

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved:

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The aim of this study is to explore how women who identify as both active, believing Mormons and as feminists negotiate the contradictions between an ideology that values equality (feminism) and a religion that values patriarchy (Mormonism). Data were gathered through recorded and transcribed interviews with women who identify as both Mormon and Feminist. Findings suggest a) Mormon feminists practice a gentle approach to feminist activism, b) Mormon patriarchs practice a gentle approach to maintaining patriarchal hierarchy, c) privilege buffers the effects of patriarchy among many Mormon feminists, and d) Mormonism contains empowering elements that are attractive to Mormon feminists.

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Feminist and Mormon: Reconciling Ideals of Equality and a Culture of Patriarchy

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Julie A. George, Author

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1. INTRODUCTION

Can a woman be actively involved in a patriarchal religion and simultaneously espouse feminism? This is a central debate among feminists (Stopler, 2005; Bakht, 2007; Hoyt, 2007; and Ulrich, 2010). Patriarchy is foundational to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons or LDS), and yet feminist principles and ideals have also been present in Mormon culture since its inception in 1830 (Bushman 2006, King Newell 1992, Quinn 1992, Hanks 1992).

The purpose of this study is to understand how Mormon feminists reconcile an ideology of equality with belief in a patriarchal religion. Thirteen women who identify as both feminist and Mormon were interviewed about the intersection of feminism and Mormonism in their lives. Findings suggest a) Mormon feminists practice a gentle approach to feminist activism, b) Mormon patriarchs practice a gentle approach to maintaining patriarchal hierarchy, c) privilege buffers the effects of patriarchy among many Mormon feminists, and d) Mormonism contains empowering elements that are attractive to Mormon feminists.

1.1 MORMON PATRIARCHAL POWER STRUCTURE

The Mormon Church traces its origin to Joseph Smith, Jr.'s account of a visit from God the Father and Jesus Christ in the spring of 1820. The patriarchal structure of the Church can also be traced to the same account wherein God the Father spoke,

first saying only, "This is my beloved son. Hear him!" (Smith 1986, 1:17). God the Father presided over the visitation just as priesthood holders preside over contemporary Mormon meetings. The first visitation (as it is commonly referred to) is also the foundation of Mormon doctrine that the holy trinity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with Father and Son having glorified physical bodies, and the Holy Spirit laboring in spiritual form until his work on this earth is complete (at that time he will be resurrected to a glorified body as well).

According to Joseph Smith's history, the Aaronic priesthood (a lesser priesthood now conferred upon 12-year-old boys) was conferred upon Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist after they prayed for inspiration regarding baptism for the remission of sins. Priesthood keys are not literal keys, they are spiritual in nature. According to Smith, John said 1) priesthood keys provide authority to act on behalf of Jesus (including performing ordinances such as baptism), 2) priesthood keys are conferred by those who possess them, 3) the Melchizedec priesthood (the higher order of priesthood now conferred upon 18-year-old boys) would be conferred upon them by the apostles Peter, James, and John, and 4) Smith should be known as the first Elder of the Church and Cowdery should be known as the second Elder of the Church (Smith 1986, 1:68-73).

Priesthood in the Mormon Church is an overarching term referring to the right to act on God's behalf, but specific tasks require symbolic priesthood keys to access specific priesthood power. For example, in order to baptize someone into the Mormon Church, the person performing the baptism ceremony must hold the

priesthood key to baptize. For example, 12-year-old male who holds the Aaronic priesthood does not hold the symbolic key to perform baptism, but an 18-year-old male holding the Melchizedec priesthood does hold the key to perform baptism in the Mormon Church. Smith also claimed priesthood keys are used to prophesy, lead the Mormon Church, and translate the ancient writing he claimed the Book of Mormon came from.

Mormons believe Heaven is under a patriarchal rule, that Christ modeled his quorum of 12 apostles after the patriarchal structure of power in heaven, and that priesthood as practiced by Christ was restored to the earth in the visitation described above (McConkie 1966, p. 558-559). The modern organizational structure of the LDS Church includes General Authorities (including in order of rank: the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorum of the Seventy), Stake Presidents, Ward Bishoprics, High Priest Groups, Elder's Quorums, and the auxiliaries (Sunday School, Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, and Primary). Each auxiliary has a General Presidency, Stake Presidency, and Ward Presidency (How the Church is Organized, 2011) (see Appendix A).

Women hold leadership positions in the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary auxiliaries on the General, Stake, and Ward levels, but they do not hold the priesthood. A Ward Relief Society President receives mentoring and support from her Stake Relief Society President, but she is accountable to her Bishop. The Stake Relief Society President may make recommendations for Ward Relief Society candidates, but the decision is ultimately made by the bishopric. A woman receives

her calling to the position of Ward Relief Society President from her Bishop. She then makes recommendations for First and Second Counselors and her Secretary, but the decision is made by the bishopric and the callings are extended to members of the new Ward Relief Society Presidency by members of the bishopric. Similarly, the Stake Relief Society President is accountable to the Stake President, not to the General Relief Society President (see appendix A).

The Mormon Church was officially organized April 6, 1830 in Fayette, NY (Green 1971, Carmack 1989, Doctrine and Covenants, section 20). Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants (canonized Mormon scripture commonly referred to as the D&C) describes the organization of the Church and outlines the authority and obligations accompanying priesthood offices and general membership. Priesthood holders conduct meetings, ordain other men to the priesthood, administer the sacrament, give the gift of the Holy Ghost to baptized members, “and visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and to attend to all family duties” (D&C 20:47).

Members without priesthood (women and male children under the age of twelve) do not currently have ecclesiastic power, but are obligated to “manifest before the Church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation that they are worthy of [membership], that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures – walking in holiness before the Lord” (D&C 20:69). Meanwhile, boys aged 12-17 who hold the Aaronic priesthood and the office of deacon or teacher are obligated to “...watch over the Church always, and be with and

strengthen them; and see that there is no iniquity in the Church, neither hardness within each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking; and see that the Church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty...to warn, expound, exhort, and teach..." (D&C 20: 53-55, 59). While adolescent boys holding the priesthood are taught to treat women with respect, patriarchal structure within the Mormon Church literally gives boys the authority to monitor and supervise the conduct of their mothers and female leaders as well as their peers and younger children.

1.2 LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR MORMON WOMEN

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is run by lay leadership. Nearly every member of the Church has a job within the Church. Even three-year-olds are assigned to give talks, recite scriptures, or say prayers in meetings (with assistance from a parent, teacher, or sibling). Nearly all members have the opportunity to act as leaders within the Church on some level. Mormon women serve on the Relief Society (organization for women 18 years and older) and Young Women's (organization for females ages 12-17) Presidencies exclusively, and vastly outnumber men in Primary (children's organization) Presidencies. While leadership roles afforded women within the Mormon Church create opportunities for women to organize events, mentor, teach, and receive recognition for their contributions, the current power structure within the Church denies women autonomy within these leadership positions.

All leadership positions in the Mormon Church are overseen by the Priesthood. Priesthood offices are conferred based on gender, worthiness (adherence to Church doctrine), age, and Church callings (Priesthood Organization, 2010). Although women do not currently hold the priesthood, historical evidence suggests women held the priesthood in the early Church (King Newell 1992, and Quinn 1992). Furthermore, the Relief Society began as a self-sustained organization with independent funds and publications. Relief Society and Young Women publications were gradually taken over between 1929 and 1956 (Neil Evans, 1992). Decline in autonomous leadership within the Relief Society is a complex issue that will be addressed in the literature review.

Modern disparity between leadership roles afforded women and those afforded men is apparent in a transcript of addresses given during the 2004 Worldwide Leadership Training (an annual event providing training to local and regional leaders through global satellite broadcast) which focused on the relationship between the priesthood and the auxiliaries primarily run by women (the Relief Society, Young Women's Organization, and Primary) while ignoring the auxiliaries dominated by men (Sunday School and Young Men's Organization), highlighting the distinction between male and female leadership in the Church (Scott, 2004). Since the Priesthood in the Mormon Church currently is only allowed for men, the auxiliaries led exclusively by men holding the Priesthood were excluded from discussion.

During the training, distinction between auxiliaries led by women and those led by men was not examined or rationalized, but was acknowledged in the beginning of the address given by the second speaker when he stated, “There are five Church auxiliary organizations: Young Men, Sunday School, Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary. This message is directed to you of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary. The other two will be emphasized in future broadcasts” (Scott, 2004). Scott named the auxiliaries in a hierarchical order consistent with patriarchy: 1) Young Men (12-18 year-old males), 2) Sunday School (adult co-ed), 3) Relief Society (adult women), 4) Young Women (12 – 18 year-old females), and 5) Primary (18 months – 11 year-old co-ed). Scott stated the two exclusively male auxiliary organizations would be addressed in future sessions, but did not explicitly identify the gendered differentiation between the auxiliaries being addressed, or which sessions would address the exclusively male auxiliaries (presumably the priesthood session of the General Conference would address the exclusively male auxiliaries).

The 2004 Worldwide Leadership Training featured four speakers and one presentation depicting several meetings between auxiliary presidencies and priesthood leaders. All four of the speakers were General Authorities (all male). The speakers gave addresses outlining the role of auxiliaries and their relationship to the Priesthood. The presentation consisted of scripted performances wherein female leaders demonstrated reporting success to and accepting direction from priesthood leaders. Separating exclusively male auxiliaries from auxiliaries women

participate in suggest the relationship between the Priesthood and exclusively male auxiliaries is different from the relationship between the Priesthood and auxiliaries women participate in. The implicit lesson of this training is men in leadership have autonomous voices while women in leadership look to the male leaders to know what to say and how to behave.

The third speaker (Oaks, 2004) made correlations between priesthood/auxiliary/member relationship and traditional husband/wife/children relationships. He discussed the origins of Mormon auxiliaries, giving credit exclusively to the men in leadership when each auxiliary was formed, while ignoring or downplaying the work and insight of women who made the auxiliaries a reality.

The conception of the Relief Society occurred when Sarah Granger Kimball and seamstress Margaret A. Cook agreed to combine Cook's sewing skills with Kimball's financial resources to supply shirts for men building a temple. By the time the Relief Society came to Joseph Smith, Jr. they were fully organized and named, with a written constitution and bylaws (Granger Kimball, 1883). Yet, according to Oaks (p. 17), "The Relief Society was organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in 1842. Some leading women of Nauvoo proposed a written constitution, but the Prophet said he would give them 'something better' – he would organize them 'under the priesthood after the pattern of the priesthood.'" There is some controversy over the events of that day as to whether Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society to operate under the authority of the priesthood or if he actually conferred the priesthood to the female leadership of the Relief Society (King Newell,

1992 and Quinn, 1992). This point of dispute will be addressed in the literature review.

The Young Women's Association began when Brigham Young noticed that women of the Church were missing religious meetings in order to make preparations for meals. He felt they were placing too high a priority on looking nice and preparing what he viewed as extravagant meals. He approached Relief Society Secretary Mary Elizabeth Hales Horne and asked her to teach retrenchment to the women of the Church (Wilson Kramer and Durant Wilson, 1982). In other words, rather than concluding too much was asked of women, or asking men to help prepare and serve food, Young asked women to serve simpler meals and to dress more simply in order to continue serving meals and still attend meetings.

Young asked some of his daughters to form a similar organization for adolescent girls. Mary Elizabeth Hales Horne assisted President Young's daughters in organizing the Junior Retrenchment Association. Hales Horne, together with Relief Society President Eliza R. Snow and Vice President Margaret T. Smoot, organized the Senior Retrenchment Association in 1870. The Junior Retrenchment Society was the forerunner to the Young Women's Association (Wilson Kramer and Durant Wilson, 1982). While Brigham Young asked women to come together for the purpose of becoming more frugal and placing greater emphasis on religious practice, it was the women who actually organized, governed, and realized his vision. Yet Oaks presents the Junior Retrenchment Society as having been organized by Young, "to give young women increased opportunities to learn the gospel and

develop greater strength to keep the commandments and reject the destructive ways of the world” (p.17).

According to LDS.ORG, the Primary auxiliary was founded in direct response to 44 year-old mother of 12, Aurelia Spencer Rogers’ concern that children did not have enough supervision and that young boys in particular were becoming unruly. In a letter to Eliza R. Snow she lamented, “What will our girls do for good husbands, if this state continues? Could there not be an organization for little boys, and have them trained to make better men?” (History of the Primary, 2012). Aurelia Spencer Rogers planned and organized the primary, but she had to go through patriarchal channels of the Church to have the meetings approved. The first Primary meeting was a local meeting attended by 250 children. While the original intent was to tame the boys, “Since these leaders decided that ‘singing was necessary,’ girls were also invited to ‘make it sound as well as it should’” (Primary makes me happy, 2003).

