

The Effect of Polygamous Marital Structure on Behavioral, Emotional, and Academic Adjustment in Children: A Comprehensive Review of the Literature

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Polygamy represents expanded family structures that are based on marriages involving a husband with 2 or more wives. Interestingly, polygamy is legally and widely practiced in 850 societies across the globe. In the last 2 decades, polygamy has been the focus of a significant growth in public, political, and academic awareness. Indeed, several quantitative and qualitative research articles and theoretical papers have emerged during this period, particularly concerning the effects of this form of marital structure on behavioral, emotional, and academic adjustment of children. However, to date, no researcher has provided a summary of the extant literature. Thus, the purpose of this comprehensive literature review is to summarize findings and to discuss implications of empirical studies that have examined whether polygamous marital structures are beneficial or harmful to children in comparison with children raised in monogamous marital structures. This review includes a summary of the findings from all quantitative and qualitative studies in the extant literature that have examined the effect of polygamy on children's outcomes.

KEY WORDS: polygamy; marital conflict; child adjustment; family structure.

A considerable body of research from diverse perspectives suggests that family structure has a substantial impact on the mental health of children. Compared to their counterparts living in intact families with both biological parents, researchers have found that children living in nontraditional family structures exhibit poor adjustment, as indicated by aggressive and antisocial behavior, conduct disorders, communication difficulties, adjustment problems, poor self-concept, high school-dropout rates, sexual activity, drug abuse, and alcoholism (Thornton & Camburn, 1987; Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994). Similar results have been found in studies that have focused on children of divorced parents

(Amato & Keith, 1991; Arditti, 1999; Demo & Acock, 1988; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagen, & Anderson, 1989; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994); adopted children (Haugaard, 1998; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001; Smith, 2001); children of widowed families (Evans, Kelley, Borgers, Dronkers, & Grullenberg, 1995); children from single-parent families; and children who live with one biological parent or one stepparent (Ganong & Coleman, 1993; Glick, 1989; Greenway & Onwuegbuzie, in press).

Despite this higher risk of behavioral problems, the percentage of children in nontraditional family structures continues to rise (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). For example, between 1970 and 1998, the number of children living with two biological parents dropped from 90 to 74% for White children, 78 to 64% for Hispanic children, and 60 to 36% for African American children. Indeed, Bumpass and Raley (1995) predicted that approximately one-half of the U.S. children born in the 1980s would end up living

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in a single-parent family before they reached the age of 18 years. Moreover, 40% of White women and 46% of African American women born between 1970 and 1974 experienced more than one family structure as children. In addition, in recent years, there has been a steep rise in the percentage of children born to unmarried mothers. In fact, a 1998 U.S. Census report found that about 25% of White births, 41% of Hispanic births, and 70% of African American births occurred outside of marriage (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998).

However, other researchers attribute the decline in the well-being of these children not to the non-traditional family structure but rather to processes and dynamics within the family, such as family conflict and parental confrontation (Emery & O'Leary, 1984; Grych & Fincham, 1990, 1992). Moreover, findings from their studies suggest that well-being and relationship equality cannot be predicted based on family structure alone (Dunn, Deater-Deckard, Picketing, & O'Connor, 1998; Stewart, Copeland, Chester, Malley, & Barenbaum, 1997). Still other researchers assign the adjustment problems of children from divorced or single-parent families primarily to the cultural stigmas associated with nontraditional family structures (Haugaard, 1998; Lansford et al., 2001).

Despite the growing recognition worldwide of the importance of family structure in the developmental process, to date, most researchers have limited their focus to monogamous family structures and individualistic cultural norms of Europe and North America in general and the U.S. middle-class nuclear family in particular (Dunn, 1988). This cultural tradition focuses on the values of achievement, pleasure, and independence, and emphasizes vertical relationships over horizontal relationships (Triandis, 2001; Triandis et al., 1993). However, in other cultures around the world (including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania), it is common for children to live in families with more than two parents (Altman & Ginat, 1996; Broude, 1994). These expanded family structures are based on marriages that may involve (a) polygamy—a husband with two or more wives; (b) polyandry—a wife with two or more husbands; or (c) polygynandry—two or more wives simultaneously married to two or more husbands (Sinha & Bharat, 1985; Valsiner, 1989). The most common form of non-monogamous marriage is polygamy (Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000), a family structure that is economically desirable in cultures based on subsistence farming, in which a family's economic success may be based on the number of children available to work the land. Furthermore, in some societies it is a marker of

economic success; the more wives a man has, the more successful he is deemed to be (Klomegh, 1997).

THE PREVALENCE AND ANTECEDENT CORRELATES OF POLYGAMY

Polygamy is legally and widely practiced in 850 societies across the globe (Bergstrom, 1992; Hartung, 1982), and it is accepted by a wide range of non-Western ethnic and religious groups. In fact, polygamous marriage is a major institution in Africa and in the Middle East. With respect to the former, polygamy may in fact be considered the “most distinctive feature of an African marriage” (Garenne & van de Walle, 1989, p. 267). Polygamy is considered to be a valid form of marriage in Algeria, Chad, Ghana, Benin, Congo, Gabon, Togo, Tanzania (Welch & Click, 1981), Saudi Arabia, and Israel (in Bedouin-Arab communities). More specifically, it is estimated that 20–50% of all marriages in Africa are polygamous (Caldwell & Caldwell, 1993). Chaleby (1985) reported that between 8 and 13% of all marriages in Kuwait are polygamous, and the ratio is much higher in some neighboring countries. The desire to increase the number of children is one reason for forming polygamous marriages. Indeed, childless wives are more likely to be in polygamous marriages than are other wives (Gage-Brandon, 1992; Sichona, 1993).

Polygamous second marriages may occur in “exchange marriages,” as is the case in Bedouin-Arab communities. In this practice, two males marry each other's sisters; if one of the husbands later takes a second wife, the other husband will feel pressure to take a second wife as well (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). There are also demographic reasons for a polygamous marital structure. Other studies suggest clear advantages where child mortality rates are high and where there are more women than men of marriageable age (Klomegh, 1997).

