COMPARING THEMES OF POLYGAMY IN MORMON WOMEN'S PUBLIC AND
PERSONAL WRITINGS AS FOUND IN THE WOMAN'S EXPONENT
AND THEIR DIARIES DURING THE EDMUNDS ACT, THE
EDMUNDS-TUCKER ACT, AND THE MANIFESTO

by

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ABSTRACT

Comparing Themes of Polygamy in Mormon Women’s Public and Personal Writings as Found in the Woman’s Exponent and Their Diaries During the Edmunds Act, the Edmunds-Tucker Act, and the Manifesto

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This thesis examined Mormon women’s arguments defending polygamy in a public forum, the Woman’s Exponent, and in a private forum, their diaries and journals. By analyzing the paper and Mormon polygamous women’s diaries from the passage of the Edmunds Act in 1882 to the Mormon Church’s Manifesto discontinuing polygamy in 1890, the study mapped the evolving rationales Mormon women used to defend their peculiar marriage arrangements. Two communication theories, Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese’s model of influences on media content, and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s Spiral of Silence, would suggest that extramedia forces influenced Mormon women not to disparage polygamy in the public forum.

Initiated in 1872, the Woman’s Exponent was one of the earliest periodicals for women in the United States. The paper provided a rare forum for Mormon women to express their views on a variety of topics including polygamy. Mormon women candidly
defended their choice of living in polygamy. However, themes in the *Exponent* changed over the years examined. In 1882, the editorials were overwhelmingly persuasive: readers were bombarded with positive arguments for practicing polygamy. By 1890, the number of editorials addressing polygamy decreased significantly and the tone was no longer persuasive, but defensive. And although Mormon women used the paper as a forum to legitimize their marriage practices, they used external rather than personal reasons to do so.

While the *Exponent* provided a history of Mormon women’s public defense of polygamy, Mormon polygamous women’s private diaries provided the history of their intimate feelings and experiences with the practice. The diaries revealed that Mormon women’s experience in polygamy varied, but that the consequences of polygamy in Mormon women’s lives were sometimes harsh and usually sad. Feelings of abandonment, loneliness, and financial insecurity were the most prevalent reasons Mormon women recorded dissatisfaction. Problems were further fueled by governmental sanctioning against the practice. Mormon women’s support of polygamy in their private writings was less supportive than their public writings perhaps because the practice was hard to live. In most cases, however, it became evident that Mormon women would not have accepted polygamy if they had not firmly believed it to be a commandment of God.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO MORMON POLYGAMY

This thesis uses historical research methods, examining the content of the *Woman’s Exponent* and Mormon women’s diaries, as primary sources. The *Exponent* and Mormon women’s diaries provide a written history of Mormon women’s public defense and personal experience of polygamy. By analyzing these sources from the passage of the Edmunds Act in 1882 to the Mormon Church’s Manifesto discontinuing polygamy in 1890, the study seeks to map the rationales Mormon women used to publicly defend their marriage arrangements and compares them with their personal writings.

The mode of examining Mormon women’s public and private writings will be thematic analysis. Expectations of this study are that Mormon women’s defense of plural marriage will change as the church outmoded the practice in 1890 and that their tone will be less supportive. However, because the church and the Mormon community did not tolerate outward ridicule of polygamy, the change in the public forum, the *Exponent*, is expected to be subtle.

It is helpful to note, at this point, that technically Mormon polygamy is misnamed. Polygamy is the practice of either gender procuring more than one spouse. In Mormon theology a man may marry many women, but a woman may not marry many men. The term for this type of marriage arrangement is polygyny. However, because the Mormon practice of marrying many women to one man has been historically called polygamy, it is better to retain consistency by using the common term throughout this thesis.
During the 1880s, the Mormon people of Utah territory were placed under heavy sanctions by the United States government for their practice of polygamy. Congress passed the Edmunds Act of 1882\(^1\) and the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887\(^2\) against the practice. Despite the heavy sanctions that these acts incurred upon Mormons living in polygamy, including prison terms and fines, Mormon leaders did not stop the practice until 1890 when they issued a Manifesto discouraging polygamy. After this time, Mormon leaders no longer officially permitted new polygamous marriages; however some Mormons still married plurally for the next fourteen years. In 1904, the Mormon Church issued a second Manifesto which threatened to excommunicate church members who married plurally, thereby effectively halting the practice among mainstream Mormons.

According to Mormon theology, as introduced by the church's first prophet, Joseph Smith, men and women who accepted polygamy would be exalted in the next life. In Mormon theology, exaltation was considered the highest order of heaven and the ultimate goal of humanity. Other than the promise of exaltation in the afterlife, Mormon leaders did not construct guidelines for its members entering the practice. The number of women a man could marry was not limited. Marrying individuals with tremendous age differences was not discouraged. Economic resources were not required of either party. For instance, a man without sufficient finances for his first or second wives and their children could continue to marry more wives. These factors, among others, have made Mormon polygamy a curious study for scholars.

While Mormon polygamy has been a studied for more than a century, the emphasis has been from the male perspective. This might be traced to the nineteenth-
century male domination of the printed word. Yet, in the Mormon community, there was a paper written for and by women, the Woman’s Exponent. The Exponent was one of the earliest periodicals for women in the United States. Initiated on June 1, 1872, it ran continuously for forty-two years. The paper was a bi-monthly, eight-page paper initially edited by Louise Green. In 1876, Emmeline B. Wells took over for Green and remained the mainstay of its operation for the remaining thirty-seven years. For the most part, the paper seldom circulated beyond Utah. Nonetheless, it provided a rare forum for Mormon women to express their views on a variety of topics including polygamy.

Many articles in the Exponent defended polygamy, and in fact, there were no articles that disparaged the practice. Mormon women, at least publicly, wholly accepted polygamy, or the patriarchal order of marriage, as Mormons of the nineteenth-century often called it. By the end of this thesis it becomes clear that the primary reason Mormon women embraced the practice of polygamy is that they had believed that the practice was commanded by God. It is not surprising, then, that publicly, Mormon women defended their choice of living in polygamy and used their paper, the Exponent, as a forum to legitimize their marriage practices.

The Exponent was an instrument for the women to defend their reputations as decent, respectable, and moral females of Victorian society. They had to rebut slander that proliferated about them in mainstream America, especially the American press, because nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines published articles disparaging Mormon women for their acceptance of polygamy. Similarly, novels portrayed young Mormon women as helplessly entrapped in polygamous marriages to old, lecherous Mormon men. Mormon women’s reputations were at stake. To reinstate their
reputations and rebuke negative stereotypes, Mormon women employed the *Exponent* to rebuff the malicious tales that outsiders spread about them. For example, an editorial,

“The ‘Mormon’ Woman’s paper” explained:

It [the *Woman’s Exponent*] finds its way into many homes, where the sound of the Gospel has never been heard, and it has been the humble means of removing prejudices and correcting false impressions, made by those who are ever on the alert to injure the cause and the people who are seeking to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth.  

In opposition to the *Exponent*, the diaries of polygamous Mormon women revealed the individual struggles and experiences of their authors. In their diaries, Mormon women recorded their personal triumphs and trials, often focusing on the emotional context rather than church doctrine. Happiness, in contrast to the text of the *Exponent*, was of key importance. For instance, Mormon women who actively shared their husband with other wives suffered much loneliness and despair. Further, the hardships that polygamy often created, aloneness and financial deficiency, were exacerbated by the Edmunds Act and the Edmunds-Tucker Act. These acts intensified the women’s hardships because the acts required polygamists, particularly the men, to be fined and jailed.

Despite the fact that the women did trumpet the cause of polygamy, nineteenth-century America was not willing to accept the practice. And ultimately, as has been noted, the Mormon people were forced to abandon it. Each anti-polygamy act and the first Manifesto of 1890 were turning points for the Mormons because each signified the decline of the church’s autonomic political identity. How did women practicing polygamy respond to the loss of church power and governmental interference? This thesis uses the *Woman’s Exponent* to trace Mormon women’s public argument and
Mormon women’s personal diaries of polygamy as tools in order to help answer this question. It then addresses reasons for the differences between the public and private themes about polygamy.

Notes

1 For the full text of the Edmunds Act, see United States Statutes at Large, vol. 22, chap. 47, 30.

2 For the full text of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, see United States Statutes at Large, vol. 24, chap. 397, 635.

3 Sherilyn Cox Bennion, “The Woman’s Exponent: Forty-two Years of Speaking for Women,” Utah Historical Quarterly 44 (1976): 237. (Bennion recorded that in 1881 the Mormon church’s Relief Society [women’s organization] general conference report showed that their were at least 754 subscribers in Utah. In 1885, a national directory for periodicals credited it with a circulation between 500 to 1,000. And again, in 1892, the paper had an estimated circulation of 700. Because the circulation remained at approximately the same number that the Relief Society reported had subscribed within Utah, it is reasonable to suppose that the paper seldom circulated beyond state boundaries.)

4 “The ‘Mormon’ Woman’s Paper,” Woman’s Exponent, 15 May 1887: 188.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter introduces the reader to a deeper understanding of Mormon polygamy, anti-polygamy legislation, and the Woman's Exponent. Previous works concerning the Exponent and Mormon women's diaries will also be examined. Also, communication models and theories that help with the interpretation of results will be explained.

An Overview of Mormon Polygamy

Mormon polygamy was practiced first by Joseph Smith Jr., the founder and first prophet of the Mormon Church. Although denying the practice publicly, Smith privately advocated polygamous marriages in the early 1840s and perhaps earlier. Before his martyrdom in 1844, Smith entrusted a small group of close friends and church leaders with the revelation. After his death, these followers carried the practice with them in their 1847 exodus to Utah, where they hoped to practice their religion in peace without interference from government. In Utah, free of the angry judgments of mobs or punitive laws, many of the Mormon people practiced polygamy without hindrance.

Many Mormons entered into polygamous marriages because Smith, and subsequent leaders of the church, taught plural marriage was authorized by God. In fact, Smith called the principle, otherwise known as the patriarchal order of marriage or celestial marriage, "the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on earth." Because Smith was believed to be a prophet of God, Mormon followers felt that he was unable to mistake and therefore the doctrine was accepted as unequivocally divine.
Section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, a collection of uniquely Mormon scripture believed to have been revealed to Smith by God, recorded the justification of the practice in 1843. However, the section heading states, "Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, it is evident from the historical records that the doctrines and principles involved in this revelation had been known to the Prophet [Joseph Smith] since 1831." An excerpt of the revelation supporting plurality of wives found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* states:

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

In the same revelation, it was made clear that righteous Mormon men were justified by God to espouse as many virgins as they liked. However, women, under threat of being "destroyed," must be faithful to their one husband. Because the revelation cited marriage as a necessary means to gain eternal salvation and exaltation, the Mormons in the nineteenth century believed they would receive even greater rewards in the afterlife if they married plurally. During the height of polygamy, many Mormons believed that a man's taking at least one additional wife was essential to exaltation for both males and females in the next life. Also, church leaders condemned those who did not readily accept polygamy. Brigham Young, the church's second leader, was quoted as saying in the 1855 *Deseret News* (the Salt Lake City, church-owned newspaper): "If any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned."
Because God commanded polygamy, many Mormons entered into the practice and few would publicly reject it. However, the most liberal estimates project that no more than 15 to 20 percent of Mormon marriages were polygamous at any one time.\textsuperscript{8}

There were two practical reasons why more men did not take additional wives: finances and insufficient numbers of women. Pressure was placed upon the elite to marry plurally, because often they were able to support more than one wife, and polygamy was considered a sign of righteousness. In actuality, men who desired upward mobility were expected by church authorities to marry plurally, causing unmarried women to be in short supply during periods of Utah history. In 1857, Wilford Woodruff wrote a fellow apostle, “All are trying to get wives until there is hardly a girl fourteen years old in Utah, but what is married or just going to be.”\textsuperscript{9} Finally, although few would publicly proclaim it, many nineteenth-century Mormons did not particularly care for the idea.

Polygamy was not initially embraced by many early Mormons because the practice blatantly affronted nineteenth-century Victorian sensibilities. As Don Carlos Smith, Joseph Smith’s younger brother, reportedly stated in June of 1841, “Any man who will teach and practice ‘spiritual wifery’ [a term used for early Mormon polygamy] will go to hell, no matter if it is my brother Joseph.”\textsuperscript{10} Mormon women also recorded strong reactions against polygamy. For instance, when Joseph Smith approached Lucy Walker to be his twenty-second wife, she felt a strong repugnance to marrying plurally. She reported feeling “tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable.”

Walker continued:

Oh that the grave would kindly receive me that I might find rest on the bosom of my dear mother….Why-Why Should I be chosen from among thy daughters, Father I am only a child in years and experience. No mother to council [sic]; no father near to tell
me what to do, in this trying hour. Oh let this bitter cup pass. And thus I prayed in the agony of my soul.11

Don Carlos Smith and Lucy Walker were not alone in their sentiments towards polygamy as the Mormon historian Richard Van Wagoner observed: "Most [Mormon] Saints, many with rigid New England Puritan backgrounds, found polygamy as distasteful as adultery."12

The exact number of polygamous marriages cannot be known for the simple reason that polygamous marriages were often not recorded in county courthouses. Many times the only records were church owned or privately owned. Although the Mormon Church kept fastidious records, these were not generally open for public consumption. Also, the Mormons believed that their marriage promises transcended earthly laws, and therefore women were not always required by church officials to file a legal divorce from a previous marriage before marrying another man. As Young explained: "If a woman prefers a man higher in authority, and he is willing to take her, and her husband gives her up, there is no bill of divorce required. In [this] case, it is right in the sight of God."13

For example, eighteen of Joseph Smith's thirty-three known wives were single when he married them and four were widows. The remaining eleven were civilly married to and cohabiting with other men at the time of their marriages to Smith.14 None of these women divorced their civilly married spouses during Smith's life.15 However, theologically, in the next life, these eleven women would be married solely to Smith, abandoning their earthly spouses entirely.

Theoretically, the first wife needed to give her consent for her husband to espouse another wife.16 In practice, however, men were sanctioned by the leaders of the
church to take additional wives without the first’s consent. As Orson Pratt, a high
council official, stated in 1853:

If the wife can show no good reason why she refuses to comply with the law which
was given unto Sarah of old, then it is lawful for her husband, if permitted by
revelation through the prophet, to be married to others without her consent, and he
will be justified, and she will be condemned.17

First wives did not always give their consent willingly or know about their husbands’
additional marriages until long after they had taken place. For instance, Smith married
two sisters, Emily Dow and Eliza Maria Partridge, without his first wife’s knowledge.
Remarkably, Smith married each sister without the other sister’s knowledge. So at the
onset of their marriages, Emily and Eliza were unaware that they shared a husband.18

Although defenders of Mormon polygamy contended that the practice was for
spiritual purposes, plural wives were generally much younger than their husbands.19 One
of the primary motivations behind practicing polygamy, as cited in Mormon revelation,
was that the saints could comply with God’s commandment to multiply and replenish the
earth and more specifically that women might “bear the souls of men.”20 This having
been the goal, then, marrying older or elderly women would have been purposeless. In
any case, whether the husband was in his twenties, thirties, or forties, the average age of a
new wife was under nineteen.21

Another of the interesting aspects of Mormon polygamy was that there were no
social standards when a man took more than one wife. Some wives lived under the same
roof; others had their own houses. Also, some men lived with one wife primarily and
would visit the other or others on occasion, rarely, or not at all. Other men would split
their time in approximately equal increments. A favored wife tended to be much more
satisfied with the institution of plural marriage than a wife who was not favored of her husband.\textsuperscript{22} For instance, in a study of polygamous Mormon women’s diaries, Suzanne Katz found that wives who were ignored showed all the symptoms of emotional loneliness.\textsuperscript{23}

Notwithstanding the negative aspects of polygamy, many nineteenth-century Mormon women felt that they enjoyed more freedoms than their Eastern sisters. In 1896, a Mormon woman, Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, was the first woman in the United States to be elected to a state legislature.\textsuperscript{24} Also, Utah women were second only to the women of Wyoming to receive suffrage and the first to actually cast the ballot. Not only were Utah women given the vote in 1870, but also they claimed that polygamous wives had unprecedented independence. An 1894 editorial of the \textit{Woman’s Exponent} nicely summarized one powerful impact of polygamy on women: “Whatever other qualities it may engender, it develops strength in character. Women are left to depend upon their own judgment and to take more full charge of their own home and affairs. A wife becomes literally the head of her household.”\textsuperscript{25}

A Non-Mormon View of Polygamy

As might be imagined, polygamy was not readily understood or accepted by most non-Mormons. Four years after the church made polygamy public, the Republican Party platform of 1856 nicknamed it the “twin relic of barbarism.”\textsuperscript{26} The nickname stuck to the practice for the remainder of the nineteenth century. Akin to the practice of Southern slavery, the other relic of barbarism, polygamy was detested by many non-Mormons and the American press. According to an article in the 1879 \textit{San Francisco Chronicle}, the
"peculiar institution of Mormonism" was threatening enough to send the entire nation to war just as the "peculiar institution of slavery" had been in 1861. The New York Times likewise promoted anti-Mormon sentiment but to a lesser extent than the Chronicle. Press historian David Copeland stated, "James Madison may have seen the exercise of religion as an unalienable right in 1785, but America’s newspapers in 1879 viewed the polygamy practice by Mormons as an ulcer or cancer that justifiably must be removed."

Historically, the Republican and Democratic parties generally had strong differences in their political platforms. In the case of polygamy, however, both parties publicly denounced it. Despite their support of slavery in the South, the Democrats did not want to be viewed as sympathizers of Mormon polygamy. The unified position of Republicans and Democrats against polygamy apparently indicates that the majority of nineteenth-century Americans viewed the practice with disdain.

Non-Mormon women, avowed to stop polygamy, organized the Ladies’ Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah in 1878. In April of 1880, the society began publishing its own monthly paper, naming it the Anti-Polygamy Standard. The nameplate for the paper read, "Let every Man have his own Wife, and let every Woman have her own Husband.—Cor. 7:2." The paper claimed polygamy to be an "outrageous swindle" and "a festering sore, a putrid spot in the heart of a nation." By the end of 1880, the Ladies’ Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah became the Woman’s National Anti-Polygamy Society.

However, it was not only the newspapers that criticized the practice of Mormon polygamy; magazines and books contributed to the anti-Mormon sentiment as well.
Between 1852 and 1890, more than fifty full-length novels were written about Mormon women, few sympathetic to the Mormon culture. Tales of downtrodden Mormon women proliferated in the press. Mormon women, who viewed themselves as exceptionally high-principled, were depicted as harlots, concubines or slaves, oppressed and exploited by evil, power-hungry men. To non-Mormons, it seemed that Mormon women were entangled in a web of male licentiousness in which they were absolutely powerless to free themselves.

American sentiment was so against Mormon polygamy that the press continued to disparage its participants decades after the church officially recanted the practice in 1890. A 1911 magazine article titled, “The Other House: The intimate personal tragedy of a Mormon Marriage,” captured the anti-polygamy sentiment common among the press that trailed into twentieth-century America. The article’s editorial note states:

We have printed in the last two numbers...the stories of the first and second wives of a modern Mormon, victims of the hideous paradox of religious practice which is illegal. Their tragic stories prove that their sufferings are the result of the selfishness of one man—selfishness disguised as religion. But, to be perfectly fair, we present in this number the husband’s side of the story. That his life was ruined by his mistaken religious fanaticism shows only too clearly... Probably nothing ever printed emphasizes more strongly the persistent cruelty of a lie than the story of this man’s life.

Here again, the nineteenth-century themes continued well into the twentieth-century press; Mormon women were portrayed as victims to the excessive egocentrism and self-indulgence of Mormon men. Although the United States prided itself on guaranteeing the free expression of religious beliefs, the Mormon people overstepped the limits of tolerance when they introduced polygamy. As Carol Cornwall Madsen explained,
“Polygamy was a direct affront to the prevalent Victorian sensibilities, irrespective of its religious foundation.”