The Mormon Church’s official website, LDS.ORG states, “While Aurelia Rogers never served as general president of the Primary, she has always been recognized as its founder” (Primary makes me happy, 2003), yet Oaks omits her role entirely, stating, “under President John Taylor, the necessity to teach children the gospel was recognized in the organization of what was called the Primary Association. At about this same time, the needs of young men to learn the gospel, to serve, and to prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood caused them to begin to be ordained and organized into quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood” (Oaks, 2004, p. 17). Not only is Aurelia Spencer Rogers’ role left out of Oaks’ remarks, so are the efforts of Eliza Snow

(General Relief Society President at that time), who likely brought Spencer Rogers' concerns to President Taylor and who played a direct role in the organization of the Primary (Primary makes me happy, 2003).

Based on the hierarchy outlined above, the General Relief Society President holds the highest office attainable to Mormon women. Yet, each Sunday morning when the General Relief Society President attends her ward sacrament meeting, the 12-year-old boy who serves the sacrament to her has more ecclesiastic power than she does. At 12 years of age, faithful Mormon boys receive the Aaronic priesthood, giving them authority to speak and act for God (Aaronic priesthood, 2010). As a woman, the General Relief Society President will never be entitled to the ecclesiastic right to claim authority from God. She can only claim personal revelation as it relates to her life, the lives of her children, and to her calling (Lesson 15: Recognizing Personal Revelation, 1998). Even so, priesthood leaders can and do challenge personal revelation and some claim authority in determining the validity of personal revelation (Oaks, 2010).

1.3 PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

My Mormon heritage goes back to the foundation of the Church. Every progenitor on my mother's side joined the Church while Joseph Smith Jr. was alive. Mary Elizabeth Hales Horne was my Great-Great-Great-Grandmother. I was born and raised Mormon by a mother who would not tell a white lie for fear of losing her place in the Celestial Kingdom (the highest kingdom in heaven) and the chance to

reunite with her beloved husband (my father) who was killed in a traffic accident when my Mother was 22 years old. Her strict adherence is admirable, but not uncommon even among members without stories of tragic loss.

My relationship with the Mormon Church has been tumultuous. I loved the community, which felt like a global extended family. The Mormon Church provides security to its members as well. I could walk into any Mormon meeting house and know what to expect culturally, socially, and organizationally. I knew that as long as I followed the teachings of the Church, I would have a valued place within the Mormon community. I also knew that if I encountered tragedy, Mormon welfare programs would ensure I always had the necessities in life.

As a teenager, however, I found out how viciously and systematically a person who does not fit the mold can be stigmatized and sanctioned. There had been trouble at home and I went to stay with an aunt and uncle in Utah for about 10 months. When I returned, my mother had moved to a new house and into the boundaries of a new ward (congregations are assigned based on home address). I learned within the first few days that the mothers of the ward had branded me a bad apple because I had lived away from home, and had instructed their children to avoid me. Rather than simply keep their distance, my peers taunted and teased me, and spread vicious rumors at school. When I was 16 years old, I left home and stopped attending Church. I had my name removed from the records of the Church when I was 18 years old.

Around the time I officially withdrew from the Church, I also came forward with sexual abuse I experienced at the hands of my uncle, who was also my Bishop, while I lived with him at the age of 14. My mother responded that she knew he had been a sexual predator in the past, but she thought he must have gotten over it since he was a bishop at the time she sent me to live with him. Ecclesiastic and leadership positions within the Mormon Church are “callings,” meaning a member of the Church is chosen through inspiration by a priesthood leader in authority over that position. In other words, my mom believed that God chose my uncle to be a bishop and would not have chosen him to be a bishop if he were not worthy to hold the position.

When I was 26, I had a change of heart, was rebaptized into the Mormon Church, and became a faithful member. I taught Primary classes, served as a Music Coordinator and Choir Director, and led music in Relief Society meetings. I attended regular meetings and served in temples. In order to enter Mormon Temples, one must obtain a Temple Recommend by interviewing with her bishop and a member of the stake presidency. During my first Temple Recommend interview I was asked about the state of my family relationships. When I asked for clarification the bishop said the question referred to matters of abuse. From that point forward, I always shared the experience with my uncle in response to that question. In all, I told six priesthood leaders in three states about my experience. Several times I was told, “We’ll take care of that.” By that time, my uncle had been excommunicated for not paying child support, so the promise to “take care of that” amounted to making a

note in his file. None of the priesthood leaders I disclosed the abuse to referred me to outside resources such as law enforcement, human services, or counseling services.

The circumstances of my uncle's excommunication shed light on male privilege in disciplinary councils. My aunt had receipts, letters, and phone recordings proving my uncle cheated on her. According to the decision of the disciplinary council, infidelity did not warrant excommunication (this is not always the case), but non-payment of child support did. Because the Mormon Church provides food, clothing, and even pays bills for families who are struggling financially, financial burden placed on the Church seems to be the motivating factor behind my uncle's excommunication.

When I was 33 years old, I took a college course analyzing Hinduism and the Bhagavad Gita. I experienced an irrevocable shift in consciousness during that course which led me to leave the Mormon Church again, and to pursue a different spiritual path.

Three years later, I learned the uncle who abused me as a teen had been rebaptized and was about to have his priesthood restored. At that time I had just begun graduate work in Women Studies. I was learning about institutionalized oppression and beginning to see my experience in the context of "the personal is political." Knowing that my uncle uses priesthood authority to gain trust and to intimidate and abuse teenaged girls, I called my uncle's bishop to share my story and to tell him about other women who had since shared experience of abuse at his

hands. I discovered during that call that no mention of my abuse was in my uncle's record. My aunt also called his bishop and told him about numerous neighbors and babysitters who have come forward about my uncle's indecent and abusive behavior toward them. Shortly after those conversations, my uncle's priesthood was restored to him without further investigation and without apology.

Those of us who came forward were silenced in an institutional structure that does not allow female representation in its courts. Our stories were presented by a man to other men. The predator who violated us pled his case to a group of peers in a setting that did not allow us to present embodied examples of the results of his offences. The testimony of two women and several accounts of abuse were met with the same response as reports of his infidelity. The safety of girls in the ward my uncle belongs to, some perhaps daughters of those on his disciplinary council, proved insignificant in the decision to grant priesthood power to a predator.

When I left the Church at age 33, it was on the basis of doctrine. Now that I have a feminist understanding of systems of oppression, and have seen those systems at work in the Mormon Church, I cannot imagine ever returning. My personal response to the Mormon Church as someone whose self-identification as a feminist is fairly recent (about 7 years ago) led me to wonder about women who identify as active, believing Mormons and as feminists. How do they reconcile their belief in a religion that is proud to call itself patriarchal with an ideal of equality?

There are three ways in which I have intentionally inserted my personal feminist identity within these pages:

1) I have intentionally used the term Mormon knowing the Mormon Church has officially requested publications use the terms LDS, Latter-Day Saints, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints. This choice is not intended to offend anyone, nor is it a denial of the central role Jesus Christ plays within Mormon doctrine. I have chosen to use the term Mormon as one who remembers when Church officials created policy requesting members not use the term Mormon as a public image campaign to bring more attention to the fact that Jesus Christ is in the official title of the Church. I was raised to think of myself as Mormon, not as LDS. Using the term Mormon is an assertion of my identity as a cultural Mormon and of my right to define my own identity through my lived experience. Using the term Mormon is also a political statement that I am an independent critical thinker, and that I no longer accept priesthood direction in my life.

2) As much as possible I have retained the integrity of the stories I have been entrusted with by limiting the amount of editing and summarizing of quotes from participants and from primary sources (when quotes from primary sources reflect personal experience). Long quotes within the text, and limited editing and summarizing are my feminist attempts to counterbalance the power I wield as writer and researcher in the coding, organizing, interpreting, and presenting of the lived experiences of participants. Long, intact quotes are my attempt to empower participants share their experiences in their own voice and to empower readers to more fully participate in the interpretation of data. They are also an invitation to

you, the reader, to identify alternative conclusions, interpretations, and opportunities for continued study.

3) Disclosure of abuse in a public forum is a discursive feminist act. It is discursive because victims are blamed for their abuse, actively sanctioned, and stigmatized. Although I was a child when the abuse occurred, those with knowledge of my abuse and unexamined biases treat me as tainted, unclean, and damaged. I choose to refuse to accept blame or to internalize stigma not only for my sake, but for others who have been victimized. By refusing to be silenced by stigma I am creating space for others to break silence and release internalized stigma. I choose to be vocal because I have come to recognize that my previous silence formed bricks in a proverbial fortress of security for a predator. Continued silence protects *all* predators. Therefore, I choose to reclaim personal power through voice, and use my voice to weaken the structural integrity of rape culture in our society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE “F” WORD

Feminism is demonized in patriarchal institutions (Shaw and Lee, 2009 p. 16) and the Mormon Church is no exception. The height of Mormon leadership’s animosity toward feminism occurred in the mid to late 1970s when President Spencer W. Kimball came out in active opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, not as a man who sat at the head of a worldwide religion, but as a Prophet of God, speaking on behalf of God. In the wake of President Kimball’s statement, Mormon men and women aligned their views to that of their Prophet, believing that they were aligning themselves to the will of God (Young, 2007).

Several weeks later, a mandate from Church headquarters required the enlistment of women from the Relief Society to attend their state’s International Women of the Year (IWY) conference. Mormon women were given callings (divinely appointed assignments administered through human leadership) to attend IWY conferences and to vote against every proposal that was presented no matter how good it seemed to them personally (Young, 2007). It was not the first time in the history of the LDS Church that a President came out with a political stance, but it was the first time members were led to believe their President was speaking as a “Prophet of God” rather than giving his personal opinion on a political matter. It is also the first time leadership of the LDS Church had a major impact on US policy (Young, 2007).

2.2 HISTORY OF FEMINISM IN MORMON CULTURE

Although Kimball influenced the majority of Mormons in their attitudes toward the ERA, dissent was present among Mormon women. During the late 70's and early 80's picketers protested at General Conferences (a semi-annual weekend-long event where top Mormon leaders address Mormons around the globe by satellite from Temple Square in Salt Lake City, UT), and some men and women voiced their dissent when it came time to sustain President Kimball in a vote "by show of hands." When their dissent was ignored at least one member yelled, "No, because of ERA" (Associated Press, 1982; Tanner, 1978).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Mormon feminism mirrored 2nd wave feminism in "the emergence of grass-roots organizing, in narratives about the discovery of women's history, and in explorations of the double-bind of identity politics" (Ulrich, 2010; p. 48). "Like members of other minority groups, Mormon feminists were sometimes caught in the double bind of identity politics, finding themselves stigmatized within their own group when they advocated for change, and dismissed by other feminists when they dismissed their heritage" (p. 56). Ulrich reminds us that feminism has many voices and that the second wave of feminism was not a single movement with one group of leaders. Mormon feminists of the second wave acted independently, within a culture of change, in tandem with - if not always in collaboration with - their peers in the feminist movement (see appendix B

for Ulrich's timeline showing the correlation between Mormon Feminist activism and mainstream second wave activism).

2.3 MORMON IDEALS FOR GENDER AND FAMILY

Modern Mormon Presidents continue to make statements as Prophets. In his 1995 General Relief Society (GRS) Conference address, President Gordon B. Hinckley introduced "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." The Proclamation on the Family, as it has become known, outlines the fundamental doctrines of the Mormon Church as they relate to gender roles and family and is instructive for this study in its concise delivery of expectations placed on Mormon women. Hinckley began with a statement, "that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." Specifying marriage between a man and a woman officially declares the anti-gay¹ position of the Mormon Church. Establishing the family as central to a divine plan underscores the emphasis placed on the traditional family structure within the LDS Church.

The proclamation goes on to identify gender as "an essential characteristic of individual pre-mortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose," draws connections between parenting roles in this life with eternal roles as celestial parents of spirit

¹ There are several terms I could have chosen to describe the official position of the Mormon Church in relation to the LGBTQ community. Use of the term anti-gay in, this context, intentionally draws connection to the Mormon term "anti-Mormon" which originally applied to those who raped, murdered, displaced, and otherwise persecuted Mormons, and contemporarily applies to anyone who challenges Mormon doctrine and practices.

children, identifies childbearing and rearing as the first commandment given to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and declares “that God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.” These statements refer to the belief Mormons have in a literal deified father and mother, and a belief that the purpose of this life is to practice parenting and prove worthy to become deified parents of spirit children in the afterlife. These statements also reference the belief that gender is an eternal and natural trait, rather than a social construct that varies through history and by social and geographic location, or as a trait that is limited to the physical body. Belief in gender as an eternal trait that applies to gods as well as humans limits discussion of and inquiry into the nature and validity of gendered roles.

