanted Shachde all to herself. She believed that, unlike the first wife's claim, Shachde spent too much time at the first wife's house, which was not appropriate as her children were still young. She experienced herself as Shachde's "slave" and reported that she wanted God to seek her revenge on the first wife for taking Shachde's love away from her. At the beginning, she said, "…he loved me and I loved him, he was always with me, now it all reversed, he is always with her, cannot refuse her requests, he travels with her and I am here neglected with my kids." Interestingly, she also referred to the first wife as "Satan" and a "snake" who ignored her problems. She "looks quiet but her sting carries you to the grave, she is a snake, a real snake. I scream and yell, but she keeps it all inside and only her poison gets out, God will attack her health, I hate her" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 322). Musa's second wife used similarly vituperative words and claimed that,

though she tried to be a sister, the first wife came to her house and beat her with a stick till she almost died. The first wife, she said, accused her of bewitching Musa, but she feels instead that the first wife let her husband get away because of her terrible behavior. Similarly, Yaser's second wife thought of his first wife as "stupid," using derogatory terms to describe a salivating way of talking. Yaser's first wife, she said, did not seem to understand that Yaser had every cause to run away and remarry, because she is disgusting. For these reasons, she said, it makes sense that Yaser does not love his first wife but loves her instead. Finally, Uda's wife was the least derogatory but in a sense carried the most finality by saying simply that she had no communication with the first wife: "…for me she does not exist!"(Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 323).

The second wives quoted above used very specific language: the figure of Satan and the act of bewitching are not uncommon motifs in this community. Indeed, the popular saying "Whenever a man encounters a woman, Satan is also present" illustrates the Islamic view on sexual temptation and also functions as the ground for rules of conduct for Bedouin-Arab women (Mass & Al-Krenawi, 1994). The wives in our proposed intervention model (see Chap. 6) used these very images, and we shall see how, rather than vainly attempting to disabuse them of their notions, we successfully built a treatment framework on socially acceptable sexual mores.

Children

Children from the high-functioning families described less confrontational parent–child relationships than did the children from the low-functioning families. To determine the tenor of these relationships, we interviewed the first child of both wives and asked each questions about their relationships with the "other" mother and her children and about their relationships with their father. Like the wives, children from the high-functioning families seemed to get along better with the "other" mother and the other children than those from the low-functioning families. "Distant" is the word that best describes the sense many children gave of their relationship with their father.

First Wives' Children

One young child stated that his father frequently played with him. However, this was an exception: emotional distance was the rule. Miryam, the twenty-four-year-old daughter of Hasan and his first wife, considered her father a good man but old and in his own world. She reported being closer to her mother than to him and managed with brothers and sisters from both families. When they fought, they would reconcile and hold no grudges. She thought of her father's second wife as a "second mother" who was emotionally supportive of all the children. This is reminiscent of Yasmin's eighteen-year-old daughter, who noted that though her father was never present in the home, she still felt a sense of love toward him. She also reported that the children of the other mother were a pleasure to have in the family and that

she helped to care for them. Eimen's seven-year-old son from his first wife said, "The children of the other woman are my brothers, I love them. I call her 'mother,' she nursed me, my mother told me that she was sick when she gave birth to me—I love them both" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 324). These reports bring to mind the findings of Minde (1975) as cited in Elbedour et al. (2002) that "the polygamous family generates so much warmth and affection that it tends to benefit the child's mental health" (p. 262).

Children from the low-functioning families exhibited anger, misery, and disconnectedness which seem related to the tensions between the mothers. For example, Yaser's five-year-old son explained that he did not like the other woman because she took his father away. He reported not being allowed to visit his father at the second wife's house or play with the brothers from the other household because his mother was angry at his father.

Thirteen-year-old Zinab said that her father Shachde was "always upset." She too reported that Shadchde's other wife was "crazy" and her father did not know what to do about it. Zinab said that the other wife always complained and was jealous of her mother. Zinab felt that she herself had the better deal because the second wife's children were miserable and locked inside all day long. She claimed to have been chased away one day and decided not to go to her "other" mother's house again. While she reported seeing some of the other children at school, she had not seen her younger brother for some time because she was kept from her in the "crazy" mother's house.

Uda's 22-year-old daughter, Mona, drew our attention to the fact that all of the people in her family suffered as a result of her father's second marriage. She was greatly upset with her father and reported barely speaking to him because she felt that he wanted to have "better" children than those in her family. She felt that her father left them with nothing at the beginning of the second marriage; her mother cried incessantly and Mona could not do her schoolwork. Mona said she even ran away at one point, but nobody noticed. There was no friendship whatsoever between her and the other children; she refused to recognize them if they passed on the street. This differs from the report of one of the eldest sons of a first wife: he at least claimed a mutual respect between the siblings. However, neither he nor his wife had any relations with the second wife whom he held responsible for encouraging his father to beat him on one occasion, though he was not guilty of the offence of which she accused him. He did not appear to be interested in granting forgiveness.

Strikingly, not a single one of the children we studied planned to establish a polygamous family in the future. For example, Abu-Ibrahim's 27-year-old son, Musa, told us that he found no need to take a second wife. He felt that he had a "perfect" wife and did not want many children. He expressed the belief that a second wife would only create trouble, and he hoped to pass this idea on to his children. Zinab told us that it was shameful for a woman to take a man from another woman. Mona told us that she had already been offered marriage by two married men and she had turned them down. Such an arrangement, she felt, is impractical because it hurts the children. Another daughter of a first wife, Yasmin, said, "I prefer to remain unmarried all my life than to marry a married man and be his second wife!" (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 324).

Second Wives' Children

The children of the second wives in the high-functioning families behaved in a manner reminiscent of the children of the first wives: they got along with the other siblings and the first wife, but were distant from the fathers. Abu-Ibrahim's 35-year-old daughter from his second wife felt that they had a normal family. She was not sure what the relationship was originally, thinking that the second wife was actually her father's sister. Regardless, the first wife was considered like a second mother and now her own children call her "grandma" as well. However, she too felt distant from her father: they did not eat together and, if they were lying down, had to rise as a matter of honor to him when he entered the room. Hasan's daughter from his second wife, Taman, reports a similar relationship between siblings and half-siblings. She reported calling the first wife, as well as her own mother, "Mother." However, she expressed anger at her father and stated that she did not understand why at age 70 he wanted to bring more children into the world. She complained of the 50-year difference in age between them, and stated that he behaved more like a grandfather to her than a father.

Children of second wives in the low-functioning families, like the children of the first wives in the low-functioning families, expressed anger and hostility toward their counterparts in the other family. Uda's nine-year-old daughter Sama from his second wife said "We hate them, my brothers from the other woman, they are bad, but I feel sorry for them because their mother cannot help them." Musa's son from his second marriage, nine-year-old Muchamd, said that he did not know the children from the first wife's family. His mother did not allow him to visit them and said that the first wife was crazy. "She chases me away and so I will never go there." Hamed's son Achmed, aged 8, seemed extremely disturbed regarding this issue. He called his brothers in the other family "bad" and accused them of beating him while the other mother did nothing. Achmed told us that he had no friends whatsoever and that he would never marry.

Women in both the high- and the low-functioning polygamous households described a significant degree of pain around the polygamy, and the men and children also painted a challenging picture of the family structure. Thus, it is not surprising that the children expressed the wish to form monogamous families in the future. We did hear, however, about behaviors and attitudes that increased the ability of the family members to function. These included acceptance of polygamy as God's plan, equitable allocation of resources by the husband, the maintenance of separate households, respectful behavior toward both wives, and communication among siblings and mothers.

The Extended Families

We were unable to determine the extended family's levels of functioning. In other words, while we had managed to determine which of our families were high- and low-functioning, interviewees in the extended family did not give us enough information to determine whether they were high- or low-functioning. Further, they

chose to tell personal stories rather than comment on the stories we related. Nonetheless, some illuminating themes emerged from these interviews.

The extended family members identified many of the same characteristics of high- and low-functioning families that were identified by the husbands and wives. They described some cohesive families, with mutual respect among the husband and his wives. These husbands were described as being fair with wives and children, treating them equitably as per religious law, and working hard to support each family. Respondents perceived these wives as being calm, quiet, and accepting of their fate. Second wives did not demand too much, they said; they were even-tempered and were usually friends with the first wife. They cooperated with each other in an effort to live a decent life. One sister-in-law said:

> He really doesn't show any favoritism. I see. I'm there all the time and I see. He's an honest man and doesn't like to arouse disputes between his wives; believe me, in families that have problems, it's all because of the man. He tends to take sides with one of his wives, he isn't honest, and no one keeps quiet, and that's why there are problems.... here, they live like sisters. (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2008, p. 195).

Conversely, respondents often described the wives and children in low-functioning families as being disconnected: fathers were distant or estranged from their children because one of the wives, usually the first, did not let her children see their father. Mothers, some reported, had to arrange for the children to see the father, but siblings were emotionally distant from one another because of the mothers' fighting. Extended family members often stayed away from lower-functioning family members. For example, one wife said that she kept a distance from her husband's extended family: "It's a strange family," she said, "always shouting, always crying, always complaining." (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2008, p. 204).

Intriguingly—given the report of familial pressure for polygamy—quite a number of extended family members were vocal about their dislike of polygamous arrangements. They said that it deprived women and children of rights, and polygamous husbands bore heavy financial burdens and found themselves torn between two homes. They stated that most wives feel jealousy and express anger and pain. Many respondents from extended families mentioned their wish that children, who share their mothers' tension, should not be reduced to seeing their father only occasionally. Their experience was that as much as some of the husbands tried to care in a just manner with wives and children, this attempt was limited to material aid; love was not equitably distributed. It seemed to them that the first wife was often abandoned because of the new wife and children, and this caused much emotional distress. Echoing the lament of some of the wives, extended family members complained of the poverty in which the first wife is often left and reported terrible conflict between the wives over resources. They voiced the opinion that this competition between the wives was detrimental to the children's emotional and scholastic development. Some alluded to domestic violence.

While many extended family members spoke against polygamy, they seemed hard-pressed to come up with alternatives. Some suggested that education and time would help. Others felt less optimistic and suggested that perhaps help would have to come from elsewhere. Some expressed that they had very little power to change

anything, so there was not much point trying. Many simply said that they would not choose to enter such an arrangement themselves. There was a tendency to blame the problem on the community at large which dictated that a woman must be married and that this meant accepting polygamy over nothing. One woman went as far as to blame her tribe —she and her peers did not want polygamy, but that desire did not change the reality. Tellingly, when it came to her own marriage, it was her husband's parents she was afraid might push for polygamy, not her husband.

Chapter 5
Discussion and Implications

Abstract This chapter results in conclusions related to monogamous and polygamous marriages in the Bedouin-Arab population. These conclusions are based on the statistical analysis we saw in the previous chapter.

Some conclusions were reached via a number of correlations between economic status and family functioning for men, women, and children.

Many of the issues researched were found to be more severe in polygamous marriages related to relationships between the subfamilies (children and wives). Other issues include educational issues of the children and the lack of such among the adult parties in the family, negativity to the polygamous form of marriage by the children of such, low self-esteem, and more.

In short, polygamy is bad not only for the children of these polygamous families, but also for Bedouin-Arab and Israeli society as a whole.

Family Functioning

Expectedly, there were a number of correlations between economic status and family functioning for men, women, and children. This was shown with two linear regression analyses for each group, one using family function as a dependent variable and the other using family functioning as a dependent variable, conducted to confirm these relationships. Our findings indicate that all members of a polygamous family, but especially women and children, suffer: because of the specific act or resulting interpersonal relationships, because of changes in personal and social image, and especially because of psychological stress related to family functioning. In particular, we have mentioned that women and children often experience anger and jealousy which, if unresolved, can lead to intergenerational and inter-relational disengagement and conflict.

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Men and Family Functioning

The quantitative study showed that polygamous men reported more problems with their family's functioning than did men in monogamous marriages. For example, they felt less satisfied with their marriage and had more problematic relations with their children than did the monogamous men. We see more evidence in the qualitative study: though only one of the ten specifically mentioned financial trouble, others said that the second marriage was a mistake and more wives mentioned financial problems. All of the husbands in the low-functioning families reported marital problems. Two of the husbands from the high-functioning families said they would rather not have had to remarry, and all of the husbands in the high-functioning families mentioned that they had felt a duty to take another wife: in one case to protect the honor of the family rather than have an affair; in another to protect the honor of the widowed sister-in-law; and the others to protect the family heritage by siring males. Only one husband reported considering polygamy before a family crisis: he felt that the second marriage of his brother-in-law coupled with a lack of fertility in his immediate family virtually forced him to remarry. This man considered the decision a mistake, perhaps because of the economic stress, but perhaps because he may have been satisfied with his first family. Clearly, then, the men we studied did not remarry exclusively for sexual or love fulfillment.

