Pseudo-Polyandry: Explaining Mormon Polygyny's Paradoxical Companion

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At the inaugural Sunstone Theological Symposium held in Washington, D.C., I presented a paper having the same title as today's presentation. This presentation is an abbreviated version of that paper. The details, however, are the same. In that paper I reviewed the historical literature of "Mormon polyandry" up to but not including the researches of Richard Van Wagoner, my distinguished commentator. Because I wrote that paper without knowledge of Mr. Van Wagoner's research, I naturally made no reference to his analysis of the subject. In the year-and-a-half since delivering that paper, Mr. Van Wagoner has published three pieces interpreting Nauvoo "polyandry." A short piece appeared recently in an issue of Sunstone, based both on the untitled chapter four of his book, Mormon Polygamy: A History, as well as on his article published in Dialogue entitled, "Mormon Polyandry in Nauvoo."

The purpose of this paper is to present my definition of the type of "polyandry" which existed in the formative stages of Mormon polygyny. I will begin by presenting a general review of the "Mormon polyandry" literature. I will then explain why I feel it has been historically inaccurate to leave unqualified and undefined in that literature the term "polyandry." I intend to focus on this subject both from more macroscopic as well as microscopic points of view than has previously been attempted. From the macroscopic viewpoint, I will suggest some etymological and anthropological reasons for why we should be far more precise in using the term "polyandry." Then, in combination with this perspective, I will incorporate my more microscopic analysis which I feel yields a new framework for understanding the previously unscrambled clues which to me explain the real "Mormon polyandry"—what I have come to term "pseudo-polyandry."

If polygyny is the most controversial story in the history of Mormonism, "polyandry" must surely be its darkest, least understood, and most troubling chapter. For while the late Fawn M. Brodie's theoretical framework for "polyandry" in Nauvoo has only been modified and further refined by more careful historical successors, nevertheless, her basic analysis of the data regarding the sexual activity of those engaged in "polyandry" remains basically unchallenged. In fact, except for one case, no matter how brilliant the theoretical hand-waving, the bottom-line assertion of Brodie still is uncontradicted: that the women who chose to enter the quagmire of "polyandry" often continued sexual relations with their former husbands while at the same time commenced them with another man to whom they had been sealed. This is the reason why the student of early Mormon polygyny faces no more perplexing problem than explaining the paradoxical role "polyandry" played in the formative stages of LDS history. In the wake of Fawn Brodie's biography of Joseph Smith, no one has, in my opinion,
counterproposed a model of Nauvoo "polyandry" which harmonizes all of the available data. The other scholars may not have phrased it this way, but the essence of Brodie's answer to the question everyone has is still the same. Of the Prophet she said:

Joseph could with a certain honesty, inveigh against adultery in the same week that he slept with another man's wife, or indeed several men's wives, because he had interposed a very special ceremony. And who was to say him nay, since in the gentile world the simple pronunciation of a few time-worn phrases by any justice of peace was all that was necessary to transform fornication into blessed matrimony.

"The spoken word," she concluded, "stood between him and his own guilt. And with Joseph the word was God."1 Joseph, according to Brodie, minimized the risk of paternity detection while at the same time satisfying his insatiable urging for liaisons by cleverly choosing to limit his field only to married women.2 Similarly for the women, Brodie says:

But the true measure of the magnetism of plural marriage can be best seen in the attitude of the Mormon women. They required very little more persuasion than the men, though the reasons are not so obvious. Nauvo was a severe town, puritanical and acutely self-righteous. But . . . a town full of "church widows," who husbands were out proselyting . . . [which created] circumstances . . . [that made] many women . . . [find] polyandry to their liking . . . [Yes,] what of these married women who gladly signed themselves and their children over to the prophet's keeping and glory for eternity, leaving their unwitting husbands to be wifeless and childless in the celestial kingdom? Was this a melancholy commentary on their own marriage state or a tribute to Joseph's charm? Or was it perhaps a mothered yearning for new experiences, released now by opportunity masquerading as religious duty?3