The proclamation also states, “We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God’s eternal plan.” The “sanctity of life” statement is most often associated with the Mormon stance against abortion, but can be interpreted as a statement against “death with dignity” and suicide as well.

Hinckley’s proclamation presents a formula for rearing families based on adherence to LDS teachings and practices, monogamous heterosexual marriage with father at the head of the household and mother as nurturer and caretaker, and provisions for crossing gendered marital roles only in cases such as death or disability. These mandates limit women’s autonomy, participation in the workforce, expression of sexuality and sexual orientation, and control over their bodies and fertility.

The proclamation concludes, “We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern Prophets.” Noncompliance with the mandate to birth and rear children is presented in the same category with abuse and infidelity. Furthermore, the threat of Armageddon is used to discourage women from exploring alternatives to gendered roles in traditional heteromonogamous family structures. Armageddon is also used in the final paragraph in Hinckley’s proclamation in an attempt to coerce secular leaders to enforce Mormon family ideals.

2.4 BENEFITS FOR MORMON WOMEN

While Mormonism clearly limits roles for women as primarily mothers for eternity, the religion offers a number of benefits for Mormon women. Of course, Mormon women experience spiritual benefits that are subjective in nature, such as personal revelation. In keeping with the scope of this study, however, I will focus on benefits that are more objective. Mormon women who identify as straight, want to be mothers, and are capable of bearing children benefit from a culture that honors the role of women as mothers, and encourages men to treat women with respect. Mormon men are offered the privilege of claiming the power to act on behalf of God

(priesthood), but they are also taught that priesthood power is contingent upon worthiness.

Literature on hegemonic masculinity identified a shift in ideals of masculinity in Sweden, where men are also encouraged to embrace the role of fatherhood (Johansson and Klinth, 2008). A similar trend exists in Mormonism. Where hegemonic masculinity traditionally maintains patriarchy by encouraging men to prove their masculinity with acts of violence and domination (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), Mormonism encourages men to be actively involved fathers, faithful to their wives in thought as well as deed, attentive husbands, compassionate, and service oriented (Scott, 2008, October). Further discussion on maintaining patriarchy without overt domination through physical violence occurs in sections 2.6 and 5.3.

While Mormon female roles are primarily domestic, Church callings (positions offered to members by priesthood leaders) give women opportunities similar to those experienced by women pursuing careers, but without penalty for putting her family first. Callings in the Mormon Church include leadership roles described earlier, as well as opportunities to plan and present lessons, organize events, direct choirs and plays, address congregations, demonstrate artistic talents, serve as a librarian, conduct research, write articles and books, or proselytize in an official capacity. Mormon women have even more ecclesiastic opportunities within temples where they are called priestesses, and perform washing and anointing

ceremonies on other women (further discussion of Mormon women's participation in temple ceremonies is found in section 2.10 and in the findings section).

Another benefit Mormon women enjoy is the pro-woman theology of Eve and belief in a Heavenly Mother counterpart to Heavenly Father. Mormons believe that God's plan required Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil so that she could give birth to the human race. While other religions portray Eve as an evil temptress, Mormons revere her as the "Mother of all living" and the fall as a transgression necessary for progression rather than a sin (Nelson, 1987).

Mormons also believe that God the Father is literally the father of our spirits made possible through union with a Heavenly Mother (or Heavenly Mothers). While Theology about Heavenly Mother(s) is sparse and contested, it gives Mormon women theological precedent to identify with the divine in a way that is not available to women in religions with exclusively male deities (Heeren, Lindsey, & Mason, 1984).

When men who hold the priesthood treat priesthood as a sacred obligation to serve rather than a power to dominate, when women are given positive feminine role models of divinity, when women are revered for fulfilling traditional roles, and to the extent women embrace the roles of wife and mother, Mormonism seems an attractive alternative to mainstream culture or religions that demonize women. Mormonism in this context also meets the vision of cultural feminists which presumes the "moral superiority of women, associated with their maternal role" and

“the need for that moral superiority to make societal life more humane” (Clifford, 2001, p. 24).

2.5 THE CULT OF TRUE WOMANHOOD

Mormon women exemplifying the cult of true womanhood are lauded as “the compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving power that binds together the human family” (Scott, 2008, November). Hinkley described women as “Gods supreme creation,” explaining:

“Only after the earth had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been created, and after man had been placed on the earth was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good. Of all the creatures of the Almighty, there is none more beautiful, none more inspiring than a lovely daughter of God who walks in virtue with an understanding of why she should do so, who honors and respects her body as a thing sacred and divine, who cultivates her mind and constantly enlarges the horizon of her understanding, who nurtures her spirit with everlasting truth.” (Hinkley, 1988).

Margaret Toscano; a Mormon woman, college professor, and excommunicated Mormon feminist, identifies oppression inherent in the cult of true womanhood within the Mormon Church. In her Sunstone magazine article (an unauthorized Mormon publication that frequently gives voice to dissenting Mormon theologians) Toscano highlights disparity between propaganda of equality in the Church and women’s lived experience. Toscano begins her article with the story of an 8 year-old Mormon boy who identified gender inequity in Mormonism opining to

his mother, "...boys are more important [than girls] because Jesus and Heavenly Father are boys, and boys get the priesthood and girls don't" (Toscano, 2007, p. 19). The next day, President Hinkley delivered an address entitled, "Women in Our Lives" (Hinkley, 2004) which the boy's mother interpreted as repudiating her son's conclusion. Toscano disagreed, and went on to explain Hinkley's speech reinforced the boy's dominant role by assuming men have authority to grant or deny voice and participation to women.

In his 2004 address, Hinkley admonished men to treat women with greater respect and dignity. Tributing his recently deceased wife, Hinkley said, "She was my dear companion for more than two-thirds of a century, my equal before the Lord, really my superior." Unfortunately, Hinkley went on to describe a relationship between men and women that continues to privilege men by assuming men are in a position to make all the decisions in relationship to women including the power to allow women to make decisions and to invite women to have a voice in council (Toscano, 2007). Hinkley's gender bias is further illustrated in addressing a worldwide audience comprised of children, women, and men, but speaking exclusively to adult males with a speech titled, "Women in our Lives."

Hinkley promulgated a narrowly defined and idealized role for women, and encouraged women to squeeze themselves into mold of idealized femininity with praise and promises of respect and honor. Hinkley's address illustrates how men in the Mormon Church are charged with a responsibility and obligation to reinforce gendered roles by reward women who conform to the cult of true womanhood with

praise and honor while positioning women who do not conform as unnatural, worldly, selfish, or misguided. Mormon women with a natural inclination toward domesticity embrace Mormonism as a community that protects and honors their identity within a larger culture that is often hostile toward their chosen lifestyle (Beck, 2007).

While many researchers have explored how different forms of mothering affect children, few researchers have investigated the effects of mothering and employment status on women. What we do know is that on average: 1) married women who participate in paid labor are more dissatisfied with their domestic role than single mothers who participate in paid labor, 2) mothers who work outside the home and mothers who stay at home spend the same amount of time actively engaged with their children, and 3) mothers who work outside the home are more satisfied than mothers who stay at home (Arendell, 2000).

In a 1983 study of university students in Utah, researchers found Mormon university students had more traditional sex-role attitudes than non-Mormon university students living in Utah. Additionally, Mormon students were more likely than non-Mormon students to perceive motherhood as equal to paid labor in value and as being equally rewarding (Hartman and Hartman, 1983).

While the LDS Church admonishes women to focus exclusively on mothering except in situations where a mother must work (such as being single, or the father being disabled), the percentage of LDS women who work is similar to the national average. A qualitative study of LDS mothers who participate in the workforce found

that folk culture allows for certain forms of work allowing LDS women to straddle the divide between their needs and the mandates of their religious leaders. These women tend to find work that involves their children, allows them to work while their children are in school and be home when their children are home (such as running a daycare or working for the school district), or to work minimal hours while their husbands are home to care for the kids (such as selling Tupperware or Mary Kay) (Ahurst-McGee, 1999).

2.6 HEGMONIC MASCULINITY IN MORMONISM

Contemporary discourse on hegemonic masculinity recognizes the need for nuanced discussion of gendered power relations (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Cheng, 1999). There is a growing trend toward non-violent and egalitarian ideals of masculinity in some populations (Johansson and Klinth, 2008; Lusher and Robins, 2010). A study of hegemonic masculinity in Mormonism would likely reveal elements of “a positive hegemony... not... devoid of hierarchy but instead constituted by power relations in which those with the most egalitarian attitudes towards women are seen as the most powerful or influential. Further, aligning with such relations would be relations of liking, indicating an emotional investment in such power relations” (Lusher and Robins, 2008, p.40).

Mormon women generally view patriarchy within the Church as a benevolent organization that protects and champions the right of women to realize their divinely appointed potential in the roles of mother, nurturer, exemplar of virtue, etc.

Many Mormon women do not feel oppressed; they view their roles as empowering, godlike, liberating. They value Mormon patriarchy as their champions and supporters, their biggest fans.

Both men and women buy into the rhetoric of equality within Mormonism because the contemporary hegemonic male in Mormonism is paternalistic, patterned after the contemporary ideal Heavenly Father rather than the wrathful God of the Old Testament. He is a good provider (most bishops and stake presidents I know of are successful professionals); spiritual -well versed in Mormon doctrine, prayerful, and sensitive to spiritual promptings- in order to fulfill his role as confessor, counselor, intercessor; makes time for his family; monogamous in thought as well as deed; affectionate with family and associates (it is common to see a bishop or stake president pat someone - male or female - on the back or affectionately grasp and arm or hand with his left hand while shaking hands with his right); and disciplines through withdrawal of approval and reprimand rather than corporeal punishment.

Physical and sexual abuses are discouraged from the pulpit and in Mormon publications, and the contemporary hegemonic Mormon male would be expected to swiftly intervene if he witnessed abuse in a public space (although victim blaming and protection of abusers still occurs in disciplinary councils and in other closed councils).

Hegemony within Mormonism does not require women to be inferior. In fact, women are often lauded as moral superiors and their moral superiority is

frequently cited as the reason they do not need priesthood power (they are already close to God, but men need priesthood to experience spirituality).

“I think it is SO interesting that there are some who have the idea that LDS women are suppressed in some way. I think we are the most liberated women anywhere. We are loved, and cherished by our leaders, and they speak of women with incredibly respect. Women don't hold the priesthood because they don't need to. They already have a divine role to take part in the creation of man, the Lord granted us the ability to grow life inside us, WHAT A MIRACLE. Mother's intuition that people speak of, this is a direct link to Heavenly Father, this is how he works through us to raise up future generations” (Ally, 2012)

I empathize with Mormon feminists who do not feel oppressed. For a long time, I was perplexed by assertions from secular feminists that women are treated as inferior. As a Mormon woman, I never felt that I was excluded from male gendered activities because I was considered inferior. No one within the Mormon community ever inferred that I was not competent to perform male gendered tasks; it was considered God's organizational prerogative to divide tasks along gender lines. Each task was appreciated as valuable and as a gift of service, although hierarchically valued. For example, a Nursery Leader does not have the level of prestige that a Relief Society President enjoys.

A contemporary example of the dynamics between Mormon rhetoric of equality and patriarchal structure came to light during the 2012 presidential election. Mormon rhetoric of equality is what led Mitt Romney to put a giant foot in

his mouth when he told the world that he supports women by making sure they are able to leave work in time to make dinner for their families (Abdulla, 2012).

From the Mormon perspective, Romney was not sending a message that women are deficient; he was conveying honor, respect, and gratitude for their contribution. It would not occur to Romney that a husband or son might prefer to cook, or that he might pay workers enough to hire someone else to cook. Mormon ideology does not consider that a woman's career could be more important to her than being home to cook.

When Romney went to women's organizations asking for help finding qualified female candidates (Abdullah, 2012), he was following the Mormon protocol to go to the Relief Society whenever something having to do with women comes up. The practice of going to the Relief Society for advice is intended to give voice to women, to ensure women's needs are met, and to show that women are valued and respected by inviting women to represent themselves. Of course, it remains problematic that women are doing the work of identifying problems, solutions, and qualified candidates among women, while decision making remains firmly in the hands of an exclusively male leadership.