It is possible that this reluctance to engage in polygamy is related to anticipating jealousy among the wives and children in a polygamous family (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). Statistics from our quantitative study show this, and we have also seen this qualitatively in both the low- and the high-functioning families. Even the high-functioning families managed jealousy by an avoidance of discussing the circumstances that led up to the second marriage. Some men mentioned this as well: only two of the five wives in the high-functioning group actually encouraged the second marriage ahead of time and it seems that at least four of the husbands from the high-functioning families anticipated trouble and led their first wives through the ordeal because they recognized the need to maintain a modicum of honor for the first wife.

The polygamous men in our study seemed to be somewhat conscious of the problems that might occur upon entering into plural marriage, but their degree of awareness when they made the final decision is open to debate. For example, three of five men in the low-functioning group told us that the second marriage was a mistake, though all seem to have discovered this afterwards. One husband kept the second marriage secret until a week after the event. He realized the trouble that would come, chose to ignore it, and was now relegated to living with the second even though he called her Satan. Another husband in a low-functioning family who remarried because his wife had borne only one son said that the second marriage had further damaged a poor first marital relationship. A third said that he had made a mistake, and his first wife claims that he now abuses her. Finally, the wife who had borne children with genetic defects similarly claimed that her husband had just exacerbated a bad marital situation. Two of the five husbands in the high-functioning group also felt they had made a mistake and ruined a good situation, though one claimed that he had had no real choice.

We have mentioned that, in the Bedouin-Arab society, like in many other Arab communities, while first wives may be valued for purposes of family alliance, they may be less loved and less cared for by the husband because the marriage was considered obligatory. Thus, instead of assuming the role of supervisor of an economic unit, the first wife assumes the role of a jilted mother.

At first glance, the qualitative study seemed to suggest that only one husband did not "love" his first wife. Upon closer scrutiny, however, we see that three husbands from the low-functioning group initially rejected the first wife, and four out of five lived primarily with their second wife. Of the other five in the high-functioning families, while none said they rejected their first wife, the reasons for four of the five second marriages included the failure of the first wife in love or in birthing capacity. It seems that for most husbands, the relationship with the first wife was largely duty based.

We have shown that when polygamy is entered into, not only are current marital difficulties intensified, new jealousies and complex disagreements arise among the various, and numerically increasing, family elements (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008a). Profanter and Cate (2008) found that:

> Unjust treatment is significantly more likely to be associated with a negative effect of the remarriages on the socioeconomic status. Therefore, the considerable financial and social burdens that are associated with an increase in family size significantly affect men's just or unjust treatment of their wives. (p. 236)

While most men in Profanter and Cate's (2008) study claimed that they treated their wives justly, these men did not seem to have a sense of the emotional needs of their family because they spent most of their time outside the home. Significantly, these researchers found qualitative evidence that the men they studied were unable to behave in an equitable manner with their wives and tended instead to show favoritism. This, they found, contributed to a sense of guilt that they were not dealing equitably, as they knew they were required to do (Profanter & Cate, 2008, pp. 236–239).

Children and Family Functioning

When we controlled for family functioning, we found that better family functioning contributed to the children's self-esteem, mental health, and peer relations. The child's perception of how well the family is functioning directly and indirectly impacted on the ability of the children from the polygamous or the monogamous marriages to adjust to other contexts. Importantly, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, we found that family functioning had an autonomous impact on all the outcome variables. We showed as well in our qualitative study that the children in the high-functioning polygamous families generally fared better than those in low-functioning families. However, from the other regression analysis in the quantitative study, the economic variable seemed to predict most readily the child's perception of family functioning. Other outcomes in children were affected by changes in the economic situation, gender, and family structure variables, some implications of which we will discuss shortly when considering how polygamy seems to regenerate from generation to generation.

Both of our studies indicated that children in the polygamous families perceived their family functioning to be more negative than those in monogamous families. It is possible that a child of a first wife "inherits" the feelings of their mothers towards the father who may well channel his emotional and financial attention from the first children of the first less-loved wife to his other families. Six of the children from first families mentioned that their father was, at the very least, distant. Some said that the father had abandoned everyone or treated them poorly. Again in the qualitative study, the children of the three first wives in the low-functioning families who claimed to have been abandoned financially were as acrimonious as their mother towards the father. Other children talked of a distant or helpless father figure. Many expressed love for their father but not for one or the other wife and the siblings of that wife. We found that everyone lost something with the multiplication of the father's obligations: figures from the quantitative study show that polygamous men have much less involvement in their family's lives than monogamous men. Unsurprisingly, then, we found in both parts of the study that children can feel abandoned by their father and look to their own mother and siblings for support (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Al-Krenawi, 1998; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Ware, 1979).

Interestingly, our quantitative study indicated that the children in the polygamous households fought more often with both the children in the father's other marriages, and with the father's other wives, and this level of conflict was disproportionate to how much the same child fought with his or her siblings and mother. Conversely, children in the monogamous marriage fought more often with their own mother and siblings than the children from the polygamous marriages did with theirs. A number of children in our qualitative survey said that they were not allowed to play with step-siblings; one said that they were kept indoors from the time they returned from school; another said that they ignored each other when they passed on the street; yet another claimed to have been beaten in front of the second wife by her children. Tragically, one child stated that he no longer had any friends anywhere.

Children we studied who had trouble at home also had trouble with their peers and in school. They performed less well in school and also fought more regularly with peers and with teachers. For example, one of the children from a low-functioning family complained that she could not do her homework. We can surmise that, as evidenced above, low self-esteem can be as evident in a schoolyard, where children come from both groups of families, as it can be at home. Even without specifics, there is reason to think that financial and familial problems influence peer relations. Trouble in one area may exacerbate problems in other areas.

This is consistent with studies that indicate that a child's social and mental health is affected by family functioning and the family structure (Hoyle & Kenny, 1999; Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). Owuamanam (1984) reported that intense resource competition amongst children in polygamous families was correlated with children's low self-esteem, while D'Hondt and Vandewiele (1980) found that secondary school children reported negativity towards polygamy whether or not they were from polygamous families. These echo other studies in Arab and African countries and cultures that demonstrated that the pronounced competition among family members in polygamous families had a serious effect on women and children (Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992; Rivett & Street, 1993).

Women and Family Functioning

Women in the polygamous marriages we studied reported less satisfying family lives than the women in the monogamous marriages, and here we see as well that poor family functioning has, within the family group, the greatest effect upon the woman's well-being. Like men, women reported that they were generally less satisfied with their marital arrangements, and their self-esteem was lower. They also reported more problems in family functioning and, troublingly, the family functioning variable had more influence on a maternal than paternal mental health. Perhaps this is related to the fact that most women in polygamous marriages spend most of their time at home, and so they are more prone to notice breakdown in family function. While it is true that only three of ten men were employed in our qualitative survey and only one of twenty women, we have mentioned in Chaps. 2 and 3 that traditionally in this region, men are more involved outside the house with community or social activities; women's work is more often directly related to home duties. This furthers supports the idea that, as we see in the statements of the wives (who tend to report more concerns), men may be much less aware of the deterioration in family relationships.

We wanted to determine whether the mental health of polygamous wives is affected by the polygamous family structure in its own right, independent of other variables which may result from polygamy (e.g., lower economic status). It is easy to see the deterioration of women's well-being in the low-functioning families, but it is possible that women in the high-functioning families accepted their position, and thus fared better economically, because they realized they might fall into disrepute if they weren't cooperative. In other words, men in both groups cited similar reasons for polygamous choices, but those women who cooperated or bowed to fate seem to have fared better in the long run. While all women reported pain, those who kept their husband's support seemed to do better.

In our quantitative study, however, as with the other groups, the linear regression analyses showed, first, that the major contributor to a woman's mental status, irrespective of family structure, age, and economic situation, was her family's functioning as a whole. Outcomes besides family functioning in mothers were affected by the age variable, but they too were affected mainly by the economic situation and then by the family structure variable.

The qualitative study indicated that the high-functioning families could be distinguished from the low-functioning families by level of familial economic stability, and by the degree of respect that each member maintained for the other. Fathers in the high-functioning families tended to be more interested in what their children were doing and more respectful of each of his wives (even before the second marriage).

The only wife that worked out of the home in our survey was part of a low-functioning family and had to work to support herself and her family. Though extremely emotionally hurt, she survived financially while at least two other first wives had to rely on sisters or brothers for support. These are the most obvious examples of how polygamous families fall apart. The wife will suffer more because of poor economic conditions and, coincidently, poor family functioning. We showed quantitatively that polygamous family structure and resultant economic difficulties

can contribute substantially to the impairment of the family functioning more so than economic problems might contribute to poorer family functioning in a monogamous family. Both the quantitative and qualitative studies indicate that polygamy in the Bedouin-Arab community is more likely than monogamy to contribute negatively to a woman's well-being; more social and emotional problems were reported among women in polygamous relations than in monogamous ones.

Violence was reported by some of the wives in the low-functioning families, with one woman claiming that her husband started to abuse her only after the second marriage, which he realized was an unmanageable mistake. At least two other wives physically attacked a second wife. In all cases, the acrimony between the wives in low-functioning families was highly palpable. This carried over to the children, who were often forbidden to play with each other. Many children adopted the violent and abusive language towards the other children and wives that seemed to originate from their mother.

Conversely, wives in the high-functioning families got along with all children and generally the other wife, though there were problems, especially as the women acclimated to the new, unwanted polygamous arrangement. In these families, the financial situation was fair, if limited. Again, the husband in these households took at least some pains to understand and legitimize the needs of each wife.

Interestingly, wives in the polygamous marriages, in contrast with wives in the monogamous marriages, did not report poor relations with their own children. The increase in mental health problems, then, does not necessarily harm parental relationships with the children in the family. In fact, the relationship between mothers and children in the first family of a polygamous husband seems in fact to be stronger than the parallel relationship in the monogamous family. Perhaps the maternal–child relationship provides a source of strength rather than burden in both the high- and low-functioning families. Children also reported that, similar to their mothers, there were more strained relationships between them and the father, not the mother, perhaps creating an alliance against the father's activities (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Al-Krenawi, 1998; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Ware, 1979). This might remain a constant in polygamous households.

Some children in our qualitative study specifically described sharing their mothers' acrimony towards a father who, they felt, had abandoned the child and first wife. This sentiment was more pronounced in the low-functioning families, where children engaged in physical and verbal conflict. However, children from first marriages also reported that they had always had slightly better relationships with their mother. A child from a second marriage in a high-functioning family expressed her anger at the silliness of a father who remarried despite his old age. He appeared to the very young children as a grandfather figure.

This echoes findings from Jordan and elsewhere (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al Gharaibeh, 2011; Chaleby, 1985). Family functioning and economic status are critical to women's mental health: senior (i.e., first) wives in polygamous marriages experience significantly lower self-esteem and life satisfaction than wives in monogamous marriages. There is less opportunity for these polygamous wives to gain feelings of positive self-worth, and simple stressors are exacerbated by more complex

family rivalries and competition for resources. That this is most relevant to senior wives is demonstrated in numerous studies conducted in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and Turkey: first wives in polygamous marriages report more psychosocial, family, and economic problems than their counterparts in monogamous families (Al-Darmeki, 2001; Al-Krenawi, 2001; Al-Krenawi & Slonim Nevo, 2008a; Al-Shamsi & Fulcher, 2005; Al-Sherbiny, 2005; Hamdan, 2009; Hamdan, Hawamdeh, & Hussein, 2008; Makanjuola, 1987). Al-Sherbiny (2005) coined the term *First Wife Syndrome* to describe the psychological crisis experienced by a first wife following her husband's second marriage. As many of the women in this study experienced, this syndrome is manifested in somatic complaints, anxiety, depression, and irritability. Viinamaeki, Kontula, Niskanen, and Koskela (1995) found that mental disorders were strongly related to financial difficulties, while Taylor (1998) added that the direct and cumulative impact of economic hardship on the mental health of mothers affected their parenting styles and their children's well-being. Chaleby (1985, 1987) found in Kuwait that there were more women from polygamous marriages in the inpatient psychiatric population than monogamous and that more senior (first) wives were under treatment than junior wives amongst a sample of psychiatric outpatients. Similarly Al-Issa (1990) found that Arab co-wives suffered a great deal of mental illness because of the general Arab social structure. He found a high amount of culture-specific family stress (which would include polygamy) related to mental illness amongst Algerian women.