The best scholars who have written since Brodie's analysis have been a bit more cautious. But as I say, the fundamental question regarding sexual activity after alleged "polyandry" remains unclear and unresolved. John A. Widstoe, obliquely responding to Brodie's sweeping generalizations, argued that all marriages of the sort were for "eternity only." Unaware, however, of solid evidence to the contrary, he was incorrect when he suggested that all polyandry-like marriages were only platonic in nature. Because the evidence has been inconclusive on this point, everyone since has, more or less, been ambiguous on this point. Daniel Bachman concluded that "[It would be quite speculative . . . to agree with Widstoe's conclusion that these were wholly celestial or spiritual arrangements."4 In fact, Bachman's study was the first in which solid evidence was presented which not only showed that Joseph Smith had sexual relations with a woman who was already legally married to another, but he did so by also showing that Joseph Smith had fathered a child as a result of this relationship. Where's the ambiguity you might say? The ambiguity is

2Ibid., pp. 345, 346.
3Ibid., pp. 304-5.
not in the evidence that it happened. His path breaking analysis is not complete enough to explain fully how the parties concerned justified such relationships. Donna Hill was fairly superficial in her analysis: "There is evidence that some undeclared polyandry existed in the early stages of Mormon plural marriage," she says. But the next three paragraphs of her study only provide headlines. Unlike Brodie, she refuses to speculate on the nature of Joseph Smith's possible intimacy with these women.5

Lawrence Foster, author of what must still be considered the best available analysis of early Mormon plural marriage, is the most careful of all the writers who have tackled the subject of "polyandry" in Nauvoo. Foster improved upon Bachman's theoretical description of the Mormon marriage system. That system rested upon three main premises: (1) the concept I refer to as priesthood legitimacy; (2) the notion of eternal marriage covenants; and, (3) the concept that while marriage is generally monogamous in form, polygyny, under certain circumstances, was condoned. As Foster and Bachman analyzed these concepts, Joseph Smith's idea of priesthood legitimacy gave the Prophet authority which not only transcended but superseded civil marriage-making authority. Thus, if Joseph Smith felt that a marriage should be annulled or if he


felt he was authorized to have another wife, or another man's wife, he did not necessarily have to appeal to civil authority to do what he intended to do. The notion that marriage could last not only for "time" but also "for all eternity" buttressed the credibility of these priesthood prerogatives of the Prophet. No one else in the world had the authority to marry for eternity, so his power ultimately was the only legitimate one. Foster, as Bachman had before him, also cited teachings to the effect that if a woman became "alienated in her feelings & affections for her husband," she could, without necessity of divorce, be sealed to another man "higher in authority."6 Foster suggests that it was on the basis of this combination of concepts that Joseph Smith actually asked some men if they were willing to relinquish their wives not only for "time," but also "for eternity."7 Foster failed to refer to cases of women who were members of the church, whose husbands were not, whom Joseph Smith also asked to be his eternal wives. Presumably, he would have agreed that such sealings would also have been justified on the same grounds.8 Foster additionally attempted to explain why Joseph Smith approached wives of his followers who were on the verge of apostasy. He might have justified [such an] action by the view that since those

6Ibid.
7Ibid., p. 314 n138.
8Ibid., pp. 159-66 omits discussion of this type.
men had become unworthy and had forfeited their salvation, they had also forfeited their wives." To summarize Foster’s position: he feels that the “all previous covenants suspended” concept and the “moving up” concept cover “all [documented] cases under which Joseph Smith appears to have approached or taken married women as plural wives.”

Yet neither he nor Bachman ever explicitly resolved the issue whether women had sexual relations both with their legal husband and their newly sealed partner. Implicitly both Foster and Bachman suggest that women did conduct themselves so if they felt there was no other way to conceal from their first husband the relationship begun with the second man. As Foster puts it: “Given Smith’s mind-set and concern for authority, it seems inconceivable that he could have done what he apparently did without believing that he had a higher justification for his actions.”