Romney's belief in Mormon rhetoric such as "Priesthood and Motherhood are equal" became evident in his campaign, showed the American public that he is out of touch with the lived experience of most Americans, and ultimately caused him to lose the Presidential election.

2.7 WHEN “THE PLAN OF HAPINESS” FAILS

A study of 30 disaffiliated Mormons in Utah found that the majority of respondents were women divorced from men who were not members of the Mormon Church. Furthermore, Bahr and Albrecht (1989) posit “The evidence suggests that most disaffiliates were never truly firm believers or frequent attenders. Among those who were, marital break-up and intellectual defection were the most obvious correlates of disaffiliation” (p. 198).

It is important to note that Bahr and Albrecht are likely members of the LDS Church based on their affiliation with BYU and with Utah State University. Their affiliation with the LDS Church is important to note because it is undisclosed within the body of the article, and because their finding that “disaffiliates were never truly firm believers or frequent attenders” supports common Mormon beliefs that attendance and faith protect members from apostasy, and that women who neglect their spiritual duties as “the compassionate, self-sacrificing, loving power that binds together the human family” (Scott, 2008, November) bring about the spiritual and corporeal destruction of families. Similarly, Bahr and Albrecht’s finding that marital break-up and disbelieving husbands are positively associated with disaffiliation supports the Mormon belief that families require husbands and fathers who “honor their priesthood” to ensure spiritual salvation (The Father as Patriarch, n.d.). Their findings may well be accurate, but their methods, including which questions were

asked and which questions were never considered, led to conclusions limited by unexamined biases.

What is instructive about Bahr and Albrecht's (1989) findings is the correlation between families that do not conform to Mormon ideals and inactivity among the women within those families. This correlation is not surprising considering reports of isolation and discrimination experienced by women within the Church who are not married or who do not have children (Neilson, 1983; Evers, 1989; Kapp 1989). The connection between treatment of nonconforming members of the Church and their activity level is not mentioned in Bahr and Albrecht's study.

2.8 MORMON SCHOLARS ON MORMONS

The majority of academic literature about Mormons is written by Mormons. Unfortunately, the biases Mormons write with are not always transparent (as with the previous example of Bahr and Albrecht). My insider knowledge as a Mormon woman allowed me to identify non-Mormon authors based on misuse of Mormon terminology, and Mormon authors based on assumptions, unexamined biases, and a prescribed worldview that integration into the secular world has led me to recognize as distinctly Mormon. Regrettably, unexamined and undisclosed biases call into question the reliability of academic literature written about Mormonism by Mormons.

Winn (1990) identifies the problem of Mormon bias in academic literature in his review of *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of*

Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900. Winn (1990) praises authors Firmage and Malgrum for their extensive compilation of nineteenth century court cases involving the Mormon Church, and then goes on to describe bias on the part of the authors. Winn explains,

"This is not merely "faithful" history; behind a tone of objectivity, Firmage and Malgrum refight all of the old Mormon anti-Mormon battles. Facts damning the saints are either excused or suppressed, while those that reflect poorly on their opponents are starkly portrayed...Perhaps part of the problem stems from the fact that, although they are well read in legal history and in Mormon sources, they have neither delved very deeply into the corresponding anti-Mormon literature nor taken advantage of the insights of relevant secondary work, some of which they cite in their bibliography. Accordingly, they often betray only modest understanding of the world view of those who oppose the Church, with the net result something like a trial where only one side is allowed to testify" (p. 908).

Another example of Mormon bias in academic literature is found in a dialogue played out over three journal articles between Malan (2005 & 2006) and Christensen (2006). Malan and Bullough (2005) examined folk and official Mormon attitudes toward masturbation over time and found that it has changed. Christensen replied based on experience as a Mormon backed by an interpretation of Malan's study that precluded any folk attitudes and focused on common contemporary Mormon interpretation of historical official Church doctrine.

Malan (2006) sets the record straight by pointing out discrepancies between Christensen's representation of the article and the language actually used in the article, along with an overview of the study and its measurements. To refute claims

that Mormon culture is in line with doctrine and that doctrine is unchanging, Malan provides evidence of change and contradiction in matters such as polygamy and birth control. Malan goes on to refute Christensen's argument that masturbation was too shocking to speak of from the pulpit during the early years of the Mormon Church with records of more controversial topics being preached over the pulpit by Church leadership.

One article on Mormon feminism (Scheutz, 1982) has ambiguous origins in that it very clearly favors the stance of Mormon leadership and uses Mormon terminology flawlessly, but a Google search did not reveal any obvious ties between the author and the Mormon Church. The excommunication of Sonia Johnson was still fresh in popular culture when Scheutz (1982) used the case of Sonia Johnson and Mormons for ERA to present a framework for analyzing secular and sectarian conflict. Scheutz posited, "The most realistic options for secular and sectarian conflicts include, (1) withdrawal from the conflict, (2) engaging in active dissent, (3) negotiating and reaching a compromise, and (4) forcing an immediate decision (p. 50). Scheutz argued that Sonia Johnson forced the Mormon Church to excommunicate stating Johnson "broke faith" by going public with her views rather than entering private negotiations with the Church and maintaining her membership by giving equal sympathy to the Mormon stance on the ERA as to the feminist stance on the ERA.

Scheutz's arguments treat Johnson as having equal power with the Mormon Church. It could be argued that difference in power between the Mormon Church as

an institution and Sonia Johnson as an individual forced Johnson to use the public forum to be heard by Church leadership, but Scheutz does not discuss power differentials in her argument. Scheutz also criticized Johnson for "ridiculing" and "criticizing" Church leaders, but does not identify examples of what she considers ridicule and criticism, although she did use quotes from Johnson's autobiography to illustrate Johnson's position. Furthermore, Scheutz identifies withdrawal as an empowering tactic for dissenters, but she does not examine losses incurred by a dissenter when she is forced to abandon principle in favor of maintaining membership in her sect (as recommended by Scheutz).

While awkward use of Mormon vernacular suggests a curious researcher with limited insider knowledge, proper use does not guarantee the writer has a Mormon background. Swetnam (1988) states within the body of her article on Mormon oral history that she is not a Mormon, and yet her use of Mormon vernacular is flawless. Swetnam is an associate professor of English and director of composition at Idaho State University (Idaho has a very high Mormon Population). Swetnam's occupation and geographic location likely account for her flawless use of Mormon vernacular.

While reviewing oral histories from private collections in southern Idaho, Swetnam found that while non-Mormons recounted their grandmother's histories with several examples of human frailty, Mormon men and women presented their grandmothers as saintly women who conformed to Mormon ideals of femininity. The one exception to the prescribed grandmother story is that Mormon women

showed signs of resisting Mormon ideals of femininity by peppering their grandmothers' biographies with a few stories of rebellion against gendered expectations. Mormon men were not as likely to deviate from the saintly biography model.

Swetnam's observation of formulaic narrative is not unique. While conducting an oral history of Mormon women missionaries, Embry (1998) and interviewer Rebecca Ream Vorimo noticed the stories sounded similar. "Frequently the women did not have to be asked any questions. They had told their stories of mission experiences many times and told them the way they had done so before. Even asking questions did not detour their responses. They would return to the narrative that they knew, which usually followed one of two patterns" (p.176).

I was unable to find any studies that bring this all together, but I know from experience that Mormon culture has prescribed formats for storytelling. For example, if an investigator were to visit a typical Mormon Fast and Testimony meeting (Sacrament meetings held on the first Sunday of each month are reserved for members to declare their belief and tell stories supporting their belief in the Church), they would hear, "I'd like to bear my testimony, that I know this Church is true, that President Monson is a Prophet of God..." and likely a testimony about Joseph Smith and a personal experience that affirms basic tenants of the Mormon faith. Understanding this aspect of Mormon culture is important when interpreting qualitative data. I recommend further research into the dialectics of Mormonism.

2.9 INFLUENCE OF MORMON PUBLICATIONS

Religious publications can have a major impact on attitudes and beliefs of religious readers. Muir (2009) analyzed major publications of Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) for gendered messages. She found the publications enforce strict gendered norms with men having power and authority and women being docile and obedient. Muir states, "Religious language serves as a form of social control. It is a regulatory measure that helps oversee how religious practices and behaviors are carried out" (p. 7). Muir drew connections between Jehovah's Witness and Mormon women's experiences, and focused on the impact these publications have on the language, attitudes, and self-image of the women who study them.

Although Mormons do not have expectations as extensive and time oriented as Jehovah's Witnesses to study Church sponsored publications, there is an expectation that all members subscribe to, read, and study publications similar to the Watchtower and Awake!. MORMON magazines include The Ensign (for adults), The Era (for teens), and the Friend (for children) (Asay, 1986). Mormons believe that men holding the priesthood speak and act on behalf of god. The President of the Mormon Church, his Counselors, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are considered modern Prophets. The Ensign magazine contains transcripts of formal addresses given by leaders of the Mormon Church, including addresses given by Mormon Presidents/Prophets. The words of Mormon Presidents/Prophets are sometimes given even more weight than scripture because it is considered modern

revelation (What we believe, 2011). Therefore, Mormon magazines are extensions of scripture similar to the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price (canonized Mormon scripture).

As a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy and as Executive Director of the Church Curriculum Department, Asay (1986) discusses the curriculum of the Mormon Church and the recommended settings for instructing members. Asay clearly outlines the importance of Church magazines as curriculum stating, "The scriptures of the Church constitute the heart and core of the curriculum" and "Church magazines are essential tools in our gospel teaching program" (quote identified as referencing First Presidency Letter, Oct. 2, 1972). He identifies, "The home is the central curriculum agency for all age groups" and "The priesthood, through its quorums, and the women's organizations stand next to the family as curriculum agencies." This places primary responsibility for interpreting and teaching doctrine on husbands and fathers first, and then on the male leaders within the local congregation. Notice that even when doctrine is taught in the Relief Society and in Primary, it is the male leaders who are given the responsibility to ensure doctrinal instruction.

2.10 FLUIDITY OF MORMON DOCTRINE

Despite extensive Church published curriculum, if someone asks Mormons what they believe to be Mormon gospel doctrine, she is likely to hear different, and even conflicting, answers. For example, some Mormons believe that Mary, the

mother of Jesus, was not a virgin, but conceived through sexual intercourse with God the Father. Others have taken this idea a step further to assert that Mary is one of God's wives and that God "loaned" her to Joseph during their mortal existence (Hudson, 2009). Many Mormons believe in the Virgin Birth. Other Mormons believe Mary is the only wife of God the Father and a physical incarnation of our Heavenly Mother. Some believe that she is merely mortal like the rest of us, but extraordinary in her willingness to submit to the purposes of God.

How can one religious group, with a relatively young history, a centralized power structure, standardized lesson manuals, and a plethora of official Church publications contain such conflicting beliefs? Contradictions and disagreements between Church leaders occurred throughout Church history, combined with lay clergy (who until recently depended on a plethora of resources with significant latitude in preparing lessons on local, regional, national, and international levels) leads to fluid doctrine with room for personal interpretation. These conditions are exacerbated by attitudes many members hold about reverence for priesthood that require obedience and deference based on the idea that priesthood is the authority to speak and act on behalf of God. In other words, an individual's willingness to interpret doctrine is largely influenced by identity politics. Those with power are more likely to claim the right to interpret doctrine for themselves, or to impose their interpretation on less powerful Mormons.

From the foundation of Mormonism, Church officials have contradicted each other, and there are folk beliefs many members believe to be doctrine. Several

examples of confusion and contradiction regarding doctrine are present in Linda King Newell's, "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood" (1992), which describes the tumultuous history of Mormon women's relationship to priesthood.

King Newell explains that gifts of the spirit were not gendered in early Mormon writings but became gendered male in the early 20th century. Early Mormon women performed healings, gave blessings, and prophesied, all of which were sanctioned and even encouraged by Joseph Smith Sr. (the founder's father) and Joseph Smith Jr. (President and founder of the MORMON Church), and by some later Church leaders to varying degrees. By the early twentieth century, healing in the Mormon Church was largely gendered male. The process of gendering includes a slow and bumpy road from (a) men and women healing with similar frequency sanctioned by Church leaders, to (b) distinctions between healings performed through the priesthood and those performed based on worthiness and Church membership, to (c) admonitions to avoid similarities in phrase and form between the two, to (d) the requirement for women to ask permission and obey their husbands in order to heal, to (e) the end of Church sanctioned healing by women using the laying on of hands.