Similar results were found in African countries where Makanjuola (1987) reported that delusions in Nigerian women were often related to rivalries between co-wives and other women. A study conducted in rural Cameroon (Gwanfogbe, Schumm, Smith, & Furrow, 1997) found that junior wives are more satisfied than senior wives with their polygamous situation, suggesting that status in the marriage was important to life satisfaction ratings. Among tribal peoples in general, polygamy and psychiatric disorders have been found to be related, as found in Yoruba when Leighton, Lembo, Hughes, et al. (1963) reported a higher rate of mental disorders among co-wives than among women in monogamous relationships.

The economic disadvantages of polygamy can be overwhelming and have been borne out in studies from Al Toniji (2001) in Syria and the Gulf States. There is often terrific competition and jealousy among co-wives (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999; Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Izzeldin, 2001; Madhavan, 2002), as co-wives find they have very limited private time with their shared husband. If the husband has married because of a woman's inability to bear many children, the woman is prone to feelings of limited self-worth and feeling abandoned by the family and community (Al-Krenawi, 1998). Some families, as we have seen, live together in cramped and overcrowded conditions which aggravates stress and leads to such jealousy that, as demonstrated here, can lead to physical assaults and suicide attempts amongst women (see also Bissuel, 2002; New Israel Fund, 2011). Overall, we see gender-related violence, discrimination, socioeconomic disadvantage, and subordinate social status as a result of polygamous practice (Astbury, 2001; Kumar, 2005).

In previous chapters we discussed the pressures that society and the parents of the bride and groom place on gender roles and the young family. We shall now

reconsider some of these points based upon the quantitative study which showed some of these effects, and the qualitative study which illustrated how this pressure was experienced in specific ways by these men and women.

As noted, polygamy has been in many ways blamed on first wives: by them not providing sexual fulfillment for their husbands, by them not bearing a sufficient number of sons, by them not practicing personal piety or judicious comportment, or by them not acting as though they are the property and under the rule of the husband (Cwikel, Lev-Wiesel, & Al-Krenawi, 2003). Irrespective of the truth value of the justification, a man who marries a second wife sends a social message, whether or not intentional, that his first wife has somehow failed, and this notion was borne out in all but one of our ten polygamous marriages studied qualitatively. We also showed that the first wife and her children stand to lose a great deal of emotional and financial support, especially if she does not cooperate. Both ideas are very difficult for a woman to accept: that she must put up with another woman in a polygamous marriage and that she must put up with the social and personal stigma that arises from her "failings," real or imagined. This can weigh heavily upon the first wife and children. They can be individually and socially shunned even though they are still technically married to the husband and, as we see, can suffer both emotional and instrumental deprivation as a result. Further, the competition with their husband's second wife can lead to further emotional and instrumental deprivation (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Wittrup, 1990).

Our qualitative study provided ample support for these quantitatively derived ideas. All ten of the respondent families referred to the social aspect of their marriage, with women the most vocal about how the man's family in particular had applied pressure for a second marriage to be contracted. Three of the women in the high-functioning families said specifically that they realized that their husband felt pressure to do the "honorable" thing: both sire many children (especially boys) and keep their family heritage robust by ensuring his family remained as strong as those who had married his sisters. This was clearly articulated by the man who said he felt pressure to reproduce because he was the only fertile man in his family of origin. Other women accepted that their husbands should have more children and that she might not be able to bear them, while one accepted her husband's marriage to her widowed sister-in-law so that the sister-in-law could keep her baby and her honor. First wives from the low-functioning families were less ready to accept these reasons, but both they and the husbands reported that the man had felt pressure to remarry to produce more children, to "keep a muzzle" on the first wife, to save the reputation of a sister in a related family, and to find love. Two wives even stated that the husband's family, rather than the husband, informed them of the upcoming second marriage. It would be interesting to research the extended family more thoroughly to see how strongly they believe that they pressured the husband to take subsequent wives. Curiously, we found that the extended family members we interviewed seemed quite non-supportive of the practice.

Both women and children from the polygamous households we looked at exhibited more mental health problems that are directly or indirectly related to polygamy than did their peers in monogamous households. Women from polygamous families

experienced more problems in family functioning, which, we have seen, correlates with lower self-esteem and less satisfaction with life. Women from polygamous families experienced more somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism and their general severity index was higher (GSI). The current study found that the children of first wives from polygamous families also have more mental health problems than do children from monogamous families. Higher levels of psychiatric symptomatology, including somatization, obsession compulsion, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychosis, were found in children from polygamous family households than in children from monogamous family households. This anguish seems to emerge most strongly at the beginning of the polygamous process; even those in the high-functioning group of our qualitative study said that they experienced at that time sadness, anger, and other psychological stress. The difference as to the degree of effect, as we have noted, seems related to how well their husbands treated them at the beginning of the second marriage, and beyond.

Importantly, polygamous husbands—who many believe fare better than the women and children—do not escape emotionally unscathed. In all mental health indicators but one (i.e., self-esteem), polygamous men exhibited more difficulties than their monogamous counterparts. The avoidance of marital problems through plural marriage has been understood as related to loss of well-being. Al-Krenawi and Lev-Wiesel (2002) found that "the option of taking another wife allows the husband to evade the conflicts inherent in the spousal relationship" (p. 159). These researchers cite Handel and Witchurch (1994), who note that as difficult as working out marital problems can be, the act of working them through can result in a sense of spousal intimacy. In contrast, unresolved marital conflicts can boomerang into a loss of psychological well-being. Additionally, increased financial and emotional burdens weigh very heavily on the polygamous man, as noted by Profanter and Cate (2008).

We did find that fathers' outcomes were affected by the age variable as well as family structure, economic situation, and education. However, the variable that best predicted the father's perception of family functioning was family structure itself. The linear regression analyses of our male groups revealed that the increases or decreases in family functioning could significantly predict all mental health dimensions. We cannot simply conclude, however, that the psychological difficulties that polygamous men experience are solely attributed to their family structures. We have found that problematic family functioning often has a negative effect on emotional functioning, and it is true that this can also be a problem for men in monogamous relationships. However, problematic family functioning was more characteristic of polygamous families than monogamous families in our research. We can therefore say that polygamy was a negative experience for the men we studied more often than monogamy.

Some men we studied expressed awareness of the suffering of their wives and children. The support for polygamous marriage was greater among polygamous men rather than monogamous and greater among all of those within polygamous marriages than those within monogamous marriages. However, it was quite clear that women were the least supportive overall, with children being next, and the father's support generally much higher than both. This demonstrates that the women,

children, and men we studied all believed that a man benefits more, and experiences less distress, from polygamous marriages than do the other family members. Indeed, men and women do seem to understand polygamy very differently. Abu al-Asal (2010) found a large disparity between male and female perspectives on polygamous relationships:

> While the women described a sense of humiliation and expressed considerable pain and neglect of themselves and their children in all respects, most of the male participants presented their married lives as positive and normal. They even spoke of the advantages of living in a polygamous arrangement, which they attributed to their strength of character as husbands and their ability to manage the arrangement well…The men did not perceive their polygamy as degrading or a cause of pain and suffering to their wives so long as they practiced it fairly. Hence it seems the fairness to which they refer is financial and not emotional or sexual fairness, which according to the men, they are not obliged to provide (p. 16).

These findings are in line with a growing body of research that indicates that the polygamous family structure is associated with various emotional difficulties (Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Ware, 1979). The findings are also in keeping with Chaleby's (1985) study that found Kuwaiti senior wives in polygamous marriages attributed their psychiatric symptoms to their husbands' remarriages. Further, our study in Jordan showed that higher levels of general psychiatric symptomatology, such as somatization, depression, anxiety, hostility, and paranoid ideation, were found in women from polygamous marriages than from monogamous relationships (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011). Hamdan (2009) and Hamdan et al. (2008) add to these findings, as they too found Arab women in other regions to be prone to depression, anxiety disorders, somatization, and eating disorders. Members of these polygamous families exhibited anger and jealousy, which, if ignored, can result in intergenerational conflict. Studies have found that "pain, intergenerational suffering in the form of disengagement, fighting, emotional turmoil, and interrelational conflicts are prevalent" in the polygamous family structure (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, p. 326. See also Adams & Mburugu, 1994; Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2002; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Ware, 1979).

The Polygamous Cycle

Participants' protests notwithstanding, we found that the practice of polygamy passes from one polygamous family to the next, and it is worthwhile to consider factors that perpetuate this cycle. Three factors emerge from the findings: One, the desire to fulfill identity (especially of the man, but also of the society); two, poverty; and three, (lack of) education.

The prevailing view in the literature is that men enter polygamous relationships because their first wife is unable to bear children—especially boys (Bretschneider, 1995; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Kressel, 1996). However, our studies reveal a different, and more complex, picture. Of the five men who cited this reason, three

reported compliance of the first wife. One of those men whose wife expressed support for entering into polygamy still thought it had been a mistake. In all five of these cases, as in most of the remaining ones, the man had already sired children—including at least one son. Many of the second wives were forced into the second marriage, and there was a fair amount of "deal making" amongst extended family members involving interfamily marriages of brothers, sisters, and cousins. Our respondents' comments—especially the frequent statements that there was social pressure involved—provide clues as to why men pursue this practice to the detriment of those involved. We shall now consider the cultural and social pressures that were brought to bear.

Economics, Religion, Cultural Identity, and Polygamy

Social pressure for plural marriage happens within a broad context. Bedouin Arabs are a formerly agrarian people who owned or at least controlled land. They have lost most of their territory and rely instead upon jobs they can get in the industrial and commercial sectors of the Israeli and surrounding economies. As noted in Chap. 1, the practice of polygamy has been historically linked to male economic success; marrying several wives would contribute to male wealth. The current Bedouin situation is radically different: now, polygamy contributes to a loss in economic stability, dividing an already impoverished economy between families.

With little money, reduced social status, and unsophisticated and minimal education, many Arab citizens in this region feel themselves stuck. Unemployment among Arabs in the areas where this study was conducted approaches 55 %; indeed, the unemployment figure amongst our participants in the qualitative study was 65 % among the men and 95 % among the women (MENA, 2007; The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007). There simply is not enough appropriate employment available. Finally, because of the poor economy, the family and community structures available in wealthier communities are in these communities nonexistent.

The men in our study avoided admitting that they had been financially stressed by their polygamous choice; they implied that they were in the same economic situation as monogamous families (an implication refuted by the women, the children, and our statistics). Of the five high-functioning husbands, only one admitted that he found it difficult to economically and physically support a new wife. However, we found that nearly all the men reduced their financial status through multiple marriages. Further, many men did not fulfill the religious tenet that demands of them to treat their wives equitably. Since the legitimacy of plural marriage hinges in Islam on men's capacity to fulfill this religious rule, we suggest either that men were either afraid to admit their failure or, since men are in control of the money, that they might be the last to realize there is, in fact, economic distress.

The determination of economic distress is important because it is a strong predictor of both family functioning and maternal and child mental health. The sociodemographic profile of the polygamous family showed more variance than that of the

monogamous family, and the polygamous families that we studied functioned on a lower level of mental health than monogamous families. Behavioral and emotional difficulties (Korenman, Miller, & Sjaastad, 1995) were directly related to financial pressure (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002; Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine, & Abu-Saad, 2002; Offord et al., 1992).

Both the current study and in one we conducted in Jordan found that men place economic stability and marital and familial peace in jeopardy when they contract for plural marriages (Al Toniji, 2001; Al-Krenawi et al., 2011; Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000; Cherian, 1990). Despite a resultant deterioration of socioeconomic status and familial functioning, polygamy continues to be practiced. In our study, parents in polygamous families received less formal education, overall, than their peers in monogamous households, and the children of the former were less academically oriented than the children of the latter. We shall now look at how poor education can perpetuate poverty and keep young men and women in the polygamous cycle.