In many regions, polygamy is seen as a way to ensure a family's socioeconomic security and stability (Klomegh, 1997). The additional children that this marital practice provides are valued for their labor, emotional support, and ability to provide security for their parents in old age (Klomegh, 1997). The higher the number of children, the more economically productive a family can be.

Religion is another antecedent correlate of polygamy. In particular, men who practice Islam are significantly more likely than are Christian men to become polygamous. For example, in Peterson's

Nigerian study, 98% of the polygamous wives were Muslim (Peterson, 1999). Also, in Klomegah's study, the distribution of religious affiliations of wives in polygamous marriages was as follows: Muslim 43%, Catholic 25%, Protestant 24%, and no religious affiliation 39% (Klomegah, 1997). In general, studies show that those who practice Islam or traditional religions are more likely to engage in polygamous marriages.

Speizer (1995) documented that monogamous men from rural parts of sub-Saharan Africa express more desire for additional children compared to men from urban areas, because it is cheaper to support and to raise children in rural areas, and the children contribute to agricultural production. However, Klomegah (1997) found that the number of wives per union in rural areas was only slightly higher than in urban areas. In total, about 25% of the women in polygamous marriages lived in urban areas, and about 32% lived in rural communities (Klomegah, 1997). On the other hand, Peterson (1999) found no significant difference between monogamous and polygamous groups of women on the basis of rural/urban residency.

Research has shown an inconsistent relationship between education and the frequency of polygamy. In particular, Al-Krenawi (2001) found no significant difference between the educational level of two groups of Bedouin-Arab women, composed of senior wives in polygamous marriages and wives in monogamous marriages. In addition, Peterson (1999) found no significant difference in literacy between monogamous and polygamous women. Klomegah (1997) reported that the majority of women in polygamous marriages have no formal education, fewer have a primary education, and an even smaller number have a secondary education or higher. Similarly, Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, and Alatamin (2002) found that a statistically significant higher proportion of two-wife families had wives with no formal education than did one-wife families (68.3% vs. 52.3%); however, the Cramer's *V* statistic of .16 associated with this relationship indicated a small effect size.

With respect to the fathers' educational level, Al-Krenawi and Lightman (2000) reported that the educational levels attained by monogamous fathers were significantly higher than those of polygamous fathers. Further, Al-Krenawi and Lightman (2000) found that father's level of education was inversely related to the number of children and wives. Gage-Brandon (1992), who reviewed educational attainment of fathers in

relation to number of wives per union found a strong relationship between whether a father has one or more wives and his educational level. Specifically, of fathers with secondary education or higher, the vast majority (78.8%) have one wife, whereas among fathers with no education, the proportion of one-wife fathers, although still large, is much less (53.3%).

Finally, with regard to mothers' employment, Al-Krenawi (2001) documented that none of the polygamous wives and only a small fraction of the monogamous wives worked outside the home. In Peterson's study, the wives in polygamous marriages also were less likely to work outside the home (Peterson, 1999). Similarly, none of the mothers in Al-Krenawi and Lightman's study worked outside of the home (Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000). Lev-Wiesel and Al-Krenawi (2000) found in their study that 25% of the mothers from polygamous households worked part-time outside the home. Also, Agadjanian and Ezeh (2000) found that more wives from areas with a lower incidence of polygamy worked outside the home and earned cash for their work compared to wives from areas with a higher incidence of polygamy. (There was no significant influence from their occupation before marriage.) Klomegah (1997) reported that most of the wives in his investigation were employed in clerical/sales, followed by agriculture, unemployed, service/manual labor, and professional, technical, and managerial positions. In stark contrast, Elbedour et al. (2002) documented that none of the 102 women from polygamous families who participated in the study were gainfully employed.

THEORETICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPACT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

There is a growing interest in family characteristics that reduce the risk of child development disturbances and psychopathology. Garnezy (1983) suggests that a supportive family can offer a protective factor against developmental risk. Several studies have stressed that an intact family with two biological parents provides the optimal developmental environment for children (Demo & Acock, 1996) and plays a decisive role in reducing psychological distress in children (Wenk et al., 1994). Disruptive factors such as a lack of parental involvement (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986), the psychological unavailability of parents, especially the mother figure (Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983), the dissolution of the family (Cleveland, Wiebe, van den Oord, & Rowe, 2000),

and change in the family system, create discontinuity in the child's immediate environment, which, in turn, can adversely shape a child's adaptive and developmental health (Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

It is likely then that the sudden shift from a monogamous to a polygamous family system that occurs when a new spouse is added to the family would constitute just the kind of major systemic disruption that would pose a major challenge to a developing child's sense of trust, security, and confidence. As family system theories express, these stressors are imposed on children because the functioning of "family members is profoundly interdependent, with changes in one part of the system reverberating in other parts of the system" (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985, p. 5). However, where the practice of polygamy is strongly supported and valued by the culture (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001), it may in fact reduce the vulnerability of children to family disruptions that would otherwise lead to maladaptive behavior.

Unfortunately, scant research has directly examined the well-being of children in polygamous families. Polygamy has been ignored by researchers in part because of the absence of precise and reliable sources of data (Welch & Click, 1981), which has several causes: (a) polygamy is no longer recorded as a marital status; (b) polygamous marriages are illegal in some countries; (c) census questionnaires may be administered improperly by untrained people; and (d) most of the available data are not statistically uniform (Van de Walle, 1968).

Despite these challenges, in the last two decades, polygamy has been the focus of a significant growth in public, political, and academic awareness. The purpose of the remainder of this literature review is to summarize findings and to discuss implications of empirical studies that have examined whether polygamous marital structures are beneficial or harmful to children in comparison with children raised in monogamous marital structures. However, we begin our literature review with a discussion of the risk factors that we believe challenge the well-being and development of children living in polygamous families and place them at risk for mental health disturbance. We believe that some of these risk factors mediate and/or moderate the relationship between polygamous marriages and developmental problems in children. Some of these factors directly affect children in polygamous families, whereas others have an indirect influence on children. These risk factors include family conflict, family distress, the absence of the father, and financial stress.