Richard Van Wagoner’s analysis of the evidence goes no further in answering this question either. In fact, if I were to summarize the major historical writers on this subject using the dubious valid “political spectrum”-metaphor as an analogy, I would say that while Foster and Bachman lie mid-point between Brodie on the left and Widstoe on the right, I would have to say that Mr. Van Wagoner lies to the left of Foster. How far to the right of Brodie he is has been unwilling to reveal in his writings. Why I say this is because, unlike Bachan and Foster who are very clear about their ambiguity on this point, Mr. Van Wagoner only leaves us to infer what turn these married women’s sexual life took after Joseph Smith approached them and succeeded in convincing them to become a plural wife. We have no clue, except perhaps the tone of his presentation, whether he believed intimacy would be conducted with one or two or no husbands.

Clearly, the word “polyandry” has had a myriad of meanings among these scholars. From Brodie’s unqualified usage to Hill’s more restrained reference to “undeclared polyandry,” meanings surely have varied. Without question, Foster is the writer who has been the most precise in the use of the term. But was it, for example, just faith-like naivete which led Foster to conclude his
analysis of Mormon "polyandry" by saying that "apparent practices of this sort by Joseph Smith . . . have led to erroneous allegations that he sanctioned polyandry?" I think not. Obviously, he uses a narrower meaning for the term "polyandry" than have other writers who have dwelt with this issue. While he does not define his usage, it is clear he is relying on an anthropological definition of the term to make the conclusion he does. But even in his case, a definition seems in order given the fact that he asserts that Joseph Smith did not sanction polyandry despite his confession that his research could not positively determine whether or not sealings "for eternity" were for eternity only.13 I feel the microscopic portion of my analysis resolves that issue, but first I would like to present the elements of a more macroscopic approach to the "polyandry" issue.

Is there justification for a more precise definition of terms? I feel there are three reasons why greater precision should be employed. First, it is obvious there is good reason just given the looseness with which students of Mormon plural marriage have used this term. Additionally, precision in definition is necessary because previous studies of the issue have overlooked crucial data essential to the analysis of this subject. This data I will summarize later. Finally, a redefinition is justified simply because the instances of apparent polyandry in Mormon history are fundamentally different from instances of polyandry among human's in general.

It is to this more general area of focus that I would now like to direct your attention.

All of the terms—polygyny, polyandry, monogamy, and polygamy—are derived from Greek words. Polygyny is derived from poly or "many" and gynia, or "women"—that is, putting the terms together, polygyny is many women. Polyandry is derived from poly, again meaning "many," and andros, or "men"—which when put together gives polyandry as meaning many men. The most popular term, which etymologically and anthropologically speaking is the least accurately used word, is the term polygamy. Poly—"many," gamic—"marriage"—that is, many marriages. Obviously, monogamy means, as above, single marriage. Etymology alone, however, is insufficient for our needs here.

H. R. H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark's A Study of Polyandry is the classic analysis of polyandry among the human species.14 After discussing a similar etymology, Peter says:

For the purpose of the present thesis, the meaning which I shall attribute to each of these terms, as also to conjoint marriage, will . . . be the following:

12Ibid., p. 165.
13Ibid., p. 311 n19.
Polygamy: the marriage of more than two persons, one man and one woman, in the same union.
Polygyny: the marriage of one man to more than one woman.
Polyandry: the marriage of one woman to more than one man.
Conjoint marriage: the marriage of more than one man to more than one woman.