The belief that Mormon women were downtrodden was so pervasive in the minds of the nation that the Congress of 1886 was persuaded by the Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah to grant $40,000 for “a refuge and rehabilitation center” in Salt Lake City for polygamous women. Otherwise known as the Women’s Industrial Christian Home, the purpose was to furnish a retreat to which abused polygamous wives could escape their oppression. Despite the well meaning of the non-Mormons, or “Gentiles” as the Mormons called them, the shelter attracted only four women and seven men in the first two years of operation. Apparently, Mormon women did not feel oppressed or at least did not want to identify themselves publicly as oppressed by using the shelter. It is also possible that Mormon women were fearful that the non-Mormons running the house would report them to the marshals, who in turn would force them to report and testify against their husbands. Whatever the possible reasons, the house was a failure. In fact, Mormon women poked fun at the anti-polygamists’ efforts to liberate them and nicknamed the shelter the “Gentile House.”

Also common among non-Mormons was the idea that polygamy would result in genetic abnormalities. In 1861, the New Orleans Academy of Sciences claimed that physical abnormalities were prevalent in the new race of polygamists. They pronounced:

The yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage; the greenish-colored eye; the thick, protuberant lips, the low forehead; the light, yellowish hair, and the lank, angular person, constitute an appearance so characteristic of the new race, the production of polygamy, as to distinguish them at a glance.
The scientific foundation for such a claim must be called into question. However, if nothing else, this declaration from a scientific community demonstrates the non-Mormon disdain for the practice of polygamy.

**Legislation Against Polygamy**

To stop polygamy, Congress enacted a series of laws. Vermont congressman and stout anti-polygamist Justin Morrill had tried repeatedly to secure passage of legislation against the Mormon marriage practices before his final success. The Morrill Anti-bigamy Act of 1862, signed by President Abraham Lincoln, was the first effort the United States government made to outlaw polygamy. The law was intended to “punish and prevent the practice of polygamy in the Territories of the United States and to disapprove and annul certain acts of the territorial legislature of Utah.” But the legislation had no effect. The government did little to enforce the law and, ironically, church leaders were convinced that the Civil War would usher in the Millennium and, in consequence, the church would become the salvation of the United States government. So the Mormons ignored the Morrill Act, and church officials continued to encourage members to accept polygamy.

In 1882, Congress enacted another legislative measure, the Edmunds Act, named after a devout anti-polygamist, Senator George Edmunds of Vermont, to punish Mormons living in polygamous relationships. It was the first serious attempt by the United States government to suppress polygamy. Polygamous men, and some women, were fined and sent to jail. For example, Rudger Clawson, the first Mormon punished for polygamy, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison and fined $500, plus an
additional six months and $300 for unlawful cohabitation. The Edmunds Act limited the penalty for polygamy to a fine of no more than $500, and imprisonment was not to exceed five years. To evade these punishments, polygamous men and women lived in an underground operation: moving from house to house and city to city, often under assumed names, to escape discovery from law officials. However, despite government pressure to reform, the Mormons actually boosted the number of polygamous marriages in the consequent years of 1884 and 1885.

With the passing of the Edmunds-Tucker Act in 1887, the government levied even greater sanctions upon the Mormons. The act, co-sponsored by J. Randolph Tucker, the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, dissolved the Mormon Church as a legal entity. Plural wives and their children could no longer lawfully inherit. All Utah women and polygamist men were denied the vote. Husbands and wives could testify against each other in prosecutions for polygamy. With church stability threatened, hundreds of polygamists imprisoned, and the majority of church leaders in exile to avoid arrest, the number of new polygamous marriages began to decline. Finally, under the threat of further government sanctions, the church president issued a Manifesto in the fall of 1890 that suspended the practice. Van Wagoner noted, "The Manifesto began 'To Whom It May Concern,' rather than the authoritative 'Thus Saith the Lord,' usually associated with revelatory announcements." However, it was not until 1904, when Joseph F. Smith, Joseph Smith's nephew and sixth prophet of the church, issued a second Manifesto, that new plural marriages ceased to take place among the orthodox Mormon people.
Short History of the *Woman's Exponent*

The *Exponent*, a paper for Mormon women, enjoyed a forty-two year span. From its inauguration in 1872 until its final issue in 1914, the paper had only two editors, Louisa Green and Emmeline Blanch Wells. Green was born in Iowa on April 8, 1849, eighth in a family that would eventually end with thirteen children. Both of Green's grandmothers were sisters of Brigham Young, who led the exodus of the Mormons from Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Utah valley.²² Green and her family moved to Utah as part of that exodus in 1852. At the age of fourteen, Green composed poetry, but it was not until she was twenty that she first dabbled in journalism and became editor of the *Smithfield Sunday School Gazette*, a small, hand-written newspaper produced and distributed by the church.²³ By 1871, she had secured a teaching position in Salt Lake only to be called home shortly thereafter because of family illness. Lacking the financial means to travel, Green sat up all night writing poetry and took it the next day to the office of the local newspaper, *The Salt Lake Daily Herald*, in hopes that the editor, Edward L. Sloan, would buy it for the $7.50 she needed to return home.²⁴ He did buy her piece, which became her first published work.

Within a few days, Sloan sent a letter to Green asking her if she would be interested in editing a paper targeted toward Mormon women. Originally, Sloan had hoped to give Green work at the *Herald*, but the staff objected to a female co-worker.²⁵ So, as it turns out, a man conceived of the *Woman's Exponent*. At first, Green refused the position, but Sloan would not give up. Finally, Green turned to Eliza R. Snow, the most influential woman in the church during her time, to ask her opinion on the paper and to get Young's reaction.²⁶ Both Snow and Young approved, and Green began planning a
bi-monthly, eight-page paper in the winter and spring of 1872. The first non-church-owned Mormon women’s paper was distributed on Young’s birthday, July 1, 1872. Eventually, it sported the motto, “The Rights of Women of Zion, and the Rights of Women of all Nations.”

Green edited the paper for four years, until 1877, when she resigned her position to Emmeline B. Wells, who edited the paper for its remaining thirty-seven years. Although Wells encouraged other Mormon women to share copies with non-Mormon women in Utah and to send copies to non-Mormon women back East, for the most part, the paper never circulated beyond the reach of Mormon women. The exact number of subscribers is not known. The closest approximation appeared in one of the 1881 church statistical reports, which claimed 754 Exponent subscribers. However, Sherilyn Cox Bennion believed that the report was incomplete. Despite the small circulation, the Exponent created a stir in other ways. As reported in an 1888 edition of the paper itself, the office of the Exponent in Salt Lake City was a “stopping place for hundreds of tourists who came each year to inquire concerning the ‘peculiar people’ and especially the ‘Mormon women.’”

Through the work of editors Green and Wells, and the contributions of Mormon women throughout Utah, the Exponent captured forty-two years of the unique Mormon woman’s experience. Because the paper has preserved an historical account of Mormon women’s lives, concerns, and involvement in the shaping of Mormon society, it provides an alternative insight into their histories, which have been until recently written and analyzed mainly from the male perspective. As Wells observed, “It is indefensible to think that the thriving prosperous and industrious state that Utah was when it joined the
Union in 1896 could have been accomplished without the help of women. For the purposes of this thesis, it must be noted that ordinary Mormon women wrote the articles in the Woman's Exponent and few were paid. Often, a writer would submit articles under several pseudonyms; the editors, Green and Wells, were particularly inclined to do this. The articles the women wrote were mainly persuasive pieces rather than hard news. Fictional stories, historical, opinion pieces, and personal experiences made up the bulk of the content. Hard news in the paper consisted of reports on meetings and an occasional piece copied from a local or national newspaper.

Emmeline B. Wells recognized the Exponent’s importance to future generations when she wrote:

[In [the Exponent’s] volumes there is much history contained, which is reliable for reference for future historians, not only concerning women’s work, industrial and educational, but the lives of women who figured conspicuously in the days of the Prophet Joseph and his successor, Brigham Young . . . and others whose names stand significant in Church history. These women helped to lay the foundations of the great latter-day work.]

Despite Wells’ foresight, the Exponent has not been examined closely for its insight into the female voice concerning Mormon polygamy. Although it is true that many studies have explored early Mormon polygamy, only a minority has done so from the female view. In 1977, Glenda Riley asserted that women’s contribution to Western American history had been ignored. Since then, scholars have increased their interest in women’s history. However, as Suzanne Larson stated, “[O]ur book shelves are still not overrun with essays, reports, vignettes or discourses delivered or written by women.” It is not surprising that even today few works address the female experience of Mormon polygamy. Only a handful of scholars have explored the Woman’s Exponent, and fewer
have studied Mormon women's diaries and journals. An overview of these scholars' findings will be reviewed below. Further, it appears that a comparison of themes of polygamy in the *Woman's Exponent* and polygamous women's diaries and journals has not been attempted.

**Mormon Polygamous Women's Writing in the *Woman's Exponent***

The first scholar to approach the *Woman's Exponent* appears to have been Sherilyn Cox Bennion in 1976. Bennion argued that one of the primary purposes of the *Exponent* was to furnish the world with an accurate view of the grossly misrepresented women of Utah.\(^{64}\) Bennion examined the role of the paper within the Mormon society, and claimed that the paper became a significant force among Mormon women.\(^{63}\) In a more recent article, Bennion compared the public forums of Utah's Mormon and non-Mormon women and discussed the debate over polygamy that took place in their publications from 1880 to 1883. She found that the two groups of women shared the same set of basic beliefs concerning society and family, only departing with regards to polygamy.

Bennion was closely followed in 1977 by Carol Cornwall Madsen, who did a thorough, quantitative examination of the *Exponent*’s editorials. Madsen found that the editorials in the *Exponent* dealt with church affairs (24 percent), defended polygamy (9 percent), advocated suffrage (7 percent) or reported political activities affecting the Mormon people or church, such as the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887 (6 percent). She also concluded that the paper functioned on four levels. First, the *Exponent* provided a medium through which Mormon women could freely voice their thoughts and opinions.
Second, the paper was a means through which they could positively present themselves to the world. Third, the paper provided a connection with the larger, national woman’s movement of the time. And finally, the paper preserved a segment of women’s history. Madsen argued, “There has been no such organ before or since that has so freely given Mormon women an opportunity to speak for themselves.” It is one on the goals of this thesis to discover whether Mormon women freely expressed their views in the paper, as Madsen claimed.

In a qualitative analysis for her master’s thesis, Alfene Page examined the paper for its literary significance and concluded that the Exponent’s writers reflected the feminine thoughts and attitudes in the church. The thrust of her work analyzed the Exponent as a vehicle for Mormon women to polish their literary talents. Page wrote that the paper “mirrored the late nineteenth century Mormon life for the women’s point of view, and is without equal as an historical reference for their work.” Page also noted, like Bennion, that Mormon women used the Exponent as a means of self-representation to correct the injustices leveled against them in the popular press.

In her doctoral dissertation, Suzanne Larson studied how Mormon and non-Mormon women argued in the public arena during the polygamy controversy of 1879 to 1886 in speeches, memorials and newspaper articles, including the Exponent. Her study investigated which words these two groups of women selected when addressing a group, whether in person or through writing, and how meaning was constructed and conveyed through their selections. The focus of Larson’s work was to understand the ideology motivating the Mormon and non-Mormon women. To do this, she identified the ideographs, a word for ideas expressed by ordinary language terms, found in the
women's discourses. Larson then "analyzed how the ideographs established, sustained, subverted or undermined power relationships between the Mormon and non-Mormons in the Utah territory." She found that Mormon women described their life in plural marriage with the hope to persuade non-Mormons, especially those in power, that polygamy was a good custom in which they did not need federal help to be freed. For example, Larson wrote that at public meetings speakers for polygamy "chose not to refute directly their opponent's argument against the Mormon church and polygamy but instead used their testimonies to demonstrate... their own experiences as proof of the positive impact of polygamy." Larson also concluded that "the Mormon women's public defense of polygamy served as a means to build cohesion among the Mormon faithful."

Polygamous Mormon Women's Diaries and Journals

Through a qualitative examination of personal writings, diaries, journals, and autobiographies, Suzanne Adel Katz found patterns of emotional loneliness among non-elite, Mormon polygamous women. Katz's master's thesis noted that these women felt acute stress under the system of plural marriage particularly when their husbands took additional wives. Katz wrote, "Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and despair are universally accepted emotional symptoms of loneliness, and all these conditions existed in the lives of the Mormon polygamous women studied." She compared the women's writings with a sociological model of loneliness and found a significant and consistent correlation. According to Katz, church-sponsored social activities combined with the women's personal prayers helped to lessen the women's anguish. Despite these outlets, Katz stated that "expressions of sorrow constitute a significant portion of their
writings. She also found that as a result of church-designed organizations such as the Woman's Exponent, "polygamous women were able to direct interests toward the church social institutions rather than toward relationships with their husbands.\textsuperscript{75} Katz contended that the bonds between husband and wife were weakened by plural marriage, and subsequently polygamous wives turned their efforts toward church service to find a sense of social belonging that helped alleviate their pain.

Theories

Two communication theories and models bring insight into Mormon women's public presentation of their polygamous practices, and help explain why themes of polygamy in Mormon women's public and private writings would be expected to differ. Among them are the writings of Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese and also of Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Shoemaker and Reese focus on the influences, both external and internal to communicators, that help to shape messages for public consumption. They describe several rings of influence on media content. At the center, and hence of primary impact to the content, was the individual journalist's background. The ring of influence Shoemaker and Reese described next was media organizational structures, then extramedia influences and finally ideology.\textsuperscript{76} The backgrounds of individual journalists affect the content of their work, incorporating their personal attitudes, values, and beliefs. Shoemaker and Reese believe that these personal attributes are key factors that mold a journalist's work. The organizational structures impact content through ownership, hiring practices, and self-censorship. Extramedia influences can mean governmental
policies or community policies that might affect media content. Ideology is the collective assumptions of the community in which the media function.

Shoemaker and Reese argue that the extramedia influence of economics is a particularly significant force that affects media content. For example, media that rely on circulation and advertising to thrive cannot long anger the readers and advertisers without suffering financially. The reality of economic viability ultimately forces the producers of messages not to differ radically in ideology. Rather, the producers of messages placate social convention. Due to these varying influences upon the media content, Shoemaker and Reese establish that the media often do not mirror reality. Instead, media reflect the ideological status quo.

The Shoemaker and Reese model, when applied to the content of the Woman's Exponent, suggests that Mormon women writers were heavily influenced by their religion. For instance, the writers of the Exponent would have constructed their articles based on their religious views because these views drove the women's personal attitudes, values, and beliefs. As a devout Mormon, the editor of the paper would also have been motivated to uphold, even protect, the religious tenets of Mormonism. Furthermore, the model suggests that Mormon women would have been influenced by the leaders of their church and government. Ideology of the church was patriarchal because it was based on a fundamental reading of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith. Because governmental positions in Utah, during the 1880s, were commonly held by Mormon men, the church's influence was pervasive. Consequently, the Mormon Church, and local and state government were filled with officials who espoused a patriarchal ideology. In such a forum, the Exponent would not be able to
financially thrive if its editors disparaged the patriarchal ideology that their audience embraced. According to the Shoemaker-Reese model, then, it can be expected that Mormon women writing in the *Exponent* would wholly reflect the patriarchal ideology of their church and government.

Noelle-Neumann’s Spiral of Silence examines the relationship between the media and public opinion. According to the theory, public opinion is formed by individuals aligning their opinions to their perception of the majority opinion because they fear that nonconformity will result in isolation. There are two factors that must be present for the theory to be relevant: the topic must be emotionally charged and morally loaded, and also the media must have a slant. Although Noelle-Neumann emphasized television in her works, that does not prevent application of the theory to a culture in which print was the only mass medium of communication.

The Spiral of Silence is a social phenomenon that occurs on an individual level. Noelle-Neumann stated that “the climate of opinion depends upon who talks and who keeps quiet.” The theory maintains that individuals who perceive that their opinions do not coincide with the majority opinion tend to maintain their silence. Consequently, individuals who are convinced that their beliefs are aligned with the majority opinion express themselves openly and freely defend their views in public. In contrast, individuals who perceive themselves aligned with the minority opinion are likely to fall mute because “fear of isolation makes most people willing to heed the opinion of others.” The smaller the minority, the less likely it is for individuals to voice their opinions. This spiraling process continues until the one view dominates the public scene, while the others disappear from the public awareness because their adherents are silent.
Further, the silence maintained by those who are unwilling to support their minority view is interpreted by others as agreement with the dominant view.

According to Noelle-Neumann, the fear of isolation is the reason individuals conform. Because speaking out can procure either castigation or rewards, it is inherently risky. Noelle-Neumann asserts that individuals become adept at being able to perceive the opinions of others by scanning their environment.\(^3\) It is through this capacity that individuals determine which opinions are rewarded and which are castigated. Noelle-Neumann believes that humans consistently strive for the reward and, in consequence, conformity. She wrote, "Men, through fear of isolation, are forced into conformity by the court of public opinion."\(^4\)

Public opinion is tightly linked to communal identity. That is, individuals tend to conform to the public opinion of the community or communities to which they belong or aspire to belong.\(^5\) A community can be defined by a myriad of factors; evident ones include nationality, religion, and geographic area. Although two individuals may belong to the same community, some are more prone to manifest the spiral phenomenon than others. According to Carolyn A. Lin and Michael B. Salwen, women, the elderly, and the poor were less likely to voice their opinions on controversial issues.\(^6\) This finding, along with the Spiral of Silence theory, would suggest that Mormon women would not have included much anti-polygamous sentiment in their public writing even if it were not filtered by the Exponent's editors.

Notes

2 Ibid.

3 The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), section 132 heading, 266.

4 Ibid., verses 34-35.

5 Ibid., verses 61-63.


7 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 91.


9 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 92.

10 Ibid., 19.

11 Todd Compton, In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books 1997), 464. (From Compton’s calculations Walker struggled with the question of polygamy in late 1842. She was sixteen years old.)

12 Ibid., 19.

13 James Beck, Notebooks, 1859-65, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives (Salt Lake City, Utah).

14 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 15.

15 Ibid., 16.

16 Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, “Law of Sarah.”

17 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 237. (Pratt was paraphrasing from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 132.)

18 Compton, In Sacred Loneliness, 409.

19 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 91.
20 Doctrine and Covenants, section 132, 273.


23 Ibid., 93.


27 Ibid., 202.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, 1880.


34 Ibid.


37 Warenski, Patriarchs and Politics, 176.

38 Ibid.

39 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy 106.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 107.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 121.


46 Annie Clark Tanner, A Mormon Mother (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), 100.

47 Ivins, Notes, 312.


49 Ibid.

50 Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, 143.

51 Ibid., 168.

52 Sherilyn Cox Bennion, Equal to the Occasion: Women Editors of the Nineteenth-Century West (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press 1990), 74. (Bennion is no direct relation to the author.)
53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 75.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 No motto was printed with the first copies of the paper, but this became the enduring motto during the sample period, 1881-1891.


59 Ibid., 226.

60 As paraphrased in Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Remember the Women of Zion*, 5.


64 Bennion, "The Woman's Exponent," 224.

65 Ibid., 231.

66 Madsen, *Remember the Women of Zion*, 211.

67 Ibid., 210.


69 Larson, introduction.

70 Ibid., 242.
71 Ibid., 109.

72 Ibid., 242.


74 Ibid., abstract.

75 Ibid., 78.


77 Ibid., 5.


82 Ibid., 5.


85 Ibid., 71. (From John Locke's 1671 work titled, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.*)

86 Lin, "Predicting the Spiral of Silence," 131.
CHAPTER III

METHOD AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mormon polygamy as presented by Mormon women in their own papers and in their personal writings is full of information for the researcher to investigate. The editorial content of the Woman's Exponent and polygamous Mormon women's personal diaries hold historical value because both media provide a rare forum for the voice of nineteenth-century polygamous women. They offer a means to understanding female approbation of a patriarchal order. This thesis will examine how Mormon women defend their involvement of what the majority of nineteenth-century Americans considered an ideologically offensive practice and determine dominant themes for portrayals of Mormon women in a public vs. a private forum. Discovering the extent of a chasm, if any, between the Mormon polygamous women's public vs. private writings concerning polygamy is the goal of this thesis.