HYPOTHESIZED RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH POLYGAMOUS MARITAL STRUCTURE

Researchers and developmental theorists have hypothesized a number of risk factors associated with polygamous marital structure. These factors include marital conflict, marital distress, absence of the father, and financial stress. We distinguish between marital conflict and marital distress because the former can accompany happy marriages and well-functioning families (Cummings & Davis, 1994). Furthermore, the relationship between marital functioning and child level of adjustment is much stronger when marital conflict exists, compared to general marital distress (Katz & Gottman, 1993; Porter & O'Leary, 1980). Other studies link marital distress with depressive and internalized symptoms (Coleman & Miller, 1975), whereas marital conflict or hostility is more associated with externalizing disorder (e.g. conduct disorder; Katz & Gottman, 1993). These four risk factors (i.e., marital conflict, marital distress, absence of the father, and financial stress) are discussed below.

Marital Conflict

Considerable research demonstrates that children of polygamous families experience a higher incidence of marital conflict, family violence, and family disruptions than do children of monogamous families (Al-Krenawi, 1998; Elbedour, Bart, & Hektner, 2000). Marital difficulties, discord, and distress, in turn, have a direct effect on the mental health status of children. In their study of children aged 8 through 18, Buehler and Gerard (2002) reported that 11% of the variance in children's maladjustment could be accounted for by marital conflict and ineffective parenting. Developmental outcomes of children predicted by marital problems include the following: poor social competence, a poorly developed sense of security (Davis, Myers, & Cummings, 1996), poor school achievement (Emery & O'Leary, 1982; Katz & Gottman, 1991), misconduct and aggression (Rutter, 1975), and elevated heart rate reactivity (El-sheikh, 1994). Marital conflict also is likely to disrupt effective parenting and parental involvement (Engfer, 1988). Further, children who experience intense marital conflict tend to use aggressive behaviors as a means of problem solving (Cummings, Zahn-Waxler, & Radke-Yarrow, 1984), show hostile patterns of interaction (Katz & Gottman, 1993), and may be forced to ally with one parent against the other (Grych & Fincham,

1990, 1992). A negative appraisal of the marital relationship by the mother is linked to a negative interaction among older siblings and between mother and child. For example, 50% of parents report that they experience tense interactions with their children as a result of marital tension (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). Increased rates of negative behavior by husbands toward their wives are associated with increased rates of negative behavior by wives toward their 5-month-old children (Pederson, Anderson, & Cain, 1977).

On the basis of these findings, one may infer that stressful experiences in polygamous families are more likely to be associated with maladjustment in children, including depression and externalized aggression. Moreover, children of polygamous marriages may become the displaced targets of their parents' frustrations and be treated as scapegoats (Crosson-Tower, 1998). Because of family violence and parental confrontation, older children may assume the role of parents and function as parents for the rest of the family, including the parent(s) themselves; these children then pay the emotional price as the result of serving dual roles in the household.

Marital Distress

Studies have shown (Achte & Schakit, 1980; Ware, 1979) that polygamous marriages are more likely than are monogamous marriages to be torn by spousal conflict, tension, and jealousy. In particular, the stress of polygamous family life predisposes mothers and children to psychological problems (Al-Issa, 1990; Eapen, Al-Gazali, Bin-Othman, & Abou-Saleh, 1998). Women in polygamous families are commonly unhappy, and the addition of a second or third wife is typically very distressing to the "senior wives." This change in the family organization can even be perceived as an abusive or traumatic experience (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). The psychological literature suggests that marital distress is linked with suppressed immune function (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1987), cardiovascular arousal (Brown & Smith, 1992; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Notarius, 2000), and increases in stress-related hormones. In addition, most women in polygamous societies are unemployed and thus are economically dependent on their husbands or families. Because they cannot support themselves through work, they feel pressure to marry into a polygamous family as a solution to their economic needs. With few alternative sources of income, they are un-

likely to seek another form of marriage, and so many of them remain with their children in the polygamous marriage. However, the mother's distress has serious implication for her children, because it can diminish her level of caring, supervision, and involvement. Some distressed mothers can become withdrawn, depressed, and even hostile towards their children (Grych & Fincham, 1990, 1992).

Absence of the Father

Polygamous marriages often lead to family dissolution. For example, men may leave their senior wives and their children in order to live with their later wives and their children. In these cases, the father may not participate in the upbringing of all of his children, and those left behind may experience feelings of grief and abandonment, as well as lower levels of parental supervision. The data show that the father's absence is negatively associated with poor academic performance, teenage pregnancy, and a higher incidence of high-risk behavior (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986). According to Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1986), the effects on male children are strongest—boys experience difficulties with self-control, sex role, gender identity, and academic performance. Although girls also suffer from the lack of a father, their symptoms tend to be less marked and of shorter duration (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1986). Specifically, there are four key correlates of a father's absence that have the strongest effect on children:

- (a) economic distress, which is associated with academic and psychosocial maladjustment (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Pearson & Thoennes, 1988);
- (b) the child's perception of abandonment by the father (Thompson, 1986);
- (c) social isolation (Hetherington et al., 1982; McLoyd, 1998); and
- (d) parental conflict (Cummings & O'Reilly, 1997; Fincham, 1998).

In some societies children of separated polygamous parents are expected to remain with the father and are subsequently raised by his other wives (e.g., Arab Moslem communities). In addition to the grief that the children experience as a result of being separated from their mother, in many cases, this kind of scenario greatly increases the likelihood that they will suffer from abuse and neglect by their stepmother.

Financial Stress

Economic stressors have a negative impact on the happiness of a marriage, and polygamous families produce more children than do monogamous marriages, which increases the financial pressures on the family unit. As we have already seen, women in polygamous marriages are less likely to work outside the home than are women in monogamous marriages, and, therefore, generally have fewer economic resources to invest in their children. For example, Agadjanian and Ezeh (2000) compared communities with low and high levels of polygamy. In the polygamous areas, they found that 71% of the wives had no education, and only 2% had at least a secondary education. In monogamous areas, they found that 35% of the wives had no education, and 17% had at least a secondary education. In addition, the husbands in polygamous marriages also were likely to have achieved a lower educational level than were monogamous husbands (Peterson, 1999).