Peter went on to explain that he intended it to be understood that he was referring to instances of simultaneous and not successive marriages. (Anthropologists generally make a distinction between simultaneous and successive types of marriage. For example, simultaneous polygyny is when a man is concurrently married to more than one wife. However, successive polygyny refers to the instance of a man who marries a successive wife (or wives) following the divorce or death of a previous wife.) Peter further clarifies his definition of polyandry by precisely defining two additional terms: cicisbeism and marriage. Having found a wide variety of uses of both of these terms in the previous marriage and family literature, Peter chose to establish his definition as follows:

Obviously, what distinguishes polyandry from cicisbeism is marriage. Polyandry consists of shared legal obligations between the partners, while cicisbeism, though a publicly acknowledged relationship, does not entail similar obligations. Peter's definition of marriage is essential to understanding this point of distinction:

Obviously, given this definition of marriage, the term polyandry does not apply to the type of relationships which Brodie, Rachman, Hill, Foster, and Van Wagoner have described as existing in the early history of Mormon polygyny. In fact, strictly speaking, you could say the same about the term "polygyny." But how useful is a definition which appears to deny the existence of such a well-documented practice in Mormon history? The definition

15 Ibid., p. 21. He further explains the terms, secondary husband, and secondary wife as relationships tolerated among some of the world's cultures in which rights and obligations between individuals achieve a level higher than that ever attained by temporary and occasional dalliances, lovers, and mistresses. They will not be included in this paper since they have limited application to this discussion although they would have to be included in a more complete analysis of Mormon polygyny.

16 Ibid., pp. 21-22, italics in the original.
17 Ibid., pp. 22, 478-91.
18 Ibid., p. 23.
does not do this at all. Actually, it highlights a point which emerged from my more detailed analysis of the primary sources of Mormon marriage theory and practice. That Mormon society when divided into classes according to distinct levels of understanding which individual Latter-day Saints had regarding the rules and order of marriage, there existed within the "Mormon" population six concentric circles of knowledge of Mormon marriage theory and practice.

The first level consisted of those members of the Church who had no other understanding than what they understood from their previous cultural experience. The second level came when the convert learned that the Church considered the state of marriage a pure and undefiled state before God; that celibacy was not prerequisite to holiness in this life. That marriage, as a stage of spiritual maturity, should not be contracted with non-Latter-day Saints. Nevertheless, the Church would consider such marriages valid, though members so engaged would be considered "weak in the faith." Furthermore, those who were at this level understood that marriages preexisting to membership in the Church would be equally valid. Those who reached a third level of understanding—a level of understanding not taught before the Nauvoo period—learned that marriages, if they were to continue into eternity, had to be "sealed" by the power received by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery from the angels Elias and Elijah in 1836. The decision would have to be made by both partners of a marriage before they entered the

Nauvoo Temple and received the endowment and marriage ordinances scheduled to be performed there. A fourth level of understanding came when individuals understood that the Church would ratify successive polygyny. That is, Joseph Smith performed eternal marriage ordinances between men and women, after which the woman would stand proxy for the man's previous wife who had died. These persons learned, therefore, that simultaneous polygyny would be a characteristic of some who attained celestial glory. This was the deepest level of doctrinal understanding to which Joseph Smith gave unretracted public exposition. A fifth level of understanding came when individuals learned from Joseph Smith or through valid intermediaries that God had commanded him to introduce simultaneous polygyny for several purposes: (1) to "raise up a righteous seed" unto the Lord; (2) to establish on earth marriage covenants which were entered into by men and women before they were born; (3) to afford women who might not otherwise marry the opportunity to qualify for exaltation in the celestial kingdom since one prerequisite for the highest degree of exaltation was marriage for eternity; and, (4) to introduce a means of testing the members of the Church to see if they qualified for its highest spiritual blessings by demonstrating, in this manner, their faith that they would do all things God might require of them through their Prophet. The sixth and deepest level of understanding came when some individuals entered into polyandrous-like relationships in order to fulfill some or all four of the reasons for which
simultaneous polygyny was introduced. This level of understanding was always conceived of as only temporary in nature until death, divorce or resealing permanently altered the polyandrous-like relationship.