In order to gain a deeper insight into the experience of Mormon polygamous women, it is the purpose of this thesis to explore the qualitative differences in polygamous Mormon women's public and private writings, focusing specifically on three landmark years with respect to Mormon polygamy. This was done in two parts. The first examined the editorial content concerning polygamy in the Woman's Exponent six months before and after the passage of the Edmunds Act on March 22, 1882, the Edmunds-Tucker Act on March 3, 1887, and the church's Manifesto on October 6, 1890. Hence, the issues of the Exponent examined were those of September 15, 1881, to September 1, 1882; September 1, 1886, to August 15, 1887; and April 1, 1890, to March
15, 1891. The number of issues was twenty-four for each year examined, making a total of seventy-two issues examined over the course of the three sample years. Themes of polygamy in the Woman's Exponent over the three years were analyzed. This analysis informs the wider historiographical construction of the nineteenth-century, Mormon woman’s public voice. The author counted and analyzed stories and themes and tones used, including whether they were persuasive, defensive, or authoritative. Changes that occur over the period examined were described. For the purposes of this thesis, the term “persuasive” entails the endowing of a story with positive messages for the purpose of reinforcing the readers’ ideological position to accept, practice, or tolerate polygamy. The term “defensive” refers to a hostile rebuke directed against non-Mormon criticism of Mormon plural marriages or Mormon women. The term “authoritative” means that the author predicted, often in dogmatic terms, that God would punish those who interfered with His people, the Mormons.

The second part examined Mormon polygamous women’s personal writings which they did not intend for public consumption, such as their diaries and journals. The rationale for examining polygamous women’s personal writings was that the women were more likely to express honestly their feelings when they were not writing for a public forum, which would be suggested by the Spiral of Silence and the Shoemaker-Reese model. There are thirty-two available diaries and journals written by women who have been identified as polygamous within four major archives of Utah. The major archives are Utah State University, University of Utah, Brigham Young University; and the church archives in Salt Lake City. The diaries and journals range in length and the period of which they cover. The diaries and journals spanned a fifty-two-year period, the
earliest of which was dated 1848 and the latest 1900. Considering the bulk, only those entries of diaries and journals that correspond with the exploration of the Woman's Exponent in part one were examined. This strategy narrowed the focus and provided continuity to the thesis.

While publications generally have an established date of issue with a consistent page length, personal writings have no such regularity. As opposed to the bi-monthly, eight-page Woman's Exponent, the women's personal writings did not provide neatly packaged data at consistent intervals. Therefore to obtain a sufficient sample the polygamous Mormon women's diaries and journals were explored during a full year before and after each anti-polygamy act and the Manifesto. As stated earlier, the dates were chosen because each represents a landmark year for Mormons practicing polygamy due to government sanctions and official church abandonment of the practice. The dates of diaries were March 1881-March 1883, March 1886-1888, and October 1889-1891. These dates were the mainstay of research for the women’s personal writings. When appropriate, however, diary entries that bring insight into an individual’s feelings with polygamy that do not fall within the chosen years have also been noted in the body of this work as a means to a fuller understanding of an individual’s experience as a polygamous wife. Again, the purpose of this thesis is to see how Mormon women defend their involvement of what was conventionally considered an ideologically offensive practice and to first determine and then compare dominant themes in the public forum and in private writings.

The examination for the women's personal writings was in part modeled after the examination for the Woman's Exponent, determining quantity of entries and themes. To
fully discover whether Mormon women were equally supportive of polygamy in their personal writings as they were in their public writings, the diaries were reviewed individually. A collective analysis, while enlightening to the prevalence of themes the women included in their diaries, was not sufficient to determine how the women viewed polygamy because the women’s diaries related experiences and events of their personal lives that are complexly interrelated and individually unique. Factors such as age, education, financial security, number of co-wives, and the husband’s attentiveness tremendously influenced the individual women’s perception of polygamy. Also, in their personal writings, individuals were not consistent in their views of polygamy. Due to these factors, it is important to examine the diaries on an individual, as well as collective, level before determining the Mormon women’s support of polygamy in their personal writings.

In addition to comparing themes of polygamy in the *Woman's Exponent* and Mormon women’s diaries, excerpts about the paper found in the diaries will also be examined. Almost half of the Mormon polygamous women who wrote diaries mentioned the paper in their writings. While some of the women had noted the paper in their diary, others had written about it in length. Reviewing their entries concerning the *Exponent* will provide an interesting link between the two primary sources of this thesis.

**Research Questions**

The literature review and a preliminary, cursory examination of the *Woman’s Exponent* and diaries suggest the following research questions:
1) Were Mormon women more supportive of polygamy in the public forum, the *Exponent*, than in their private forums, their diaries and journals? (In particular, did they characterize themselves in the public forum in opposition to their personal experiences?)

2) To what extent did Mormon women's public views of polygamy echo the views of the male leaders of the church? The Shoemaker-Reese model would suggest patriarchal pressure as an extramedia influence through ideology and government. Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence theory would likewise suggest that the climate of opinion in Utah was dominated by the male leaders of the Mormon Church.

3) Did the themes of polygamy in the *Exponent* and in Mormon polygamous women's private writings become less supportive over time as governmental pressure increased, as would be suggested by the Shoemaker-Reese model?
CHAPTER IV

THEMES OF POLYGAMY IN THE MORMON

*WOMAN'S EXPOSÉNT*

The Edmunds Act: *The First Serious Sanctions Against Mormon Polygamy*

During the first sample year, six months before and after March 22, 1882, the date of the Edmunds Act, the *Woman's Exponent* published forty-seven articles specifically concerning polygamy—almost two articles per issue. Also published were twenty-one articles that focused in part on polygamy, making a total of sixty-eight articles addressing the subject (See table 1.).

**TABLE 1**

*Articles Concerning Polygamy in the *Woman's Exponent* Grouped According to Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Edmunds Act of 1882</th>
<th>Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887</th>
<th>Manifesto of 1890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Articles Focused on Polygamy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Articles Partially Focused on Polygamy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Article</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Divine sanction was by far the most prominent reason given to defend the practice and was cited as a motive for practicing polygamy in fifty-four of the articles. Other motives included pragmatic reasons such as the abundance of righteous women compared with men (mentioned in five articles), moral reasons such as polygamy's curing of selfishness (mentioned in nine articles), avoidance of jealousy (mentioned in two articles), and curbing of prostitution (mentioned in fifteen articles). Twelve articles stated that polygamy helped the Mormons fulfill God's first commandment in the Garden of Eden to multiply and replenish the earth. The writers of the *Exponent* also supported the practice in eight articles by claiming that it procured genetically or morally superior children. A common thread throughout all of the articles of this period was that they were persuasive in nature: readers were bombarded with positive arguments for practicing polygamy (See table 2.).

Although the writers of the *Exponent* gave a variety of reasons for their acceptance and practice of polygamy, the conviction that it was divinely sanctioned was the most prevalent and the most important. All other reasons the women gave for their participation hinged on the belief that plural marriage was a stipulation for them to gain eternal life, or access to heaven. However, while Mormon women argued that heavenly rewards motivated them to enter into polygamy, it is indubitable that social pressures motivated them to argue its divine origin. Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence theory would predict that the castigation that Mormon women would incur by speaking out against the doctrine of polygamy was sufficient to secure their conformity. Church leaders had pronounced damnation upon those who denied the doctrine.¹ So, in effect, denunciation of the practice would jeopardize good standing in the church, and hence the
TABLE 2

Arguments Mormon Women Used to Support Polygamy in the Woman's Exponent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edmunds Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divinity</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest Against Edmunds and Edmunds-Tucker Acts (Including Vengeance Theme)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curbs Prostitution</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cures Selfishness</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfills First Commandment to Multiply and Replenish</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produces Morally Superior Children</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Women Then Men</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Speak Against Polygamy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cures Jealousy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Articles</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

community. This fear of church sanctions may have been enough to persuade Mormon women to accept polygamy; however, there are other factors that helped influenced their acquiescence to the doctrine. Dogmatically, if God had not sanctioned plural marriage, then all wives but the first would not be wives but mistresses. Therefore, if the women
rescinded their stance that polygamy was divinely sanctioned, they would be implicating themselves as immoral, by Victorian standards, in their relationships. It is unlikely that a Mormon woman would have been willing to implicate her sister Mormons, family members, and herself as a social degenerate. Further, she would effectively be labeling children from plural marriages as illegitimate. These factors, along with the fear of isolation, likely influenced Mormon women writers to present divine sanctioning of the practice to their readers in the *Exponent*.

Divine sanctioning of polygamy was presented as a persuasive argument in 1882, often accompanied by threats of damnation for those unwilling to comply. An article written under the initials M.A.B.F. stated: "The principle of plural marriage is honorable; it is a principle of the Gods, it is heavenborn. God revealed it to us among other things as a saving principle." In another article, underscoring "the fruits of polygamy," an author wrote, "Woe, woe to all who will not humble themselves and receive and obey the simple but glorious plan of salvation and eternal life, ere it is too late." In a semi-fictional story run during several issues, Prophet Joseph Smith is depicted struggling with the principle of plural marriage. Finally, the author wrote, "Joseph Smith would never have had the courage to introduce such a doctrine . . . but he also knew that if he disobeyed that command that he would be destroyed, and would also forfeit his eternal salvation." Adherence to the principle was presented in the pages of the *Woman's Exponent* as paramount to salvation and eternal life.

Included as divine ordination of the practice, biblical precedence was repeatedly cited as motivation for polygamy. Most often listed were Father Abraham and his polygamous marriages. For example, one author asked in regard to polygamy, "If we
would be the children of Abraham, then ought we not to do the works of Abraham?"\textsuperscript{5}

Although Abraham was the most common, other biblical characters such as David, Solomon, and Moses were also cited. Occasionally, an author would simply refer to "the ancient prophets and patriarchs."\textsuperscript{6} In all instances, the authors relayed that polygamy was the capstone to the restoration of God's law in the latter days. As Helen Mar Whitney explained, "[I]f all things were to be restored again as they were in the beginning, as the scriptures declared them, the principle of a plurality of wives must also be restored."\textsuperscript{7}

Other reasons Mormon women gave for supporting their polygamous belief were more pragmatic in nature. One, in 1882, was that women in the world greatly outnumbered men and that righteous men were the exception, not the rule. Polygamy was then a remedy for this problem. As Mary J. Morrison explained in her article, "Celestial Marriage":

If all the inhabitants of the earth at the present time were righteous before God, and both males and females were faithful in keeping His commandments, and the number of the sexes of a marriageable age were exactly equal, there would be no necessity for any such institution [polygamy]; every righteous man could have his wife, and there would be no overplus of females. [But] that by taking the statistics of the census of the different States, that there are hundreds of thousands more women than men.\textsuperscript{8}

Other authors connected the overabundance of women to fulfillment of biblical prophecy. As cited in Isaiah: "And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man."\textsuperscript{9}

Ironically, this claim did not apply to Utah, as Lawrence Foster states that at no time during Utah territorial history did the total number of women outnumber the men.\textsuperscript{10}

However, to the Mormon women, at least for those writing the \textit{Woman's Exponent}, it was reality that needed no statistical basis and an obvious support for plural marriage.
It is important to note that during the 1882 sample year, the writers presented as paramount that all women should marry. There were several articles, separate from articles concerning polygamy, that encouraged women to marry. For example, an article, "Hints on Marriage," claimed that if "a woman fails to realize the cherished hopes [of marriage and motherhood] something is radically wrong."11

Another pragmatic reason given was that polygamy fulfilled the biblical commandment to multiply and replenish the earth.12 One author, Emily B. Spencer, demonstrated how polygamy was beneficial for childless women in fulfilling this commandment. She stated, "I have been acquainted with second wives who have willingly given their first born to the childless first wife, who has nourished and raised it as her own."13 It is worth noting that males living in polygamy did have more children than non-polygamous males, but polygamous Mormon women bore fewer children on the average than those in monogamous marriages.14 However, it is unlikely that the Mormon women involved in the Exponent's production had this information.

Contrary to the prevalent view outside Utah, it was argued in the Woman's Exponent that children of polygamous relations were genetically benefited. As one author wrote, "We are proud of the principle, because we understand its true worth, and we want our children to practice it, that through us a race of men and women may grow up possessing sound minds in sound bodies—who shall 'live to the age of a tree.'"15 Long life was not the only benefit attributed to the practice, but the writers also ascribed better health to children born in polygamy. As this unnamed author claimed, "[Polygamy] is in strict accordance with the laws of life and health, not only for the present, but more especially future generations."16 Because God sanctioned polygamy
the writers of the *Exponent* said they truly felt that the practice would “people the earth with a superior race of beings.”\(^{17}\)

Personal edification was also presented as a positive effect of plural marriage. One of the most common claims was that polygamy rooted out evil personal vices such as selfishness. As Ann Brinthurst and Semira Wood advised their readers: “Do away with selfishness, plural marriage will help us to overcome this faster than any other principle.”\(^{18}\) The notion that Mormon women were able to live in polygamy precisely because they were not selfish, and therefore more spiritual, was also prevalent. M. Isabella Horne wrote, “Now we might be selfish and make a fuss about our husbands taking other wives, if we were of the world; but we are not of the world, but rejoice in the spirit of the Gospel.”\(^{19}\) Here, the author attributed faith in spirit of God and a true Gospel for Mormon women’s ability to accept polygamy.

Not only was polygamy presented as a sure cure for selfishness, but according to the women writing in the *Exponent*, it also remedied the social problem of adultery and prostitution. In 1882, the writers of the *Exponent* observed that Mormon men were almost always faithful to their wives. As Susan Terry wrote:

A [Mormon] man marries several wives—pure, virtuous women, they understand it to be a sacred and holy order. That husband keeps himself free from such vices as prevail in the world—he would no more associate himself with the vile, than he would enter a den of vipers, for he looks upon adultery as one of the greatest sins a man can commit.\(^{20}\)

Mormon men, especially if pluralistically married, were portrayed as worthy husbands, while non-Mormon men were not. As a woman who signed her article “Tiney” boasted:

We [Mormon women] do not have to suffer the mortification of having babies laid on our doorsteps belonging to our husband and some woman he has dishonored, his
partner in guilt; neither do we have occasion to suffer any misgivings should our husbands remain out at night a little longer than usual.\textsuperscript{21}

Here again another writer, Eliza R. Snow Smith, aligned male virtue with polygamy:

I truly believe that a congress composed of polygamic men, who are true to their wives, would confer a far higher honor upon a nation, and would perform better service to their country, than a congress composed of monogamic, unreliable husbands. Virtue is the foundation of the prosperity of any nation; and this sacred principle of plural marriage tends to virtue, purity and holiness.\textsuperscript{22}

Insistent that Mormon men were worthier husbands than non-Mormon men, the women were able to cope with the patriarchy of their religion. Mary F. in a “Letter to a Gentile Lady” wrote:

We know that hundreds, yes thousands, of Gentile wives could tell tales of abuse, heart burnings and jealousies, more cruel than was ever known by the great majority of Mormon women, for the simple reason, we have perfect confidence in the virtues of our husbands.\textsuperscript{23}

Despite the intent of this author, the letter relates that Mormon men cause “abuse, heart burnings and jealousies” only to a lesser degree than their non-Mormon peers. Protecting the Mormon image seems to have been the primary motivation behind this author’s revealing claim. Most women writers in the \textit{Exponent} cite religious reasons for their support of patriarchal marriage, another Mormon name for polygamy. However, in this instance, social factors such as retaining a good image appear to have fueled the author’s public support of polygamy. Like many of the authors writing in the \textit{Exponent}, this author used the paper as a means to retaliate against Gentile assumptions about the Mormon people.

One possible reason for living in polygamy that was conspicuously absent from the \textit{Exponent} was happiness. Of the sixty-eight articles that were devoted or partially devoted to polygamy, only one woman stated that it makes for happier living. However,
even this writer attributed happiness found in polygamous marriages to the participants’ obedience of divine commandment. She wrote:

[T]here is more happiness in a well-regulated patriarchal family, where all have a proper regard for each other’s rights. There is a source of joy and happiness and satisfaction, in the certainty that we are obeying direct commands from heaven; that nothing else can give.24

The women do not intimate that they find joy in polygamy aside from the satisfaction in being obedient to God. In all the sample years examined, of 129 articles, not one author described polygamy in emotionally positive terms—for instance, that it was joyous, delightful, enjoyable, fun, fulfilling. The lack of positive emotional reasons for advocating polygamy apparently indicates that this was not a reason for Mormon women’s acceptance of the practice. However, few writers of the Exponent insinuated that living in polygamy was unpleasant. Only a few articles of the sixty-eight do so. For instance, one woman stated, “I do not assume that polygamy is a system calculated to enhance earthly happiness.”25 Only one article stated that there was personal unhappiness, and that refers to a male’s domestic unhappiness in the practice rather than a female’s unhappiness.26

One theme mentioned five times in 1882 was mentioned only once in each of the following sample years. Writers deemed it necessary to warn women not to verbally resist polygamy and to teach their children, and in particular their daughters, to believe in it. For example, an author spoke of “the duties of mothers in teaching their daughters the principles of celestial marriage.”27 Another stated, “We should teach our children that it [plural marriage] is a pure and holy order and will exalt and ennoble all who live it according to the spirit thereof.”28 Yet another, after “advising all to never fight against”
the sacred ordinance of plural marriage, stated, “Sisters, never influence your daughters against [plural marriage].”29 Notably, all of these statements were printed in the Exponent a few weeks prior to the passing of the Edmunds Act, which the Mormon women understood would levy greater sanctions upon those practicing polygamy. Perhaps the writers of the Exponent meant to prepare their readers for the imminent controversy.

The Edmunds-Tucker Act: Period of Heavy Governmental Sanctions Against the Mormons

During the next sample year, 1887, considerably fewer articles were focused on polygamy. Twenty-three articles centered on polygamy, less than half the amount in 1882. However, the number that mention or partly focus on polygamy increased to twenty-five, four more than in 1882, making the total number of articles forty-eight. Also, response to the Edmunds-Tucker Act was a prevalent topic of the articles that partly focused on polygamy. The writers of the Exponent in 1887 still wrote prolifically on the divine origin and endorsement of plural marriage (mentioned in twenty-six articles), but the tone of their argument shifted from the persuasive to the defensive. Instead of trying to convince their readers that polygamy was a positive and desirable experience among Mormon women, they focused on the inequity of the laws being passed against them. Protest against the laws was a focus in twenty-eight of the forty-eight articles, as opposed to the sample year 1882, in which protest was mentioned in fourteen of the sixty-eight articles but was generally not the focus of these articles. Feeling prosecuted, Mormon women claimed that their constitutional right to practice religious freedom was violated. Religious freedom was a focus in many of the articles.
Also, warnings to the "godless, hypocritical Gentiles" (non-Mormons) were issued.

Finally, a new theme was introduced into the pages of the Exponent in 1887: the writers predicted that the government and its laws would fail in abolishing polygamy.