Along with the economic pressure of supporting a large polygamous family, these educational disparities tend to produce high levels of financial distress. In turn, financially distressed parents are more likely to be depressed (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Moreover, financial problems are positively correlated with parental intolerance, increasing the likelihood that children will suffer abuse or neglect (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Elder, Eccles, Ardel, & Lord, 1995). Further, family income is positively correlated with the psychological health of children, and negatively correlated with problems such as externalizing and internalizing behavior (Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1997); depression, antisocial behavior, and poor impulse control (Takeuchi, Williams, & Adair, 1991); poor academic outcomes (Conger, Conger, & Elder, 1997; Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998); and self-concept (Weinger, 1998). Pagani, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997) found that among Canadian youngsters aged 8–12 years, family poverty was strongly correlated with being held back to repeat a grade. In their 1997 study, Duncan and Brooks-Gunn document that the negative academic effects of poverty are strongest in early childhood and fall off in adolescence (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997). More specifically, McLoyd (1998) found that poor children score approximately nine IQ points lower than do other children, even after participating in a cognitive enrichment program. Also, Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson (1987) found that early childhood teachers have lower academic expectations of poor children.

Finally, family poverty is also associated with a higher incidence of health problems in children (Bradley et al., 1994; Seccombe, 2000), including infant mortality, birth defects, prematurity, and low birth weight (Rosenbaum, 1992); seizures and learning disabilities (Crooks, 1995); and lead toxicity (Needleman, Schell, Bellinger, Leviton, & Allred, 1990). Studies have found that the negative effects of family poverty on children's health increase with the duration of the financial stress—children tend to experience more illness as the poverty continues (see, for e.g., Wolfe, 1999).

In sum, these risk factors (e.g., marital conflict, marital distress, absence of the father, and financial stress) are hypothesized to mediate and/or moderate the relationship between polygamous marital structure and adjustment levels in children. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a mediator indicates how (or the means by which) a given effect occurs. More specifically, the independent variable (e.g., polygamous marital structure) causes or influences the mediator (e.g., marital conflict), which then causes or influences the outcome (e.g., developmental problem in children). On the other hand, a moderator variable identifies the conditions under which a given outcome occurs, as well as the conditions under which the strength or direction of an effect change (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In other words, the moderator variable influences the relationship between two variables such that the nature of the association between the predictor (e.g., polygamous marital structure) and outcome (e.g., developmental problem in children) varies as a function of the moderator variable (e.g., financial). As such, while levels of financial stress can serve both as a mediator and moderator, marital conflict, marital distress, and absence of the father are hypothesized to be mediators only. Financial stress can act as a mediator because polygamous marital structure can cause or influence financial stress, for example, by increasing the burden on the family's resources, which, in turn, can alter negatively the affective state of the parents, thereby unduly affecting child adjustment (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Also, financial stress can serve as a moderator by varying the relationship between polygamous family structure and child development. On the other hand, marital conflict, marital distress, and absence of the father are not hypothesized to be a moderator because it is assumed that a polygamous marital structure precedes these variables. It is worth noting that some of these risk factors, specifically, marital conflict, can exert a direct impact on a child's

level of adjustment through modeling (Belsky, 1981). Unfortunately, little attention has been given to both mediating and moderating processes within the same framework (Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001). Thus, studies are needed that examine multiple processes (mediator, moderator, vulnerability, risk factors) to understand more fully the interdependence of family systems and relationships (Minuchin, 1988).

We contend that based on our discussion of these risk factors, the reader may arrive at the conclusion that the practice of polygamy is a fertile breeding ground for behavior problems in children. However, as we will demonstrate, this has not been borne out consistently in the extant literature. In attempting to explain the contradictory nature of the findings, we posit that polygamy represents a culturally bound phenomenon, and the variations in findings reflect, at least in part, the different cultures, beliefs, and subgroups characterizing the various polygamous participants across studies. However, before reviewing the empirical findings on the impact of polygamous marital structure on children's level of adjustment, the current paper will address one further issue—namely, the effects of polygamy on the mental health of wives.

EFFECTS OF POLYGAMOUS MARITAL STRUCTURE ON THE WIVES

Among West African women in polygamous marriages, life satisfaction has been significantly influenced by wife-order (junior wives were more satisfied) and marital satisfaction. Additionally, marital satisfaction is influenced significantly by husband supportiveness, maternal employment, and the age of the husband. The hierarchy of wife happiness from most happy to least happy is as follows: young only wives, older only wives, young subsequent wives, and older subsequent wives. Further, while, older senior wives were happier than were young senior wives (Gwanfogbe, Schumm, Smith, & Furrow, 1997), the opposite finding has been reported in the Bedouin-Arab community (Al-Krenawi, 2001; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). With respect to the latter result, senior wives whose husbands marry subsequent wives often perceive themselves as having failed to meet the standards set by their husband and the community regarding being a successful wife (Al-Krenawi, 2001; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). In the Bedouin-Arab society, most of the older wives report somatic symptoms, including body aches, headaches, insomnia, fatigue, breathlessness, and *assab* (i.e., a state of nervousness encompassing anxiety and tension;

Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). Also, those who are perceived as old by their husbands tend to have low self-esteem (Al-Krenawi, 2001).

Women living in areas with higher prevalence of polygyny experience limited economic resources stemming primarily from low education attainment and scant opportunity to work outside the home and earn pay (Agadjanian & Ezeh, 2000). These women express unequal treatment among wives despite the fact that the religions underpinning polygamy (e.g. Islam) stipulate the existence of equity (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). These wives typically dislike the practice of inequity; however, expression of such feelings is less likely in areas with a higher incidence of polygamy because of subordination and the inequality of resources (e.g., emotional, financial) (Agadjanian & Ezeh, 2000; see also Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). In contrast, in areas with low incidence of polygamy, husbands and wives are more likely to engage in family planning. Therefore, they typically report higher frequencies of diverse discussions concerning family planning, including the desired number of children and wives (Agadjanian & Ezeh, 2000).

American Muslim women of various ethnic backgrounds in polygamous marriages report being abused emotionally, verbally, sexually, and physically by both husbands and the other wives (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). Apparently, a close association exists between psychopathology and infertile women of polygamous marriages (Aghanwa, Dare, & Ogunniyi, 1999). Moreover, Eapen et al. (1998) found an increased risk in the manifestation of psychiatric disorders among women of Al-Ain District, United Arab Emirates, involved in polygamous marriages, including a greater incidence of low self-esteem and loneliness.