In effect, these six levels of understanding established within Mormon society, five coexisting but distinct “societies” within which Peter’s definition of marriage applied. Only the sixth-level “society”—those persons engaged in what I will soon define as pseudo-polyandry—were not married—at least in terms of this life. Each of the five other “societies” consisted of an internally recognized form of union which entitled the individuals so joined the specific kinship status of husband and wife, with reciprocal rights and obligations, including the right to procreate legitimate children as a result of the union. The marriage forms associated with the first two levels of Mormon “society,” consist of well-established civil, common law and religious public ceremonies which preexisted the establishment of the Church. The eternal marriage ceremony associated with the third-level “society,” and the successive polygyny marriage ceremony associated with the fourth-level “society,” although unique ordinances of the LDS Church, were, nonetheless, irreproachable by the law of the land. Only the simultaneous polygynous marriages of fifth-level Mormon “society” could be touched by the laws of the State of Illinois. As I will soon establish, sixth-level “marriages” were not marriages for this life. Thus, other than polygynous mar-

Joseph Smith never lived to see a sufficient period of peace so he could in public sermon, by further written revelation, or, perhaps, by way of treatise detail his rationale for the complex story of polygyny. Thus scholars, apologists and detractors alike have all been left to pick and choose, from a very slim amount of available data concerning this controversial topic. Surely the paucity of primary sources regarding early Mormon polygyny in general, and “polyandry” in particular, should have cautioned all against hasty conclusions. But just as there has been imprecision in the use of the term “polyandry,” so also has important data been overlooked in the specific description of apparent polyandry in early Mormon history. I should now like, therefore, to turn your attention to certain direct evidence for my contention that all polyandry-like marriage sealings performed under Joseph Smith’s direction were specified as marriages for “eternity only,” unless the first husband either gave explicit consent to a new marriage relationship or had abandoned his wife.

191 should not like to be understood as saying, however, that levels four and six harmoniously existed within the Church, let alone in contact with the “gentile” society at large.
## Mormon "Society" Levels Based on Marriage Form Awareness

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### Member Only Understands Marriage Practices of General Culture

**Level 1:** Marriage form is either civil, common law or legally recognized religious ceremony. This form was legal.

### Member Understands Non-Temple Church Marriage Standards and Teachings

**Level 2:** Marriage form is either civil, common law or legally recognized religious ceremony. This form was legal.

### Member Understands Eternal Marriage Ordinances

**Level 3:** Marriage form consists of civil/religious ceremony performed for "time" or for "time and eternity." These two varieties of marriage form were simultaneously legal and extralegal.

### Member Understands the Successive Polygyny Implications of Eternal Marriage Ordinances

**Level 4:** Marriage form consists of civil/religious ceremony performed for "time" or for "time and eternity." These two varieties of marriage form were simultaneously legal and extralegal.

### Member Understands the Doctrine of Simultaneous Polygyny

**Level 5:** Marriage form consists of religious ceremony performed for "time," or for "time and eternity." Both varieties of marriage form were, from standpoint of state law, illegal.

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Table 1. (Continued)

**Mormon "Society" Levels Based on Marriage Form Awareness**

**Member Understands the Rationale for Pseudo-Polyandry As a Means of Eventually Meeting Level Three, Four, or Five Requirements**