The divine origin of polygamy remained the crux of the Mormon women's argument supporting polygamy. However, the writers targeted Congress, especially Senators Edmunds and Tucker, as dupes to God's ways. As M.A.M. Pratt insinuated:

How much did our good Congressmen understand the passage of scripture they quoted upon the Edmunds Bill, "And they twain shall become one flesh." Paul to the Ephesians, 5th chapter, and members of Christ's Church, he was giving instructions to, and not outsiders, says: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Could not wives become members of the man's body under the same head? Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor his wife, not anything that is thy neighbors, etc. How is it with our liberal neighbors, do they not covet what it is our right to possess? Offenses must come, but woe! unto them by whom they come.30

In a defensive tone, this author pointed out congressmen's lack of understanding of polygamy—God's doctrine. The passage addressed Congress with a decidedly different tone than the authors did in 1882, when Congress was addressed with such sentiments as "your honorable body."31 In an equally accusatory article the first editor of the Woman's Exponent, Lulu Greene Richards, singles out Senator Edmunds when she queried:

Has Senator Edmunds a wife or a daughter? If he has either, what must be her feelings towards him? How must she regard his injustice to woman? How can she tolerate the inhumanity of his nature, which is so apparent in the laws he has framed for Utah?32

Less incriminatingly, other writers simply stated that non-Mormons could not understand the divinity of polygamy:

Congress and the President may rest assured [that] plural wives will never place themselves under their direction. . . . The same disappointment awaits all those who are advocating their various methods to overthrow a principle and order of marriage, that is as eternal as the heavens, and as far above their comprehension.33
Although the writers of the *Exponent* support the practice of polygamy with reference to divine sanctioning as they did in the previous sample year, their angle shifted from hopefully persuasive to scornful.

Another notable difference of the *Exponent*’s themes on polygamy in 1887 was the increased protest against the anti-bigamy bills. Absent in the sample year of 1882, many writers in 1887 complained of the injustices and insults brought down upon the Mormon women because of these laws. In an article, “Prejudice Blind to Facts: Still We Protest,” signed “A Plural Wife,” the author angrily penned:

They talked about liberating the “slaves,” the women—“Mormon” women, of course. Until the “Mormon” women acknowledge this position and assume the attitude of slaves, pleading deliverance, such sentiments are a gross insult to our womanhood, and we decidedly resent it.34

In the same vein, women writers in the *Exponent* declared their unprecedented freedom as female members of the Mormon Church. Eager to show their independence, the writers insisted that they were free to chose their polygamous lifestyle. An editorial related, “I know there is more liberty for women in the Mormon Church than in any other in the world. The women vote not only upon all political questions, but upon religious tenets as well.”35 Similarly, Dr. R. B. Pratt wrote, “Hand in hand with celestial marriage is the elevation of woman. In church she votes equally with men, and politically she has the suffrage raising her from the old common law, monogamic servitude to political equality with men.”36 The *Exponent* writers’ claim that polygamy enhanced equality among men and women, combined with their assertion that they were polygamous of their own free will, helped frame the anti-bigamy laws as unconstitutional in the minds of their readers. In this attitude the writers then portrayed the anti-bigamy bills as violating
the constitutional right of each person to worship as they saw fit. As this unnamed author declared:

The liberty they [our Revolutionary Fathers] fought and bled for, that their children might enjoy "the freedom, to worship God according to their consciences" has been denied, and to their direct descendants, and there is no alternative, under the present regime, but to submit to this violation of that sacred principle.37

The writers repeatedly stressed that Congress' anti-bigamy legislation was unfair to religious freedom. Yet, religious freedom alone was not the only motivation behind Mormon polygamous women's embitterment. While the 1882 Edmunds Act prohibited polygamy, the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Act disinherited plural wives and their children. In a practical sense, the United States' supreme congressional body had declared that the children of plural wives were legally illegitimate. Suddenly, all but the first wife in Mormon polygamous relationships found themselves with the legal rights of a concubine. The women felt the insult deeply. A fervent passage written by "A wife in exile" captures the women's predominant reaction to the congressional insinuation in the Exponent. Also, the author qualified polygamy as a righteous institution in the sight of God before stating her main point—that plural wives were honorable and their children were legitimate. The author boldly wrote:

Women of Israel, a crisis has come in our lives! With a knowledge that God had revealed the law of celestial marriage, which knowledge brought to us the solemn conviction that it was our duty to obey it or lose an exaltation in His presence, it became with us a matter of conscience, a religious duty, associated with all our hopes of eternal happiness and with the assurance that we would be honored of God, even as Holy women of old are revered by all "Christian nations" as the pure and most exemplary—many of us took upon ourselves the sacred obligation of plural wives, with the full understanding that we would henceforth bear the proud distinction of honorable wives—not concubines, not bondwomen, not women of any inferior position in the marriage covenant, for the same ceremony that binds the first wife binds also the plural and each is under exactly the same obligations. The children of each in the sight of God and angels who bear witness of the marriage tie
are honorable. They are the fruit of lawful wedlock, not bastards, not underlings, and need no special act of legislation to make them legitimate.38

The legal and constitutional legitimacy of plural wives and their children were themes heavily stressed because many women and their children’s position in respectable society was being threatened by the Edmunds-Tucker Act.

Despite the preoccupation with the anti-bigamy laws, the writers of the Exponent were less likely to cite the moral benefits of polygamy in the year 1887 than in the previous sample year. Instances of articles that the writers claimed polygamy to be a cure for selfishness declined from nine to seven, and the jealousy argument was used in both years twice. However, polygamy as a means to multiply and replenish the earth decreased from twelve citations in 1882 to two in 1887. Also, the genetic benefits in future generations declined from eight articles to one, and polygamy as a solution to infidelity and prostitution, while argued fifteen times in 1882, was only argued four times in 1887. Furthermore, the writers were more severe in their arguments in the sample year of 1887, as this forthright example demonstrates:

Marital infidelity in monogamous families in the Christian world is the rule rather than the exception; while marital infidelity in polygamous families among the Latter-day Saints [Mormons] is the exception (and a very marked exception) rather than the rule.39

A prevalent theme in 1887 was the pronouncement of doom upon the “enemies” of God’s people, the Mormons. In an article recounting one woman’s experience in a polygamous marriage, for example, the author stated, “We must learn to forgive even our worst enemies—The Lord has said, ‘Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.’”40

Intertwined with the vengeance theme was a new theme particular to the sample year 1887. Authors predicted that the non-Mormon crusade to stop polygamy would
ultimately fail. In speaking of polygamy and the non-Mormons who were trying to stop it, N. M. Tracy wrote:

[I]t is our enemies that are exerting themselves to the utmost to bring us into bondage, by trying to take away every right and privilege bestowed upon us for our benefit and well being; but the Lord has said, “Thus far shalt thou go and no farther,” but let them do the work for him [Satan] they have listed to obey, the reckoning day will come, and all will be rewarded according as their works have been.41

Another author similarly wrote, “Should the Edmunds-Tucker Bill become law ... it will ignominiously fail of accomplishing what the 50 millions of people have been asking for, because God is at the helm, and it is His work they are fighting.”42 Despite the women’s predictions, the “terrible day of reckoning,” as one author put it, only came to the Mormon people, not the non-Mormons as the writers of the Exponent had expected.43

The Manifesto: The Mormon Church’s Relinquishing of Polygamy

During the sample year 1890, six months before and six months after the church’s official signing of the Manifesto banning polygamy, the number of articles significantly decreased. Only seven articles primarily concerned it. Six additional articles mentioned polygamy, making a total of thirteen articles during the 1890 sample year that dealt with plural marriage. Of these, six cited divine sanction for living in polygamy, five mentioned the persecution that women and children in Utah had to suffer because of the anti-bigamy laws, one cited the commandment to multiply and replenish in reference to polygamy, and one admonished women never to speak against polygamy. Not only were there significantly fewer articles, but thematically there are several significant differences between the 1890 sample year and the previous sample years.
First, the writers of the *Exponent* no longer warned or threatened their "enemies," but insulted them instead. For example, Eliza D. Gibbs wrote: "Like a green bay tree, the enemies of truth flourish for a short time—make lies their refuge, behind which they strive to conceal their hideous hydra-head."\(^{44}\) Another labeled "woman-haters" all those who passed the anti-bigamy laws.\(^{45}\) Helen M. Whitney similarly wrote:

Any man or woman who would stop and think a little more of the natural laws . . . if they are not grossly wicked, ignorant of blind to the present corrupt and rotten condition of the civilized world, which is standing in the way of the elevation of human kind, would be silent upon the degrading and pernicious effects of Polygamy among the "Mormons."\(^{46}\)

In a complete turn-around from the previous sample years, the *Exponent* writers began to reject even biblical references that could be construed as derogatory toward Mormon women. For instance, Whitney claimed that the biblical passage stating:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of the skirts of one man saying we will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach now had no reference to 'Mormon' women who have obeyed and honored the plural wife order, there will be no 'reproach' upon them.\(^{47}\)

Concerned with their image, the passage that was once used as a means of supporting plural marriage was reinterpreted and refuted because of its conceivably negative insinuation. Although other authors had referenced this particular biblical verse, it is interesting to note that Whitney also had previously utilized this passage as a means to support her argument for Mormon polygamy.\(^{48}\) It is evident, even when defending their choice, that Mormon women were extremely sensitive about the censure that they had been receiving for practicing plural marriage.

Another new theme emerged during the 1890 sample year. Stories and articles in the *Exponent* in 1890 not only depicted non-Mormon men as unfaithful and treacherous
to their wives, but a few Mormon men also were depicted in the same light. As one author wrote: “So long as women will be foolish, men will be deceptive.” In the story “Hephzibah,” a fictional, young Mormon wife is abandoned, “with baby in arms,” by her Mormon husband. Two more stories during the 1890 sample year, both fictional, depicted Mormon men who had run off on their wives, one to be with another wife.

The idea that it is acceptable for a woman to remain single was introduced in the *Exponent* during 1890, although only one article articulated it. Jenny June explained to other Mormon women, “There is now every inducement for young women as well as young men, who are sufficient unto themselves, to remain single.” This statement is a complete attitude change from the previous sample years, which related that “something was radically wrong” if a woman did not marry. This article signifies that in 1890 Mormon women were evolving to accept more options for themselves in marriage and career—or at least the discussion of more options.

Comparing Mormon Women’s Public Views of Polygamy and the Teachings of the Male Leaders of the Church

The Mormon Church has always been organized and run by a patriarchy. The male leaders officiate for the whole of the membership. It would be extremely unfair to single out the Mormon Church, particularly in nineteenth-century America, as unusual in this respect. What is different about the Mormon Church is the history of its female members’ general acceptance and public endorsement of a patriarchal order of marriage, polygamy. The public arguments that Mormon women used to endorse polygamy already have been investigated in this thesis. Yet the origin of their arguments has not. If
the women's arguments are reviewed in isolation, it could be assumed that the women themselves were the originators of the reasoning they have given in the defense of polygamy. At least, this is how the writers of the Woman's Exponent present their arguments. Not surprisingly, however, the women were echoing the doctrinal ideologies of their male leaders. Oftentimes holistically. It is important to note the source of Mormon women's ideological support for polygamy because it brings insight into the motivation behind their arguments, which might not otherwise be evident.

Many of the arguments that writers of the Exponent employed to support polygamy can be traced directly to the top male leaders of the church. More specifically, although not inclusively, to the first four presidents or prophets, who in succession were: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff. The primary motivation these men gave for practicing polygamy is divine command. Secondary motivations cited were to fulfill the biblical commandment to multiply and replenish the earth, to curb prostitution, to elevate womankind, etc. As the Shoemaker and Reese model would suggest, the women aligned the messages in their paper to reflect the ideology and doctrines taught by the patriarchal church hierarchy.

The male hierarchy of the Mormon Church taught that plural marriage was requisite to gaining exaltation—the highest place in heaven. In 1874, Orson Pratt, a highly applauded apostle, publicly stated of polygamy, "The Lord has said, that those who reject this principle reject their salvation, they shall be damned, saith the Lord; those to whom I reveal this law and they do not receive it shall be damned." Pratt's preaching resounds of the previously quoted Brigham Young, who stated in 1855, "If any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise that you will be
Both men's statements can be traced to Joseph Smith, who had made the first claim that polygamy was part of "the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on earth" and that without it no one could attain a "fullness of exaltation" in heaven. In regards to polygamy as a divine command, it is clear that Mormon women's public argument did not deviate from Smith's original assertion.

The men also maintained that polygamy fulfilled the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. In 1855, Young stated:

God never introduced the patriarchal order of marriage with a view to please man in his carnal desires, nor to punish females for anything which they had done; but He introduced it for the express purpose of raising up to His name a royal Priesthood, a peculiar people.

Integral to this idea was that righteous women far outnumbered righteous men, therefore requiring polygamy as a means to equalize all women's chances for marrying and producing children. Orson Pratt explained in 1842, "Instead of plurality of wives being a cause of sorrow to females it is one of the greatest blessings of the last dispensation: it gives them the great privilege of being united to a righteous man, and of rearing a family according to the order of heaven." Over two decades later, in 1869, Pratt again stated:

If all the inhabitants of the earth at the present time were righteous before God, keeping his commandments, and if, further, the numbers of the sexes were exactly equal, there would be no necessity for any such institution as polygamy. Every righteous man could have his wife, and there would be no surplus of females.

The belief that women outnumbered men was also related by the women writers of the *Exponent*. One of the writers, Mary J. Morrison, duplicated Pratt's statement almost verbatim, as was related in the previous chapter. Pratt was not mentioned in the article, giving the reader the impression that Morrison created the concept on her own.
In like manner, articles in the *Exponent* claimed that polygamy curbed prostitution, procuring virtue in both genders. However, the women’s argument was not novel, nor their own. For instance, in 1869 John Taylor, an apostle at the time and eventually the third president/prophet of the church, wrote:

What of that great moral curse of the land, that great institution of monogamy—*Prostitution*? What of its twin sister—*Infanticide*? ... What of the thirty thousand prostitutes of New York City and the proportionate numbers of other cities, towns, and villages, and their multitudinous pimps and paramours?\

In the *Exponent*, the women made similar claims. They associated monogamy with prostitution while linking polygamy with chastity. An *Exponent* article written in 1886, by “A Woman Forty-Sevener,” related sentiments identical to those of Taylor. She penned:

I thought, when reading the speech of the woman visitor to Salt Lake, offering the “Mormon” women a home in New York, to get away from polygamy: “A home indeed!” It made my blood boil; I thought: “before you preach to us change your practice.” In New York City there are thirty thousand prostitutes, with their multitudinous pimps and paramours.\

Again, the *Exponent* author did not cite her source, but rather presented the information as her own. It is possible that the women authors understood that their readership would recognize the sources of their arguments while outsiders would not. Nonetheless, it is significant that a group of women endorsing a patriarchal order would publicly reproduce the voice of the patriarchy rather than fashion a voice of their own. Perhaps, relating anything other than the dogma of the male hierarchy would not be acceptable to their contemporaries. It is also possible that those whose views varied from the standard did not write or their ideas were censored before going into print. Regardless of the factors, it is evident that the Mormon women’s public support of polygamy, as published in the
*Woman's Exponent*, reflected a male rather than a female perspective. The publication might have reflected the women’s religious beliefs, but only so far as a patriarchy had guided and prescribed them.

Despite the fact that the women’s arguments parallel the arguments endorsed by the patriarchy, the writers of the *Exponent* did discard one argument adopted by their male leaders. That was the idea that males were inherently superior and therefore female subjugation to male authority was an expected and natural state. For instance, George Q. Cannon, in 1869, meant to comment on the elevating effects that polygamy had on women when he stated:

> But the gospel of Jesus and the revelations which God has given to us concerning patriarchal marriage, have a tendency to elevate the *entire* sex, and give to all the privilege of being honored matrons and respected wives. There are no refuse among us—no class to be cast out, scorned, and condemned; but every woman who chooses can be an honored wife, and move in society in the enjoyment of every right which woman should enjoy to make her the equal of man, as far as she can be equal.  

This passage suggests that polygamy snuffed out prostitution, thereby elevating women to an equal footing in society as men. Both arguments were related by the women in the *Exponent*. What was not related by the women writers was Cannon’s insinuation that women were not inherently men’s equal. Cannon was not alone in his view, as all of the early Mormon patriarchy, including the presidents/prophets, taught that women were commanded by God to submit to male authority. Joseph Smith, in the November 1835 issue of the *Latter-Day Saints Messenger and Advocate*, stated, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." Similarly, Brigham Young taught, "I do not believe in making my authority as a husband known by brute force but by superior
intelligence—by showing them that I am capable of teaching them.” In a
continuation of the same theme, the male leaders of the Mormon Church presented male
superiority as an integral part of women’s submission to polygamy. For instance, Young
said:

You sisters may say that plural marriage is very hard for you to bear. It is no such
thing. . . . If it is the duty of a husband to take a wife, take her. But it is not the
privilege of a woman to dictate the husband, and tell who or how many he shall take,
or what he shall do with them when he gets them, but it is the duty of the woman to
submit cheerfully.  

In the same mode, Wilford Woodruff declared in 1875:

We have many bishops and elders who have but one wife. They are abundantly
qualified to enter the higher law and take more, but their wives will not let them. Any
man who permits a woman to lead him and bind him down is but little account in the
church and kingdom of God.

Another thread among the male argument was that men who were monogamous were not
as manly as the men who had multiple wives. Apostle George A. Smith stated that non-
polygamists were a “poor narrow-minded, pinch-backed race of men, who chain
themselves down to the law of monogamy, and live all their days under the domination of
one wife.” The authorities of the church taught polygamy provided a means for men to
prove their worth before God and other men by dominating many women. Functionally,
the men claimed they had a divine right to reinforced female subjugation.

While nineteenth-century Mormon women were encased in a patriarchal culture
and religion, they did not profess a belief of male superiority in their own support of
polygamy. Publicly, Mormon women enthusiastically emphasized obedience to God as a
key reason for which they accepted polygamy; however, obedience to men because they
were women’s superior was, understandably, not a theme found in the Woman’s
Although Mormon women embraced polygamy, they did not acknowledge male superiority as a motive for their choice. In direct opposition to the preaching of their male leaders, rather, the women routinely defended their right to equality throughout the three sample years of the *Woman’s Exponent*. An article written in 1886, by M. A. Till, provides a representative sample of the women’s voice. Till wrote:

> Woman’s voice should be heard in defense of her rights. . . . There are some of the opposite gender who would intimidate us and try to make us believe we do not know anything but to wash, scrub, make or mend for the whole household. Do not be daunted, my sisters, in raising your voices in the cause of truth and justice; we have immortal souls, and have a right to think and act according to our honest convictions and aspirations. . . . Then exercise your God given intelligence, and rank side by side with your partner, and help him to see and realize that women have rights and privileges in and outside the home circle.66

Notes


10 Lawrence Foster, "Polygamy and the Frontier: Mormon Women in Early Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50:3 (summer 1982), 276.


45 Mary Ann M. Pratt, “Unjust Decision,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 1 September 1890: 46.

46 Helen M. Whitney, “The Opinion of an American Woman whose Forefathers Fought for the Liberty that we are Denied Today,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 15 November 1890: 81-82.

47 Ibid., 82.

48 Ibid., 83.

49 “Caught by a Telegram,” *Woman’s Exponent*, 1 March 1891: 130.

50 “Hephzibah,” Story ran in the *Woman’s Exponent* from 1 June 1890 to 15 September 1890. (Emmeline B. Wells, the paper’s editor, indicates in her diary that she wrote the story.)