Polygamy affects the members of a family in other ways including issues related to fertility and offspring. Interestingly, there is great variation in reproductive success in polygamous families, excluding cases where men have extensive harems (Einon, 1998). Indeed, while Sichona (1993) found that polygyny has no effect on fertility, Mulder (1994) noted that polygyny increases the likelihood of having female offspring. Planned intercourse that is typically an aspect of polygamous marriages occurs typically near ovulation for older women because intercourse is infrequent. In addition, Strassman (1997) also documented a decreased likelihood of child survival from polygamous marriages, especially if the mother is the first wife. Stressful home environment, parental investment, and dilution of resources also contribute to

the mortality rate. In Johannesburg and Pretoria from 1983 to 1986, the average number of surviving children from monogamous marriages (4.01) was higher than those from polygamous marriages (3.87). Also, the number of children per monogamous husbands (4.01) was lower than the number of children per husband in polygamous marriages (10.96). There was a low but statistically significant negative relationship between the number of wives and the number of surviving children (Anderson, 2000).

On the other hand, respondents of Anderson's study indicated several benefits for polygyny: sharing household workload, site companionship and socializing with other women, greater autonomy because other wives will take care of the children, and other responsibilities (Anderson, 2000). In research conducted by Al-Krenawi (1998), when the relationship among wives improved, the relationships among siblings, between wives and the husband, and between the father and the children also improved in Bedouin-Arab communities. According to Sichona (1993), no more family instability prevailed among polygynous families than occurred among monogamous families. Along the same lines, Gage-Brandon (1992) found that two-wife unions are more stable than are three- or more wife unions. Within the Bedouin-Arab community, where the first author was raised, on many occasions, the first wife encourages her husband to marry a second wife, especially when she cannot bear any children.

In summary, variations exist on the effect of polygamy on the lives of mothers. These variations occur as a function of the number of unions in the family, how the culture values polygamy, the wife order, and whether polygamy is imposed on the senior wife or initiated by her.

DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES OF CHILDREN FROM POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES

Opinions differ regarding the question of the emotional health of children in polygamous families; thus, a consensus has not been established. For example, Swanson, Massey, and Payne (1972) suggest that being part of a very large polygamous family with numerous role models is helpful for children. Similarly, Minde (1975) has suggested that the polygamous family generates so much warmth and affection that it tends to benefit the child's mental health. Conversely, Camara (1978) and Achte and Schakit (1980) have emphasized the conflict, jealousy, anxiety, insecurity,

and general emotional stress to which members of polygamous families are prone. Polygamous families tend to feature rivalries among competing wives (Ebigbo, Onyeama, Ihezue, & Ahanotu, 1981), and sibling rivalry tends to be more severe than in monogamous families (Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992). Unfortunately, both of these effects can create serious emotional problems in children.

By examining and interpreting family drawings of 20 Bedouin-Arab children from polygamous families, Lev-Wiesel and Al-Krenawi (2000) provided evidence that polygamy can considerably affect children's psychological and emotional well-being. In particular, the children in the study tended to draw their biological mothers' figures larger and placed them higher on the page than of the other wives in the polygamous family. Further, while children of senior wives revealed their mothers' superiority in their drawings, children of junior wives tended not to represent this social status. Most notably, 36% of children did not draw their fathers at all, all of these representing children of the most senior wife. Of those who did, the father figure was consistently smaller in size than the figure of the biological mother, irrespective of the location of the figures on the page. According to the researchers, the latter findings may reflect unresolved negative attitudes toward their fathers on the part of the children. Moreover, these results may suggest that the fact that each child from polygamous families is compelled to share his/her father and all his resources with the wives and children of other families within the system may induce confusion about the boundaries of his/her nuclear family (Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 2000). Nevertheless, as noted by Lev-Wiesel and Al-Krenawi (2000), the overwhelming tendency of the children to name their half-siblings from their father's other wives as their brothers and sisters, in the same way as they referred to siblings from their biological mother (i.e. full siblings), suggests an acceptance of their father as the dominant family figure.

Other consequences of polygamous families include little interest exhibited by fathers in the children of senior wives (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999), accompanied by significant interest in the children of junior wives (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). In addition, because of the number of children in a large polygamous family, the parents are less willing to invest in health care (Strassman, 1997). Cherian (1994) and Kampambwe (1980) claim that by weakening the parent-child bond, polygamous family life provides a reduced level of emotional satisfaction and psychological security for the child. One of the conclusions

that Kampambwe (1980) draws from his study is that when children's emotional needs are not met, they are at risk of developing learning problems. These learning difficulties, in turn, attenuate their school achievement levels (Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000; Cherian, 1994), as well as lead to further negative social and emotional outcomes compared to their counterparts in monogamous families (Eapen et al., 1998; Kampambwe, 1980).

In research among Nigerian adolescents, Owuamanam (1984) discovered a significant relationship between polygamous family background and low self-esteem. Also, Oyefeso and Adegoke (1992) found that young males raised in monogamous families reported significantly better psychological adjustment than did their counterparts from polygamous families. Surveying a group of Xhosa-speaking South African children, Cherian (1990) found that those from polygamous families attained significantly lower levels of performance on achievement tests than did those from monogamous families. In a later study, Cherian (1994) observed no significant difference in the relationship between corporal punishment and academic achievement between Xhosa children from polygamous and monogamous families. More specifically, a statistically significant negative relationship between corporal punishment and academic achievement was found for both groups (Cherian, 1994).

In Bedouin-Arab communities in Israel, children from polygamous families have been found to exhibit behavioral and academic problems to a disproportionately higher degree (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1997; Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000). More specifically, Al-Krenawi and Graham (1997) found that at home, children of polygamous families were reported as being disobedient, hyperactive, untruthful, and likely to fight with siblings. At school, the majority of the children had lower-than-average levels of scholastic concentration, school attendance, homework completion, classroom adjustment, functional peer group interactions, and teacher/student relations. Most of them had insufficient school supplies, academic achievement below the school average of 78%, and extremely low academic motivation. These findings are consistent with the results of Elbedour et al.'s study of third-grade children in the Negev Bedouin community in Israel (Elbedour et al., 2002). These researchers examined 29 behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes, and found that the children of monogamous parents fared better than did the children of polygamous parents with respect to every index. In particular, the children of

polygamous parents had higher levels of externalizing behavior (especially attention problems) and school absenteeism, as well as lower levels of academic achievement.