Education and Polygamy

The polygamous men in our study were, overall, less educated than the monogamous men. They were also generally older than monogamous husbands, and their first wives were, on average, older than the wives in monogamous marriages. D'Hondt & Vandewiele (1980), White and Burton (1988), and Elbedour et al. (2002) have suggested a relationship between lower educational levels, (older) age, and the practice of polygamy. They suggest that polygamy is practiced by relatively tradition-oriented men. Importantly, both polygamous men and women in our study were relatively less employable and less educated than their monogamous counterparts. When we consider that the children in the polygamous families demonstrated lower academic achievement and reported less interest in study and future academic careers than their counterparts in monogamous families, the (non-) employability crisis becomes obvious.

Participation in a sophisticated economy demands sophisticated education. Modern employment demands a high level of education in which children from polygamous families show little interest in attaining. This can result, as we already may see, in marginalization and a propagation of a desire to assert one's identity in whatever ways possible. Since those who are less educated are more often involved in polygamous marriages, and since men and women already in a polygamous arrangement reported fewer objections to their sons and daughters entering into plural marriage, the educational boomerang is clear.

In Jordan as well (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011) we see evidence of this self-perpetuating pattern. Women and their husbands from polygamous families were on average older than women and husbands from monogamous families. While there were no significant differences in age at time of marriage between the two groups, the husbands in polygamous families were found to be older compared to husbands in monogamous families at the time of marriages (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011). In our

study, however, no statistical difference in women's or husbands' education was found between polygamous and monogamous families.

Thus, while monogamy would appear at this point to be a more practical marital structure than polygamy, many people continue to practice polygamy. We believe that this choice may represent defiance of local authority and assertion of cultural tradition rather than a practical and equitable lifestyle choice. Regardless of intent, however, the current practice exacerbates tangible concerns, particularly those of economic stress and social stigma that contribute demonstrably to psychosocial problems.

Whether or not polygamy is justifiable in the religious or traditional realm, the implications of these findings and the profound effects that the practice of polygamy has had upon our study participants demand attention. There seems to be an overriding belief that men have a religious right, regardless of economic backlash, to take a second wife. As well, we see sectors of Arab society supportive of the practice. Indeed, in his study on polygamy in Palestinian society in Israel, Abu al-Asal (2010) found that men were being actively encouraged by Islamic religious authorities to enter into polygamy.

Polygamy is, then, driven by a number of factors: patriarchy, poverty, poor education, and perceived need to assert cultural strength. Al-Darmeki's (2001) work identified similarly that demographic imperatives, religious belief, family pressure, and traditional primacies underlie polygamous practice.

The effects of polygamous practice are pervasive. Troublingly, we see a group of women whose status within their own societies has regressed because of social conditions and religious and traditional backlash. We have discussed the segregation that women have experienced, a backtracking of more enlightened religious pursuits, that seems to have resulted from perceived external threats and deteriorating economic and social lifestyles. Women in this region are still too dependent upon male members of the family, and are too subject to social stigma, to be in a position to reject "compliance." None of these findings were surprising, reflecting the inferior status that is placed upon the first wife in polygamous marriages and the loss of her emotional and financial capital when multiple marriages take place (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al-Krenawi, 1997; Borgerhoff-Mulder, 1992; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Ware, 1979). Huss and Cwikel's (2005) work on arts-based research with Bedouin women's drawings provides further depth to the polygamy picture. They reported that an older, abandoned first wife in the Bedouin community created a clay ashtray and then burst into tears, stating that the ashtray was "like an older woman, an empty and discarded container." And, as we have seen in our qualitative study, the sense of impotence does not end at the doorway of the first wives: many of the women who became second wives felt that they had been forced to enter the marriages. One of the women who became a second wife stated outright that divorce would mean being ostracized—even from her parents. Abu al-Asal (2010) notes that while the Palestinian women he studied "were thoroughly dissatisfied with their polygamous arrangements, the majority were fearful to leave these marriages out of a fear of…becoming a divorcee" (p. 11). We shall discuss in Chap. 7 the critical need for alternatives to be made available to young women to alter this sense of radical dependency.

A bleak future beckons to the children from these polygamous families. The emotional, social, familial, educational, and economic problems they endure seem related to the startling fact that 40 % of the numerous school dropouts in the Bedouin-Arab community come from polygamous families (Cohen-Navot, 2002). These children are ripe for hopelessness and its frequent companion, pleasure-seeking behavior (see Slonim-Nevo, Auslander, & Ozawa, 1995). In adolescence and young adulthood these children are at risk for delinquency and drug abuse (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Beiser et al., 2002). In short, polygamy is bad not only for the children of these polygamous families, but also for Bedouin-Arab and Israeli society as a whole. Armed with an empirically based understanding of the problems found in polygamous households, we can begin to formulate culturally sensitive interventions for this population.

Chapter 6
A Proposed Model for Treatment of Polygamous Families

Abstract Following a description of many of the problems, this chapter proceeds to propose treatment for polygamous families. A case background of a polygamous family consisting of eight wives and 60 children is presented, with a treatment model.

The treatment is a multistep process which includes seeing each person individually as well as in groups. This intervention model has much to teach us about clinical approaches to treating Arab-Muslim polygamous families. In a collective society, individualization is a delicate issue and so, when an individual is treated, it is imperative that the treatment plan be framed within a larger context.

Finally—and critically—polygamy is likely to bring up strong feelings in the clinician: biases must be noted and professionally managed.

There is very little research on therapeutic treatment with polygamous families in general and in Arab society in particular. Indeed, the most related published findings are on therapeutic dilemmas treating "informal polygamy" in a monogamous, Western society (Rivett & Street, 1993). Treatment with this population entails a great deal of planning and cultural knowledge, the latter of which was presented in in the preceding chapters, and which will be applied as we enter into the private world of a multi-household, Bedouin-Arab polygamous family. I shall present a model of therapy that I used with this family that I believe may serve as a model of treatment for polygamous families in an array of contexts. This intervention model is based on Al-Krenawi (1998). Clinical challenges will be considered, as will the many parameters defined by the client context.

Case Background

Several of the wives of a 55-year-old Arab man had been referred for family counseling by the local health clinic. Presenting problems included somatization and undifferentiated physical complaints. The man was married to eight women and had

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fathered approximately 60 children. He now lived with his youngest, 18-year-old, while each of the other wives lived in her own tent with her own children. The husband provided limited financial support to each family; several were also receiving social assistance benefits. The wives ranged in age from 18 to 50 years. The children ranged in age from 5 months to 30 years. Of the 60 children in the family, some were in school and some had dropped out or graduated. Neither the husband nor the wives had had any formal education, and the wives were illiterate. The husband was reputed to be somewhat wealthy, which had allowed him the luxury of many marriages. The subfamilies were in conflict with one another continuously.

The absence of an established treatment regimen for this population called for the formulation of a novel intervention approach. This would need to be based on the cultural canon of Bedouin-Arab society, which is in many ways similar to that of other Arab communities. To treat these families would, I decided, require three steps: first, to confer with the referral source and other people who worked with these families in everyday life; second, to meet with each of the first seven wives individually to gain insight into her particular "subfamily" problems; third, to meet with the whole group and to extend the invitation to the eighth youngest wife to attend individual and group meetings. This process would involve sessions with different people both individually and in group format.

A few points shall be mentioned before delving into the progress of treatment. Outcome hinged on me establishing a working clinical relationship with the co-wives and developing a coalition between them. This in turn demanded that I understand the cultural sensibilities of the clients. A number of these sensibilities have been alluded to in general terms, but a therapeutic level of understanding would include the specific ways in which language was used by the client. I shall review this shortly, but it is worth noting that I already knew that community involvement would help me accomplish this.

Equally important was that the wives understood my sensitivity towards both discretion and confidentiality. I explained that clinicians are by law required to respect client confidentiality, and I devised with them a method of address using the term "sisters" to avoid any possibility of anyone misinterpreting the tenor of our discussions. This latter idea drew upon the trust that develops between sisters and their brothers (see Chap. 2) and also served to forestall the clinical transference that can surface during treatment (Mass & Al-Krenawi, 1994).

Whether or not the husband attended sessions, I acknowledged that the husband played a pivotal role in the entire process: he had the power to terminate treatment at any time, and the success of the project hinged on his (eventual) involvement. The wives and I agreed that the husband need not be informed about our initial meetings because—and this is very important from a cultural perspective—they felt that the initial consultations fell under what could be considered women's business (dealing with their own and their children's health and emotional issues). It was decided that the most effective stratagem to get the husband involved would not be to attempt to approach him with evidence of marital conflict (which would have threatened his self-esteem), but to ask him to help make decisions regarding his children's well-being, which was his duty. This technique, which takes into account a traditional male sense of honor, has been used effectively in such situations (Srour, 2005).

Step 1: The Systems Consultation Conference

Individuals from a number of community institutions (school, primary health care, and social services systems) participated in a conference to discuss important issues pertaining to the subfamilies in the intervention model. The conference enabled me to gain a more comprehensive view of the problems that these women and children were having, and I was able to devise a viable, coordinated approach to intervention. I found that these professionals had been working in relative isolation from each other; the conference format enabled them to share important information. As a group, we established a number of social and cultural foundations upon which we could provide insightful and productive guidance. We articulated the need to understand how the clients operate within their society, discussed what traditional or cultural attitudes motivate them, noted familial patterns of engagement and neglect, and arrived at a starting point at which to begin discussion and exercise discretion.

We learned that the children were having real problems. Many were receiving poor grades, and some showed signs of emotional neglect including stuttering and enuresis. School officials also reported that a number of children from these subfamilies felt their parents did not care about their progress in school. The parents neither visited the school to discuss problems with the teachers nor inquired as to the child's progress. This observation echoes our discussion regarding the direct relationship we found between level of functioning and education.

A general practitioner from the clinic reported that several of the women consulted with him on an almost daily basis about somatic problems that had no physical pathological etiology. This observation is in line with research which has found that women in this population somaticize emotional turmoil and feelings of helplessness (Abu-Ras, 2007; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001).

As the clinic social worker, I provided the background regarding the husband's eight marriages and described the co-wives' presenting problems and the familial dysfunction. Here again we see similarities between the thinking of this husband and that of the men in our larger study. The brother of this man had been attacked and humiliated by a larger, rival Bedouin-Arab family. Believing his family to have been shamed, he resolved to establish a larger, stronger, and thus more respected family.

Finally, we learned from social workers in the social services department that a number of the co-wives had applied for social assistance. We noted in Chap. 4 a direct relationship between wives' well-being and family functioning, with the latter aggravated by poverty. Though this husband was said to be wealthy, he was unaware of—or was ignoring—the needs of some of the subfamilies. Thus prepared, we began individual consultations.

Step 2: Individual Sessions

Each of the seven older wives was interviewed individually. The eighth was not interviewed at the time because she was not experiencing problems and, in fact, was herself described by others as "the problem." As we have noted, the newest wife in

a polygamous household is very often the favored one and is less prone to report the emotional problems described by the other wives.

Somatic symptoms were universally reported. Giddiness was common when they experienced a lack of control over situations. They complained of "heartaches" when distressed and felt incapable, at times, of proper social functioning. Some of the wives expressed concern over the children's problems, the most prevalent being enuresis.

All wives complained of spousal neglect (both emotional and material), claiming that the husband spent most of his time with the youngest wife. They all considered the husband to be a difficult man to deal with—he would be antagonistic, they feared, if he found out that they were meeting with me about him. Importantly, a number of wives expressed concern that they had not been able to create a unified family, as was the expected tradition of the Bedouin-Arab people. For example, five of the wives had not spoken with each other in several years, and all agreed that the children behaved in a hostile manner with one another.

I had determined at this point that the problems expressed by each of the co-wives were shared by others in the group—and so a third step, group therapy, was indicated. The women were not sure what a group meeting might accomplish and, in fact, confidentiality was again at issue as they were concerned that one woman might report on the other. Having accepted my assurances that the content of both individual and group meetings would remain confidential, however, the co-wives agreed to meet as a group.

Step 3: Group Process

The First Seven Wives

In these group sessions, the women again blamed their husband for his poor treatment of them. They concurred in their anger—and occasional sense of hatred—towards this man. In a comment reminiscent of our broader research, one of the women said that the husband treated his wives like animals, completely ignoring the older wives. Another stated that from her point of view, the husband believed that his sole responsibility was to bring food to the house and reiterated the group's overall perception that the husband ignored his wives' feelings.