54 Ibid., Introduction.

55 Ibid., 89.

56 Ibid., 98.


60 Evans, *Joseph Smith*, 269.


65 Ibid., 92.

CHAPTER V
MORMON WOMEN’S DIARIES

While publications generally have an established date of issue with a consistent page length, personal writings have no such regularity. As opposed to the bi-monthly, eight-page Woman’s Exponent, Mormon, polygamous women’s personal writings did not provide neatly packaged data authored at consistent intervals. In the public forum, the Exponent, Mormon women defended polygamy by stating the tenets of their religion. In their diaries, however, the women recorded personal experiences of their daily lives. Many of these experiences can be understood and evaluated only within the context of the diary as a whole. It is therefore evident that circumstances of each woman’s personal experience must be discovered before unraveling the personal rationales behind their support of polygamy. With this in mind, counting and classifying issues concerning polygamy in the women’s diaries, while contributory, cannot give full insight into their private views of the practice. Furthermore, the diary samples vary, there being almost twice as many women who kept a diary in the second sample year than in the first, and these samples differ in length and substance, so simply determining themes alone will not satisfactorily accomplish the goals of this thesis.

Because individual diaries do not lend themselves to be evaluated in the same way as publications, the diaries were evaluated collectively as well as individually. Viewing the diaries in both ways helped identify themes of polygamy as recorded in personal diaries, while permitting individual lives to be compared with the claims made by Mormon women in the Exponent. Themes of polygamy were examined in Mormon
polygamous women's diaries just as they had been in the *Woman's Exponent*. The author counted themes in all of the diaries and broke them down according to category and sample year. In addition, however, a section of this chapter addresses each woman's writing individually and separately from the other women's writings. All three sample periods of each woman's writing is reviewed in its entirety, revealing the experience of the individual separate from the other women in the sample. The goal was to discover not only Mormon women's experience in polygamy, but the individual Mormon woman's experience as well. It is the combination of the themes that reemerge throughout the diaries and the particular experiences and feelings of individual women that will help paint an adequate picture of the private eighteenth-century Mormon woman's attitude toward polygamy.

Over the three sample periods, March 1881-83, March 1886-88, and October 1889-1911, there were fifteen diaries written by Mormon polygamous women that survive in the four Utah archives. Three of these diaries spanned all three periods, six diaries spanned two sample years, and the remaining six diaries had entries for one sample period. The diaries were not equally distributed over the three sample years. Of the fifteen women who kept a diary, seven wrote during the first sample year, eleven wrote during the second sample year, and nine wrote during the final sample year (See table 3.).

**Diaries During the Edmunds Period**

Seven women wrote in their diaries a year before and after the Edmunds Bill of March 22, 1882. The first sample period had fewer diary entries than the subsequent two
TABLE 3

Mormon Polygamous Women, Grouped According to Sample Period That Each Wrote in Her Diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 4 diaries</th>
<th>March 1881-March 1883</th>
<th>March 1886-March 1888</th>
<th>October 1889-October 1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindley</td>
<td>Hindley</td>
<td>Hindley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 6 diaries</th>
<th>Dalton</th>
<th>Chase</th>
<th>Blood</th>
<th>Neilson</th>
<th>Thurber</th>
<th>Whitney</th>
<th>Chase</th>
<th>Blood</th>
<th>Neilson</th>
<th>Thurber</th>
<th>Whitney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dalton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Neilson</td>
<td>Thurber</td>
<td>Whitney</td>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Neilson</td>
<td>Thurber</td>
<td>Whitney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td></td>
<td>Neilson</td>
<td>Thurber</td>
<td>Whitney</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total of 6 diaries</th>
<th>Lyman</th>
<th>Hart</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Thatcher</th>
<th>Williams</th>
<th>Smith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hart</td>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>Thatcher</td>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

sample periods. Consequently, this period had less material to review than the following periods. In the seven diaries, polygamy was specifically addressed seven times. Most of these were short entries such as Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman’s, who simply recorded that she had “spoke publicly” in the defense of polygamy. While the women did not record lengthy speeches about polygamy, they did record their experiences in the practice. For instance, loneliness or being left alone was recorded in twenty-five entries, lack of finances was the subject of six entries, jealousy was mentioned once, co-wives were mentioned in three instances, and divinity was mentioned three times.
Heartbrokeness was also mentioned by several of the women. The Edmunds Act was mentioned in thirteen diary entries. However, the women approached the bill more casually than in the succeeding sample periods because none of their lives had yet been directly affected by it during this time period. There was one theme, regarding the enemies of the Mormon people, that was found exclusively in the diary of Emmeline B. Wells (See table 4.).

Many themes prevalent in the Exponent were not discovered in the women’s personal writings. In the diaries there was no mention that polygamy helped multiply and replenish the earth, reduced selfishness, prevented prostitution, or enabled men to marry because of a surplus of righteous women compared with the number of righteous men. It was not surprising that these points are not found in the diaries, as they might not have been relevant issues in the women’s daily lives.

In contrast, loneliness was a theme found throughout the diaries. In fact, loneliness was the most common theme found in the Mormon women’s diaries over the all three sample periods. Several factors caused the women’s sense of aloneness, including: husbands being with the other wife, husbands on church missions, and husbands being incarcerated for unlawful cohabitation, as the deputies of the time labeled polygamy. Loneliness, as recorded in the women’s diaries, was generally due to the absence physically or emotionally of the husband. For instance, on April 13, 1881, Wells records that she has no one to turn to when in need. In her non-punctuated form, she wrote, “I was very weary could scarcely sit up came home and was much distressed. How lonely it is not to have any one to go to in the hour of trouble.”2 A few weeks later she similarly records, “I have felt very gloomy I seem so much alone.”3 Many of her
TABLE 4

Themes of Polygamy in Mormon Women’s Diaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes of Polygamy</th>
<th>Edmunds Period</th>
<th>Edmunds-Tucker Period</th>
<th>Manifesto Period</th>
<th>Period Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness or Being Alone</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bigamy Laws</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Wives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygamy Mentioned</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartbrokenness</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divinity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enemies or Punishment Upon Them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Benefits of Polygamy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>222</strong></td>
<td><strong>161</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

entries simply state, “A very lonely day.” or “Spent a very lonely evening.” Wells mentioned her feelings of loneliness generally when her husband had not visited. Jane Hindley followed the same pattern. Hindley recorded loneliness when her husband was not present in her life. In September of 1882, she wrote, “[M]y husband has gone and I must not murmer [sic].” Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young, like Wells and Hindley,
linked her loneliness to polygamy. She wrote, "I have been heart hungry all my life. . . Some will understand what it is to be a woman, mother, or an unloved 'spiritual wife." Spiritual wife was a polygamous wife of which Young was to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, after Smith was martyred. A little over a year later she recorded, "I am terribly lonesome. A lonely old age is not a very desirable situation." Emily Dalton also recorded that she was "quite lonesome," but this was due to her husband being on a mission and there was not any indication that she felt chronically alone or linked the condition to polygamy as the other women had.

It was not uncommon in the women's writing to have several themes combined in one day's entry. For example, Josephine Streeper Chase, who always referred to her husband as Pa, scrawled, "I think Pa is very hard on me to go and leave me with out one cent and tell me to do the best I can seems to me they ought not to make widows of us. I am broken hearted, But I lay [my] trust in [the] Lord." Here, Chase clearly related loneliness and financial stress and her trust in God.

Although not all the women record financial stress, lack of financial means was a topic in many of the diaries, and the first sample year was no exception. Writers usually linked their financial struggles to their sharing a husband. Hindley reported a squabble with her husband over a little money. She wrote:

I've had quite an unpleasant time this morning with my Husband all about 40 cents for darling Willie I feel so bad that I can't keep the tears away. Pray God to give me wisdom to act alright, and to comfort me with his Holy Spirit, perhaps I was wrong too. I will try and be more careful in the future, I cannot bear this contention.

Wells also recorded of her financial dependence, "I feel if I had my home and means independent I would be much more comfortable and it would be better in every way."
In contrast to Chase and Hindley's experience, Wells recorded lending money in the amount of twenty-five dollars to her husband. Wells is the only one of the fifteen women in all sample periods who ever recorded positively about finances. Although financial problems were slightly recorded in the first sample year, it was an increasingly prevalent problem in subsequent years that the women, even Wells, linked to polygamy and the effects of the anti-polygamy laws.

Only Hindley recorded any sense of jealousy concerning her husband. She wrote:

Saturday morning. My husband has gone to S. L. City. Eliza [another of her husband's wives] is there still I try not to mind, anything about it but I find that I have not overcome all my jealousy [sic] yet, pray to God to help me with his Holy Spirit to lead me in the right path.

Placing trust in God under troubling circumstances was commonly recorded by the different women.

As in the Exponent, the Edmunds Act was mentioned in the diaries. For instance, Young noted that "The Edmunds Bill passed both Houses yesterday." Hindley recorded that she felt there was "trouble coming on account of the Edmunds Bill." Wells also accounted for the bill in her diary. She wrote:

Today the Edmund's Bill passed the house by two thirds majority there has been many able speeches made against it and in favor of justice for our people—It will perhaps awaken some to a just sense of the sentiment of the outside world against us as a body of people—

The next day Wells again noted that "every one on the street is talking of the Edmund's bill and the possible & probable results of such strong measures when enforced in the Territory." She related that the bill was personally oppressive to her, remarking on March 20, 1882, two days before the bill became law that "one cannot have the time to write as they would like when the cares of life press heavily and persecution for
religion's oppress & crowd upon the soul." Similarly, Hindley had felt "humbled" because of the measure against her people. The women did not critique the law, they simply recorded negative feelings. However, there is evidence that Mormon women viewed the anti-bigamy law in varying ways. Wells recorded, a few days after the Edmunds Bill had become law, that "so many ladies have been in the [Exponent] Office and got up such a controversy about the Edmund's bill, it was quite exciting and I became quite irritated." She further wrote, "Pres. Taylor has moved all his wives out of the Gardo house to their own homes and he is there with his children only."21 Again, observations were made without specific criticism of the law.

Only Wells remarked upon the enemies of the Mormons during the first sample period. She inscribed, "Everything seems unfavorable towards our people at present.... However we know our trust in the Lord and He will watch over us."22 Over a year later Wells again recorded, "So much talk about what Congress is going to do against our people."23 While Wells mentions adversity, she does not hope for divine retribution against Congress. In the first sample year it was typical for the women to be rather mild about their attitude toward the Edmunds Act and the pressures against the Mormon people, because, as evidenced by the diaries, sanctions were not yet personally felt by them.

As an interesting side note, over the sample years, three of the women made entries into their diaries that recorded the adoptions and marriages, or "sealings" as termed by the Mormons, to prominent members of the church. Sealing is a term that meant to bind together two or more people—wife and husband or parents and child into a family unit. Sealing could take place while both parties were living, deceased, or one
member living and one deceased. For instance, Emily Young recorded the sealing or marriage of her sister, Harriet P. Partridge, to the late Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{24} Young also noted that she “had our father[‘s] Mother and their fathers and mothers adopted to Joseph Smith, the Prophet” and that she was “sealed for several to father.”\textsuperscript{25} In the third sample year, Wells noted that she had acted for the female line as she “stood for ten families to be adopted to Pres. Wells,” her dead husband.\textsuperscript{26} Wells also stood proxy for several deceased women sealed to her husband while he was still living.\textsuperscript{27} Similarly, Whitney recorded that another Mormon woman wanted to be adopted with all her kin to her father, Heber Kimball.\textsuperscript{28} These adoptions and marriages were done by proxies or living persons and were done for those who were deceased. The marriages were, in effect, posthumous polygamy. Young, Wells, and Whitney were the only three of the fifteen women to record adoptions and marriages of this kind, probably because they were married to or daughters of prominent male leaders, while the other women were not. It is significant that the women recorded posthumous adoptions and marriages because it indicates just how important it was to Mormon theology that family members be in some way connected to prominent Mormon men, even in death.

\textbf{Personal Diaries During the Edmunds-Tucker Period}

With eleven, the Edmunds-Tucker period, a year before and after March 3, 1887, had more diaries than any other sample period. During this period, polygamy was specifically mentioned in the women’s diaries thirty-three times. Loneliness or being alone was mentioned in fifty entries, finances were mentioned seven times, jealousy was mentioned once, co-wives were mentioned in thirty-four entries, and divinity was
mentioned in eleven. Heartbrokenness was mentioned in twenty-two entries, twenty of which belonged to Wells. The Edmunds and Edmunds-Tuckers acts or a consequence of them, such as arrests of polygamous men, court procedures, or persons serving in the penitentiary, were mentioned in fifty-five diary entries. Unlike the previous sample period, the women demonstrated more anxiety about these acts. Two themes were found in the women’s diaries that were not encountered during the previous sample period, but that were in the *Exponent* articles. These were eight diary entries predicting the inevitable punishment upon the enemies of the Mormon people and one entry noting the physical benefits of polygamy. Although there were a few entries concerning the enemies of the Mormon people during the first sample period, none predicted divine retribution. Several of the women also wrote that they believed that God was testing or disciplining his people through the anti-polygamy laws. This was a novel theme not yet encountered in the women’s personal or public writing.

Although the majority of themes in the second sample year were much like the first sample year, there were several subtly different or new themes introduced. One of the most evident changes during this sample year was the anxiety the women related about the anti-polygamy laws and the effect they had upon their lives. The anxiety heightened according to the negative consequences that each woman experienced. Naturally, women whose husbands had passed away were less anxious than those whose husbands were subject to the laws. For example, Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, whose husband had died, wrote, “I do feel worried about the infamous Tucker and Edmunds Bill, however God Almighty holds them in his hands to do what seems best.”

Hindley’s attitude is casual compared with the women whose husbands were directly
affected by the laws such as Laura Ann Keeler Thurber's, whose husband had been imprisoned. He had been in the penitentiary for ten months when she wrote of the Edmunds-Tucker Bill, "I don't know how long the Lord will suffer this to go on, but I hope not long."\textsuperscript{30} Emily Stevens Dalton, a thirty-two-year-old mother of six, felt the ultimate consequence of the anti-polygamy conflict between the Mormon people and the federal government. Her husband was shot to death by a marshal during an 1886 anti-polygamy raid in Southern Utah. Shortly afterward Dalton recorded, "—the debt will have to be payed [sic] Sooner or latter [sic] Father in heaven help us all to for give [sic] all that help to do this cruel thing."\textsuperscript{31}

As a result of their anxiety about the measures taken against them, the women recorded that they believed that the enemies of the Mormon people would be punished by God, as they did in the \textit{Exponent}. However, in addition to this theme, several of the women connected the prosecution from the anti-polygamy laws to God's way of testing his people. For example, Wells felt that God intended to "discipline his people" through the passing of the Edmunds-Tucker Act.\textsuperscript{32} Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood, whose husband was imprisoned for polygamy, predicted in her diary that the Mormon people would have to bear whatever their enemies placed upon them until the Lord thought they had borne enough, then the enemies would have to take their turn, at which time, great would be their sorrow and distress.\textsuperscript{33} Thurber similarly recorded, "I don't think we as a people have been tried enough yet for to be delivered from our enimes [sic]. . . . when the Lord has tried us till all is well sifted the wicked from the good then he will deliver the good ones from the hands of their enimes [sic]."\textsuperscript{34}
Personal Diaries During the Manifesto Period

There were ten diaries during the Manifesto period that encompassed a year before and after October 6, 1890, two fewer than the previous sample period. During this period polygamy was mentioned in sixteen entries, while loneliness or being alone was mentioned in fifty-one. Finances were the subject of sixteen diary entries, jealousy in one, co-wives in thirty-four, and divinity in six. Only Wells recorded that she suffered from heartbrokenness. The Edmunds and Edmunds-Tucker acts or their consequences upon Mormons were mentioned fifteen times in this period, down from fifty-five the previous sample year. Enemies of the Mormon people were mentioned in four entries. The only new subject during this final sample period was the Manifesto issued by the leaders of the Mormon Church. Five entries about the Manifesto were recorded by two of the ten women writing in their diaries during this period, four of which belonged to Wells. As was the case in the Woman's Exponent, the women did not emphasize the Manifesto or its implications in their personal writings. For the most part, in fact, they were silent on the subject.

A few weeks after the Manifesto had been adopted by the church, Thurber reported, "Our President has issued a Manifesto to the world that the church will quit living in the Celestial Law, but he says the wicked that has [sic] passed laws to hinder us from practicing this, will have the bill to foot." Here, Thurber recapitulated the leader of the church rather than relaying her own opinions and feelings. Three women recorded attending the meeting in which the Manifesto was announced by the leaders of the church. However, two of them, Whitney and Blood, made no mention of the Manifesto or discontinuation of polygamy in their diaries. Wells also attended the meeting. She
recorded that the meeting had "been an exciting time on account of the Manifesto." 37

Three days later she observed that "there can be no opportunity for married men to
increase their families. . . . how peculiar a change after more than 40 years. There is a
class who do not relish it [at] all and think the Lord has not been seen in it or had any
hand in it." 38 A year later she wrote, "Geo. Q & Joseph F. bore testimony . . . concerning
the Manifesto and the practise [sic] of plural marriage. It is a time of trial for many of the
Saints and truely [sic] barriers are being burned away and a great revolution taking
place." 39 Wells revealed that the Manifesto was a positive step for the Mormon people
despite the pain it inflicted.

Theme of Polygamy in Individual
Women's Diaries

The women's diaries contained several of the same themes found in the Woman's
Exponent; however, the diaries were much more complex. This is, in part, due to the
range of emotion each woman demonstrated in her writings. For example, several
women wrote negatively of their experiences as a plural wife in a diary entry. Then, the
very next day's entry would try to apologize or repent of their feelings that they had
recorded. This pattern reflected the women's inner struggle between personal experience
and belief. Although the majority of the women demonstrate this pattern in their diaries,
each does so for reasons particular to her own domestic circumstances. Therefore,
tracing thematic changes in the women's diaries is significant only when the situation of
the writer is understood. This section of the chapter will summarize each woman's
writing to shed a better light on Mormon women's experience in polygamy. The women
varied greatly in age, temperament, and education. These factors seemed to directly
influence each woman’s personal attitude toward polygamy. External circumstances equally affected the women’s experience, and hence attitude, toward polygamy. These particularly included the husband’s attention or lack of it, number of wives the husband married, and extent of financial security provided by the husband.

Several of the women wrote little or nothing of their personal experiences with polygamy because their husbands had died. These women were Patty Barlett Sessions and Clarrisa Harding Williams. Their diaries were not reviewed individually. The remaining women’s diaries were reviewed in the order they demonstrated contentment with polygamy, beginning with the woman who demonstrated the most satisfaction, Emily E. Hart, and ending with Emmeline B. Wells, who demonstrated the most dissatisfaction.

**Emily E. Hart**

Emily E. Hart kept a diary only during the second sample period. Although her husband was not living with her at the time, she wrote dotingly about him. For instance, she wrote, “God in Heaven likes my dear kind Husband he is always ready and willing to do all we ask him.” Despite—or perhaps because of—her admiration for her husband, Hart recorded loneliness in her life because of his absence.

**Sarah Ellen Richards Smith**

Writing exclusively during the third sample period, Sarah Ellen Richards Smith was one of five wives. There were originally six but the first of her husband’s wives acquired a divorce. Smith was unique among the women evaluated because she mentioned her co-wives more than her husband. For example, she wrote that on New
Year’s Day that “Julina and Edna ate with us. Alice, Mary, and all the children came in [for] cake. The day passed off quietly.”\textsuperscript{43} Not only were the four women Smith’s co-wives, but they were listed in the order they were married, Julina being first and Mary last. Smith also recorded positively about her relationships with these women with whom she shared a husband. For instance, she reported, “I called in Marys [sic].”\textsuperscript{44} as visiting between the women was evidently common. Smith further related that Mary had “told me her troubles. I felt sorry for her. I said to her do not talk to everybody as you have to me.”\textsuperscript{44} In addition to demonstrating the relationship between the two wives, Smith’s advice to her co-wife might suggest that there were some troubles that were not talked about in Mormon society. Those who experienced them were encouraged to maintain silence as Noelle-Neumann’s theory would predict.