The progression of patriarchal oppression was made possible by institutionalized patriarchy which inherently bestows greater authority and power on men. In the case of the Mormon Church, the highest ranking leader holds absolute authority as the only living Prophet of God. Each time a man in leadership

decided to change doctrine the doctrine was changed with little resistance. When resistance exists, the Mormon Church responds by sanctioning resisters as evidenced by the September Six. The September Six refers to the disfellowship of one Mormon academic and excommunication of five Mormon academics in September, 1993.

Contemporary Mormon women receive and perform sacred rites within Mormon Temples (see section 2.10). King Newell points out, however, that even though women had been promised they would be able to participate in temple endowments once the first temple was built, they were denied participation in temple endowment ceremonies in the first Mormon temple in Kirtland, Ohio.

King Newell exposes a scandalous cover-up involving minutes from a Relief Society meeting in 1842. In this inaugural meeting, Joseph Smith described an autonomous Relief Society organizational structure, including priesthood positions such as Deacons and Teachers (contemporarily bestowed on teenage boys). However, while compiling a history Joseph Smith in 1851, Joseph Smith's cousin and member of the twelve apostles George A. Smith changed the wording of a phrase referring to keys of the priesthood in Joseph Smith's address at the founding of the Relief Society from, "I now turn the key [referring to priesthood keys] to you in the name of God" to "I now turn the key in your behalf." Since then, autonomy has been significantly decreased, including the shift in language, introduced by George A. Smith, which relegated the Relief Society to the position of an auxiliary rather than the "separate but equal" organization Joseph Smith described. Further attacks

include the take-over of formerly autonomous Relief Society publications and funding, which took full effect in the 1970s.

King Newell shows that the original Relief Society presidency was “ordained” to their positions by Joseph Smith; contemporary Mormon women are “set apart” for their callings, while men are still ordained to offices within the Church. However, following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and the pilgrimage to Utah, Brigham Young denied that women ever held priesthood, had ecclesiastic value, were full members in the Church (referring to them as wives of members), or were sanctioned by Joseph Smith to form the Relief Society. Paradoxically, in 1869 Young encouraged women to develop the ability to heal saying they could heal as well as any of the men in the Church. King Newell explains that even when Brigham Young was against it, the practice of women blessing by the laying on of hands, administering ordinances such as washing and anointing, and calling on priesthood power continued.

King Newell identifies 1914 as the year the Relief society stopped fighting against progressively restrictive changes in women’s status within the Church. That year, the Relief Society presidency came out with a statement that encouraged women not only to accept secondary status to men but to seek out marriages that were unequal in favor of men. The statement further diminishes women’s autonomy by stating that, “women everywhere, as men who may be under [a priesthood holder’s] jurisdiction, should render that reverence and obedience that belongs of right to the Priesthood which he holds.” The same statement ended the practice of

women consulting female leaders about doctrinal questions, referring Mormon women to their local male leaders.

“[I]gnoring both single or childless women and fatherhood as an equivalent of motherhood,” King Newell explains, the Church drew parallels between motherhood and priesthood, during the 1950s through early 1980s, that has defined the roles of men and women within the Church since then. The result is restriction for women in ecclesiastical and administrative work, while men are able to enjoy full access to ecclesiastic authority as priesthood holders and full participation in the rearing of children as fathers.

Joseph Smith envisioned women as “queens and priestesses,” but King Newell revealed the following poem read by BYU Professor Rodney Turner in a 1966 regional address,

*“Women are doormats and have been
The years the mats applaud –
They keep their men from going in
With muddy feet to God.”*

Turner continued, “A man needs that kind of support so that he can go back [to heaven] without muddy feet.”

Examining only one aspect of Church doctrine and practices, Linda King Newell’s example illustrates the level and depth of conflicting teachings among Church leaders and the effects those teachings have on the beliefs and actions of MORMON members. By exposing the variability in attitudes among priesthood leaders and the level of authority and autonomy priesthood leaders are given to

impose their beliefs, her article also sheds light on the variability in position of women in the Church relative to the men who are given authority over them. These concepts are central to this study because many of the participants of this study identify variation in Church doctrine as liberating. These participants interpret variation as authorization to decide for themselves what to believe, who to listen to or ignore, and how to behave.

While King Newell's article outlines several changes and contradictions in Mormon doctrine, changes in doctrine were likely unchallenged due to absolute power and authority wielded by those in authority within the Mormon Church. September Six scholar Paul Toscano (the September Six are six Mormon academics and feminists sanctioned by the Mormon Church in September 1993) describes absolute authority exercised by Church leadership leading up to and including the disciplinary council during which he was excommunicated as an apostate for his theological arguments.

"...what I've experienced in Mormonism is that nobody tries to show that you're wrong. They just assume that you're wrong, or explain to you why you are wrong without ever going through the trouble of proving or demonstrating that you're wrong. And this is what I see happen all the time. So even in all those instances I mentioned before where I got into trouble, there was never an attempt to show that I was wrong, or explain why. I mean they would say, 'You're wrong because, you're not obedient' ...but it was always, "We're right, you're wrong" (Paul Toscano in Dehlin, 2007).

In support of Toscano's observation, I have observed that disobedience to Church doctrine is used to discredit members without the need to make a direct

connection between the offense and the area the member is being discredited in. For example, one of the participants in this study referenced the sexuality of a member of the September Six as evidence that his academic career was invalid. An inactive, disfellowshipped, or excommunicated member is discredited within Mormonism in every aspect of their lives. Similar to the credibility granted to an individual dubbed a “good Christian” among evangelical Christians, Mormons earn and lose credibility among other Mormons in their careers and other aspects of their lives by their level of adherence to Mormon doctrines and norms.

As a male member of the Mormon Church, Paul Toscano experienced the disciplinary council resulting in his excommunication as a relative peer, a member of the Priesthood. In an interview with PBS, Margaret Toscano (also excommunicated for feminist academic publications and lectures) describes disenfranchisement and paternalistic patriarchy she experienced as a woman going before an exclusively male disciplinary council resulting in her own excommunication.

“...They call them ‘courts of love,’ which of course is very funny, and now they call them ‘disciplinary councils.’ ...you go in by yourself as the person who’s been disciplined. You’re not allowed to bring anybody with you. So, for example, as a woman, I’m in there. There are 16 men that I am facing. If you can imagine the room, it’s a little bit intimidating on one level. But I’m a university professor, and I’ve had to face a dissertation committee, so I was not intimidated on that level. But...you don’t have much support there. The Stake President (regional leader) is the one who is presenting the case against me, and he did it in almost courtroom-like fashion ...it did feel a little bit like an inquisition and a little frightening in the sense that they had all the power and I had

none...They brought the charges against me – this apostasy – saying that I had been in opposition to the Church, and then proceeded to give their case...I really was never given the chance to defend myself doctrinally by quoting Joseph Smith and by using argument and reason... the stake president interrupted me, and said, ‘We will not allow you to lecture us. We will not allow you to use this kind of reasoning again. You’re only allowed to speak as we give you permission’...they deliberated for about 20 minutes and then brought me back in...[the stake president] said, ‘I want you to know that the high council was very impressed with you.’ [Laughs.] and he said, ‘They were all amazed at how articulate you are and how passionate you are and what a nice person you are’...Then he said, ‘However, you are excommunicated. We have found you to be apostate.’ I’m a nice apostate, I guess, right? ... It just struck me as so – [Laughs.] – ironic on a certain level.”

“Then I left, and they wanted to make sure they walked me out to the parking lot, because it was 10:30 at night, and so there was this politeness. ...In fact, I afterwards talked about sort of the horror of niceness – that on the one hand they’re cutting me off from eternal salvation and telling me that I’m this nice apostate, which really is considered very bad in Mormon culture, and then I’m this nice woman that they’re going to shake my hand.

“There’s something vicious about niceness that struck me in this – that niceness covered over the violence of what was being done, because, in fact, excommunication is a violent action. And yet you had this veneer of niceness that covers it over. That was horrifying to me...It occurred to me as I’m sitting there that if this had been in the Middle Ages, if these men had not only the ecclesiastical power but if they had the power of the state, where they could give a physical punishment to me, I realized in this moment that they would have burned me at the stake. And they would have done it smiling, thinking that they were saving my soul. This is why at the end they can shake my hand and say, ‘Oh you’re such a lovely person,’ at the same moment that they’re saying, ‘We’ve condemned you,’ that, ‘you are now cut off from the Church and the Kingdom of God and everything else’” (Frontline, 2006).

Toscano's account of her excommunication illustrates the paternal nature of patriarchy within the Mormon Church which leads many Mormon women to feel cared for, valued, respected, and even honored in the midst of oppression. Paternalism within the Mormon Church camouflages the oppressive nature of its Patriarchy. Recall the juxtaposition between Toscano's response to Hinkley's "The Women in Our lives" and that of the 8 year-old boy's mother. Toscano is educated in rhetorical analysis and had experienced an extreme form of Mormon patriarchy. The mother of the 8 year-old heard only compliments while Toscano heard an outline of systematic oppression.

Like the dutiful daughter of a doting father, Mormon women are not likely to recognize the danger of Paternalistic Patriarchy until they are educated in recognizing the potential for abuse of power or until they witness or personally experience oppression in way or to a degree that exposes the bars of their gilded cage.

Just as a doting father is sometimes influenced by his daughter's arguments for greater freedom, changes in attitudes of Mormons influenced by popular culture and mainstream education have an effect on evolving Mormon doctrine. Ionnacone and Miles (1990) found that it is important for Churches to maintain a balance between remaining sufficiently separate from mainstream culture to retain long-standing members and sufficiently accommodating of social change to attract and retain young and converted members. They highlight the dichotomous nature of Mormon teachings and show that Leadership in the Mormon Church tends to show

initial resistance to change and then provides accommodation within core values of the doctrine.

Conflicting beliefs within Mormonism is no secret among members. However, Mormons do not all consciously recognize variability as permission to define their own version of Mormon theology. Because of the ubiquitously hierarchical structure, and the godlike qualities and authority given to priesthood leaders, many Mormons decide what to believe by following counsel received from various authority figures such as parents, teachers, Bishops, and General Authorities. Some Mormons depend on intellect to guide them to truth, and others rely on the Holy Spirit to tell them what is true through internal spiritual guidance. I have observed as a Mormon woman that men are more likely to feel entitled to interpret doctrine than women and that women with higher education are more likely to feel entitled to interpret doctrine than women who have not attended college. The one exception I have noticed to the general trend of positive correlation between education and women who claim the right to interpret doctrine for themselves, is the phenomenon of women who have experienced abuse at the hands of their husbands, been counseled by their bishops to stay in the marriage, and who leave their abusive husbands (contrary to priesthood counsel) based on personal revelation from God. I personally know three women who fit this category, and all three of them were in working class homes with limited education when they left their abusive husbands. I recommend further investigation into how Mormons

determine what to believe by demographics of gender, education, level of prestige within the Church, history of abuse, and socioeconomic status.

If my observations are correct, Mormon women's deference is likely a result of over a century of Mormon women being taught that they cannot access the highest blessings heaven has to offer except through their husbands, and reliance on priesthood authority to legitimize their activities (King Newell, 1992). Conversely, men's feelings of entitlement likely come from being trained to believe that when a boy receives the Aaronic priesthood at twelve years-old, "He serves as a standing minister, 'appointed to watch over the Church' (D&C 84:111). He is also to 'warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ'" (D&C 20:59) (Aaronic Priesthood, 2010). Authority and responsibilities progressively increase with age and experience for men and boys in the Mormon Church, and every young man has reason to believe he could become the President and Prophet of the Church, and can earn the right to become a God in the afterlife.

One of the participants of this study, when explaining how she determines doctrine within the Church, referred me to an article written by BYU professor Valerie Hudson. Although the intent of the article is to illustrate the importance and application of an official statement from MORMON authorities on how to identify Church doctrine, Hudson's article also illustrates (both directly and indirectly) how Mormons can have such varied beliefs and how each of them may consider their beliefs doctrine.

In a journal published by Mormon academics (Square Two), Hudson examines an official Church statement on doctrine. Hudson does not explain differences in doctrine, but focuses on how to identify current doctrine. She begins by identifying the statement as overlooked but important because of its instruction on how to identify what is doctrine within the MORMON Church and what is not. She provides context by describing cultural and political events that led to the scrutiny of Mormon doctrine by mainstream press, which fostered a negative public image of the Mormon Church and confusion and a crisis of faith among some members of the Church.

Hudson's article goes on to assert that commonly held Mormon beliefs and practices are only doctrinal if they are "in the standard works as repeated in statements that are in official Church publications and which are found consistently in those publications over time—and that time must include the present." Using an inferential reference to the end of the practice of polygamy among mainstream Mormons and the change in Church doctrine on the conferring of priesthood to men of color, Hudson explains that doctrines change through time as new revelation is received by Church officials. The article then describes how members can apply the Church statement to doctrines with which they struggle.