It soon became apparent that a number of the women believed that the youngest wife was a sorceress of sorts: that she had used magic to lure the husband away from the others. One woman saw the apparent uncontrollable love of the husband for the youngest wife and felt frustrated: whether caused by magic or not, she stated, it made the man act in an immature, inappropriate fashion. As we recall from Chap. 4, the notion of sorcery being involved in sexual temptation is not novel in this context; it has a long and illustrious history.

Overall, the women held that their husband fell very short of fulfilling his obligation to treat them equitably and with respect. The youngest wife was a second target of group rage. All the women in the group mistrusted the eighth wife—which made it difficult to convince them to invite her to group sessions. They needed to be

confident that she would not report the procedure of events to the husband and thus agreed to accept her in session only after I had had some individual meetings with her and could assure them of her discretion.

The Eighth Wife: The Key Holder

As I expected, the eighth wife reported very few concerns about her marital relationship and stated her belief that the husband loved and respected her. Crucially, this woman had positive access to the husband. She held the key to improved communication for all. Getting her onboard, however, was not so simple. Anticipating sabotage of her marital relationship by the other women, she was hesitant to join the group. Only when I managed to convey absolute group confidentiality did she agree to join.

The Group as a Whole

With the eighth wife present, the group discussed the husband's patterns of behavior. The eighth wife expressed her sense of mutual love and loyalty, and the others noted that they, too, had experienced this at the beginning of their marriages. I provoked deeper discussion by asking the eighth wife whether she believed that the husband might eventually remarry yet again, and, should this happen, whether she anticipated that her relationship with him would change. Of course, this provided the impetus for the other women to describe exactly how each had, in turn, lost the favored status she had initially enjoyed.

The group sessions began, then, as a forum for the women to vent frustration and anger. Then a breakthrough occurred: when the youngest wife realized that she was also vulnerable, she agreed to act as a mediator between the husband and other wives and children. She need not give up her position or complain about his behavior so much as to encourage him to interact with them. A helpful dynamic emerged: when the other women realized that they had all been in the same position at one point, they started to express verbal support for the youngest wife; she responded with a willingness to speak with the husband for the good of the entire group.

A cooperative atmosphere built, the group got to the task of repairing relationships between each other and their children. They began to show support towards one another in small ways; they were starting to operate as their tradition would have liked—as a supportive family group. It was now time to work on the husband's behavior towards the women and on the behavior of the children between themselves.

Practical goals included better relationships between the co-wives and between the co-wives and their husband; better relationships between the children of the different co-wives; and establishing a working group between the co-wives that included the youngest wife (see Solomon, 1985, cited in Compton & Galaway, 1994). This trajectory required subfamily collaboration and the practitioner assuming a peer role with the clients. Culturally attuned strategies helped the wives to ventilate and form a coalition to manage the husband's behavior.

Session with the Husband

I went to visit the husband with the group's understanding that I would be addressing the problems of the children. Again, since it was important that the husband save face within the community, any reference to relationships with the women would have to be framed within the context of helping the children. Further, we followed proper custom in that no women were present. While the husband agreed with me that the upkeep of the children was important, he complained that his wives were not fulfilling their obligations to the children and stated that he now only respected only his youngest wife because she was the only one who treated him and her own children well. This reaction was expected. I highlighted with the husband the emotional needs of all of his children and how and why the lack of fulfillment of these needs could affect them psychologically.

Towards the end of the meeting, the husband articulated a decision to take greater interest in all his children and to work with teachers and others to help each child improve his or her grades and behavior. I appealed to his interest in maintaining his stature within a large and respected family. With this agreement, the road was paved towards some improvement. The children's functioning did improve, and the women had learned ways to cooperate with each other and relieve hostilities that had flowed amongst all individuals within the subfamilies. As might be expected, with an improvement in the relationships between the husband and the children, there was an improvement in the relationships between him and the women overall. Group therapy continued until, three months later, the group agreed that the presenting problems had been resolved.

The youngest wife was the linchpin in the treatment. She had learned to encourage the husband to do his duty, rather than rely on complaining. She realized that she might herself be in a similar position one day and that it was in everyone's interests to develop the stability of the larger family. Further, she was in a position to inform me and the others that the husband was satisfied with the progress of the children and the decrease in familial discord. A sense of positivity spread throughout the multifamily unit.

Conclusions

Overall, this therapeutic model was successful. There are a number of points, however, that require explanation. Effective treatment required very specific methods of communication.

Imposition of opinions (e.g., regarding polygamy and patriarchy) had no place in the treatment process. Rather, the clinician strove to understand existing beliefs and expectations. I accepted the belief in sorcery, for example, and conveyed my understanding that some of the women honestly thought that their husband had been bewitched. Arguments to the contrary would have fallen on deaf ears and would have detracted from the confidence I had gained.

This intervention model was tailored to Bedouin-Arab people. There is a great diversity of people in the Middle East, and there will be many layers of tradition to discover. Expression and depth of belief will vary. For this reason, some in the field suggest that a clinician should consider using his or her client as a cultural informant (Lu, Lum, & Chen, 2001) and critically reflect upon how to work with what the client presents to the professional:

> the multidimensional and holistic nature of identity in interconnected layers: personally in self-concept and definition, actively in the social practice that a person manifests, relationally in how identities are negotiated with others, and communally as the beliefs and discourse or collective memory of various communities affect the person… identity gaps: between the sense of self and the ability to communicate this to others; between the outsider's perceptions of a person as different than that person's self-concept; and between the person's self-concept, the self the person portrays to others, and the identity that is actually seen and accepted by others (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press. See also Al-Krenawi, 2012; Urban & Orbe, 2010).

Consultation with specific community members is critical to the therapeutic enterprise. In addition to garnering information regarding the overt behavior of the clients, the clinician gains an understanding of what is expected of the person by the community and what status the person holds in the community. It can be very helpful to have a mediator who interprets not just the linguistic traditions of the population, but, as a community member, is an informant regarding conventions held by Arab people of so many different backgrounds (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001).

As is evident in this intervention model, people in this region tend to consult with mental health practitioners only after they have sought help elsewhere (Abu-Ras, 2007). Crucial information is gathered and disseminated in the community (Elsaidi, 2011; Abu-Ras, 2007), and individuals in this population turn to the community, rather than to someone they do not know or trust, for guidance. In our study, community members provided valuable information, and in other situations community members can bridge gaps between people who need to work together in mediation (Abu-Baker, 2005; Al-Krenawi, 2005b; Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Dean, 2000; Bodie & Cnaan, 2006; Ferguson, 2004; Hodge, 2005). Finally, by working with community professionals, the clinician develops the credibility and the support needed to gain a client's trust—the potential for stigma will be reduced if the community is seen to support the professional (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Al-Krenawi, Graham, Dean, & Eltaiba, 2004; Ferguson, 2004; Gearing et al., 2012; Harel-Fisch et al., 2010; Soheilian & Inman, 2009).

Community should not only be defined exclusively as those external to the family. In this intervention model, the women gained valuable guidance and support through a community of their peers. It was important to each woman that her subfamily flourish, and this is what initially brought them to the meeting. However, it became a mutual goal that the community of co-wives accept each other's frustration and anger and work collectively to decide upon a course of action to alleviate stress.

The women in both the model and the larger study noted in previous chapters had many common experiences. We should consider how women in these polygamous households need to be legitimized in the overall community and within their own

extended families. Women in more successful relationships might assist those in lower-functioning ones, while the community as a whole should recognize the daunting challenges faced by women in polygamous relationships.

Honor and Stigma

Honor and stigma figure strongly in this population. Indiscretions may result in being ostracized from families and entire communities (germane to this treatment model and also alluded to in the quantitative and qualitative sections of the study discussed in Chaps. 4 and 5). Biblical references are used to condemn drinking, gambling, and sexual indiscretion, but honor mainly rests on the perceived ability of a man to keep his family in order (Soheilian & Inman, 2009).

So, discretion was in this treatment regimen was not merely "the greater part of valor"; it was the bedrock operative. At any time, any woman could have been cast out and branded as an "undesirable" by the husband or any of the other women (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004). All the women in the model were concerned that they might make a bad situation worse, thus providing the husband with an excuse to once again remarry and ignore all the rest (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Cross & Bloomer, 2010).

Finally, in this population, those seeking help for mental health issues may be branded *majnun* ("crazy"), a term that carries considerable stigma as it implies a spiritual illness (Abudabbeh, 2005; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). It was important to gain an alliance with the clients to guard against such trauma. This brings us to the next issue: understanding Arab perspectives on health and illness.

View of Mental Illness and Religion

Sorcery has been mentioned in the context of this intervention model. A number of the women in the qualitative section of the study alluded to forms of magical control that one woman held, and some men referred to a woman as "Satan." In this context, these are not idle remarks. Clinicians should understand that these references attribute physical and emotional problems to spiritual turmoil. The population of our study frames problems and their solutions within spiritual as well as physical guidelines—mind, body, and spirit are of a piece (Sayed, 2003; Skinner, 2010). They see a direct relationship between this world and a supernatural one, with illness caused by a devil manifested in the evil eye or its *jinns* (evil spirits)—particularly for women (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press; Cross & Bloomer, 2010; Skinner, 2010). Trouble in all its varieties is rooted in the will of God ("*Insha'Allah*") and is considered best dealt by a wise community elder—most often a spiritual leader—rather than a clinical professional (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Hodge, 2004; Sayed, 2003).

Erickson and Al-Timimi (2001) have argued that Arab people tend not to think in psychological terms as defined by Western cultures; rather than analyze personal issues, an Arab person is likely to attribute failing health to an inability to achieve a balance between his or her personal life and communal situation (Abdulrahim & Ajrouch,

2010; Al-Krenawi, 2005a). Hurdle (2002), Sayed (2003), and Erickson and Al-Timimi (2001) all discuss the futility of trying to convince some clients of the clinical benefits of considering the consequences of decisions and of anticipating the results of treatments. Invocations of time and personal control over the future seem foreign and unreasonable; such a client will wonder how he or she is expected to participate in shaping a future that is fully determined by God's will.

As mentioned, coping and healing mechanisms for many problems are offered by the *Qur'an*. Clinicians might find that the client's focus on prayer and practice of the other Pillars of Islam work well in tandem with other forms of therapy or even on their own (Boddie & Cnaan, 2006; Denny, 2006; Ghaffari & Çiftçi, 2010). Recent studies have shown that despite the heavy influence of Western ideas, high numbers of young Arab people (as well as older people) in the Middle East still use prayer as part of a therapeutic regimen (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Abdel-Khalek, 2010).

Misunderstandings regarding the role of mental health professionals can manifest themselves in client expectations, as well as in treatment (non-)compliance. Since we are often referred to as "experts," some Arab clients may perfunctorily agree to follow clinical advice and then not follow through on it. Clients and their chaperones may also regard us as medical professionals and expect detailed advice, explicit directions, and medication (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Hurdle, 2002). As the family and the community loom so large in their own sense of well-being, the client will likely only work on solutions that make sense for everyone, not simply themselves (Al-Krenawi et al., 2000, 2004; Ferguson, 2004; Sayed, 2003; Srour, 2005). Without resorting to an approach which could be construed as patronizing (Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001), the clinician will need to carefully monitor outcome in an effort to help the client to adhere to the treatment plan (Ferguson, 2004; Sayed, 2003).

Here again, the community can be used as a resource for understanding how faith is expressed by the client. Mass and Al-Krenawi (1994) used the power of a Bedouin community council to mediate a serious conflict that had arisen regarding professional and social canons in the treatment of a Bedouin woman. Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) suggest that religious leaders might be included in the process of empowering women and children, both because of their influence and because of the possibility that they will make a contribution to finding solutions that are acceptable to society, to women, and to the state. And Cross and Bloomer (2010) found that treatment compliance hinges on community cooperation and collusion regarding communication, diagnosis, and treatment. This being the case, misdiagnoses, ineffective treatment plans, and lack of compliance are very real possibilities in the absence of this cooperation (Abudabbeh, 2005; Abu-Ras, 2007; Al-Krenawi et al., 2000; Boddie & Cnaan, 2006; Cross & Bloomer, 2010; Ferguson, 2004; Fischer & Stelter, 2006; Gearing et al., 2012; Ghaffari & Çiftçi, 2010; Lavallee & Poole, 2010).