**Level 6:** Marriage form consists of religious ceremony performed only for eternity. Except in the case of death of the woman, if the conditions of relationship change between woman and the non-eternal husband, this marriage form would be altered to a level three-, four-, or five-type marriage.
As mentioned before, Lawrence Foster indicated that he was unable to verify whether sealings "for eternity" were for eternity only. I believe I have discovered such evidence. I discovered this key evidence when I read the transcript of the only known stenographic report of a woman who tried to explain how she could be sealed to Joseph Smith while still legally married to another. Though her interview ended abruptly, she said enough to give me the clue on how to formulate my hypothesis regarding "pseudo-polyandry." Based on her words, I postulated that indeed not only were there "eternity only" sealings between living persons, but also that Joseph Smith did not justify sexual intimacy for partners in such relationships. Thus again, according to Peter’s definition of marriage, the woman was not practicing polyandry. For this reason I conclude that all such cases of apparent polyandry were not polyandry in reality. I have, therefore, chosen to call such cases instances of "pseudo-polyandry." What provided me with my first key to this complex puzzle was the interview of Zina Diantha Huntington. She, in fact, is the first documented case of pseudo-polyandry in the history of Mormon polygyny. Her case, therefore, provides us the clearest insight into the procedures used by Joseph Smith at the very inception of pseudo-polyandry. Her interview, however, has remained enigmatic to several generations of historians and laymen. Specifically, two features of her interview have consistently been overlooked by students of Mormon polygyny. First, the fact that she more than once emphatically asserted that she was sealed only "for eternity" when first sealed to Joseph Smith by her brother Dimick in October 1841. (This, for example, should have been sufficient evidence for Foster to have at least said that there is credible evidence that there were "eternity only" sealings.) Second, she also stated that sometime later, during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young performed a second sealing ceremony between her and the Prophet, but this time they were sealed "for time and eternity." Apparently before this second sealing was performed, Henry Jacobs, Zina’s legal husband, consented to relinquishing her to the Prophet for both time and eternity.
Similarly overlooked crucial data exists which establishes that another pseudo-polyandrous wife of Joseph Smith—Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde—was also sealed to Joseph Smith on two separate occasions. The first sealing date may be found on the fourth to last page of an 1843 diary of Joseph Smith. The entry is in the hand of Thomas Bullock. The date given in this record is April 1842. Marinda, herself, provided the date of the second sealing: May 1843. This second sealing occurred after her husband, apostle Orson Hyde, returned from his mission.22 Orson had

22Joseph Smith, 10 March 1843-14 July 1843 Diary, kept by Willard Richards, and Smith, comp., "Affidavits on Celestial Marriage," L15, both in the LDS Church Archives. Brodie (p. 463), Donna Hill (p. 146), and Foster (p. 314 n357) were unaware of any dates confirming that Marinda was sealed to Joseph Smith during his lifetime. They were only aware of an 1857 sealing and had misinterpreted its meaning. While Bachman was aware of the May 1843 date (p. 348), he was not aware of the April 1842 sealing date. Consequently, he makes no use of such information in his interpretations of the Joseph Smith and Orson and Marinda Hyde relationship (see Bachman, pp. 76-77, [she is not mentioned in the following pages—Bachman’s section entitled "Joseph Smith and Previously Married Women":] 124-36, [and her situation is basically skirted on pp.] 339-40).

What each scholar has overlooked regarding the 1857 sealing of Marinda to Joseph Smith is the fact that on this occasion Orson Hyde served as proxy for Joseph Smith, and that Marinda served as proxy for her deceased sister, Emily, during this marriage ceremony. By virtue of the proxy ordinance rule, this ceremony served also to confirm that Orson and Marinda were to continue to remain together "for time" as had apparently been the case since the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. Because that's was one of the very first sealing ceremonies recorded in the Nauvoo Temple records, where errors sometimes were introduced as the clerks and recorders were then attempting to perfect their recording system, perhaps they made an error in recording the sealing ordinance between Orson and Marinda by failing to note that she was actually only being sealed to Orson "for time" and to Joseph Smith "for eternity." Although rarely required, "corrections" (by way of performing the ceremony) occasionally had to be attended to and the 1857 occasion of the sealing of Marinda's deceased sister to Joseph Smith afforded them the opportunity of formally correcting the record.

23Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Minutes, 30 January 1843, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

24Naturally, consent by all parties concerned was a rule which governed how all level three-, four- or five-type marriages were created from level one or level two marriages—which those marriages passed through a level six relationship or not.

off on 19 November 1842. Sylvia's grandson further indicates that shortly after Lyon was excommunicated, he deserted Sylvia not intending either to return to her or the Church again. How soon Lyon moved to Iowa City, Iowa, over a hundred miles upriver from Nauvoo, I have not been able to determine. Regardless of when he left Nauvoo, this would not necessarily coincide with the date of his separation from Sylvia. The unconfirmed date for Sylvia's sealing is given as 8 February 1843, five months after Lyon's excommunication. And approximately three months before Sylvia conceived a child by Joseph.