Another interesting aspect of Smith’s entries was that she recorded depending upon her brother rather than her husband. For instance her brother gave her rent money.\textsuperscript{45} He also called upon her when her baby was sick. Smith was not unusual in this respect; it was not uncommon for the polygamous women in the sample years to record family members taking over the responsibilities of the husband.

Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney

Married into polygamy at fourteen, Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney had been widowed twice by the time she wrote during the second and third sample periods. In her fifties, Whitney was one of the most prolific writers among the women in this thesis. She narrated very little of her personal experience with polygamy in her diary entries; rather, her belief in the doctrine was emphasized. In consequence, her entries about polygamy
seemed more objective when compared with those of the other women in the sample. Her objectivity could be attributed to the fact that both husbands had passed away and therefore she was not physically living in polygamy while she was writing during the sample periods.

In her diary, Whitney recorded her active involvement in defending Mormon polygamy. Besides defending the practice in writing in a variety of forums, including the Woman’s Exponent and a pamphlet that she had authored about polygamy, she also spoke publicly in its favor. For instance, she recorded that she had spoken on polygamy and “bore a strong testimony to its truth & Godliness.” In addition to her writing and speaking, Whitney recorded having visitors to her home who wanted to discuss the subject. For example, she wrote, “Three ladies from Iowa called to interview me—wanted to learn about the feelings of ‘Mormon’ women . . . their curiosity being excited on the question of polygamy.” According to her diary, Whitney’s contemporaries knew her to be a public figure who stood for Mormon polygamy.

Whitney’s belief in polygamy stemmed from a conviction that obedience to God’s commands was paramount to salvation. When some followers did not go to Sunday meeting, she wrote, “I told them . . . that our only safety was in being obedient to the Commandments of the Most High. And Oh! my heart aches to see these things, and know, as I do, the danger of disobedience.” In an entry in which she recorded a speech she had given, she cited obedience as the motivating factor that compelled her to accept polygamy. She wrote:

I testified to the rightness of the plural wife order, & that I had known it from my youth, & dared not rebel against it for the Lord would punish all who did . . . I told
them that the greatest exaltation would come through obedience and to honoring this celestial order.  

Whitney was adamant in her belief. She recorded telling a newly converted young woman who felt she could never accept polygamy that "bitter doom" would come to all who rejected it.  

In a similar vein, Whitney entered into her diary that she would not consent to her daughter's marriage to a non-Mormon. She related to her daughter that the Lord had proclaimed "everlasting doom" upon those who married outside of the church.  

Whitney conveyed to her daughter that her fate would be "awful trouble & sorrow [sic] . . . when she came to see what she brought upon herself through disobedience." Whitney truly believed her daughter would be doomed as was evidenced by her record of "lamenting" and "weeping" over her daughter's prospective marriage. The fate of those who accepted the celestial order of marriage and those who did not was great in her eyes. In the same period that she recorded that she believed that her daughter would bring doom upon herself for marrying an "outsider," she also recorded that she, along with those who married Joseph Smith in polygamy, were believed to be "the wives of a God."  

The only entry in Whitney's diary that was negative concerning polygamy reported upon a blessing given her in which she wrote that she would have troubling trials "caused by a spirit of jealousy [sic] in certain Marters [sic]." It is most likely that this entry referred to prophet Joseph Smith, who was both martyred and her first husband.  

Perhaps due to writing little of her personal experience with polygamy, Whitney's diary entries concerning polygamy were not very different than the Mormon women's
public writings as found in the *Exponent*. Her diary even paralleled the paper in that both wrote more about polygamy in the second sample period than in the third. During the second sample period she made thirty-six entries in her diary related to polygamy, but by the third sample period, that number was reduced to ten.

**Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood**

Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood kept a diary during the second and third sample years when the sanctions on the Mormon people, due to the anti-polygamy laws, were at their peak. Accordingly, she wrote mainly of the effects that the laws had upon her life. Both her husband and brother were fined and imprisoned for practicing polygamy. Her brother was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment and fined three hundred dollars because, as Blood recorded, “he would not disown his own wives and children.” She also wrote that she felt glad to see him stand firm in his beliefs. Eventually, he relocated his wives and children to Mexico where polygamy was legal. Blood reported of her brother, “He is starting to Mexico this evening. Part of his family started last night. It made me feel bad when I heard them going past in the night. Emma has a little baby, and if our enemies knew it, they would likely imprison him again.” Her husband was also indicted for unlawful cohabitation. He was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment and fined one hundred and fifty dollars. While her husband was in prison, Blood had her fifth daughter. She wrote of the experience, “I missed William [her husband]. He has always been with me when the children were born, but I know the Lord helped me.”

Although Blood’s brother and husband had been imprisoned, she felt that the sanctions upon her people were because of their lack of repentance and faith in God. She
wrote, "I wonder how long this raid will last. I expect until we all repent and turn to
the Lord."\textsuperscript{62} Evidently there were some Mormons who felt polygamy ought to have been
renounced when the first anti-polygamy law was issued. On a personal level, Blood
demonstrated the struggle that was occurring between those within the church who
renounced the practice and those who did not when she recorded:

President W. R. Smith [the title President indicates that he was a local leader in the
church] spoke in meeting today. Part of what he said was all right, but I do not hold
with the rest. In speaking of polygamy he said that a person would be a religious
fanatic who would live so as to be liable to the law. He said, "I presume that
Brother Blood does not live just as he did before he went to prison." He knows
William does, and it seemed just an insult. I went to him after meeting and told him
that William lives with both of his families. "Well," he said, "If you can stand it, but
you will lose your property and come to want." I said, "No, sir. God will provide."
Perhaps I am mistaken, but I feel grieved for it seemed to me that he would like to
see William go to prison again. I felt like saying, "Oh, ye of little faith!" There are
many who have but little faith in the Lord. At least I should judge so by their
actions.\textsuperscript{53}

This passage relates that Blood was placed in a dilemma—either her husband had to
abandon one of his wives and her children, or both families could lose their property
while he paid fines and served in prison. With these circumstances in mind, it is not
surprising that Blood disparaged the anti-polygamy laws in her diary. Accordingly, other
than her belief in the doctrine of polygamy, she wrote nothing of her personal experience
outside the legal persecution caused by the law.

Emily Stevens Dalton

Very much in love with her husband, Emily Stevens Dalton still felt lonely for
several reasons. During the first sample year Dalton was lonely because her husband
went on a mission for the church. Concerning the mission she recorded that "if we winn
[sic] treasures for a nother [sic] world we must make Sacerifies [sic] in this [one]."\textsuperscript{64}
Reward in the next life was also one of the reasons the women were willing to marry plurally.

In the second sample year, Dalton's husband was killed in an anti-polygamist raid. She wrote that "every body [sic] trys [sic] to make me feel the best they can . . . that I will get along allright [sic] if I put my trust in my Hevenly [sic] Father and do right but I cannot forget So Soon."65 Of course, his death caused her to feel much loneliness.

Although married plurally, Dalton only alluded to her husband's other wife and family. For example she wrote that "we have got a letter from our dear Husband."66 Also, she wrote that "that every one of the folk in boath [sic] famielys [sic] are so kind to me."67 It seems that Dalton was content with her marriage. And, as well as can be surmised from her diary, it was not polygamy that brought emotional pain to her but the effects of the anti-polygamy laws.

Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman

Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman kept a sketchy diary that had few entries spattered over a large number of years. During the first sample period, Lyman recorded that she had spoken in defense of polygamy at a meeting.68 However, at an earlier date she had recorded her introduction and feelings toward polygamy. She wrote, "[It] was truly a great trial for me. . . . nothing but a firm desire to keep the commandments of the Lord could have induced a girl to marry in that way."69 Lyman reiterated several times that only God could have kept her from opposing polygamy because it was such a severe trial to her heart.
Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young

Like her sister, Lyman, Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young also kept a diary. Young’s diary spanned all three sample periods, but, the first period was the only one in which she reminisced upon her experience with polygamy. Significantly, she wrote that she could not look back upon her life with any degree of satisfaction. She maintained:

My life has been like a panorama of disagreeable pictures. As I scan them over one by one, they bring no joy, and I invariable [sic] wind up with tears. I have been heart hungry all my life, hoping against hope, until the years are nearly spent, and hope is dead for this life but bright for the next. . . . some will understand what it is to be a woman, mother, or an unloved “spiritual wife.”

The next day Young admitted in her diary that she was in a dark mood when she wrote this passage, and that it was a blessing to be a mother and a spiritual wife. Yet, several years later in her diary she again returned to the dark theme of her younger years. She recorded, “This morning as soon as I woke up my mind reverted back to Nauvoo, and I was back in the Mansion House, living over again some of the incidents of my long ago life. And ended as usual by making myself sick with weeping.” The Mansion House was an official residence built for the church president, Joseph Smith, in 1843. At one time, Young was living in the house with Smith, her first husband.

Outside the sample years, Young made an interesting entry to her diary. She revealed that when polygamy was new in the church that some Mormons turned the eye of disfavor or contempt upon those who accepted the doctrine. She further recorded, “Some [Mormons] did not like that peculiar religious principle, although they pretended so to do.” Young’s disclosure demonstrates that even members of the early church who did not believe in the doctrine, outwardly supported it. Noelle-Neumann’s Spiral of Silence theory would suggest that the silence of those who pretended to accept polygamy
would be interpreted as acquiescence to the doctrine, suppressing the awareness of
anti-polygamy sentiment among the church’s members. In consequence, the acceptance
of polygamy would seem universal.

Laura Ann Keeler Thurber

Laura Ann Keeler Thurber, who wrote during the second and third sample
periods, shared her husband with one other woman. Her husband served over a full
year’s sentence in the penitentiary for living in polygamy. During his imprisonment, she
wrote about her feelings of loneliness and the activities of her co-wife, Annie.

Although the loneliness Thurber reported during the second sample year was due
to her husband’s imprisonment, during the third sample year it was due to her husband’s
absence. Thurber’s diary entries mainly recorded her husband’s visits and absences, and
she always noted when he went to Richfield, the town where his other wife lived. For
instance, “[M]y Husband started over there [to Richfield] this morning . . . did not know
how long he would stay . . . . [he] stayed six days.”77 And “[he] went over to R= [sic]
again this morning . . . and I feel so lonesome . . . [he] stayed three days.”78 Loneliness
was evident in Thurber’s writing when he was absent. She wrote, “My Husband has
gone over there to Richfield to conference, it has been a long time Since I have been any
where, I feel So lonely and have the blues So much of late.”79

While Thurber was not the only woman to experience loneliness at her husband’s
absences, she was the only woman to write that she wished the time would come when
her husband could live with both of his families again, even in the same house. She
wrote:
My Husband has gone over to Richfield again, took my little Dora with him, it makes me feel so lonesome to have him gone and even more so when one of the children is gone to [sic], I hope the time ain’t far distant, when he can be with both his wives in the same place or in the same house then we both can be with him for it is a great trial to Annie [Thurber’s co-wife] to be deprived of his company so much.\footnote{80}

Although Thurber cited Annie’s loneliness that made her wish both families could live in the same place, it seemed that her own loneliness was the primary motivating factor. For instance, two weeks after writing the passage, she reiterated, “it seems lonelier [sic] then ever . . . for this place is so dull I have a longing for company, this is three Sundays together my Husband has been in Richfield."\footnote{81} Loneliness was such a problem that she contemplated moving out of the country so they could all live together, as she reported, “We have been thinking about going to Mexico, there we can live in the Laws of God unmolested."\footnote{82}

Her dream of living all together was not to be realized. In 1891, Thurber wrote that her husband was going to be called on a mission to the Sandwich Islands, now known as Hawaii. She also wrote that the leaders of the church wished for him to take a wife. She wrote:

Annie will be called to [sic] I think, my poor heart is almost to break to think of another parting with him . . . Such a lonely, longing, heartache . . . and the thought of having to look out for my ouss [sic] and little ones . . . . he will be gone for years.\footnote{83}

When her husband finally left, Thurber wrote that “they have gone and left me alone, I am a widow again, Oh how my prayers assend [sic] to God to give me strength to bare [sic] this trial."\footnote{84} Not only did she turn to God for solace, but she also wrote that she was glad she could turn to her many children to fill up her time.\footnote{85} Another problem Thurber faced was lack of finances while her husband was away. As with so many of the
polygamous women, finances were scarce. Thurber wrote, "O: what can I do for a living."\textsuperscript{86}

While Thurber seemed to accept polygamy, she still struggled with its consequences. Her primary struggle was with the loneliness caused by being left behind when her husband attended his other wife, and when they went to Hawaii. In her writing, Thurber clearly supported polygamy as divinely sanctioned; however, it did not add to her personal happiness. Polygamy might have elevated her spirituality, as the articles in the \textit{Exponent} argued, but her personal experience revealed that the practice introduced loneliness and physical isolation into her marriage that, if she had married monogamously, might not have been present.

Josephine Streeper Chase

Writing during the first and the third sample periods, Josephine Streeper Chase focused her diary entries around her husband and financial problems. In 1881, she kept her diary on scraps of old paper and wrote a number of entries about her relationship with her husband. Although much of the content of her writing was identifiably about her husband, some of her passages about him were either erased or torn out.\textsuperscript{87} It is impossible to know what was written in those passages, but it is not difficult to surmise that if she had thought positively about them, they would most likely still be intact. Of the few passages that survived, Chase noted that the stresses of the farm were harder upon her than her husband because he was often absent. Further, she recorded, "I would rather take a whipping than ask for our needs i [sic] think. Husbands ought to know what is needed and do their best."\textsuperscript{88} A few weeks later Chase complained that her husband left
her again without sufficient means and that she felt like a widow. Continuously, she noted when her husband was with her and her children and when he left. For instance she wrote, "Pa is with us tonight." Chase was not the only woman who kept track of her husband’s visits and absences in her diary; others such as Thurber, Hindley, Neilson, and Wells had the same tendency.

Chase did not write again until the third sample period. Eight years later, her subjects and problems had not changed. She complained, "Bro. Chase did not come back and i [sic] never can rest when the cares of the boys and farm and house rest all on me." She recorded a similar entry on a separate occasion to which she admitted that it made her feel bad to be left on the farm alone. As in 1881, Chase recorded that her husband never gave her "one cent of money" when he left her. Also, she wrote that "with the children’s help and my own good management—We have paid 2 or three [sic] big debts" that her husband had left. In other entries she noted that she was usually left alone and in one wrote, "I think Pa very neglectful of me." In addition to the problems with her husband, Chase mentioned polygamy twice and in both instances in a melancholy context. She recorded that a bishop’s father had died, leaving ten wives and forty children. She also recorded that her son, after a family outing without his father, stated that he did "not think a man ought to have but one wife." Although Chase recorded dissatisfaction with her marriage, she did not directly cite polygamy as the cause of her problems as some of the other women did.
Jane Charters Robinson Hindley

Having written during all three sample periods, Jane Charters Robinson Hindley related the struggle between the practical experience of polygamy and devotion to God. She was the second of five wives, although only three remained married to her husband for the duration of his life. In the first sample period, Hindley demonstrated some satisfaction with her marriage. She mused, "Saturday was the anniversary of my marriage twenty five years since I took upon myself the holy name of wife and I have never regretted it for one moment." This statement was not consistent with parts of her diary that she had kept earlier. After six years of marriage, she wrote that her husband "has returned and brought two.—I cannot call them wives yet it seems so strange Oh what feelings are this moment—life to me is not so joyous, it seems dark. My God help me in my weakness and forgive me if I falter in my duty and affection to him I love." A few days later she confessed in her diary:

I feel very weak, but composed and tolerably happy a little jealous I must acknowledge Oh, the pang I suffered the first time I heard him call her wife I dare not write my thoughts God only knows the agony that I endured, I must try and learn the lesson of self denial better.

Ten years later, despite her determination, Hindley had not achieved the level of self-denial required of a polygamous wife. Although she recorded that she never regretted being married, she also recorded her struggle with polygamy. She wrote:

Saturday morning. My husband has gone to S. L. City Eliza [Hindley's co-wife] is there still how I try not to mind, anything about it but I find that I have not over come all my jealousy [sic] yet, pray to God to help me with his Holy Spirit to lead me in the right path.

Yet another woman recorded turning to God to relieve the heartache that polygamy instilled. This entry, similar to the writing of other polygamous women in the sample,
also noted her husband’s attention to another wife. Hindley regularly made note in her
diary when her husband was with a co-wife. For instance, she would write, “Mr. Hindley
and Eliza are in the city now.” In consequence to her husband’s absence, Hindley
recorded suffering from loneliness.  

During the second and third sample years, Hindley again recorded a great deal of
loneliness. However, the cause was her husband’s death in 1886. The only other entry of
note that she made thereafter was a poem her sister had sent when Hindley was a young
woman, having just left home. The poem is enlightening to this thesis because it
captures a philosophy that the Mormon women seemed to have cherished, and that was
submissive resignation to God’s will. Hindley recorded:

It may be all for the best

I said I will not murmur
it may be all for the best,
This seeming sore affliction
the strength of the soul will test,
I will fold my hands in meekness
so be it thy will O’God
and question not in weakness
the strokes of thy chastening rod,
so wherever comes sorrow
whenever the cup of pain,
I put to my lips I barrow,
the courage never to complain,
when sorely tried with trouble
when robbed of pleasure or rest
I say I will not murmur,
It may be all for the best.  

Emma Wartstill Mecham Neilson

The first of two wives, Emma Wartstill Mecham Neilson wrote during the second
and third sample years. During the second sample year Neilson recorded in her diary that
there were many anti-polygamous raids throughout the southern, St. George area of
Utah, where she lived. In one of her shorter entries, she simply wrote, "Deputy marshals
raiding." Neilson also recorded feelings of abandonment and heartbrokenness due to
polygamy. In one entry her husband had been gone so long with his other wife that she
wondered if he was doing his duty toward Emma and her children. She wrote:

How pleased I would be if he would step in administer to our wants, soothe the cries
of my four little ones and do a fathers part . . . they have looked forward to the time
(so long) that they would see their Pa that they begin to think they have no Pa. I feel
heart broken [sic] myself."107

Neilson recorded negative feelings about her experience with polygamy, yet, in the same
entry she illustrated a desire to triumph over the conflict between her experience and her
belief. She continued, "O Lord give me strength to bare [sic] the trials that daily beset
my pathway . . . I feel thankful that I am numbered among those that are tried even to the
very core of my heart."108 Continuing on the same theme, Neilson entered into her diary,
"have had trials almost unbareable [sic] but with the aid of a Supreme Being I have
weathered the worst, and hope to remain firm and faithful untill [sic] I reach the other
shore."109 After living in polygamy for a year she again recorded, "[I] am severely tried
with in [sic] polygamy but Father in Heaven help me to bare [sic] with the trials; and if it
is right I should be bore down with sorrow through this principle I am willing to stand
it."110

Despite the heartache that polygamy brought to Neilson, she did write positively
of her co-wife. In fact, she wrote, "I love my husbands wife and have taken comfort with
her she is a good girl and I know the Lord will bless her and my-self if we are faithful."111

For a portion of her diary, Neilson mentioned her co-wife in more entries than her
husband. Included in these entries, was her attending to her husband’s wife during and after childbirth. The majority of the entries concerning her co-wife, Mary, were short. Such as “prepared medicine for Mary,” “assisted Mary,” or “As usual done my duty to Mary.” These entries suggest that Neilson tolerated her situation, marriage in polygamy, finding her co-wife to be a “duty” rather than a pleasure.

During the third sample period, Neilson wrote nothing of Mary but noted whenever her husband visited St. John’s, where Mary lived. In the only four entries made over a period of a year, Neilson wrote exclusively of his absence and her need to rely on God. In the first entry she wrote, “My husband had been absent this winter.” In the second, “I have one source of enjoyment that I can always rely upon and that is the companionship of my Father in Heaven I find him always a true friend.” In the third, “At present my husband is in St. John’s.” And in the fourth she continued, “I gave birth to a baby girl while my husband was at St. John’s, Ariz. It was a cold night and no one with me but my little children.” During the next year, Neilson did not record that her husband left her. She did not record any feelings of abandonment, aloneness, or exclusive reliance on God for companionship.