Interestingly, the findings of Elbedour et al. (2002) on third-grade children are inconsistent with the results reported by Elbedour, Bart, and Hektner (2000, in press-a, in press-b), on adolescents who belong to the same Bedouin-Arab community. These studies involved three independent samples of adolescents in high school. The first investigation (i.e., Elbedour et al., 2000) reported no overall difference in academic performance between children from polygamous and monogamous families. In addition, there were minimal differences in academic achievement (e.g., Arabic, English, Hebrew, mathematics) among polygamous families on the basis of number of mothers in the family.

The second inquiry conducted by these researchers (i.e., Elbedour et al., in press-b) focused on the mental health and self-esteem of 210 adolescents (mean age = 15.9 years) from polygamous and monogamous families in the same Bedouin-Arab community. The majority (54.3%) of the participants was from polygamous households (66.7% two wives, 31.6% three wives, and 1.7% four wives). The families were assessed according to degree of conflict, expressiveness, control, and the level of violence in the home, school, and community. No differences were found between the children from polygamous and monogamous families in terms of anxiety, depression, hostility, or psychopathological symptoms, although the children from families with three or four wives appeared to display more psychopathological symptoms than did their monogamous counterparts.

A third study undertaken by Elbedour and his colleagues (i.e., Elbedour et al., in press-a) assessed the level of intelligence (IQ) among Bedouin-Arab adolescents from monogamous and polygamous families. Using Raven's Progressive Matrices, no statistically significant differences in IQ scores emerged. Given that the participants in the three studies of Elbedour et al. (2000, in press-a, in press-b) were adolescents, their developed perception, internalization, and processing of their family environments might explain, in part, why these results were not consistent with some of the other findings from other studies that were conducted on younger children (i.e., Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Al-Krenawi, 1997; Cherian, 1990, 1994; Eapen et al., 1998; Elbedour et al., 2002; Kampambwe, 1980; Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992). Indeed, as children get older, they play a more active

role in their own development—even identical twins raised in the same home environment do not possess identical personalities (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, Segal, & Tellegen, 1990). Compared to younger children, adolescents are less likely to be confined to the home environment and to witness parental conflict (Porter & O'Leary, 1980), are more likely to interpret accurately parents' emotions (Kelly & Wallerstein, 1975), and are more likely to have more advanced coping strategies and have access to external social support systems (e.g., peer groups). Support from peer groups have been shown to help adolescents to cope with family stress including marital discord (Bowen & Chapman, 1996; Hashima & Amato, 1994; Jennings, Stagg, & Connors, 1991). Thus, it seems that marital discord is more likely to affect the behavior of younger children than that of adolescents (Porter & O'Leary, 1980).

Jankowiak and Diderich (2000) investigated sibling solidarity within polygamous families in the United States. The theme of family solidarity and unity was consistent at church, Sunday school, and school. When discussing individual placement within the family, participants of all ages delineated their birth positions in relation to the birth mother within the entire family (i.e., in relation to their father's children). Also, the male participants stated their position within gender. In family drawings from children 5–12 years old, an overwhelming majority included their birth mother, comothers, father, and their full siblings as well as half siblings. When probed, the other children also included the remaining family members. All of the children drew their birth family first, and then the others, thus indicating family solidarity while also recognizing organization related to birth and comothers. The participants indicated three forms of solidarity: functional, affectual, and associational. Siblings indicated that they loaned money to and baby-sat more often for full siblings than for half siblings (functional). They also indicated that they were closer to their full siblings than to their half siblings (affectual), and that they attended events involving full siblings out of obligation or affection more often than those involving half siblings. The latter-born half siblings were usually closer. The children recognized the unity between one another and with the father, as well as respect for their biological mother (associational). However, they were aware of the existence of subfamilies or divisions within their father's family, and showed loyalty accordingly. The reverence of wife order was only acknowledged by the children of senior wives because of hierarchy among the wives—

all of which indicate a positive effect from the family structure.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As described in the previous section, researchers have been able to identify multiple risk factors associated with polygamy. These multiple stressful factors would be expected to have a highly disruptive effect on the home environment required for children to foster a sense of dependency and security, and to provide a foundation for sound development. Indeed, some researchers (e.g., Mann & MacKenzie, 1996) hypothesize that problems associated with polygamous marriages negatively affect the family unit and constrain children to an attenuated, less adaptive range of coping strategies than is available to their counterparts living in monogamous families.

However, not all researchers agree with this viewpoint. In fact, some researchers posit that large families provide a greater number of role models for children, and that this has a positive effect on their development (Swanson et al., 1972). Further, these researchers hypothesize that polygamous families provide more warmth and affection than do monogamous ones, which benefit children's mental health and self-esteem (Minde, 1975; Swanson et al., 1972). Authors from this school of thought contend that children are not necessarily negatively affected by polygamy, despite the host of risk factors associated with it (Chaleby, 1985; Elbedour et al., 2000, in press-a, in press-b; Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992). These findings may suggest that a well-adjusted child would not suffer lasting negative outcomes as a result of being raised in polygamous marriages. Rather, the results appear to indicate that children, especially adolescents, are quite resilient and can manage the stresses they encounter in polygamous marital structures.

The divide between advocates and opponents of polygamy has been exacerbated by the fact that findings from the few empirical investigations on the effect of polygamy on children have been mixed. Some studies (i.e., Al-Krenawi et al., 1997; Cherian, 1990, 1994; Eapen et al., 1998; Elbedour et al., 2002; Kampambwe, 1980; Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992) have documented negative effects of polygamous marital structure on the developmental outcomes of children, whereas others (i.e., Elbedour et al., 2000, in press-a, in press-b) have not found evidence that polygamy places children at risk for adverse consequences relative to their peers from monogamous families. These inconsistent results have left

uncertainty concerning the impact that this form of marriage has on offspring.