Based on her understanding of early Mormon marriages forms, Bathsheba W. Smith, wife of the apostle George A. Smith, could reconcile perhaps the most volatile case of pseudo-polyandry which was alleged to have occurred in Nauvoo—-the sealing "for eternity" of Jane Law to Joseph Smith. Bathsheba's testimony taken during the 1892 "Temple Lot Case" proceedings adds these details to the pseudo-polyandry model:

Q. You had a good many reasons to know [that Joseph Smith] had more than one wife you say?
A. Yes sir.
Q. Well what were they?
A. Circumstances.
Q. Did you ever see him cut to church with any one except Emma as his wife?
A. Yes sir.
Q. Take them home with him, and to and from church?
A. Yes sir, I have seen them hanging on his arm.
Q. Who have you seen hanging on his arm?
A. Well I have seen Mrs Law, if you want to know who.
Q. William Law's wife?
A. Yes sir.
Q. . . . Was he married to her?
A. To whom?
Q. To William Law's wife?
A. You can't prove it by me, for I was not present, but I believe it.
Q. Did not she have a husband at that time?
A. Yes sir.
Q. Well how could she be married to Joseph Smith if she had a husband living at that time?
A. Well I believe she was sealed to him for eternity.
Q. Sealed to who for eternity?
A. To Joseph Smith.
Q. Is that what you mean by "marrying" or "married,"—sealed to one for eternity?
A. Yes sir.
Q. That is what you mean by being "his wife"?
A. Yes sir, but sometimes they were married for time and eternity, and sometimes only for time. Sometimes for time, and some times for eternity.
Q. And she was sealed to him for eternity?
A. I believe she was.
Q. But you don't mean to say that Joseph Smith had that man's wife living with him as his wife?
A. No sir, I mean that she was sealed to him for eternity, and I think that it was a good thing for her, for she will be much better off in eternity—much better off in the next world then if she had stuck to Law.

26"Minutes of the High Council of The Church of Jesus Christ of Nauvoo, Illinois," 19 November 1842, LDS Church Archives.
27Irvin F. Fisher to A. B. Call, 9 April 1943, typescript copy, Nels B. Lundwall Manuscript Collection, microfilm of original manuscript volumes, in possession of author.
28The unconfirmed date of Sylvia's sealing is in the unsigned affidavit prepared and placed in Smith, "40 Affidavits," 1162, LDS Church Archives.
Whether Bathsheba Smith's speculations are accurate, nevertheless, she succinctly expresses the theoretical basis of pseudo-polyandry.

Perhaps no better evidence exists supporting my view that pseudo-polyandry specifically meant that the woman's sexual activity was, on the basis of her covenants, limited to but one man, the one to whom she was sealed "for time"/"for time and eternity," than in the case of Sarah Ann Whitney. Eight months following their sealing "for time and eternity," Joseph Smith became concerned that his marriage to Sarah might become publicized. Consequently, the Prophet approached the widower, Joseph C. Kingsbury, to ask him if he would be willing to act as a "nominal husband" to Sarah Ann Whitney, in order to spare Joseph and Sarah possible incrimination if she were to become pregnant. He agreed, and on 29 April 1843, as he explains in his diary, "I according to President Joseph Smith[']s Council & others agreed to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as Supposed to be her husband & had a pretended marriage for the purpose of bringing about the purposes of God in these last days." The available evidence suggests that Joseph Kingsbury and Sarah Whitney maintained a relationship which was never more than the Prophet originally ordained that it should be.