Somatization

I have written elsewhere, "…distinct idioms of distress were based on the head which, according to Arab culture, governs and integrates all body activity, and the heart, the center of all feelings" (Al-Krenawi, 1998). This is an extremely important point, the

misunderstanding of which lies at the root of "first filter" mistakes in diagnoses (Al-Krenawi, 2005a, p. 560). Sayed (2003) suggests that thinking of how we use terms such as "broken heart" or having "the gall" to do something will bring us closer to understanding how somatization serves to express problems which individuals find difficult to define and articulate (Abu-Ras, 2007; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001). A practitioner should be aware that "heartaches," "dizzy spells," and displays of extreme fatigue or agitation are codes for anxiety and stress (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004).

Proverbs and idioms reveal opinions left otherwise unsaid. Some particularly interesting examples emerged from the intervention model described in this chapter: one woman reported that a person who did not know the husband would say "I wish I had such a person as a member of my family," which meant that her husband seemed like a good person until one actually got to know him; another said "What a sorrow…leave it in the heart to keep making pain and injury, rather than saying it, and this will create a trouble" which meant that she had many problems about which she had not spoken; a third said about her inability to affect her husband's behavior "My eye is blind and my hand is short" (Al-Krenawi, 1998. See also, Al-Krenawi, 2000; Cross & Bloomer, 2010).

Myriad communication nuances stud the therapeutic field, and it behooves the clinician to learn from the client, as well as from other helping professionals, interpreters, or cultural brokers involved in the treatment, precisely how language is being used in a given situation (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2001; Sayed, 2003). For example, communication in the Middle East can be very cyclical, especially in authoritarian families, and a full description of a situation may be impossible to derive from one source (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Srour, 2005). Communication may also be hampered by a fear that speaking out against someone, even when done in a confidential manner, might *spread the pain* or cause irreparable damage (Abudabbeh, 2005; Al-Krenawi et al., 2000; Dwairy et al., 2006; Srour, 2005). Frank discussion is considered rude, and expressions of anger or frustration are viewed as unacceptable. Further, much might remain unsaid because the desire to express or to know what one member of a family thinks of another is limited within traditional Arab families, where roles are more irrevocably defined (Abudabbeh, 2005; Dwairy et al., 2006).

In this environment, there is a strong reluctance to speak or to speak directly. Many women in our study were completely unable to communicate their concerns to their husbands: I acted as the mediator between the wives and husband as the wives were expected to refrain from confronting the husband. Even here, though, the work that was done to change the behavior of the husband was accomplished through a coalition of the wives; I used a discussion about the children's problems as a lever to convince the husband to change his attitude and provide more maintenance.

Adoption of Roles for a Clinical Purpose

In this intervention model, I chose to adopt the role of a peer—and even a brother. As noted in Chap. 2, brothers and sisters have a special relationship in the Arab family. In this case, the role alleviated fears about inappropriate interactions with the

women. I used this technique a number of years ago with a young Bedouin woman who came for therapy following a sexual trauma. Her transference-based sexual overtures towards the therapist were managed by the adoption, and regular reiteration, of the brother role (see Mass & Al-Krenawi, 1994). Maintenance of professional relations is a concern in any clinical relationship, but here the concern was more pronounced as women in the Middle East are closely monitored and suspicions are easily aroused. Further, this adoption of roles for a clinical purpose exemplifies the adaption of the professional canon to the social context within which it is applied (Mass & Al-Krenawi, 1994).

Typically, women must seek permission to attend any type of consultation, and even then they may be accompanied by another member of the family who acts as a "guardian" (Sayed, 2003; Srour, 2005. See also Chap. 3). Consequently, a clinician may find it very difficult to conduct confidential interviews with women. Further, as highlighted above, it should be remembered that all decisions regarding children and nearly anything else to do with the family will be referred back to the oldest male in charge of the household (Al-Krenawi, 2003). Meanwhile, "the acceptance of the diagnosis, treatment and need for follow-up may revert back to the family and community, who may decide whether treatment is complete or lacking. Further treatment may be referred back to avenues within the traditional community" (Al-Krenawi and Jackson, in press; see also Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Erickson & Al-Timimi, 2001; Ferguson, 2004; Sayed, 2003). It is for these reasons that ground rules had to be established amongst the wives as to what the husband was to be told and when.

This confidentiality extends to discussing private matters—including marriage and sexuality—with other people. These topics might be easily broached in the West, but may be absolutely taboo for Arab people to discuss, especially in mixed company. To some extent, this is because rules for marriage are considered laid out in the *Qur'an* and thus not open to discussion (Al-Krenawi & Jackson, in press).

A final, crucial point: Access to the clinic must be easy, nonthreatening, and discrete. Abudabbeh (2005) found that telephone sessions help to circumvent the discomfort of disclosure, as well as the need to explain where one is going (especially critical in the context of Islamic guardianship laws). Importantly, my sessions with the eight women were conducted within the same clinical area as the regular general practitioner; this arrangement served to forestall stigmatization (Abu-Ras, 2007; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2005).

Family Functioning: Making it Work

We now see how the state, the community, and the client are thoroughly intertwined. Clinicians are bound to make use of current realities rather than what might exist at some future time. The clinician might work with government and community leaders to change the way that polygamy is viewed and practiced in a region, but clients themselves are in distress that demands immediate attention. All three elements—the laws of the state, the practices of the community, and the problems of the individual within that context—must be taken into account during treatment planning.

We have emphasized in this work that both direct and indirect tactics will be needed to address the problems experienced by polygamous families. As emphasized, most people in Arab regions are high context: their lives are ruled by the expectations of those around them, and those expectations are slow to change. When I treated the large family described above, I adapted my professional knowledge to work within the confines of various traditions. Treatment was conducted along professionally accepted guidelines, but extreme flexibility was called for. For example, I relied upon the women to discover how they could cooperate towards their own well-being—to keep their family and community intact while modifying stressful elements that threatened these structures (i.e., the behavior of the husband and the rivalries between the wives and the many children). Consultations were made palatable to all parties through active listening to my clients and the professionals around me. We reached workable decisions within a very restrictive framework. When I followed up with the women, the general practitioner, and the teachers, I was told that quite reasonable changes had taken place: the children's school performance had improved because their father was continuing to show interest; the women were functioning on a higher level because they felt that they were being cared for, and all—including, to some extent, the husband—had formed a working coalition to achieve the betterment of the group as a whole.

This intervention model has much to teach us about clinical approaches to treating Arab-Muslim polygamous families. In particular, it is instructive regarding how to read the ecological map of the Arab-Muslim polygamous family. In a collective society, individualization is a delicate issue and so, when an individual is treated, it is imperative that the treatment plan be framed within a larger context (Al-Krenawi, 2000). Further, Western-style face-to-face confrontational group treatment involving both sexes will need to be replaced with strategies that make sense to the clients. Finally—and critically—polygamy is likely to bring up strong feelings in the clinician: biases must be noted and professionally managed.

In the next chapter we shall return full circle to peer through the lenses of our work and that of many others, towards the future of polygamy—and the psychosocial well-being of polygamous people—in the Middle East.

Chapter 7
Dealing with Polygamous Families and Changing the Rules

Abstract What's next? This chapter discusses the need for change, to correct the existing problems. The Arab Spring of 2011 served as notice that there was discontent amongst the people of the Middle East. There have been many upheavals in the Arab countries. The entire region is now tasked with assessing, for example, how religion and other social ideals are to be embodied in people's lives. Many revolutions have been spurred by poverty and inequalities that have persisted in the region; conditions which we have shown are exacerbated by polygamous marriages.

To counter polygamy requires longitudinal planning—a continuing commitment rather than a simple fix. While attempting to assist polygamous families here and now in culturally sensitive ways, we can also engage with the many institutions that influence the high-context person. A multilevel approach recognizes the individual within his or her social environment: the relationship within families and communities, the political, economic, educational, and social environment, and the ideologies that have influenced them.

The challenge of gender perceptions must be met in addition to a strong need for economic and educational support.

In short, these challenges, even when they argue against polygamy, are neither anti-Muslim nor anti-religion. Rather, they push for the decoupling of religious principles and traditional patriarchy and attempt to find allowances for equality and justice in universally acceptable terms. No one should be compelled to accept inferior forms of equality or status under the guise of religious principles, but should, instead, expect support from the community and government to which they contribute.

The Arab Spring of 2011 served as notice that there was discontent amongst the people of the Middle East. Corrupt and inefficient governments have either been overthrown or have had to shore up their support with a combination of money, manipulation, and might. The new governments of Libya, Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt have the opportunity to rewrite constitutions, while the kings in other countries have

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had to meet the challenge of protesters and rioters in their countries. The entire region is now tasked with assessing, for example, how religion and other social ideals are to be embodied in people's lives. Many revolutions have been spurred by poverty and inequalities that have persisted in the region; conditions which we have shown are exacerbated by polygamous marriages.

We have explored reasons for polygamy, and the challenges that people face when entering such an arrangement, living in this arrangement, and attempting to change this arrangement. We have tried in our studies to interpret the interaction between different members of the family and between them and the community. We have found that even those we designated as high-functioning experience polygamy as painful—especially the women and children. The indications of torment that are hinted at in the quantitative part of study became pronounced in sections of our qualitative study, suggesting that though women may accept their fate as one of two or more wives, an underlying agony remains.

When family members do not manage to overcome their problems, their discord degrades the functioning of even the extended families. We shall now provide some suggestions as to how to work within the community context to help solve the problems created by polygamy. While our studies were limited to a group of Bedouin-Arab people in the Negev region of Israel, we have found sufficient similarities throughout the Middle East to suggest that our recommendations are, to varying degrees, applicable in the treatment of psychosocial problems that arise from polygamous marriage for many Arab families.

Paradoxes abound. As noted above, women in painful polygamous relationships may well find solace in the very religious and social environment that has justified this practice. In short, nothing can be achieved without a deep awareness of the complexity of this very high-context population.

The urgency of the issue is several-fold. First, while we noted that polygamy is on the downswing in many countries of the Middle East, we have also seen a decided trend to assert cultural identity by reverting to traditional customs. Due to the prevailing notion that the practice is legitimized, and even expected, under religious and social dictates, polygamy is a prime candidate for use in this cultural assertion. With the changing political and social tides in the Middle East, people must reconcile various nationalisms with global influences and changing economies. The fear that traditional, more "Arabic" customs will be lost can result in these customs being interpreted in a fundamentalist and even radical manner (see Sabry, 2010 who notes a revival of traditionalisms to the detriment of individual well-being).

To counter polygamy requires longitudinal planning—a continuing commitment rather than a simple fix. While attempting to assist polygamous families here and now in culturally sensitive ways, we can also engage with the many institutions that influence the high-context person. A multilevel approach recognizes the individual within his or her social environment: the relationship within families and communities, the political, economic, educational, and social environment, and the ideologies that have influenced them. Everyone has to be on board: families, communities, and social institutions.

The multilevel approach is important for two reasons. First, it reminds us to consider closely how people view themselves. While we described some tendencies of people in the Arab regions, we recognize that each individual has a unique way of reconciling his or her worldview with what may be a more clinical perspective. Some procedures and approaches may be considered both alien and unwarranted.

Second, this approach takes into account the "disconnect" that exists between various factions of society: the inefficiencies (and even hostility) of the state and conflicts between the state, the communities, and the religious and social leaders who often find themselves in opposition to the state and to each other. As we sift through ideas and expressions of the patient and the community to decide what is objectively true, we need to be aware of current and potential change. Similar efforts are being made for other cultural groups throughout the world (Boddie & Cnaan, 2006; Lavallee and Poole, 2010). Besides assessing the immediate impact of polygamy on the extended family and the community (Al-Krenawi, 1996, 1998), we must address the power differential between women and men in Arab society and how religion and other elements play constructive and destructive roles. Changes that are generated within a community are more robust and long-lasting, though they take longer to implement (Al-Krenawi, 2012). We are dealing with intricate systems: only when all players are working together can a concerted stand against polygamy be made (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al Gharaibeh, 2011).

We shall first consider the disconnect: the predicament of countries that pass, and then ignore, legislation; of countries that do not succeed in passing enlightened laws due to fundamentalist community elements; and of countries that, because of ties with fundamentalism, ignore enlightened elements. We can then consider how the community might effect changes using universal moral principles. Finally, we shall consider some concerns in treating individuals whose motivations are built up over years and are not easily circumvented.