Sara Davis Thatcher

To fully understand Sara Davis Thatcher’s experience of polygamy, the first years of her marriage as recorded in her diary must be reviewed. Thatcher wrote from 1878 to 1887. At the beginning of her diary the entries she made concerning polygamy and her husband, John, were negative. These entries comprised 1878 to the beginning of January 1881. However, years after her husband’s first wife died from the collapse of a kitchen
roof on January 17, 1882, Thatcher recorded more positively about her husband and their marriage.

In her first years of marriage, Thatcher recorded, "And the future—as it now appears, and unavoidable—I dread. Oh! I dread it... I craved love and sympathy too much to think of being a polygamous wife if I had only realized it." In regards to finances, she wrote, "Strange! That a man with about twenty years experience in housekeeping didn't know it would cost something at least to keep another family and if he couldn't afford it he shouldn't have undertaken it." Thatcher recorded that her co-wife also felt their husband had financially overextended himself by marrying plurally. Thatcher entered into her diary:

R. [Rachael, Thatcher's co-wife]... told him he mustn't get any more wives if he couldn't keep the ones he had. He said he was going to get one who could keep herself next time. That made me angry, and I said I didn't think he'd find many that would do better than I had, for it was the first time he'd bought me any calico dresses, and this is the fourth summer I've been his wife." In addition to financial problems, Thatcher recorded that she felt lonely. For instance, "Oh! I do get so lonesome and blue sometimes that I am nearly crazy." To feel less so she turned to her children, as is evidenced by the following entry into her diary. She penned, "Last night I had my little boy. God willing, I'll not be alone any more [sic]." Not only did Thatcher have a difficult experience with polygamy, but she recorded that so did her husband's first wife. She wrote, "I realize... he [her husband] was married to her so long before I became his wife, and it hurts her so. Oh! If I could be patient. If I could only do right everything will be satisfactory sometime." By the time Thatcher was writing in her diary during the second sample year, in 1887, her life did seem more satisfactory than the first years of her marriage. However,
she still complained about her husband's lack of visiting and lack of finances. For instance, she wrote, "It was two months Thursday since John left here and only left me $15." Despite the continuation of financial problems, there were several entries that demonstrated some change, even contentment, with her marriage situation. Thatcher recorded, "I enjoyed John's visit very much he was so kind and made all the provision for our welfare he could. We've been married over 10 1/2 years and he bo't [sic] the first bedstead he ever furnished for me while down this time." She also noted that "John has been down again. . . . Will try to be down again the first of next month." It is apparent that Thatcher continued to live alone with her husband visiting occasionally, but she did not relate in her diary entries that the situation bothered her as it had in the first years of her marriage. Not only had her husband's first wife died but, by this time, her children would have been old enough to keep her company.

Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris
Whitney Wells

Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris Whitney Wells was not only the editor of the Woman's Exponent during all three sample periods, but she also was a most fastidious about her diary—keeping a lengthy diary during all three sample periods. Wells was one of five wives, four of whom married on the same day. Wells did not have a happy experience with polygamy. Of her life she related, "I have written a letter to my husband telling him some of my strange experiences he knows so little of my life and what I had to endure men scarcely realize when a young girl marries what a sacrifice she makes." She also noted "how much women suffer and live through, and how little it is appreciated
by men in this world." Unloved for most of her married life, Wells demonstrated intense loneliness in her personal writing.

Much of Wells’ loneliness was caused by her living separate from her husband. Occasionally referring to her husband as "the Esquire," Wells noted his scattered attentions to her with daily entries. She would write, for example, "My husband came and spent a few hours with me—" Sometimes he would stay longer, as Wells indicated in this entry, "My husband came and staid [sic] with us." In 1887, Wells even recorded that her husband "stayed with me all night. The first time for years." Between her husband’s sporadic attentions, Wells recorded feeling intensely lonely. In fact, a clear pattern of loneliness can be traced throughout her diary; she never recorded feeling lonesome during his visits. She professed in her dairy, "I have felt very gloomy I seem so much alone." At other times she would plainly write, "A very lonely day." Wells also mentioned in her writing that in times of trouble and heartache there was no one to which she could turn.

During the second sample year, it became apparent in her writing that Wells counted upon her children for much of her companionship. When her last daughter left home, Wells wrote that she was utterly forlorn because she had been her one companion for so long a time. Because she relied on the companionship with her children, Wells recorded that loneliness was inevitable. Yet she felt their loss keenly. She documented with anguish, "I have no one at my hearthstone, no one, no!" In a later entry she noted that not much joy had entered her life except through her children.

In addition to loneliness, Wells recalled in her writing that much of her life had been a scenario of tribulation. Referring to the wedding anniversary of another woman,
Wells wrote, "It calls up many unpleasant recollections as well as much that is sentimental in its nature. So much misery for me and so much that is depressing in its nature, that one cannot help feeling sad & sorrowful." On her own anniversary, she again recorded that although she and her husband had never had an unpleasant scene between them that she had passed "through trials that would pierce the inmost recesses of the human heart." Here, Wells is referring to years of unhappiness in her marriage. In and 1874 diary entry, for example, she lamented:

O, if my husband could only love me even a little and not seem to be perfectly indifferent to any sensation of that kind. . . . he is surrounded with love on every side, and I am cast out. . . . O my poor aching heart when shall it rest its burden only on the Lord.

By the final sample period, Wells' husband began to pay more attention to her. She wrote, "I scarcely dare acknowledge even to myself what declarations my husband made to me to night—had it happened years ago how different my life might have been. But Alas, it comes so late—" Wells wondered what made him seem so devoted now that she was more than sixty years old, when her younger years had passed without much of his attention. Accordingly, she recorded that his renewed romantic feelings toward her came too late for her to care, and wrote, "I had such a lovely letter from my husband & he said so many pleasant things, that in days past would have filled me with the most infinite pleasure, but now it is only like dead sea apples."

Although Wells wrote that her husband's attentions came too late, she still showed signs of enjoying them. For example she wrote that she was glad to "be enfolded in his loving arms." She confided in her diary that "we are more like lovers than husband and wife for we are so far removed from each other there is always the
embarrassment of lovers and yet we have been married more than 37 years—”

Two weeks after this entry Wells’ husband contemplates taking another wife. Wells recorded that a co-wife, Lydia Ann, was unhappy about the possible union, but that she herself did not care. Wells wrote:

Lydia Ann came in to see me talked of Kitty Ann Hunt—seems to feel unpleasant about it—I do not care in the least—she is welcome if he loves her and wishes to take her to wife. I am not jealous, while I have my mind free from embarrassment and can exercise it for my own advancement I do not care for the personal attractions of any other woman. If he does not love me then it is sad after all these years of devotion but I cannot afford to weep and lament and ruin my own life for that.”

In this entry, Wells indicated that she did not mind her already much-married husband acquiring another wife. This passage might lead one to believe that Wells was indifferent to her polygamously married state. Yet, she was not consistent. Although her husband was a part of the first presidency of the church, she wrote, “If some of the beauties of life had fallen upon me, and I had shelter and protection from some great-souled [sic] man how differently my lot might have been and might be now—”

In addition to an emotional void, Wells recorded that she experienced financial stress over the first and third periods studied. Dependent upon her husband for financial support, she wrote of her desire to be independent. In the first sample period, she revealed, “My heart is heavy I feel if I had my home and means independent I would be much more comfortable and it would be better in every way.” By the third sample year Wells recorded a somewhat different viewpoint by writing that she would be glad if she did not have to devote all her time to getting her own living. She also complained, when her husband divvied up the finances, that she had not received a fair portion and that he would be doing her a great injustice if she were not given more. Wells fretted
that she received less than her portion because she had no one to speak for her. She wrote, "I regret I have not a son to speak for me as all the others have, but I must submit to the divine guidance and destiny that has overshadowed my life." Resigned to her lot, Wells did not seem happy with the financial situation within her family.

In addition to her own woes, Wells wrote about the suffering caused by the heavy sanctions that were placed upon the Mormon people. During the second sample period, she reported that those who had fled to Mexico were living in great poverty and destitution "because of having obeyed the laws of God." But Mormons in Mexico were not the only ones who suffered. According to Wells, the hardest lot fell upon polygamous wives. For instance, she wrote, "Such times as these are O how hard it is for us all but especially for women in the order of plural marriage young and inexperienced how my heart aches for them." This theme continued throughout Wells’ diary during the third sample period. She reported that a judge had rendered a decision in the case of a child born in plural marriage that was even more severe than the anti-polygamy laws. In regards to the decision, Wells wrote, "So it seems everything falls heavily upon woman." It seems that Wells implied in this comment that it would be the mother of the child who would suffer under the harsh judgments, not the father.

Wells further wrote of the effects of the laws in her own life, especially how "inconsistent” it was for a husband and wife not to be able to visit with each other, and how "dreadful” it was not to be able to see her own children’s father. In addition, she noted that it was "very unpleasant to creep into one’s apartments like a thief” to avoid being arrested for visiting with her husband. According to Wells, the year that the Edmunds-Tucker Act was passed by Congress brought the heaviest sorrow she had ever
known, a sorrow that caused "all past griefs [sic] to sink into insignificance." To cope with the sorrow Wells turned to God. She wrote, "O, may the God who rules and controls all things help us bear this fearful calamity that has fallen upon us." Like Helen Mar Whitney, Wells expressed concern over her daughter, Louie, marrying a non-Mormon. In regards to one of her daughter's male acquaintances, she wrote, "Dear Joe how sorry I am he is not a Latter day Saint [sic] in sentiment and spirit-Lou is the dearest sweetest girl in the world almost and must never marry any one who is not good & pure & true in the Gospel." This passage indicates that marrying within the faith was paramount to Wells.

As an interesting note, Wells wrote about an experience that occurred in the second sample period with a non-Mormon, female doctor. The woman had asked her for information about Mormons to use in a lecture for an international council in Washington, D.C. Of the woman, Wells recorded, "She evidently thinks she can do more towards our cause than any Mormon woman can do. After being here 15 months she knows more than we know ourselves. Her manner and her discourse are equally repulsive to me." Wells' reaction demonstrates that she despised the assumption that Mormon women could not assert themselves in their own cause.

During the third sample period, in contrast, she wrote that the Mormon people had been "so much advised to be quiet and at peace," to deter the prejudice against them. As the Exponent's editor, Wells' admission likely influenced the content of the paper during the third sample period, as the Shoemaker Reese model would predict. Because Wells controlled much of what was accepted into the paper, she could have easily applied
this form of self-censorship, which would explain the paper's significant drop in articles concerning polygamy during the final sample period.

The Woman's Exponent: A Part of Mormon Women's Lives

After delving into the themes of polygamy found in Mormon women's diaries, it is interesting to note that the Exponent was referred to in seven of the fifteen diaries. In their diaries the women reported reading and contributing to the paper, and to several—Helen Mar Whitney and Emmeline B. Wells— it was a focal point in their writing. Also, the diaries revealed that the Exponent office was a place that Mormon women liked to visit. The women evidently felt the paper important enough to regularly mention it in their diaries. Therefore reviewing their entries concerning the Exponent will provide a link between the two primary sources of this thesis.

In the first sample period, two mentioned the paper in their diaries—Emily Dow Partridge Young and Emmeline B. Wells. Young had simply written, "I took an article to the Exponent office."167 While Young made only one entry, Wells mentioned the paper on sixty-eight occasions. The abundance of Wells' entries is understandable considering that she was the paper's editor and recorded spending a great portion of her time in the Exponent office. For instance, she typically would write, "Worked hard in the office all morning, had lots of visitors"168 or "many ladies in the Office, preparing the paper was so busy I could scarcely pay much attention to them."169 Wells also recorded writing stories and editorials. In addition to recording her daily routines, she demonstrated frustrations. At one point she noted, "My paper goes on slowly I get in so little that is good from my correspondents I wish our sisters would make a greater exertion."170 The frustrations did
not ever let up, as is evident by these entries made in exasperation, "Well it does seem just impossible to get the paper out on time, no matter how hard I may try" and "— perfectly awful paper not ready most aggravating thing after all the hard work."171

In the second sample period, six women mentioned the Exponent in their diaries. Ninety-six entries were made among these six. Again, most were by Wells, sixty-one. However, Helen Mar Whitney also prolifically noted the paper in her diary; she mentioned it thirty times. Three of the other four women mentioned the paper once, and one mentioned it twice. Some entries noted only that the paper had been read that day.

Patty Bartlett Sessions, for example, noted on February 6, 1887, that she had "read the exponent through to day."173 Whitney was likewise prone to report reading the paper for the day. Others recorded their contributions and subscriptions. Sara Davis Thatcher’s Mother sent a subscription to her in January 1887.174 Emma W.M. Neilson recorded that she wrote to the Exponent office and latter "Subscribed for Exponent."175 As in the previous sample year, Emily Dow Partridge Young had written articles for the paper. However, she had them printed under a pseudonym or her first initial and middle name. She wrote, "Articles published in the Exponent signed Eng. E. N. G.—E. Dow—were written by Emily P. Young."

Whitney also wrote for the paper, often at Wells’ request. For instance, she inscribed, "Wells call[ed] last Friday to see if I had written anything for Ex—not knowing that I was sick."176 And "Em. Begges [sic] me to try to write again for the Ex—."177 She recorded writing specific articles for the paper as well, such as "Scenes and Incidents at Winter Quarters."178 Whitney also actively sent copies of the paper to non-Mormons. She recorded, "sent away Ex . . . to the Gentiles."179 What was most
notable about Whitney’s diary entries was the great delight she took when someone
had complimented one of her articles. Whitney beamed, “She [Sister Levi Richards]
surprised me by praising my scetches [sic] of history, in the Ex, so highly, & begged me
to continue them.” About two months later she again flaunted that she had received “a
very kind letter” from a stranger, thanking her for the “very excellent sketches in the W’s
Exponent.”

Emmeline Wells’ entries were much like those of the preceding sample period.
She noted “lots of visitors” to the Exponent office, many of which were high-profile
women in the church such as Zina Young. Also during this period, Wells had a lot of
problems with the press. On October 15, 1887—the paper was always published on the
first and fifteenth of each month—she complained, “Had the Revise up here early and the
paper ready for the press but did not get it printed. They disappointed me as usual. It is
such an annoyance and has occurred so often that one would think it a common grievance
and cease to worry. Many coming in for their papers and such a disagreeable day.”

The final sample period followed suit of the previous year. Five women
mentioned the Exponent in their diaries, with a total of eighty-seven entries. Fifty-eight
belonged to Wells, twenty-six to Whitney, while the remaining entries were from three
others. Clarissa Harding Williams wrote that she had “ben [sic] reading the Exponent all
the forenoon.” Likewise, Neilson wrote, “Read some in . . . Woman’s Exponent.”
Young recorded the articles that she had written in the paper, again using a pseudonym or
shortened E. Dow or C. Dow to indicate her authorship. Whitney repeatedly
mentioned the paper in the same manner of the previous year, while Wells made a few
interesting entries during this period. Wells noted that a non-Mormon asked for copies of
the paper. She documented, "I have had a letter from Countess Selkirk, asking for
copies of the paper and speaking very nicely to me."^{187} Also, during this period, Wells
wrote a serial story in the *Exponent* entitled "Hephzibah." This story was the one
depicting a young Mormon wife being abandoned, "with baby in arms" by her Mormon
husband.^{188} There were several entries about this story; for instance, she wrote, "I am
preparing another chapter of Hephzibah—I hope it will be of sufficient merit to publish in
book form."^{189} In another she explained:

> I have been finishing another Chapter of Hephzibah it enters in to my very soul to
> write those things no one knows save only those whose hearts are interwoven with
> their themes how much one suffers in writing for the public, the innermost feelings of
> the soul—^{190}

By the third sample year, Wells continued to experience frustrations as the
paper's editor. This year's theme was finances. She grumbled in her diary, "I am trying
to get some money together for the printers but the people pay so poorly for their
subscription."^{191} On the lighter side, she again affirmed:

> It is hard work to get suitable copy, even those who can afford to pay are not very
> successful & I depend entirely upon those who like to get into print. I have offered
> some inducements besides subscription free, but it is not much of a success. I have to
do a great deal myself and depend upon my sister and two or three others.^{192}

Here, Wells clearly conceded that "those who like to get into print" were the women who
regularly contributed articles to the paper. Despite Wells' frustrations with the
mechanics of running the *Exponent*, Mormon women seemed to appreciate her efforts.
For if the paper was not important to them, so many would not have mentioned it in their
personal diaries.
Notes

1 Eliza Maria Partridge Smith Lyman, Diary, January 22, 1882, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2 Emmeline B. Wells, Journal, April 13, 1881, Brigham Young University Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

3 Wells, April 30, 1881.

4 Wells, May 11, 1881.

5 Wells, January 10, 1882.

6 Jane Charters Robinson Hindley, Diary, August 15, 1882, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

7 Hindley, September 7, 1882.

8 Emily Dow Partridge Smith Young, Diary, July 29, 1881, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

9 Young, August 3, 1882.

10 Emily Stevens Dalton, Copied—of an old diary of Emily Stevens Dalton, November 3, 1882, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

11 Josephine Streeper Chase, Diary, June 19, 1881, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

12 Hindley, March 25, 1882.

13 Wells, December 9, 1881.

14 Wells, December 21, 1881.

15 Hindley, May 20, 1882.

16 Young, March 15, 1882.

17 Hindley, April 16, 1882.

18 Wells, March 15, 1882.

19 Wells, March 16, 1882.
20 Wells, March 20, 1882.

21 Wells, March 27, 1882.

22 Wells, November 2, 1881.

23 Wells, February 3, 1883.

24 Young, May 11, 1881.

25 Young, May 13, 1881.

26 Wells, July 18, 1891.

27 Wells, December 1 and 2, 1887. The women were Helen Maria Fiske and Mary Ann Evans.

28 Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, Private Diary, October 26, 1889, Utah State University Special Collections, Logan, Utah.

29 Hindley, January 21, 1887.

30 Laura Ann Keeler Thurber, Private Diary, November 17, 1887, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

31 Emily Stevens Dalton, written between December 16, 1886 and January 7, 1887.

32 Wells, February 17, 1887.

33 Jane Wilkie Hooper Blood, Diary, October 6, 1887, Utah State University Special Collections, Logan, Utah.

34 Thurber, October 26, 1887.

35 Thurber, October 28, 1890.

36 Whitney, October 6, 1890 and Blood, October 4, 1890 (Blood also made entries in her diary on October 5, 11, and 12.)

37 Wells, October 6, 1890.

38 Wells, October 9, 1890.
39 Wells, October 4, 1891.

40 Emily E. Hart, Diary, April 5, 1886, LDS Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

41 Hart, April 6, 1886.

42 Sarah Ellen Richards Smith, Diary, January 1, 1890, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

43 Smith, January 21, 1890.

44 Smith, January 21, 1890.

45 Smith, January 29, 1890.

46 Whitney, June 13, 1886.

47 Whitney, April 24, 1886.

48 Whitney, May 9, 1886.

49 Whitney, August 23, 1886.

50 Whitney, August 30, 1886.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Whitney, October 15, 1886 and November 16, 1886.

56 Whitney, April 8, 1886.

57 Blood, August 22, 1886.

58 Ibid.

59 Blood, October 23, 1889.
60 Blood, September 30, 1887.

61 Blood, January 3, 1888.

62 Blood, October 23, 1889.

63 Blood, November 10, 1889.

64 Dalton, October 2, 1882.

65 Dalton, January 6, 1887.

66 Dalton, November 3, 1882.

67 Dalton, January 2, 1887.

68 Lyman, January 22, 1882.

69 Lyman, 1877. (The exact day and month was not recorded.)

70 Young, July 29, 1881.

71 Young, August 1, 1881.

72 Young, November 3, 1883.

73 James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, The Story of the Latter-Day-Saints (Published in collaboration with the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 159.