Using the official statement as a guide and supporting her assertions with quotations from Church officials, Hudson recommends first determining whether a belief or practice is current doctrine. Based on the proliferation of scriptures and official Church publications, the task of determining which teachings are current

doctrines even as Hudson defines it is a challenging feat. Add to that challenge the proliferation of unofficial publications that are quoted by general authorities, sold through official Church catalogues, and prevalent in Mormon homes, and the task becomes daunting for all but those with the time and training to research and stay current on what is doctrine according to the 4 May, 2007 statement, as opposed to what is folk doctrine.

Using the example of folk belief that Jesus was conceived by conventional means with an unconventional father and that Mary is the literal wife of God, Hudson asserts members are obligated to use the 4 May, 2007 statement to challenge teachers who perpetuate teachings that are not doctrinal based on the framework presented therein. This statement seems inclusive and empowering at first glance. However, only members who feel confident in their ability to decipher doctrine for themselves based on the framework Hudson provides are included and empowered to challenge an instructor they believe to be incorrect.

If doctrine is determined to be Church sanctioned and current, the second step, as identified by Hudson, is to determine whether the doctrine is fundamental or peripheral. She explains, "Making peripheral elements central, or making central elements peripheral, both lead to sorrow because each stems from an erroneous judgment. These errors in judgment can lead to brittle, fragile testimonies that shatter at the first challenge."

The definition of fundamental doctrine offered by Joseph Smith, as quoted by Hudson, "...are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ,

that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.” Yet Hudson uses the framework provided to go beyond testimony of the nature of Christ when she identifies the “Proclamation on the Family” as fundamental doctrine, stating, “Teachings such as those found in ‘The Family Proclamation’ are not to be casually brushed aside, no matter how anachronistic or insensitive they might seem to some modern minds.” She goes on to quote Elder Dallin H. Oaks:

“Love is an ultimate quality, and tolerance is its handmaiden. Love and tolerance are pluralistic qualities—encompassing all—and that is their strength, but it is also the source of their potential distortion. Love and tolerance are incomplete unless they are accompanied by a concern for truth and a commitment to the unity that God has commanded of his servants. Carried to an undisciplined excess, love and tolerance can produce indifference to truth and justice and opposition to unity. What makes mankind free from death and sin is not merely love but love accompanied by truth.”

The above statements likely reference the MORMON Church’s highly publicized opposition to gay marriage. She further warns against deciphering doctrine without the framework provided in the 4 May, 2007 statement with the following quotation from BYU Professor of ancient scripture Robert Millet:

“[I]t is as important for us to know what we do not know as it is for us to know what we know. Far too many things are taught or discussed or even argued about that fit into the realm of the unrevealed and thus the unresolved. Such matters, particularly if they do not fall within the range of revealed truth we teach today, do not edify or inspire. Often, very often, they lead to confusion and sow discord.”

Hudson explains that obedience to doctrines that instantly resonates with an individual as true does not build faith, but remaining faithful while struggling with difficult doctrine strengthens testimony. She recommends patience, asserting that troubling doctrine will either evolve or have new light shed on them through future revelations. Hudson denies an individual's right to personal revelation when personal revelation conflicts with doctrine as defined by the framework outlined in her article, further disempowering Mormons who do not have the training or confidence to implement the recommended framework.

Concerned over the confusion folk beliefs and peripheral doctrine might cause new converts to the MORMON faith, Hudson quotes a reviewer of her article who asserts that, "Church members [may] have an obligation to avoid speculating on peripheral doctrines in the presence of new converts and nonmembers." The preceding statement is another example of exclusionary practices that reinforce hierarchical and elitist ideas about who is worthy and capable of deciphering doctrine.

The content of the Hudson's article, the relative obscurity of the article and the official statement it examines, and the cryptic language used in both the article and the statement illustrate the difficulty rank and file members encounter in deciphering Mormon doctrine. Doubtless, there are several educated members with access to journals such as Square Two who will use Hudson's article and the 4 May, 2007 statement as a guide to decipher doctrine, and to defend their faith when faced with scrutiny over Church doctrine. Meanwhile, general membership will likely

continue promulgating folk doctrine and practice unless those who follow Hudson's advice are able to overpower current beliefs and practice with arguments that folk beliefs such as those regarding Mary's relationship to God the Father, and practices such as women giving blessings of healing and comfort to their children, are not doctrine.

Even with the framework Hudson provides, confusion is likely to continue when individuals are encouraged to seek personal revelation and are able to argue in favor of folk beliefs supported by scripture and statements made by current and past leaders who hold Church sanctioned positions of authority. Additionally, ambiguity remains in regard to who has authority to teach, what constitutes consistent teachings, and what qualifies as current, especially if the following statement from Hudson's article is accepted as true:

"Of course, there be instances when ecclesiastical leaders, such as a bishop, have wrongly stepped beyond their stewardship, and in such cases, their counsel is simply not binding on a member of their ward. And there may be very rare instances when a local ecclesiastical authority is clearly wrong on central doctrine, and in those instances, their authority is moot, and higher authorities should be informed of the issue in order to re-educate the leader in question."

Who decides when "ecclesiastical leaders...have wrongly stepped beyond their stewardship" or when leaders are "wrong on central doctrine"? Will a woman from a rural area who dropped out of high school to help meet the needs of her family feel as entitled to question her bishop as a woman with a PhD living in a metropolitan area and enjoying the prestige of an internationally renowned career?

Will a young man who is given the Aaronic priesthood and told that he has the responsibility to “watch over the Church...warn, expound, exhort and teach” be more or less likely to challenge the teachings of a bishop than his mother, if his mother believes that her son is to preside over her when her husband is away?

Hudson’s article also illustrates circular reasoning used by Church authorities to discourage members from critically examining doctrine or depending on their own judgment when authorities make statements they find troubling. Further evidence of the discouragement of dissent is in the following statement that appears at the end of the article: “Would you like to comment on this article? Thoughtful, faithful comments of at least 300 words are welcome. Please submit to SquareTwo.” Limiting discussion to “faithful” comments excludes dissenting voices. Using the word “thoughtful” with the 300 word requirement implies the discouragement of less educated voices from entering the discussion.

The fluidity of Mormon doctrine can be an empowering element for Mormon women. Whether a Mormon woman chooses to define Mormonism for herself based on the fluidity of Mormon doctrine, or defers to Church leadership for the interpretation of Mormon doctrine is largely dependent on identity politics and the individual’s standpoint within Mormon culture.

2.11 TEMPLE CEREMONIES

Temples are very important to Mormons as sacred places where ceremonies are performed that will allow them to be with their families for eternity and to become as

God is. They are also important as sacred ground where the veil between heaven and earth are thin, and personal revelation is easier to obtain. When a member struggles with a decision or problem, she will likely fast, pray, and go to a temple. Participants in this study talked about two temple ceremonies as being transformative in their understanding of their gendered identity within Mormonism.

2.11.1 Endowment Ceremony

In the Endowment Ceremony the story of creation is reenacted. According to Mormon doctrine, our universe was created by Jesus Christ and the Arch Angel Michael (who became Adam) under the direction of Heavenly Father. When Heavenly Father asked Adam why he and Eve covered their nakedness, Adam responded, "The woman which thou gavest me, and commanded that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat." After they were cursed but before Eve and Adam were cast out of the Garden of Eden, Eve was commanded to make a covenant to obey Adam and Adam was commanded to make a covenant to obey God. Eve turned to Adam and said, "Adam, I now covenant to obey the law of the Lord and to harken unto your counsel as you harken unto Father." Adam turned away from Eve to face God and said, "Elohim, I now covenant with thee that from this time forth I will obey Thy law and keep Thy commandments."

Throughout the reenactment, patriarchal hierarchy is reinforced. Although the reenactment goes on to depict Satan continuing to tempt Adam; and the apostles

Peter, James, and John come to check up on them, test Adam, cast Satan out of their presence, and teach them the gospel; Eve remains silently at Adams side for the rest of the reenactment. Peter, addressed Adam directly but never spoke to Eve. Elohim commanded Jehovah and Michael to create the universe, and Jehovah said, "Michael, let us go down..." Elohim commanded Jehovah to send Peter James and John to check on Eve and Adam, Jehovah passed the message on to Peter, James, and John, and then Peter said, "Come, James and John, let us go down." Each time an action was carried out it was reported back up the chain of command. Peter reported to Jehovah and Jehovah reported to Elohim. The repeated enactment of hierarchical command and report reinforces ideals of obedience and patriarchal governance.

During the endowment ceremony direct correlation is made between Adam and Eve, and married couples in the room. A married couple is chosen from the participants to represent Adam and Eve at the Altar of God. The reenactment is paused periodically and participants make gender specific vows corresponding with the story of Adam and Eve, their relationship to each other, and their relationship with God. For example, when Adam and Eve cover their nakedness the reenactment is paused while participants put on green aprons with leaf patterns on them. A married couple kneel at an alter facing an officiant who represents Heavenly Father and stands on the other side of the altar. At the end of the ceremony men and women exit the room on opposite sides through curtains meant to represent a veil passed through when transitioning from this life to the next. Men are brought

through the veil by a man representing God. Women are brought through by their husband or a man representing their husband.

The endowment ceremony uses symbolism to reinforce Mormon understanding of the purpose of premortal, mortal, and antemortal existence. Although women often outnumber men as participants in endowment ceremonies (particularly during business hours on weekdays) Eve is the only woman in the reenactment. Because Eve is the only woman in creation at the time represented in the reenactment, there is no purpose for the line “which thou gavest me” except to reinforce the notion that Eve is Adam’s property. Mormons are taught that Heavenly Father is married to a Heavenly Mother, but she is not represented in the reenactment, nor is she mentioned or depicted anywhere else in the temple. Heavenly Mother does not take part in the creation of the universe, nor does she speak with or visit her children. The only thing Mormon doctrine officially says about the role of Heavenly Mother is that she is married to Heavenly Father and she is the Mother of our Spirits.

In practice, this means a Mormon man may feel he has authority to tell a Mormon woman she is mistaken if he disagrees with personal revelation she receives, because there is not a single domain within her life or death where a man does not have ultimate authority over her as a priesthood leader. As an individual, she needs a husband or father as intercessor. If she does not have a husband or father that is a worthy priesthood holder, her Bishop has authority over her along

with the obligation to care for her as the “Father of the Ward” (a phrase commonly used to describe the role of Bishop).

2.11.2 Initiatory Ceremony

Before a person can participate in the Endowment Ceremony, she must first be initiated through a ceremony that is interchangeably referred to as Washing and Anointing or Initiatory ceremony. Initiatories take place adjacent to locker rooms, and are officiated by members of the same sex as the receiver because the initiate is not fully clothed during the ceremony, but wears a covering similar to a poncho. The poncho-like covering is used to allow access to bare skin on the torso. The ceremony entails being blessed with water and oil in similar fashion to Catholic baptism, but the individual is blessed on the bare navel, spine, and chest as well as head, legs, and feet. It is at the end of the Initiatory ceremony that a Mormon receives the Garments of the Holy Priesthood (generally referred to as garments). Once a Mormon has been endowed, Garments of the Holy Priesthood are worn at all times (except when inappropriate, such as swimming) for as long as the individual is a worthy (obedient) member of the Mormon Church. The Robes of the Priesthood are put on during the Endowment Ceremony and are only worn in the temple.

Knowledge of these elements of temple ceremonies will assist non-Mormon readers with the interpretation of participants’ quotes in the Findings section.

2.12 FEMINIST THEORY AND RELIGION

Several scholars have developed feminist frameworks for analyzing or dealing with patriarchal religions. Stopler (2005) looks at the relationship between Church and state, identifying five ways liberal democratic states retain connections with patriarchal religions and shows how those connections adversely affect women. She argues liberal democratic states cannot realize ideals of equality until ties are completely severed between Church and state and the state works to actively dismantle oppressive practices influenced by patriarchal religion. Bakhti (2007) argues for a more balanced approach stating that strict separation of Church and state, especially when combined with secular judgment of religious practice, restricts women's freedom of choice in religious expression, and promotes fear-based imperialist prejudice.

Hoyt (2007) recommends a nuanced approach to studying religious women by looking at Mormon women's belief in a divine couple and their potential to become Goddesses in company with their husbands. She explains that Mormons tend to reject feminism because they believe feminism is anti-family, and feminists tend to reject Mormon women because they believe Mormon women are anti-equality. Academic feminists and Mormon women tend to see each other in simplistic generalities. Each group has difficulty recognizing the nuances and diversity within the other group.