Society and the Community: Changing Concepts

Countries may feel pressure to change, but legislation is only one step in the process. Communities must be able to uphold laws and encourage change; the road runs two ways. The government can be in the vanguard, but it must have a polity backing it up, and it should take into account all people that it serves. Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) emphasize that "the courts of the land are capable of punishing offenders and can be part of the process, but not the entire process" (p. 19). Emphasizing the interwoven threads of the discourse, Rabia writes:

> Polygamy in the Naqab takes place in the context of patriarchal control within the Bedouin society. Polygamy is not solely a legal issue that operates in the context of colonial power. Rather, it is an interdisciplinary issue that extends beyond the legal sphere. Polygamy is simultaneously a legal, social, cultural, and political issue and is mostly a product of change. For many of the issues accompanying polygamy, there is a colonial component that fosters its continuity as a traditional practice. (Rabia, 2011, p. 11)

The degree to which religion, tradition, family ethics, and the tribal class system are interwoven for Middle Eastern people cannot be overstated. Recalling Williams (2008), it is incumbent upon governments to base themselves on reasonable standards of morality and move towards religious, gender, and other types of equality that meet the demands of its local—but also more globally aware—individuals. Governments would do well to learn from research such as that presented in this volume that demonstrates unequivocally that polygamy is a detrimental practice and work with community leaders to alleviate this distress. Communities, too, must assist government in the adoption of ideologies which offset or discourage fundamentalist approaches. Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) place community at the forefront of change: "What is needed is dialog with the community, with special attention paid to women's voices, explanation and negotiation" (p. 11).

We heard from our study participants and found in other research (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999) that many people in Arab societies that permit polygamy express the wish that polygamy laws could be changed from outside their own communities. They recognize that changes are taking place from without and, though still convinced that it is a mistake to adopt purely Western ideals, feel some of these changes might alleviate tensions that the community by itself is unable to sufficiently address. As we saw from Sabry (2010) in Morocco and Alsanea (2007) in Saudi Arabia, young people are frustrated with having their lives dictated by patriarchal families and religious police. Indeed, it has been found that young people in some countries have no affiliation with current regimes at all (Yamani, 2010).

Public opinion demands more equitable family laws and states should take lessons from other countries who have dealt with the difficult political, financial, and social problems associated with reform (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007; MENA, 2007; Welchman, 2007). There is much work to be done to overcome those religious, tribal, and "nationalist" traditions which are held to the detriment of all members of polygamous families.

Can States Really Help?

Shepard (2012) reports that many reform-minded individuals feel stymied by the apparent inability of states to separate indigenous demands from the governing forces of a country. However, reforms at state level need not be in contradiction of local ideals: the concepts of heritage and importance of family need not be refuted outright, but, rather, refined to reflect modern realities of economic and social justice. Most parents want to see their children married well, but there is no end of examples of the problems that exist within arranged marriages (AI-Krenawi, Graham, & AI-Krenawi, 1997; Chaleby, 1985; El-Islam, 1989). Both men and women consider it important for marriage to entail some emotional bonds, but, should love (of whatever definition) fail, we have seen that polygamy most often aggravates a poor situation. Al-Krenawi and Graham (1998) found that men favor successive wives over polygamous arrangements in terms of economic resources, social support, love, and affection (see also Al-Krenawi et al., 1997; Al-Krenawi et al., 2011; Profanter

& Cate, 2009). In the final analysis, when the rights of all people in polygamous households are given more weight than the importance of extended family alliances created through first marriages, things will begin to change.

The World Bank's 2007 publication on women's rights in the Middle East reveals a lack of political will. Some countries are cited for reforms: from the minimal decision to ban forced marriages in Saudi Arabia to the disallowance of *talaq* (automatic divorce when a man "repudiates" a wife three times) in Morocco. Saudi Arabia is unable to pass further marriage reforms, however, just as it cannot seem to introduce voting rights or even driving privileges for women (MENA, 2007; Yamani, 2010). Jordan is known to be too lenient on domestic violence, Bahrain and Yemen have no minimum age requirement for marriage, and Bahrain's family law is virtually de facto because it is split between Sunni and Shi'a interpretations with little enforcement either way (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2007; MENA, 2007; Welchman, 2007).

The Arab Spring: Calling the Role of the State into Question

MENA (2007) draws our attention to Turkey, who had abolished polygamy in 1914 as the Ottoman Empire was crumbling. Turkey is now ruled by a secular government that relegates the questions of religious and gender equality to the legal and political realm (MENA, 2007, p. 5). It is for the government to ensure a just balance between the dictates of religious and other social tenets, but the government is pressured by diverse religious fundamentalist groups who demand that their government adopt Sharia law. MENA (2007) also discusses Tunisia's Islamic approach from 1950, where the government:

> …seeks legitimacy in the religious texts, reinterpreting them to promulgate a meaning compatible with modernity and the rights of women. In a context of religious fervour, a reinterpretation of religious texts seems imperative to reduce internal resistance to changes sought in the interests of women. (p. 5)

The discussions over best forms of government continue, as the first-elected president of Egypt appears to have adopted the same manner of dictatorship as his predecessor in an effort, he said, to quell this opposition and push through a proper, "enlightened" constitution. It is feared that the first draft passed by the Parliament may be more Islamist and neglectful of women's rights than what existed under president Mubarak's dictatorship (Cook, 2012).

Meeting the Challenge of Gender Perceptions

While women have few rights in most Middle Eastern countries, our study in Jordan revealed that "the appreciation of rights for women leads to many social improvements in areas of demographic governance, academic achievement, and the like…" (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011). However, men in this population tend to consider their own rights of kinship and inheritance more important than the rights of women in

the family (Abudabaeh, p. 427, Abu-Rabia, 2011; Elsaidi, 2011). The continuation of the status of patriarchal families relies on stagnation of attitudes rather than flexibility, but community institutions and practitioners can be the conduit towards accomplishing a slow change in such attitudes (Mashour, 2005). The community must start to reject what Rabia (2011) describes as the "…patriarchal structure of Bedouin society [which] makes it difficult for women to resist polygamy since Bedouin society associates honor and autonomy with masculinity, but associates modesty and dependency with femininity" (p. 5).

We cannot wait for women in polygamous relationships to complain, because, as demonstrated by our study, they often do not. Recall in Chap. 3 that we discussed how a woman's role is considered self-sacrificial (Abudabbeh, 2005, p. 427):

> many Arab women do not seek help for mental or other such problems that result from polygamy, household violence, other verbal and physical maltreatment, and even the simple depression of not feeling respected or of any true value in a family or other relationship (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Al-Krenawi, Graham, Dean, & Eltaiba, 2004).

Indeed, the literature indicates that women in this region are not expected to be happy. Abdel Khalek (2007) demonstrated an inverse relationship between being female and being happy in Arab populations:

> …boys had higher mean scores on self-rating scales of happiness, mental health, and physical health than did girls, whereas girls had higher mean scores on religiosity, anxiety, and depression. Consistent with previous results, females in Arab countries attained higher mean scores than did their male counterparts for anxiety, fear, neuroticism, depression, and religiosity. (p. 585. See also Al-Krenawi et al., 1994)

This situation may well be at the root of the symptomatology reported in our study. We found that women were frequently not consulted about polygamous marital choices and that this lack of power led to distressing economic and social relationships (see also Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). In Egypt, Philips (2001) found that few first wives willingly grant their husbands permission to remarry. In Kuwait, Abdul Salaam (1997) found that roughly half of the men polled did not plan to tell their wives of their intentions to remarry (see also Human Rights Watch, 2004).

The state must grant more voice to women through publication and advocacy for the voices of such women studied here and elsewhere (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011). Issues of gender construction that are embedded within the practice of polygamy and other related problems would be given this voice if states would encourage women to be more regularly involved in society and its institutions (Al-Krenawi et al., 2011, p. 604). After all, the police forces and government institutions which ignore women's voices are often run by the same men who feel they have the right to practice polygamy, randomly divorce women, and abuse them when they feel they have misbehaved (Abu Rabia, 2011).

Women have had to resort to various methods to manage their relationships with men. Darwish (2003) found amongst her friends and contacts that women simply could not trust their husbands where polygamy was concerned. The following adage was repeated to a woman friend: "…spend your husband's money as fast as you can before there is extra for another wife" (n.p.). Some women, as we have noted, use

Islam to guide their husbands towards piety and, considering the more enlightened views of Islam, the author admits that this practice provides some empowerment for some women (Mahmood, 2005; Piela, 2011). Piela (2011) says:

> Women's re-readings of Islamic scriptures have signalled a Qur'anic concept of the moral framework of human action, an ethical awareness related to God and society [and]… a departure from both patriarchal understandings of Islam and secular–liberal feminist frameworks rooted in the secular West. (p. 1)

A properly functioning state should encourage and support this latter endeavor if it is to be responsive to the public it serves.

Some changes are occurring naturally; that is, if specific family laws cannot be changed, the atmosphere around the laws is changing. In most countries of the Middle East, strict gender-segregation law enforcement is easing up, and, as Khasawneh, Hijazi, and Salman (2011a, 2011b) suggest, people are becoming more aware of the importance of integration of both men and women to healthy family life. These researchers found that in Jordan:

> Men and women have become more conscious of their responsibilities as spouses and parents, which enable them to integrate with each other. This gives men and women a chance to form a bond and come to mutual understanding before marriage, giving men less of a reason to take on a second wife…" (p. 566).

Challenging Concepts for Better Understanding and a Better Future

Rehman (2007) reports ways that *Sharia* law can *build* flexibility and equality into the practices of marriage, divorce, and thus polygamy. A Tunis court granted a divorce to a woman whose husband has threatened polygamy despite her withholding of consent:

> In Islam, marriage is a contract and not a sacrament, and whatever sanctity attaches to it, it remains basically a contractual relationship between the parties. Islam, recognizing the weaknesses in human nature, has permitted the dissolution of marriage, and does not make it an unseverable tie, condemning the spouses to a life of helpless despair. (p. 122)

Rehman reminds us that since marriage is contractual in Islam, each party must receive fair and just treatment for the contract to remain intact. Without laying blame, this reasoning provides the possibility of such a contract becoming null and void.

Marital counselling can be enriched by Islamic precepts. Dr. Farah Ibrahim (2012) reports that in her treatment, "When the client brings up… *Surah e Maryam*… a 30-page chapter in the Koran that addresses the rights of women and how they should be treated, it clearly outlines the equality of the genders…" (n.p.), and the raising of Islamic text should be welcomed within the therapeutic process, because things can be liberally interpreted (n.p.).

Other theorists offer robust and pliable interpretations of such texts and suggest ways in which religion, the state, and the people are meant to grow together and be

capable of accommodating a range of views. Mashour (2005) offers Tunisia as a good example of how itjihad (reasoning?) can work:

1. *Sharia* is partly divine (the *Quran* and *Sunna*) and partly human derived… Thus, *Sharia* is not static but rather evolving.
2. Based on the principle of *Talfiq* [or joining interpretations together, people can] choose which school they want to follow in a certain incident. The evolving nature of *Sharia* will even allow, based on the principle of public welfare, to ask new questions and to arrive at new answers…
3. When patriarchal culture dominates, conservative, literal, and selective interpretations of the text prevail…
4. Liberal Ijtihad and legal reform came from above, while the political system is still restrictive. The sustainability of… reforms depends on how far liberal Islam is rooted in… society and on the roles that the educational system, the media, and the religious institutions play in this regard.
5. Islamic law, through Ijtihad, based on the principles of justice and public welfare, has to cope with and respond to the changing social needs.
6. Due to the influence of patriarchal social customs, most of the mainstream interpretations are conservative, thereby raising the need for feminist Ijtihad…
7. Finally, the *Qur'an* puts a great emphasis on the right to seek justice and the duty to do justice… Ijtihad leave no room for doubt that a common ground can be found between Islamic law and gender equality. (p. 595–596. See also Rehman, 2007)

Need for Economic and Educational Support

The role of women in this region is slowly changing; they are no longer simply the caregivers to children and older members of the family (Khalaili & Litwin, 2011). However, too many women remain dependent upon their husbands and often unsympathetic families for support (Elsaidi, 2011). The state must back up its laws and ideals with enforcement. Most states try to compel men to take care of all their wives (Khasawneh et al., 2011a, 2011b), but fall very short of providing legal support to women in trouble.

Polygamy served an economic advantage when wives were active in certain rural family enterprises, but our study found that multiple wives drain an already stressed economy. It is tempting to say that polygamy should simply wither away with the new economic reality, and, to some degree, it had been doing so. However, some hold that with the loss of land and employment, women have become the last "property" a man can acquire (Rabia, p. 12). Indeed, family honor and heritage figured prominently in our study. However, great migrations from the deserts of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and elsewhere to the cities means that large numbers of people are becoming dependent upon unfamiliar environments (Goldschmidt & Davidson, 2006) which challenge the future of tribal life. Such disenfranchised people tend to follow the dictates of the social and religious leaders who themselves may not be able to negotiate power in their state and thus defiantly cling to fundamentalist traditions (Sabry, 2010).

