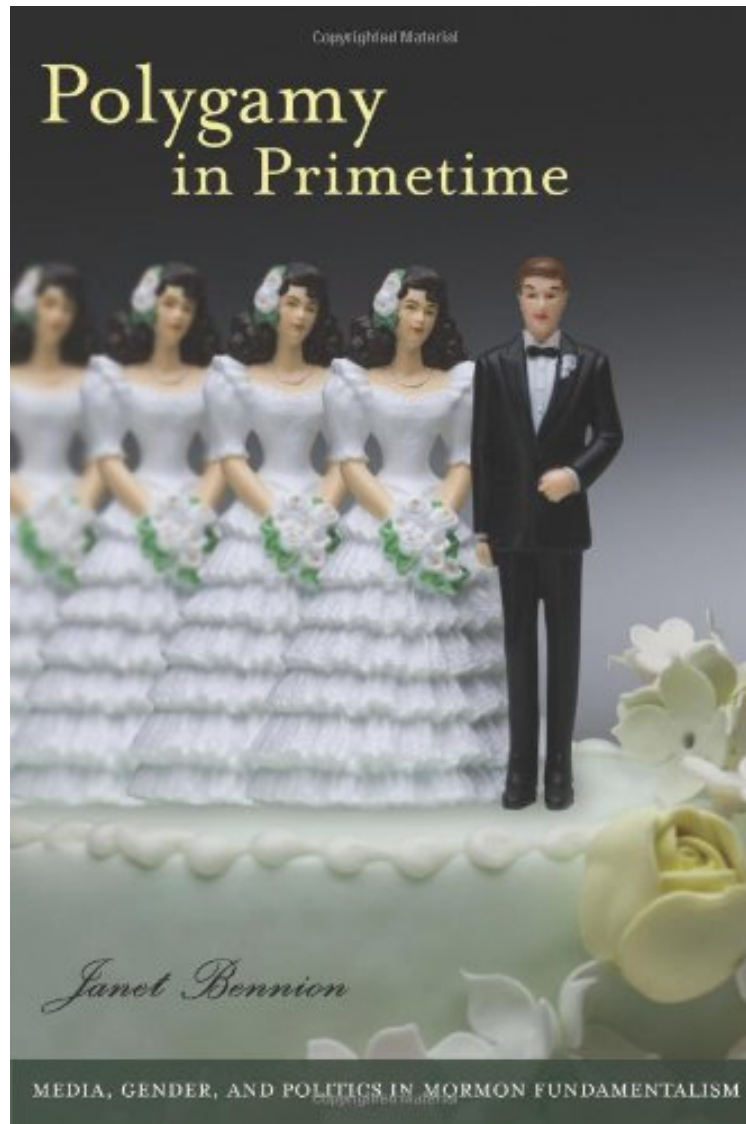


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Polygamy in Primetime: Media, Gender, and Politics in Mormon Fundamentalism (Brandeis Series on Gender, Culture, Religion, and Law)

Janet Bennion

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Janet Bennion : Polygamy in Primetime: Media, Gender, and Politics in Mormon Fundamentalism (Brandeis Series on Gender, Culture, Religion, and Law) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Polygamy in Primetime: Media, Gender, and Politics in Mormon Fundamentalism

(Brandeis Series on Gender, Culture, Religion, and Law):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good book and well researched
By Azburner
Insight into polygamy as it is now. This is not just someones personal story woven with sordid tales of living the lifestyle. Janet Bennion is a professional writer and accomplished field researcher who spent a considerable amount of personal time living with and interviewing polygamist families and communities. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in Fundamentalist Mormon based polygamy as it is now.
2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A positive view on a vile topic.
By Talia Carner
The author has been familiar with polygamy among the Mormons or Later Date Saints, both from her own distant family history and decades of research and publishing on these issues. In closely examining the subject, the author discovered quite a few serious cases of child molestation and rape, made easier by either the ideology, history, cultural environment, isolated rural locations, low parental investment on the part of the father, and secrecy of these insular communities where girls have no chance or opportunity to escape. Similarly, when men tend to gather harems, they must get rid of young males who will inevitably grow up to become their competition for the pool of available women. Boys are chased away, or deserted on some rural roadside. Yet, in taking a clear, full research with the tools of a sociologist, Bennion comes to a surprising conclusion: When polygamy works, when the relationships in the family are good, the formula actually empowers women: It frees them from the exclusive burden of child care, provides shared household responsibilities, and creates a supportive sisterhood. Women can be employed outside the home and reach autonomy, (some are educated, professional women,) and they are less likely to be bound by the demanding exclusive "service" of their spouses. Compared with facing divorce in traditional marriages, women in poly systems may find themselves much less emotionally isolated and have the space and capacity for self-development and growth. The author found quite a few biological sisters who had been close prior to entering a polygamous marriage with one man, and continue their friendship. Poly system also may solve the myriad problems of single mothers almost breaking under the strain of multiple roles and economic burden. Polygamy provides children with more parents to care for them and larger families with instant playmates and siblings with whom to create life-long alliances. This is certainly a fresh outlook on a topic so previously viled.

Recently, polygamy has become a primetime phenomenon. Television shows like *Big Love* and *Sister Wives* demonstrate the progressive side of polygamy, while horror stories from victims of abusive marriages offer less upbeat experiences among the adherents of the fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS Church). Bennion, herself a product of Mormon polygamy, seeks to dispel the myths and misinformation that surround this topic. This study, based on seventeen years of ethnographic research among the Allred Group (Apostolic United Brethren) and on an analysis of recent blog journal entries written by a range of polygamous women, examines the variety and complexity of contemporary Mormon fundamentalist life in the Intermountain West. Although Bennion highlights problems associated with polygamy, including evidence that some forms are at high risk for father-child incest, she challenges the media-driven depiction of plural marriage as uniformly abusive and harmful to women. She shows how polygamist families can provide both economic security and social sustenance for some women, and how the authority of the husband can be undermined by the stresses of providing for multiple wives and children. Going beyond the medias obsession with the sexual aspects of polygamous marriage, Bennion offers a rich description of familial, social, and legal contexts. Throughout, she makes the case for legalizing polygamy in order to allow greater visibility and regulation of the practice.

Polygamy in Primetime responds to [polygamys] new visibility [in the media] with an overview of the subject that, despite occasional academic language, will appeal to general readers seeking more details than the soap operatics of *Big Love* can provide. *Seven Days* (Burlington, VT)