Hoyt argues that dichotomous views of Mormon women overlooks or marginalizes the self-actualization they encounter through theology that recognizes divinity within them and that offers exalted roles patterned after traditional gendered roles. Heavenly Mother is widely accepted Mormon doctrine and she is spoken highly of, but Pres. Hinkley forbade praying to her in 1991 citing lack of scriptural precedent. Many women feel valued simply by the existence of doctrine that includes divine feminine. Some would like more details about her and hope for future revelation.

Hoyt believes the fact that Mormon women's conception of the divine feminine reinforces traditional gendered roles may force a shift in feminist thought about the effect of belief in the divine feminine on religious groups. Hoyt argues that if Mormon women are forced to take on independence at the expense of interdependence with spouse and children, the roles they believe ensure their exaltation is sacrificed and they are thereby restricted rather than liberated. Hoyt recommends examining theological commitments along with victimization and empowerment to gain a more nuanced understanding of religious women.

Beaman (2001) identifies three groups of Mormon women according to their level of adherence to MORMON doctrine and ideals. Molly Mormons (Anthropomorphic Mormon ideal of femininity) sing the praises of the patriarchal structure of the Mormon Church, joyfully submit to Mormon gendered roles and insist that they do not feel restricted in their prescribed role. Moderates question some MORMON tenets and have found a way to negotiate their way through the

system that allows them to stand their ground and challenge authority when necessary. Of the three groups, Mormon feminists are the only ones in Beaman's sample who recognize an imbalance of power between men and women in the Church. The Mormon feminists perform Mormonism on their own terms. Beaman identifies the difficulty women who are single, divorced, widowed, or child-free experience in a religion that places so much emphasis on traditional family structure. She also identifies the propensity to attribute abuse of authority among priesthood holders as unfortunate acts of individuals rather than inherent in the system of patriarchy.

Analyzing the question of how women can find empowerment in a religion that is patriarchal, and therefore inherently hostile to women's empowerment, Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak (1996) created a model of predictable responses women have when reconciling religious beliefs with ideals of equality. The first step Weiss Ozorak identifies is the perception of inequality. If inequality is perceived, the first choice is whether to acknowledge the inequity or deny that inequity exists. Once inequality is acknowledged one must decide whether the inequity is justified or not. If a determination is made that the inequity is unjust, women may leave, choose to work for change from within (translation), or "alter her private response to the environment" (interpretation). Weiss Ozorak refers to the use of both interpretation and translation as integration.

In Weiss Ozorak's (1996) study, the overwhelming majority (43%) of participants chose to cope with inequity in religion cognitively (interpretation).

Eighteen percent of participants used a combination of interpretation and translation, 16% chose to accept inequity, 8% chose translation, 8% chose to avoid the inequity by leaving, and 7% denied inequality exists.

Weiss Ozorak (1996) identified comparing the level of inequity women experience in their Church with inequity experienced elsewhere in society, or within the history of the Church as the most common method participants employed to avoid cognitive dissonance in patriarchal religions. Other tactics include attributing feminine characteristics to male deities, focusing on other issues, and focusing on concepts of God that emphasize relationship and community rather than judgment and hierarchy. Weiss Ozorak concludes, "Thus, although these women are aware of inequities, they see them for the most part as tangential to their faith experience, as annoying consequences of human wrongheadedness that need to be either worked on or overlooked in the context of an experience that is predominantly satisfying" (p.27).

Presley, Weaver, and Weaver (1985) studied the socialization of traditional, transitional, and liberal Mormon and ex-Mormon women. They found that Mormon women who have nontraditional political attitudes often have mothers who held non-traditional political attitudes, mothers who worked full-time, or tension in their home life. Their study identified the need for further study into the ways and reasons Mormon women reconcile seemingly irreconcilable liberal political views with devotion to a conservative religion.

Feminist approaches to religion are as varied as feminists are to each other. While I recognize the validity of arguments for austere separation such as those presented by Stopler (2005), I prefer a more balanced and nuanced approach as suggested by Bakhti (2007), and Hoyt (2007). Weiss Ozorak's patterned responses to patriarchy in religion are useful in categorizing responses of participants in this study, but I have tried to follow Hoyt and Bakhti's admonishment to recognize advantages women experience within the Church. Throughout the study I have asked myself how participants benefit from remaining within the Church. Presley, Weaver, and Weaver (1985), Weiss Ozorak (1996), and Beaman (1991) identified various ways Mormon women interact with the Church and how they locate themselves within Mormonism and how many of them have empowered themselves to perform and experience Mormonism on their own terms. Similar patterns were evident among the women who participated in this study.

2.13 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the main concerns I wrestled with in analyzing data collected through interviews with study participants is how to analyze the data without diminishing the validity of each standpoint. As a student of feminism I recognize a great deal of struggle among feminists to be heard and valued. Womanists, mujeristas, lesbians, and women from lower socioeconomic groups struggle to be heard and seen in a movement historically focused on Western, middle to upper-class, white, straight

women. Women who have been relegated to the outskirts of feminist discourse are right to argue for inclusion.

What concerns me about the discourse among feminists is a tendency to allow horizontal hostility to dominate the tone of those arguments. Audre Lorde demonstrated, “The Masters Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (Lorde, 1984, pp.110-114). Attacking and shaming are patriarchal tools for control and domination. My goal is to build bridges of understanding between Mormon feminists and non-Mormon feminists and between Mormon women who stay in the Church and those who leave, so that we can work together in a shared vision of a world that is safer for and more affirming of women.

While I recognize the need to shine light on continued racism, ableism, ageism, classism, and the like, my goal is to “discover/create a standpoint for woman [but not] collapse the differences among women into the ‘Universal Woman’” (Tong, 1989, p. 237). “As bad as it is for a woman to be bullied into submission by a patriarch’s unitary truth, it is even worse for her to be judged not a real feminist by a matriarch’s unitary truth” (Tong, 1989, p. 236).

Mormonism and feminism are both fluid, and each can be represented as a spectrum rather than on a fixed point on a graph. Likewise, the standpoint of Mormon feminists might look like a multi-dimensional cluster rather than a specific point on a graph. This study examines what little information can be extracted from interviews averaging 1.5 hours on the lives of 14 individuals who identify as active believing Mormons and as feminist. While patterns have been identified among their

stories, it is important to remember that we are glimpsing a small aspect of their lives rather than the essence of who they are. This study is an attempt to add qualitative depth to scientific inquiry into the phenomenon of Mormon feminism rather than a conclusive explanation.

Patriarchy within the Mormon Church presents itself as a benevolent organization dedicated to reverencing and protecting women as preordained eternal mothers. Patriarchy presented in this way causes some Mormon women to question feminist views of patriarchy, to distinguish patriarchy within Mormonism from patriarchy outside Mormonism, or to deny that patriarchy exists within Mormonism. The afore mentioned responses are evident among participants within this study and the articles presented in this literature review provide frameworks with which to understand how women can identify themselves as feminist while actively participating in a religion that is overtly patriarchal.

3. METHODS

The positivist model of research dictates that the researcher gather data, objectively analyze it, and then inform the readers of the ideal interpretation. The practice of removing the researcher from her data and conclusions supposedly validates her findings. Contemporary social research has largely rejected the positivist model because it leads to an incomplete presentation of the data and findings, particularly in areas of research that define ways of being such as feminism and sociology. To assert that a researcher is not a participant in the study she conducts is erroneous at best, and misleading at worst. Researchers view research questions, participants, and data, through the lens of their individual standpoint and training. They design questions, formulate hypotheses, and develop measurement tools based on that lens. In qualitative interviews both interviewee and interviewer participate in the process.

My approach to social research is heavily influenced by feminist ideals of giving voice to the disempowered, acknowledging personal privilege, and validating the right of an individual to self-identify. Methods for this feminist qualitative study include autoethnographic methods co-mingled with qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews using grounded theory and fluid frame inductive analysis (constant comparative method) with 13 women who identify as Mormon and as feminist.

3.1 GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is an inductive form of qualitative analysis that allows the answer(s) to a question to emerge from the data (Lofland et.al., 2006). I used grounded theory in this project because grounded theory is a feminist approach to qualitative research that places the participants' experiences at the heart of the research rather than the researcher's biases and theories. Grounded theory accomplishes participant centrality by relying on the data to form the answers to a question rather than assuming the researcher's hypotheses are the only possible answers. I also chose grounded theory because answers revealed through grounded theory tend to be more nuanced than a researcher's hypotheses.

Fluid frame inductive analysis was used to analyze transcribed interviews of thirteen participants. Fluid Framework allows the researcher to build a framework that is informed by the data, and inductive analysis is the process of identifying commonalities among subjects and contrasting variances (Ragin, 1994). In this case, transcriptions were coded by answers to interview questions (see appendix C). As patterns emerged the transcripts were recoded according to emergent themes. Commonalities were identified and then compared and contrasted with variance.

For example, answers to the question "what is your definition of feminism" were compiled in two columns. One column contained answers in their entirety, the other column contained summaries of answers. General themes such as "apologetic about feminism" were identified in the summary. "Apologetic about feminism" became a new

aspect within the analytical framework and the rest of the interviews were recoded to explore how participants present their feminism. When a participant was particularly bold about her feminism in comparison to other participants, similarities and contrasts were sought out to identify possible reasons for the variance.

Initially there were fourteen participants. All participants were given the opportunity to read and respond to this thesis. One participant chose to withdraw after reading the thesis and all data collected from her was pulled out of the final copy. All interviews were recorded in their entirety, although half of one recording was accidentally and irretrievably destroyed before it was transcribed. The portion of the interview that was destroyed was not used in the analysis, but was consistent with other interviews.

Interviews were between one and three hours, with a median time of one hour 30 minutes. Five interviews took place in the participant's home, three were conducted over the phone, two were conducted in restaurants, two were conducted at my Grandmother's house (in Utah), and one took place in the participant's office at her workplace. Participants were able to choose the location of the interview with the exception of two phone interviews which were not logistically feasible to conduct in person. The participant who chose to participate by phone preferred not to schedule a face-to-face interview.

Within a few days of receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study I traveled to Utah for one week to begin conducting interviews. Only four

interviews were scheduled when I arrived in Salt Lake, and I depended on the initial contacts to provide referrals. One of the four women who initially had an appointment to meet with me did not qualify for the study because she no longer identified as an active and believing Mormon. Through referrals I ended up interviewing seven participants while in Utah. Other participants were located by word of mouth and interviews with them were completed after I returned home.

3.2 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography in this study served two purposes. First, autoethnography allowed complete transparency about my standpoint and the biases I bring to this study. Second, it allowed me to use experience as a culturally Mormon feminist to inform the analysis of collected data while exposing “the micropolitics of the research situation” (DeVault, 1999, p. 41). For example, my experience as a Mormon woman allows me to describe the Mormon Temple Endowment ceremony as one who has participated in it (see section 5.3.2).

Some participants and other Mormon readers may be offended by the fact that I have shared information about temple ceremonies. Temple ceremonies are sacred to Mormons and outsiders are not allowed to view the ceremony or even to enter rooms where the ceremony takes place once a dedication ceremony² has been performed. Insider status combined with autoethnography allowed me to perform

² Ceremony that takes place after construction of a temple is complete that dedicates the temple building for sacred Mormon ceremonies.

qualitative analysis that includes intimate knowledge of sacred ceremonies, their meanings, and the impact they have on the lives of participants. Because temple ceremonies are considered sacred, I have only shared information that is available through other public sources and sheds light on the beliefs and experience of participants. My intent in sharing this information is not to offend, but to build bridges of understanding.

3.3 INSIDER/OUTSIDER

As mentioned in the Literature Review, it is difficult to find academic literature on Mormon women that is both accurate and transparent about biases. It would have been difficult to for an outsider to have prepared for semi-structured interviews with this population using academic literature alone. My insider status as culturally Mormon facilitated the advancement of conversation during semi-structured interviews because I did not have to rely on preparatory study of academic literature to interpret meaning during interviews. For example, when Susan mentioned the children's song, "Follow the Prophet" I immediately knew she was referencing an anthem-like children's song with a chorus that repeats the phrase "follow the prophet" several times (with only two short reprieves) and with a musical phrase that has a marching quality to it. An outsider might not have known she was talking about a song (and several curricula referencing the song), and might have had to interrupt the narrative to ask for clarification. If Susan had

been speaking with an outsider, she might not have even mentioned the song, knowing that it would require an explanation.