Regarding the Israeli case, Rabia (2011) suggests that the Israeli government deliberately controls the Arab society by catering to patriarchal traditions that subjugate Arab people by perpetuating the cycle of poor education and employment

(p. 1). The official position of the State of Israel is quite different. For example, the government notes a drop in Bedouin illiteracy rates from 95 % to 25 % in a single generation (with the latter group comprised of individuals 55 years and older), and, while acknowledging the difficulties created for the Bedouin in governmental limiting of pasture land (some Bedouin in the Negev would like to retain traditional livelihoods), does provide veterinary services, refrains from mutton-importation, and periodically increases grazing-land quotas (Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999). In any case, the question itself should function as a spur to Arab people to examine what pitfalls exist in maintaining traditional patriarchal practices such as polygamy.

The Druze Muslim populations in the Palestinian territories, Israel, and Lebanon have banned polygamy and attribute the success of their action to the recognition that both social and religious arguments were addressed (Layish, 1997). Polygamy is said to be an individual rather than a social prerogative, and being such, it is now understood as an affront to the community and subject to both social and religious sanction. The polygamous husband:

> …is liable to be reprimanded (*muldm*) by religious functionaries and expelled by the community… this sanction applies also to the wife in a polygamous marriage…. But again, the religious offence does not affect the substantive validity of the polygamous marriage, any more than an ethical offence affects the validity of the prohibited act in question in orthodox Islam. (p. 61)

Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) offer this case as one that "proves that the most effective way of combating polygamy is through a decision by the religious leadership to ban the phenomenon and to announce a social boycott and clear sanctions against the offenders." (p. 11).

If states do not yet understand the emotional and psychosocial fallout from polygamous practice, they are beginning to recognize the resultant economic and educational damage. Government leaders and communities are seeing the paradox created when polygamy is practiced as a symbol of what people feel to be an important part of the "Arab way of life," yet leaves many individuals trailing woefully behind. Community leaders must be at the forefront, guiding their constituents to make practical and emotionally healthy choices.

We have demonstrated that the practice of polygamy is perpetuated in poor families. Viable alternatives to remaining in poverty must be offered. Beyond health and psychological counselling:

> …it is crucial that concrete assistance be provided where it is needed, in the form of financial benefits, school materials for the children, food aid, and health care. Both men and women in polygamous families should be helped in acquiring marketable skills and in entering the job market; this would give both a modicum of financial independence and some sense of empowerment. (Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008a, p. 761)

Stronger community efforts can help women and families in need, and Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005), like Al-Krenawi and Slonim-Nevo (2008a) above, caution that a balance must be struck between providing support for Bedouin women and turning them into dependents. They stress that policy-makers should encourage local elements to help move women from a victimized to an active position. If too many women remain dependent upon their husbands and often unsympathetic

families for support (Elsaidi, 2011), the state can try to regulate the (religious) requirement that men take proper care of all wives (Khasawneh et al., 2011a, 2011b). To do, they must be ready to enforce legal consequences for those who renege on their responsibilities. Governments can provide more employment opportunities for both men and women—understanding that many women have a much more limited sphere in which they may function. While most Bedouin men might object to their wives being employed outside the home (Lapidot-Firilla & Elhadad, 2005), jobs might be created in community centers, for example, where women could work in societally acceptable areas and take advantage of community daycare and other supports (Al-Krenawi, 1996).

Programs can also assist women and children in polygamous families to cope with their problems. These might include support groups for wives and children, where participants from other polygamous families can share their feelings and find ways to overcome mutual pain and conflicts.

Children in polygamous families could also gain support from family therapists who might use school facilities for therapy sessions. Family and group therapy is often indicated, and participants learn not only the skills to negotiate for attention and resources, but also that others have similar problems. In this way, collective knowledge can be tapped (Al-Krenawi, 2012; Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006).

Education is critical to gain both employment and life skills. All members of the family can learn cooperation techniques and the art of negotiating space and working within the family. Again, the community is crucial: afternoon classes can provide enrichment for youth who are having difficulty in school, but also offer training in life concerns; more sports, hobby, and cultural activity programs should be offered; community field trips through schools and religious institutions outside the neighborhood might open up parts of the world to a person who might otherwise feel alone and rejected (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006). This education should be guided by professionals and leaders of the community, and it must be based on clear, balanced, enlightened, and rational principles, free of the fundamentalist bent that too often taint exercises that are ostensibly designed to "help people" (Al-Krenawi, 2012).

States must support laws that make it more possible for women to seek refuge and to gain justice around child custody, abuse, and unfounded accusations of indecency. Toward this goal, Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) suggest that hostels for "rebellious" young girls be set up with the authorization of religious leaders and run by women to forestall the common scenario of these girls being referred to the sheikh and then married off as a second or third wife. The government must also support initiatives that provide counselling in such areas as family management and work towards educating people in cases of justice and changing economies. By doing this, the state can forestall the development of new problems and deal with the fallout from circumstances that already exist (Abudabbeh, 2005; Al-Krenawi et al., 2011). Lapidot-Firilla and Elhadad (2005) take a similarly comprehensive and depth-oriented view:

> Thought must be put into finding the correct and efficient way to empower women through the education system, through the creation of jobs and through proper professional training. This will increase Bedouin women's independence and awareness, and in the long term, will change their image in the eyes of their children. Training of this kind must conform to know cultural limitations, but must also recognize the need for change (p. 18).

In short, these challenges, even when they argue against polygamy, are neither anti-Muslim nor anti-religion. Rather, they push for the decoupling of religious principles and traditional patriarchy and attempt to find allowances for equality and justice in universally acceptable terms. No one, the challenges imply, should be compelled to accept inferior forms of equality or status under the guise of religious principles, but should, instead, expect support from the community and government to which they contribute.

Appendix

Appendix (Slonim-Nevo & Al-Krenawi, 2006, pp. 329–330)

Summary of statements from qualitative subjects	
High-functioning families	Low-functioning families
Husbands' perceptions	
Reason	Reason
Main reasons for polygamy are increasing the number of sons, protecting the family honor, and falling in love	Main reasons for polygamy are increasing the number of sons, protecting the family honor, and falling in love
Reaction to the second marriage	Reaction to the second marriage
Satisfied with their decision; attribute the success to equal treatment of both wives and to the separation of each household	Perceive their decision to remarry as a mistake because of endless fights and conflicts within the family
First wives' perceptions	
Acceptance of second marriage	Acceptance of second marriage
Accept second marriage as their fate, as God's wish	Perceive husband's marriage as an expression of uncontrolled sexual desire
Role in second wedding	Role in second wedding
Decision to remarry was shared with them, and they were supported by their husbands throughout the wedding process	Were surprised by the second marriage and were forced to accept the event
Reaction to marriage afterwards	Reaction to marriage afterwards
Think that both wives are equally treated, financially, emotionally, and physically	Think that they and their children are neglected Relationships with second wives characterized by unresolved conflict, tension, and animosity
Second wives' perceptions	
Acceptance of second marriage	Acceptance of second marriage
Were forced to become second wives, had no choice	Were forced to become second wives, had no choice
Reaction to marriage afterwards	Reaction to marriage afterwards

(continued)

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(continued)

Summary of statements from qualitative subjects	
High-functioning families	Low-functioning families
Maintain civilized and cooperative relationships with first wives, respect her senior status, and able to solve conflicts and disagreements	Relationships with first wives characterized by unresolved conflicts, tension, and even hate
Children's perceptions	
Enjoy good and open relationships with all their siblings and with the other mother Generally distant from father Do not wish to form a polygamous family in the future	Relationships with the other mother and her children characterized by disconnection, conflict, and tension Generally distant from father Do not wish to form a polygamous family in the future

The Family's Characteristics According to Husband's Name

High-Functioning Families

Hasan	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	0	0	0
Monogamy or polygamy	Y	Y	Y
Reason for second marriage	Only one boy—boys give power to family		
Man's reaction	Things work well		
First wife's reaction	Encouraged second marriage Man must be honest and treat wives equally		
Second wife's reaction	Treat each other as neighbours		
Child of wife 1	Father is old and distant		
Child of wife 2	Angry at father—no good reason for extra children		

Eimen	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	Y	N	N
School	12	7	7
Monogamy or polygamy	N	N	N
Reason for second marriage	Brother died leaving new wife and baby alone		
Man's reaction	Financially difficult		
First wife's reaction	Duty bound Mad at fate—cried Doesn't talk about it		
Second wife's reaction	Had no choice Marry Eimen or lose baby Held back from sexual activity for years		
Child of wife 1	Young—loves both		

Muchamd	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	8	0	8
Monogamy or polygamy	P	P	M
Reason for second marriage	Fell in love on a trip		
Man's reaction	He is fine		
First wife's reaction	He would possibly leave Destroy family honour if not allowed Occasional problems worked out		
Second wife's reaction	Married even though she swore she would not		
Child of wife 1	Father is missing but she loves him Looks after children of second wife		

Abed	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	10	0	4
Monogamy or polygamy	N	Y	Y
Reason for second marriage	Only fertile brother and father dead Response to Badel marriage—protect honour, keep even		
Man's reaction	Things work well		
First wife's reaction	Understood and helped Things must remain equal with her as senior		
Second wife's reaction	No choice—father made her and threatened her mother		
Child of wife 1	–		
Child of wife 2	–		

Abu-Ibrahim	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	Y	N	N
School	4	0	0
Monogamy or polygamy	Y	Y	N
Reason for Second marriage	First wife not many sons Result of social pressure		
Man's reaction	Considers it a mistake		
First wife's reaction	Second wife a correction for possibility of few sons		
Second wife's reaction	Making the most of fate. Guests in each other's house Can call on her father if there are problems		
Child of wife 1			
Child of wife 2	Distant from father—had to show respect Not sure what relationship was at first		

Low-Functioning Families

Shachde	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	10	10	4
Monogamy or polygamy	Y	N	Y
Reason for second marriage	Could not have children after fourth with only one son		

(continued)

(continued)

Shachde	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Man's reaction	Big mistake Second wife thinks she is superior Two wives always fighting		
First wife's reaction	Relies on sisters for money for children Second wife curses, spits, and provokes fights		
Second wife's reaction	First wife is greedy Husband spent too much time at the first wife's house She is a snake. Wishes her unhealthy		
Child of wife 1	Second wife is crazy and jealous Father does not know what to do about it Doesn't know step-siblings—chased away		
Children of wife 2	Kept indoors all day according to first child		

Uda	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	6	0	12
Monogamy or polygamy	Y	N	N
Reason for second marriage	Fell in love. Hid the second marriage Told second wife that first wife was handicapped		
Man's reaction	Second wife is a Satan		
First wife's reaction	Second wife has destroyed everything for no good reasons "She does not exist" Relies on brother for food sometimes		
Second wife's reaction	Feels cheated and stuck Family won't take her back and she cannot get married again if divorced		
Child of wife 1	Everyone suffered Tried to run away—nobody noticed A son unwarrantedly beaten once by father because of second wife		
Child of wife 2	We hate the other kids		

Musa	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	N	N
School	12	3	9
Monogamy or polygamy	N	Y	N
Reason for second marriage	4 of 5 children with first wife with genetic defects		
Man's reaction			
First wife's reaction	Cannot trust men who throw wives away like peel Initial problems just got bigger and bigger		
Second wife's reaction	First wife accuses her of bewitching husband Says first wife has terrible behaviour Claims first wife beat her with stick		
Child of wife 2	Says first wife is crazy and chases him away		

Yaser	Husband	Wife 1	Wife 2
Employment	N	Y	N
School	8	12	6
Monogamy or polygamy	N	Y	Y
Reason for second marriage	Badel marriage so no love in first marriage Had desire—honor to marry instead of fall to temptation		
Man's reaction			
First wife's reaction	He is taking new wives and throwing away old like dog Extremely hurt—wanted to kill second wife's baby Would like Yaser to visit children more		
Second wife's reaction	Hatred of first wife—similar derogatory terms Yaser should have left her		
Child of wife 1	Other woman took his father away Cannot visit second house because mother is angry		
Child of wife 2	Says first wife is crazy and chases him away		

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