



Why They Believe: A Case Study in Contemporary Polygamy

Amy Osmond Cook Ph.D.

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“Why do they do it?” is a question often asked about people who choose to live a polygamous lifestyle. This book aims to answer that very question. Driven by the theories of Kenneth Burke, Janja Lalich, George Cheney, Max Weber, and others, this six-year study explores organizational identification and unobtrusive control and compliance as it intersects with rhetoric, organizations, and religion. To explore the overarching question of why people choose to live this lifestyle, 14 current and 14 former polygamists volunteered to participate in in-depth interviews. Current members affirm their freedom of choice and say they would never live any other way. Former members state they were victims of brainwashing and organizational control. Both sides are represented equally, and both perspectives are given full treatment. In addition to in-depth interviews, written organizational documents were collected and analyzed using Extended Metaphor Analysis, Aristotelian Analysis, and Burkean Identification Strategies. Why They Believe investigates the question of “why they do it” in a depth never before explored. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the reasons polygamists choose to live this alternative lifestyle.

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