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In summary, the fundamental factors which Joseph Smith believed directly bore on the question of pseudo-polyandry are as follows:

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- Priesthood is the only source of legitimate authority to solemnize any covenant relationship including marriage.
- Culturally sanctioned marriage relationships entered into in good faith and continuously maintained without violation cannot be terminated without consent of both parties.
- The sealing keys of the priesthood can solemnize not only for "time," and not only for "time and eternity," but were also, in instances of pseudo-polyandry, used to seal only "for eternity."
- The nature of post-resurrection life was known to pre-mortals some of whom chose mates which they wished to, during their mortal lives, be sealed to for all eternity. Some males of exceptional valiance promised themselves to multiple females.
- When recognized by both parties, the sealing keys of the priesthood also has power to "loose on earth" civil marriages, or priesthood solemnized "time" only, "time and eternity," and "eternity" only marriages. In no case can this annulling authority abrogate either a civil or priesthood authorized marriage except by consent of both parties, or consent of the one party if the other has already forfeited the covenant by adulterous conduct. And if the covenant has been broken by one party, nevertheless, the civil or priesthood authorized marriage will remain valid until loosed (if possible) by civil, but at the very least, loosed by the priesthood authority only possessed by the prophet.

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During the lifetime of Joseph Smith the rule regarding proxy ordinance work was such that ordinances could only be performed in behalf of deceased blood relations. Many faithful women desiring to be sealed to faithful men in the Church did not have blood relations who members of the Church who they felt confident would perform this work after they were dead or who were old enough to be entrusted with such instructions. They
therefore elected to be sealed to a man of their choos-
ing "for eternity only."

Taken together, the evidence suggests to me that we should
outright reject Brodie’s image of Joseph Smith as a libertine who
invoked the Old Testament passage "If a man entice a maid . . ."
in order to take wives without benefit of ceremony. The rules
governing the practice of pseudo-polyandry bear out Erastus Snow’s
recollection of the Prophet’s teachings to him regarding plural
marriage: "[T]he law of the Lord concerning these things [is]
exceedingly strict." Regardless of the varieties of pseudo-
polyandry—ritual and reasoning were the rule rather than reckless
and unprincipled promiscuity. I have here pulled together some
previously unrecognized pieces of the polyandry puzzle to help us
better appreciate the internally consistent logic which distingui-
ished their acts both from polyandry and adultery. Joseph Smith
only expected pseudo-polyandry to be a temporary catalyst essen-
tial to his first attempt to simultaneously introduce to the cor-
porate consciousness of the Church the concepts of priesthood
legitimacy, eternal marriage, and polygyny. Pseudo-polyandry was
only scaffolding for a structure of much greater significance—a
scaffolding which would be removed when these other doctrines were
safely incorporated into the theology and practice of Mormonism.

—from St. George Stake General Meeting Minutes, 17 June 1883, LDS
Church Archives.

It cannot be construed, therefore, that Joseph Smith’s rev-
elutions gave license to any of the forms of polyandry as found
(rarely) in some of the world’s cultures. It seems clear to me
then that Joseph Smith did believe that covenants (even when
solemnized by what was ultimately illegitimate authority) were
binding for as long as a specific culture or country which acted
in good faith felt they had authority to so officiate. Thus, when
he sealed a woman to a man under the conditions that it would not
take effect until “eternity,” not only was he resolving the prob-
lem of securing the possibility of the exaltation of a faithful
sister who otherwise might not have the chance of forming an
eternal relationship, but he was also demonstrating that he did
respect the law of the land as far as it had authority to operate.

For example, when he received the following revelation, the word-
ing could not be construed to mean he had authority to annul any
covenant before men and women were dead:

All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths,
vows, performances, connections, associations or expec-
tations, that are not made and entered into and sealed
by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed,
both as well for time and for all eternity . . . are of
no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrec-
tion from the dead; for all contracts that are not made
unto this and have an end when men are dead (D&C 132:7).

Joseph Smith’s authority to alter culturally legitimate marriage
contracts could not extend beyond these limitations except when
consented to by all parties connected by the contract.

In this paper, I have attempted to enlarge the theoretical
framework so we can finally understand how Joseph Smith and these
women understood their polyandry-like relationships. If we were to accept as divine the theoretical framework upon which they justified their conduct, then we would, as they did, reject the notion that they were culpable before the law for polyandry. They believed that in the sight of God they were neither guilty of adultery nor bigamy. They had faith that though the world would refuse to understand, God did understand.