75 Young, August 7, 1883.

76 Ibid.

77 Thurber, May 28, 1890.

78 Thurber June 22, 1890.

79 Thurber, August 24, 1890.

80 Thurber November 14, 1890.
Thurber, November 30, 1890.

Ibid.

Thurber, January 2, 1891.

Thurber, February 27, 1891.

Ibid.

Thurber, April 8, 1891.

For examples see Chase, May 27, 1881, June 21, 1881, June 30, 1881, and July 21, 1881.

Chase, June 10, 1881.

Chase, June 19, 1881.

Chase, June 21, 1881.

Chase, August 20, 1889.

Chase, September 25, 1889.

Chase, October 23, 1889.

Ibid.

Chase, November 7, 1890.

Chase, November 7, 1890.

Chase, September 30, 1889.

Hindley, February 21, 1881.

Hindley, December 22, 1862.

Hindley, January 5, 1863.

Hindley, May 20, 1882.
Hindley, April 9, 1883.

Hindley, August 15, 1882.

Hindley, May 2, 1887.

Ibid.

Emma Wartstill Mecham Neilson, Diary of Emma W. Mecham Neilson, August 31, 1887, Brigham Young University Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

Neilson, August 26, 1887.

Ibid.

Neilson, December 3, 1887.

Neilson, December 7, 1887.

Ibid.

Neilson, (From December 1887 through February 1888.)

Neilson, December 20, 1887.

Neilson, January 17, 1888.

Neilson, January 23, 1888.

Neilson, December 26, 1887.

Neilson, March 18, 1890.

Neilson, June 13, 1890.

Neilson, September 14, 1890.

Neilson, February 11, 1891.

Neilson (From March 1891 to mid-December 1891, Neilson did not make one entry into her diary that demonstrated stress because of her husband’s absence and she regularly mentioned his presence in her life.)
Sara Davis Thatcher, Sara Davis Thatcher's Diary, February 3, 1878, University of Utah Special Collections, Salt Lake City, Utah.

123 Thatcher, February 3, 1879.

124 Thatcher, July 11, 1880.

125 Thatcher, July 4, 1880.

126 Thatcher, April 29, 1979.

127 Thatcher, January 3, 1887.

128 Thatcher, May 8, 1887.

129 Thatcher, May 23, 1887.

130 Wells, August 3, 1890. (In this entry, Wells lists her husband's other wives at the time: Martha, Lydia Ann, Susan, and Hannah.)

131 Wells, July 29, 1890.

132 Wells, January 21, 1891.

133 Wells, March 22, 1881, and October 10, 1890.

134 Wells, May 20, 1881.

135 Wells, November 29, 1887.

136 Wells, April 30, 1881.

137 Wells, May 13, 1881.

138 Wells, April 13, 1881, October 18, 1881, and February 23, 1888.

139 Wells, January 3, 1887.

140 Wells, January 28, 1887.

141 Wells, February 7, 1888.

142 Wells, June 4, 1890.
143 Wells, October 1, 1881.

144 Wells, October 10, 1881.


146 Wells, January 2, 1890.

147 Wells, April 9, 1890.

148 Wells, September 16, 1890.

149 Wells, September 20, 1890.

150 Wells, March 13, 1890.

151 Wells, March 19 and 20, 1890. (The entry was recorded under both dates.)

152 Wells, November 13, 1890.

153 Wells, December 9, 1881.

154 Wells, November 13, 1890.

155 Wells, March 4, 1890.

156 Ibid.

157 Wells, September 6 and 7, 1887.

158 Wells, August 4, 1887.

159 Wells, January 21, 1890. (Wells did not state what the severe judgement upon the child born in polygamy entailed.)

160 Ibid.

161 Wells, January 11, 1888, and July 23, 1890.

162 Wells, October 30, 1887.

163 Wells, December 31, 1887.
164 Wells, February 24, 1888.
165 Wells, February 28, 1888.
166 Wells, February 13, 1890.
167 Young, July 27, 1883.
168 Wells, April 29, 1881.
169 Wells, April 17, 1881.
170 Wells, July 9, 1881.
171 Wells, October 14, 1881.
172 Wells, February 1, 1883.

174 Thatcher, January 1887.
175 Neilson, August 23, 1887.
176 Whitney, April 19, 1886.
177 Whitney, October 4, 1886.
178 Whitney, July 20, 1886.
179 Whitney, June 1, 1886.
180 Whitney, July 1, 1886.
181 Whitney, August 31, 1886.
182 Wells, December 20, 1887.
183 Wells, October 15, 1887.

184 Clarissa Harding Williams (Wilhelm), Diary of Clarissa Harding Williams (Wilhelm), November 5, 1889, Brigham Young University Special Collections, Provo, Utah.
Neilson, January 13, 1889.

Young, March 2, 1890.

Wells, November 6, 1889.

"Hephzibah," story ran in the *Woman's Exponent* from June 1, 1890 to September 15, 1890.

Wells, January 9, 1890.

Wells, January 17, 1890.

Wells, October 7, 1890.

Wells, October 8, 1890.
Mormon women used the same rationale, divine sanctioning, to support polygamy in both their public and personal forums. However, Mormon women were more supportive of polygamy in the public forum, the *Exponent*, than in their private forums, their diaries and journals. In the public forum they were more supportive of polygamy than in their personal writings. First, they used multiple reasons to defend the practice, such as there being more righteous women than men, it cures selfishness, curbs prostitution, produces morally superior children, and fulfills the commandment to multiply and replenish. In their personal writings, however, the women cited only one reason, divine sanctioning, for accepting polygamy. Second, in the public forum, Mormon women emphasized that polygamy uplifted its participants, not only in the life to come, but in this life as well. In their personal writings, however, Mormon women clung only to the hope of being rewarded in the next life for their sacrifice. The sacrifices of polygamy, rather than earthly benefits, were the focus of the diaries. And finally, Mormon women’s public writing reflected only the positive arguments of polygamy, while their personal writings reflected many of the drawbacks.

It is this disparity that reveals how Mormon women portrayed themselves in their personal versus their public writings. This addresses the second part of the first research question dealing with whether or not Mormon women characterized themselves in the public forum in opposition to their personal experiences. However, there are several complexities involved in answering this question because it is clear that the women were
forced to write differently in their public and private writings. As an observer, it is easy to ascertain that Mormon women characterized themselves differently in the public forum by omitting the struggles of the practice that were revealed in their diaries. The editor of the *Exponent*, Emmeline B. Wells, was a prime example. Privately, Wells was unhappy with polygamy. Her diary revealed a struggle with loneliness and isolation within her marriage. Yet, she was the editor of the very paper that featured a supportive, public discussion of the practice that she privately criticized. Perhaps this seeming contradiction in Wells’ writing could be attributed to her belonging to a whole belief system that encouraged her to view polygamy as the men in the church viewed it instead of how she experienced the practice. Just as the actual experience in a religious tenet often falls short of the theological ideal, so did Mormon women’s personal writings of polygamy fall short of their public assertions.

It is not unreasonable to suggest that while an observer would interpret the disparity between the public and private writings as incongruous, a Mormon polygamous woman would not. Most of the women’s private writings did not blatantly disparage polygamy. Instead, they tended to mollify the suffering incurred by their polygamous marriages. Jane Hindley’s declaration represents how many of the polygamous women dealt with the hardships of their marriages when she related that she “must not murmur” against the consequences of the practice. Rather than ridicule the practice outright in their diaries, the women actually used their private writings as a safe way to “murmur,” if only to themselves, against polygamy.

With this in mind, it could be argued that although Mormon women were more supportive of polygamy in the public forum, the *Exponent*, than in their diaries, it is
doubtful that they tenaciously portrayed themselves in the public forum in opposition to their personal experiences. This is due to the fact that the women did not characterize much of their personal experience in the public forum at all. In the Exponent, Mormon women portrayed themselves as devout followers of what they believed to be God’s will. This was apparently true, considering the information found in their diaries. For instance, the diaries revealed their willingness to sacrifice temporal security and happiness by entering into and sustaining polygamous marriages. In both forums, public and private, the women uniformly characterized themselves according to their righteous willingness to submit to God. However, their obedience to God was the only way that they characterized themselves in the public forum. In the Exponent the women presented the theological motivations for their acceptance of the doctrine of plural marriage, while they were silent upon their personal experiences after the doctrine was implemented. Personal feelings and anecdotes concerning polygamy were not presented in the Exponent. For instance, overcoming selfishness was cited in the paper as a reason to accept polygamy, but stories and sketches demonstrating how the selflessness was achieved were nonexistent. Further, based on the diaries, Mormon women’s personal experience with polygamy would hardly motivate readers to accept the practice. Because theology and reality were in opposition, then, the writers of the Exponent avoided portraying their personal experiences as polygamous wives. In this way, the women were able to honestly defend polygamy in their paper without actually portraying themselves in opposition to their personal experiences. This is not to say that the Mormon women’s public writings about polygamy demonstrated satisfaction with the practice. They did not. It only means that Mormon women did not support polygamy in the public forum by
using personal examples. The effect was that the women evaded the inconsistencies between their ideals and their experiences—even if only in their own minds. This is assuming a lot, but it does account for the disparity between the two forums. Despite the women's efforts to emphasis the theological side of the practice, nevertheless, the content of their public writings about polygamy is misleading when compared to their personal writings on the subject.

Another possible reason that Mormon women presented only the doctrinal side of polygamy in their public writings was that their target audience was other Mormon women. Essentially they were preaching to the converted—the Mormon faithful—as most of the Exponent's circulation was within Utah. Because these readers accepted polygamy as a tenet of their religion, and religion was central to their lives, the writers relied on this tenet to build a mutual support among Mormon women during a difficult time of governmental sanctions against them.

The second research question addressed the connection between Mormon women's public views of polygamy and the views of the male leaders of the church. As the Shoemaker-Reese model predicted, Mormon women's public views of polygamy were influenced by the patriarchal ideology of Mormonism. So much so, that the content of the Woman's Exponent mirrored the arguments made by the male leaders of the church. The women's support of polygamy holistically reflected a male, rather than a female perspective. The paper might have reflected the women's religious beliefs, but only as the patriarchy had sanctioned them. From this result it can be deduced that all the rings of influence that Shoemaker and Reese identified, including the background of the individual journalist, organizational structures, extramedia forces and ideology, were
heavily affected by the philosophy of the male leaders of the church. Rather than
fashion a voice of their own concerning polygamy, Mormon women reproduced the voice
of their male leaders. By supporting the patriarchal ideology, the writers and producers
of the Exponent placated both Victorian and Mormon social conventions.

The aim of the third research question was to discover whether themes of
polygamy in the Exponent and in Mormon polygamous women’s private writings became
less supportive over time as governmental pressure to stop polygamy increased. The
answer is that, yes, arguments supporting polygamy did decline during the sample
periods. However, it is more complex than that. While themes in the Woman’s Exponent
notably diminished, themes in the diaries were interwoven with the circumstances of the
individual women’s lives. Although themes in the diaries shifted and changed—for
instance, the theme of the anti-polygamy acts heightened as the sanctions were
increasingly felt by the writers—they did not follow a strong pattern of decline as did the
themes in the Exponent.

As expected, themes in the Woman’s Exponent did change in the eight years
surrounding the two anti-bigamy laws and Manifesto. The number of arguments
supporting polygamy decreased significantly, and some arguments disappeared
completely, such as the morality polygamy instills. Although the writers of the Exponent
in all three years reasoned that it was divine command that persuaded them to enter
polygamous relationships, there were fewer and fewer articles devoted to this argument
for each sequential sample year. Evidence shows, too, that the basis for this argument
changed over the eight-year span. Arguments in 1882 were persuasive in nature, as the
writers hoped to persuade their audience of the rightness of their marital arrangements.
By 1890, however, the writers became defensive and accusatory. And rather than focusing on the benefits of polygamous marriages, they focused on the wrongs they had suffered at the hands of Congress and other non-Mormons.

Themes in the *Exponent* reflect the changing attitudes of Mormon women toward polygamy. In 1882, Mormon women sought understanding and tolerance of their lifestyle. They were resigned to accept that patriarchy was the order of heaven, and hence plural marriage was necessary for their salvation. They clearly concentrated their efforts to present themselves favorably in this aspect, to Mormons and non-Mormons alike. They also used the *Exponent* as a forum to legitimize their marriage practices. In a sea of press that opposed the marital choices of polygamous Mormon women, there was one forum that defended the practice. In this way the paper functioned as a cohesive force that fostered a sense of unity and shared experience among Mormon women.

By 1887, the writers of the *Exponent* became less supportive of polygamy, not only through the number of articles recommending the practice, but also through their tone in defending it. The *Exponent*’s writers minimized their efforts to convince readers that polygamy was desirable, and instead, used arguments such as freedom of religion, citing their constitutional right to live in polygamy.

In 1890, new themes appeared. Polygamy was lightly mentioned and sparingly supported. Several stories condemned the unrighteous interference of non-Mormons in “God’s Kingdom.” Despite their insistence that it was a Godly way of marrying, none of the writers mentioned that they would miss the practice, for themselves or for their children. Also, Mormon men in 1882 and 1887 were praised for their unwavering fidelity to their wives, while non-Mormon men were criticized for their infidelity. By
1890, however, Mormon men were displaced from their high moral pedestal, as the
Exponent writers portrayed them in a less exulted and untainted light. Also, by 1890, the
writers were exploring the possibility that a woman need not marry to find fulfillment and
purpose.

What is peculiar about the themes surrounding polygamy in the Woman's
Exponent is the fact that Mormon women wrote so little of their personal experiences and
feelings. It obviously was an emotionally charged topic, considering space and the
vehemence that the women used to support it and citing personal satisfaction with their
experience in polygamy would have been the most effective way of arguing it its favor.
Truly, how could anyone argue with Mormon women if they had reasoned they enjoyed
polygamy? However, support was always based on external factors rather than personal
factors. For example, the Mormon women writers recommend polygamy because God
commanded it, the Bible sanctioned it, it elevated morality, etc. They never
recommended the practice based on positive personal experiences: they enjoy the
practice, that it is fun, or desirable in any other context than to gain salvation in heaven.
The impact that polygamy had upon Mormon women's personal lives was conspicuously
absent in the Woman's Exponent. Noelle-Neumann's theory nicely explains this
phenomenon. It is conceivable that Mormon women who opposed the accepted theology
of polygamy fell mute because of a fear of social isolation. As Emily Dow Partridge
Smith Young's diary indicated, Mormons who did not care for polygamy pretended to
accept it. Also, considering that church authorities and the Exponent writers pronounced
damnation on all those who would not accept polygamy, it is easy to understand the
social impetus for Mormon women writing in the Exponent to dampen any anti-
polygamous sentiment. Apparently, Mormon women had rather comply with the dominant ideology supporting polygamy than suffer isolation from their community, their religion, and their God. In consequence, the Mormon Woman's Exponent projected to its readers a unified female voice that endorsed only the best side of nineteenth-century Mormon polygamy—which from their arguments was the doctrinal, not personal, side of the practice. The results also mesh well with Shoemaker and Reese, in that internal influences such as author's self-censorship and external influences such as social ideology affect media content. It is clear that some of these influences were functioning considering that the issue of polygamy as presented in the Exponent did not mirror the reality of polygamy as found in the women's diaries.

The reality of polygamy was not pleasant, especially after the anti-polygamy laws came into full effect. Mormon polygamous women's diaries were fraught with themes of loneliness, abandonment, financial insecurity, and heartbrokenness. These themes extended throughout all three sample periods. Only the theme of the anti-polygamy laws and their effects varied over the three periods. In the first sample period, a year before and after the Edmunds Act, the women were concerned, but not truly alarmed about the government sanctions against the Mormon people. By the second sample period that had significantly changed. The laws and their effects were mentioned in the women's diaries more times than any other theme concerning polygamy, including loneliness. This was due to the fact that many of the women suffered under the laws. Husbands and relatives were hunted, fined, and imprisoned. One even lost her husband in an anti-polygamy raid, when he was shot to death. Mormon women's diaries reflected the hardship caused them by the implementation of the laws. In the third sample period,
the anti-polygamy laws were again mentioned less in the diaries. By this time, the Edmunds law had been in effect for seven years, and the Edmunds-Tucker law for two and a half. The women had grown accustomed to the sanctions and their effects. Also, the leaders of the church conceded to the laws by issuing the Manifesto banning further polygamous marriages. Concerning the polygamy issue, the Mormon people were defeated.

While the theme of polygamy became evidently less and less supported in the *Exponent* pages over the three sample periods, the women’s support in the diaries did not drastically change. The women’s support of polygamy in the diaries did not depend on outside influences, as did in the paper; rather support of polygamy in the women’s diaries depended upon individual circumstances and experiences. Certain conditions seemed to help the women be more satisfied with polygamy. The most important was the husband’s attentiveness, followed only by financial security. In the diaries, the two seemed to run together. When the husbands were absent, their wives recorded in their diaries a lack of finances, but when the husbands were visiting the women did not tend to record that they were in financial need. Also, the women who were new to polygamy seemed to suffer more than the women who had been living in the practice for many years. Josephine Streeper Chase, for example, was miserable when she first married in polygamy, but after ten years of marriage, she recorded less dissatisfaction. Emmeline Blanche Woodward Harris Whitney Wells also recorded being less satisfied with her polygamous state in her younger years. Others followed suit. Mormon women seemed to initially have a strong aversion to the experience of being a polygamous wife, but after years in the practice they complained less of emotional suffering.
What is intriguing about Mormon polygamy, and to an outsider’s perspective is in seeming contradiction to their own interest, is the vehemence with which Mormon women defended the practice. For instance, as governmental pressures increased, Mormon women’s private writings did not become significantly less supportive of the practice. This is partly due to the reasons Mormon women entered polygamy. Both their public and private writings revealed that the women truly believed polygamy to have been a commandment of God, against which rebellion would bring upon their heads eternal damnation. Yet there were other practical reasons the women maintained their support of the practice. Most significantly was the women’s honor in Victorian society. While it was relatively easy for the Mormon Church to forsake its stance on polygamy, it was very difficult for the Mormon people to forsake the practice in their personal lives. The first necessitated an alteration in policy; the second, necessitated divorce for Mormon polygamous women. Not only would the women have to face the disgrace of divorce in Victorian society, but to acknowledge that polygamy was anything less than a commandment of God would have been to implicate themselves as willing participants in immoral relationships. Further, the children of polygamous wives would then be illegitimate. Mormon women regarded themselves as highly moral, so once committed to polygamy, the women could never turn back without the most dire consequences. Despite the fact polygamy did not make Mormon women happy, they did not see it as being in their best interest to disparage it in the public sphere. They made only limited criticisms in their private journals. Because Mormon women would have placed themselves in a socially compromised light by denouncing polygamy, the practice would have indefinitely continued if not for the Manifesto. With this in mind, perhaps Mormon
women were caught in a patriarchal web in which they were unable to free
themselves, as the American press asserted.

Considering the results, it seems evident that Mormon women would not have
been induced to live in polygamy if they had not firmly believed it to be commanded of
God. It is also clear that the *Exponent* was strictly a public forum for the writers, as the
women’s intimate feelings and opinions about polygamy in the paper remained elusive.
Only in the diaries were feelings expressed and personal experiences explored. They
revealed that the consequences of polygamy, in Mormon women’s lives, were sometimes
harsh and usually sad. In all cases, however, the *Woman’s Exponent*, along with Mormon
women’s diaries, has preserved a moment of women’s history into which we may now
glimpse, and charted the arguments that nineteenth-century Mormon women employed to
defend their own acquiescence to a patriarchal order.
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