A possible explanation for the contradictory findings pertaining to the effect of polygamy might stem from the role of culture. Specifically, culture may be able to play a protective role that enables children to thrive despite multiple risk factors. The mitigating effects of culture are highlighted in the studies conducted by Elbedour et al. (2000, in press-a, in press-b) in Bedouin-Arab communities. In this culture, polygamy is not only well accepted but valued, and the large family size that is associated with polygamy is a signifier of high social status; hence, the children of polygamous families are not stigmatized. In addition, in most Moslem communities, producing more children, especially males, plays an instrumental role in establishing a family's honor and social status. Bedouin-Arab women are valued because of their roles in producing children. Thus, polygamy is a vehicle to achieve social status and to discriminate between "the haves and the have-nots" (Klomegah, 1997, p. 3).

In some communities it is not unusual to find that women prefer polygamous marriages for social motives (Anderson, 2000). For example, as noted earlier, if a first wife fails to give birth she may encourage her husband to marry again (Momeni, 1975). Senior wives may play an important role in selecting a second spouse for their husband, and they will tend to choose women who can help with rearing children and other family tasks (Gage-Brandon, 1992). For these women, the critical relationship is not with the man but with the other women who have entered into the marriage. For instance, in a South African study, women commonly cited assistance with child rearing as a reason for choosing or becoming a cowife (Anderson, 2000). A similar line of thinking may be applied to some societies in Africa (e.g. Ghana) where polygamous marriage is practiced by all social groups and "is an expression of a way of life which is deeply embedded in their religious and cultural obligation" (Ohadike, 1968, p. 360). Thus, in order to understand how well polygamous children function in these communities, we would need to analyze the entire cultural milieu and how polygamy contributes to the needs of the community (Hillman, 1975). For this reason, the development of children in a polygamous marital structure can be regarded as a culturally bound phenomenon. Thus, in order to understand children's degree of adaptation, we must consider the contributing role of cultural values and tradition. In communities where the practice of polygamy is valued and frequently practiced, no

negative stigma prevails, which, in turn, may provide a buffer from the adverse stressors associated with polygamous marriage, as noted by some authors.

Furthermore, as Asch concluded in 1957 (cited in Harris, 1995), it is misleading to assume that researchers can understand individuals' developmental outcomes without taking into account the social milieu to which they belong. According to Klomegah (1997), in some communities, the role of polygamous family practice is not only a means of binding a nuclear couple, but it also serves as a way of unifying extended families and groups. Thus, these marriage structures "are valid to the extent that, within their cultural context, they serve to promote and actualize the ideal of humanity in general" (Snoek, 1970, p. 116). The ideals valued by each culture will shape its predominant family structures and parental norms, which will play a key role in the developmental outcomes of its children (Bradley, Corwyn, & Whiteside-Mansell, 1996). Unlike the Western societies that place a premium on individualism, most societies that practice polygamy are collective, and consider interdependence and group cohesiveness to represent adaptive modes of behavior. In these communities, the values that shape individual behavior include group social expectations, restrictive conformity, respect, and commitment to community (Traindis, 2001; Triandis et al., 1993). In most Moslem communities that practice polygamy, a sense of collectivity overrides individual needs (Feghali, 1997). As a result, all of the adults in the extended family or kinship group will participate in raising the children, and the children's parents play a less pivotal role than in a monogamous Western family (Al-Issa, 1990).

Therefore, it is unusual to find studies that suggest that polygamous marital structures are beneficial to children (especially when the parents are ineffective) because they provide adult role models and foster the value of cooperation (Swanson et al., 1972). In a polygamous family, the older children are usually expected to help raise the younger siblings, and this parental role reversal tends to accelerate as the children mature and the parents grow older. Oyefeso and Adegoke's findings suggest that a male child in a polygamous marriage who experiences a stressful home environment tends to "fend for himself" and his full sister(s) (Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992, p. 788). It is also likely that the extended family may compensate for some of the ill effects of polygamy by providing children with links to other children and adults within their family or community. The messages of cooperation, sharing, obedience, respect for elders,

and the importance of family bonds are strongly emphasized in the socialization of these children. These communities raise children to perceive themselves not as autonomous individuals, but as deeply interdependent with their communities.

Thus, in order to assess truly the risks and advantages of a polygamous family structure, we must take into account the values and norms of the community or ethnic group—and it appears that many polygamous cultures are able to play a protective role in moderating the disruptive effects of the family structure, especially in the case of older children (Oyefeso & Adegoke, 1992). In a collective community, there are no boundaries that separate one family (nuclear or extended) from another family within the community, or each family from the community as a whole. As a result, the older children move freely within the community and are less likely to be exposed to parental conflict and tension than are younger children. Additionally, the developmental stage and relative cognitive maturity of the older children allows them to cope with the stressful experiences associated with a polygamous marriage. Also, in many areas, children from polygamous families freely interact with children from monogamous families: they play together and attend school and mosque together (Elbedour et al., in press-a). Because of the reliance on the collective community, an older child may go home for the primary purpose of eating and sleeping, and it would not be considered unusual or worrisome for an older child to sleep at another house without informing his mother. Therefore, a child's interpretation of family conflict and tension is likely to change as he or she matures (Grych & Fincham, 1990), and as a result of social values, culture, and other ecological factors (i.e., community) beyond the family context.

Compared to the tendency of older children to grow up with fewer problems, studies involving younger children in polygamous families (e.g., Al-Krenawi & Lightman, 2000; Elbedour et al., 2002) indicate that they display a host of symptoms, including high levels of anxiety, hostility, and aggression; somatic problems, such as headaches or stomach pain; and difficulties with learning and school adjustment. This is not surprising, because these younger children are more dependent on their mothers, more exposed to episodes of parental conflict, and more confined to their homes than are their older counterparts (Harris, 1995). Thus, researchers must address the moderating role of age (i.e., young vs. old) in the relationship between polygamous marital structure and children's developmental well-being.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the fact that some form of polygamy is practiced in 850 societies spanning several continents (Bergstrom, 1994; Hartung, 1982), it is surprising how few empirical studies have been undertaken investigating the effects of polygamy on children. Thus, clearly, many more quantitative inquiries are needed in this area. Qualitative studies, which are even more scant, also are needed. Such examinations can help to increase our understanding of the dynamics of polygamy. In particular, interview and observational data could be used to compare levels of marital conflict, parenting styles, and other process variables, among the different family structures, to determine whether any of these constructs serve as confounding variables. Other potential extraneous variables worthy of qualitative examination include age and culture. Qualitative studies may also lead to some insights as to the role that stigma associated with belonging to a polygamous family might play in mediating the effect of polygamy. In fact, in testing hypotheses in subsequent empirical studies, adjustments could then be made for any confounds.

Studies in the area of polygamy have focused on the structure of the family, rather than on family dynamics. Thus, researchers should study the family dynamics (e.g., children's perceptions of marital discord, content, frequency, and duration of conflict, degree of marital mutual respect and support, parental supervision, and involvement) that best characterize polygamous families, and that distinguish these families from monogamous families. Also, comparisons must be made with respect to indexes of adjustment among children from the first wife, second wife, and subsequent wives.

The few empirical studies that exist have been cross-sectional in nature. Although cross-sectional research designs allow groups to be compared, they do not help researchers to determine the effects of polygamy over time. As noted by Elbedour et al. (2002), another limitation of cross-sectional designs is that they do not allow researchers to determine whether any problems exhibited by the children in polygamous households are the result of the marital structure per se, or whether these children are developmentally lagging (i.e., precondition) before experiencing a polygamous marital structure. Further, cross-sectional studies usually fail to determine whether the risk factors associated with polygamy precede maladjustment in children or vice versa. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to increase

our understanding of the developmental ramifications of polygamy.

The studies cited above typically have involved data from one source (e.g., teacher, mother, or child). Unfortunately, extracting data from only one source does not allow triangulation. Consequently, future research should collect and analyze data from multiple sources. Also, as recommended by Elbedour et al. (2002), researchers should examine whether factors such as levels of stress, coping skills, and marital factors can mediate and/or moderate the relationship between marital structure and children's adjustment.

The fact that mothers from polygamous families have been found to have lower levels of education than do those from monogamous families suggests that a cycle of low educational attainment may prevail in polygamous families. This should be the subject of future investigations. In addition, researchers should examine the role of parental income level in communities characterized by polygamy.

As noted above, some studies found no difference on various indexes of adjustment including cognitive, functioning, academic achievement, and mental health status, specifically among adolescents. The remaining investigations have documented emotional, behavioral, and academic deficits among polygamous children, particularly younger ones, in comparison to their monogamous peers. One way of determining the impact of polygamous family structure across these studies would be to undertake a meta-analysis. Such analyses involve aggregating effect size coefficients across studies. Unfortunately, with the exception of Elbedour et al. (2002), effect sizes have not been reported. Moreover, some of these researchers have not presented any or sufficient summary statistics (e.g., means, variances) to facilitate the computation of these effect size estimates in secondary data analyses. Thus, presently, it is not possible to undertake a meta-analysis on the (scant) extant literature. As asserted by many (e.g., Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002, in press), and advocated by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001), we recommend that effect sizes always be reported in all future empirical investigations in the area of polygamy. Not only will such practice enable meta-analyses to be conducted, but it will also prevent any statistically significant differences that may emerge between children of polygamous and monogamous families, and any other statistically significant findings, from being overinterpreted (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, in press).

Although the practice of polygamy itself tends to be similar across cultures, it appears that the function it serves, the attitudes toward it, and the value that society attaches to it will determine its impact on children. In addition, the beliefs and values about polygamy in one society are not transferable to or meaningful in other cultures. Although some studies stress the resiliency of the children and the buffering effects of collective parenting, other studies support the opposite position—the damage thesis. One example is Cherian's study of academic achievement among adolescents between the ages 13 and 17 in Transkei, Xhosa (Cherian, 1990). Unfortunately Cherian does not identify whether this culture has other compensatory factors—such as a collective external social support system—that are commonly found in other polygamous communities. The reported variations in the adjustment of children in polygamous settings likely can be accounted for by the diversity of contexts in which the data have been collected and the fact that the studies do not take into account the possible compensatory or protective factors or the degree to which polygamy is accepted by the society. Thus, there is a need to examine how cultural context and the variations among cultural groups interact with or moderate the impact of polygamous family experiences.

These studies may need to focus on the unique factors of the culture under study, rather than on general issues of family structure and dynamics. Indeed, it may be that the distinction between polygamous and monogamous family structures is of little value in a collective society. Researchers may need to focus on the nature of the collective milieu in which the child lives, rather than on the parent-child relationship. In fact, there is growing evidence to suggest that the psychological concepts formulated in Euro-American societies may not be applicable to the collective societies of Africa and Asia (Al-Issa, 1995; Dwairy, 1998; Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 1993). Maitra (1996) suggests that Western epistemological and social assumptions lie at the heart of the professionalization of child services, and that non-Western cultures may have vastly different ways of understanding subjective experience, selfhood, and the relationship between the individual and the community. We must view development not solely as an individual or family phenomenon, but also as social and culturally bound experience. In this regard, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) suggests that child adjustment, whether adaptive or maladjusted, may be best predicted by understanding the dynamic interplay among the family, neighborhood, community,

and sociocultural factors. Each of these systems, which is influenced by and influences other systems, will determine the course and nature of development. Also, we need to remember that differences within cultural groups sometimes are much larger than differences between cultures. The well-being of children from a polygamous marital structure may vary even within collective cultures; thus, polygamy is a *subculturally* bound phenomenon. This is well articulated by Korbin (1980), who emphasizes that there is no universal, cross-cultural standard of good child-rearing practices. She contends that if researchers fail to take the cultural perspective into account in defining best child-rearing practices, “we will be hopelessly locked into an ethnocentric position in which one’s own set of cultural beliefs and practices are presumed to be preferable and indeed superior, to another” (p. 15). Researchers in the area of polygamy should take heed of this warning, and examine this phenomenon combining both etic and emic cultural perspectives.

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