Because I was raised Mormon, Susan's mention of the song brought up memories of singing that song while wearing an uncomfortable dress and tights, sitting in metal folding chairs in rows with other children organized by age with youngest children in front rows and oldest children in back rows. Although Susan was introduced to the song as an adult and I was introduced to it as a child, I knew that Susan's memories associated with the song would share elements of my memories. Most, if not all, of the adults in the room were female. Everyone present wore dress clothes. Most boys wore ties, button-up shirts, and slacks; several boys wore suits, and some wore sweaters or sweater vests. All of the girls and women wore dresses or skirts (the first and only time I ever saw a woman wear pants to a Mormon Church on a Sunday did not occur until I was an adult).

Because Mormon Church buildings are based on a handful of building plans and use the same building materials across the world (when possible), I knew that the carpet was low pile industrial and was likely orange or brown but might have been blue or green. At least one wall had an accordion style divider, and there was an upright piano and a wooden pulpit at the front of the room. Several chairs were arranged behind the pulpit for the Primary presidency and for the children who were assigned talks that Sunday. As an insider I was able to delve into the interviews with the contextual richness of an ethnographic inquiry, but because I am an insider the contextual richness is instantly accessible to me. I did not have to

spend time accessing and processing the above mentioned memories; they all came instantly and effortlessly.

Another advantage to my insider status was access to resources in Utah, including the use of my Grandmother's home as a location for interviews. Being able to offer a local residence as an optional location for interviews helped to establish my status as an insider with participants, and opened the door to conversation about my connection to the Mormon Church. As an insider, I was able to quickly establish rapport with most participants, and most participants treated me as an insider. However, I am no longer a full-fledged insider. My status is more accurately described as a returning native (Perryman, 2011) or as an insider/outsider (Yakushko et. al., 2011).

One participant was more guarded initially, but became less guarded as our interview progressed. I hypothesize that my status as an inactive member of the Church led her to question my motives since members often think of inactive members as having weak morals, being less spiritual than active members, and as dangerous influences. Active members will encourage inactive members to become active again, but do not usually socialize as openly with inactive members as with fully active members or as with non-members.

Another factor that may be linked to the participant's initial guardedness is her relative hesitance to engage in discursive behaviors compared with other participants. Participants who were engaged in more discursive behaviors tended to be less dogmatically aligned with official Church doctrine. It is likely that

participants who engage in more discursive behaviors and who are more inclined to diverge from dominant Mormon dogma are, therefore, less inclined to stigmatize inactive members of the Church. It is also likely that participants who consciously engage in discursive behavior recognize inactivity as a variant of their own discursive behavior, which would reinforce my status as an insider (a discursive Mormon feminist) in the minds of participants who consciously engage in discursive resistance.

Even as an insider, my personal experience varies significantly from most participants in that I experienced overt oppression at the hands of priesthood leaders. My views differ from most participants in that I do not consider Mormon patriarchy to be any less dangerous or less threatening than more overtly oppressive patriarchy. My history and class standing differs from most of the participants as well.

I was raised in a working-class household that bordered on and then transitioned to middle-class during my mid-teen years. I had three different step-fathers, three half-siblings and four step-siblings growing up (which was very unusual in Mormon households in the 70's and 80's). My mother and her mother were raised in poverty. My grandfather was raised on a dairy farm, so although he was also raised in a working class environment, he did not experience the hunger my grandmother did growing up on an orchard (seasonal versus year round food supply). I knew that my ancestors were pioneers within the Church, but I didn't know about the distinction of Mary Elizabeth Hales Horne until a few years ago. I

was a high school drop-out and lived on my own from the age of sixteen. I was 29 when I earned my GED and came back to school.

Although my history is not immediately apparent, it makes me an outsider in terms of family dynamics, class, educational pathways, career level, and internalized self-efficacy to all but three of the women I interviewed. Like other researchers who enter the field with subjects that have both shared and variant histories (Reay, 1996; Yakushko, 2011; and Perryman, 2011) I was highly conscious that my background “affects all stages of the research process from theoretical starting point to my conclusions” (Reay, 1996 p. 68).

In an attempt to minimize the effects of my bias on the interviews, I did my best to remain present with the individual I was interviewing in the moment and to immerse myself in her story. Whenever I found myself processing their stories through my own experience while an interview was taking place, I reminded myself that I would have plenty of time to analyze the experience after the interviews were transcribed. I then turned my attention to asking questions focused on the participant’s experience, and commonalities as well as contrasts with the narratives of other participants. In other words, during interviews I focused on gathering information that would shed light on the experiences of the participants. Although personal insight into my own lived experience through the narratives of participants was inevitable, I tried to only relate the experiences of participants to my own experience when it would advance my understanding of their experiences and their perspectives.

3.4 LIMITATIONS

Snowball sampling was used, resulting in a relatively homogenous sample of mostly middle- to upper-middle class, professional, Caucasian women with post-secondary educations. The questions posed and the answers expressed are as complex as the women who participated in this study, and the scope of this study only scratches the surface of the subject matter. I have done my best to represent the individual standpoints of these women as authentically as possible, but acknowledge that I am biased as a Mormon Feminist who chose to leave the Church while (thanks to the women I interviewed) embracing my Mormon cultural heritage.

Thirteen is too small a sample to definitively answer the question posed, yet common themes were identified that can be used to inform future research into Mormon feminists, Mormon women, feminists of faith, and reconciling intersectionality. Because the data in this study has been filtered through the lens of my experience, I relied heavily on quotations from interview transcripts in the Findings section to allow participant voices to dominate. It is my hope that this study will facilitate greater understanding between Mormons and Feminists.

4. DEMOGRAPHICS

Snowball sampling often results in homogeneity, and the sample in this study is no exception. On the demographic questionnaire, twelve of the thirteen participants self-identified as White, Caucasian, Anglo, or Euro-American, and one identified as Russian/Tatar. Twelve of the participants identified English as their first-language, and one identified Russian as her first language. The majority of the participants were in their 50s and 60s with five participants in their 60s, four participants in their 50's, one participant in her 40s, two participants in their 30s, and one participant in her 20s (see appendix D).

The majority of participants were raised in the Western United States, but a minority was raised in Utah. Currently, the majority of participants live in Utah. All of the participants live in urban or suburban communities with nine participants living in medium sized cities or a close-in suburb of a medium sized city (population 50,000 to 250,000), two participants living in a small city or suburb (population 2,500 to 50,000), and three participants living in a larger city or a close-in suburb of a larger city (population 250,000 to 1,000,000).

Ten participants grew up in middle class families, one participant started out in a middle-class family that became working class after her father died, and two participants were raised in working class families. Currently, nine participants are middle-class, two participants are upper-class, one participant is working class, and one

participant is a student who has experienced a full range of socio-economic status during her adult life. One of the participants who currently enjoys upper-class socioeconomic status is uncertain of her economic future due to a pending divorce (see appendix E).

At the time of the interviews, all of the participants had at least some college with three participants holding doctoral degrees, two participants in graduate school working toward their doctorate degrees, one participant with a terminal master's degree, two participants were close to completing master's degrees, two participants with bachelor's degrees, and three participants with some college but less than a bachelor's degree (one was one semester away from a bachelor's degree).

Nine participants were married at the time they were interviewed, one of the married participants was in the process of obtaining a divorce at the time she was interviewed, three participants were divorced, and one participant had never been married (see appendix F). Eleven of the participants have children, and two participants do not have children. Of the participants who do have children, two participants have two children, four participants have three children, one participant has four children, one participant has five children, one participant has six children, one participant has seven children, and one participant has fourteen children. Six of the eleven participants who have children, no longer have any children living at home. One participant who does not have children would like to have children in the future. The other participant

who does not have children did not want children early in her adult life, but changed her mind when she became physically unable to have children (see appendix G).

All participants identified as politically liberal with six participants registered as democrats, four participants registered as independent, two participants who identified their political party affiliation as “other”, and one participant who is a registered alien (see appendix H). Nine participants work for pay outside of home, five participants who work for pay outside of the home also work for pay from home, and one participant works for pay from home exclusively. Three participants are not currently working for pay (see appendix I).

Eight participants were raised Mormon, one participant was not raised with any religious training, one participant attended Protestant, Episcopalian, and Presbyterian Churches, and the remaining participants were raised in various other Christian denominations including the Church of England, Methodist, and the Church of Christ.

5. FINDINGS

In the previous chapters I have attempted to build the readers' knowledge of Mormonism to a level that will allow appropriately nuanced understanding of the findings. In this chapter we will explore the lived experiences of participants in an attempt to understand how Mormon feminists reconcile an ideology of equality in a culture of patriarchy.

This chapter is divided into four sections. We will begin by looking at the participants responses to the question of how Mormonism, feminism, and patriarchy intersect in their lives. In the second section we will look at how privilege effects the interpretation of patriarchy among Mormon feminists. The third section examines the gentle approach Mormon feminists and Mormon patriarchs use in relation to each other. Finally, we will explore how personal revelation combined with the fluidity of Mormon doctrine empowers participants to define and interpret Mormonism, and their standpoint within Mormonism, for themselves.

5.1 INTERSECTING MORMONISM AND FEMINISM

When participants were asked about support they receive as Mormons among feminists and as feminists among Mormons ten of the thirteen said they felt misunderstood in both communities. Charlotte described her experience in the Mormon community as, "I don't think I receive any support from my Ward members. I think they look at me as sort of an exotic animal. I think they look at me

with curiosity and a bit of fear...it's a bit of a hands-off wariness" and in the feminist community as, "Oh, I think also I am an exotic animal to them as well. But there's more tolerance in my field..."

Responses to the question of support in feminist and Mormon communities are best understood in context of participants' definitions of Mormonism and feminism. Many participants have positive associations with patriarchy within Mormonism and see patriarchy within Mormonism as different from patriarchy outside Mormonism (a more detailed discussion of this view will be discussed in sections 5.2 and 5.3). Simultaneously, there are negative associations toward feminism among participants. Five of the thirteen participants used the term strident in association with feminism to distinguish their feminism from more overt forms of feminist activism.

Sophia: "Well at the time (late 60s and early 70s) when the way to be an acceptable feminist was to be very angry and strident I would not do that. I don't think that's right you know. You would certainly feel the injustice and feel, you know, justified in being put out about the things you hear about. You know women still don't make what men make, you know it's redic[ulous]. I would've thought by now. Oh my goodness. It's just crazy. But there used to be just horrible injustices and that generation of women have made it so much easier for women to just live. So I chose not to be angry as a Christ-like kind of principle. I chose to try to not react because so much of it was about reactivity you know. I wanted to be a woman of faith and so I just felt like if we are quiet and strong and quietly insist on being treated with respect and equally that will carry the day much more than being agitated and certainly leaving the Church. So many women left and I said, 'No. This is my Church too.' They are not driving me out of this Church. I chose this Church. I believe this Church."

Sophia does not feel comfortable with overt forms of feminist activism, and she is not alone. Although six participants have careers that focus on improving the lives of women and children and all of the participants have served callings focused on the welfare of women and children, none of the participants in this study disclosed participation in overtly feminist activism. Like jujitsu masters³, these women use the art of softness to effect change within a community they are devoted to.

Participants in this study value their membership in the Mormon Church. They acknowledge the antagonistic relationship between Mormonism and feminism in their reluctance to identify themselves as feminist within the Mormon Community (although they did not express reluctance to identify themselves as Mormon within the feminist community). Eight participants said they engage in feminist activities without openly identifying themselves as feminist in the Mormon community.

Pam: "Well, I don't wear a sign around that says, 'I'm a feminist,' okay? So if I did around here, oh my God, I don't know what would happen! Again I think it's been different parts of my life. I don't feel like men in the Church are threatened by me because they think I'm old... and I never come on as sort of shrill or demanding. I'm clever enough I guess as a [profession] or something that tone of voice to use and how to get pretty much what I want to have happen... but that's taken however many years 45, more than 45 years I mean, to get there."

³ I thought of this analogy several months before reading a similar analogy used by Foucault likening judo to the tactic of going along with an oppressor long enough to find a way to turn things to one's own advantage (Faith, 1994, p. 39).

Lois: "You know that is a troubling question for me because I don't know that I ask for that kind of support. I think if I used the word feminist the people would get a different picture of who they think I am and so I think that I'm very honest about what kind of work I do and who I am but I don't call myself a feminist within my Church circles. I think it's that whole thing that actions speak louder than words in who we are and in many instances and I think sometimes the words that are a turnoff to other people won't look beyond that label and so you never get to know who the other person is or you never get to help move agendas forward or to get to move friendships forward because they'll pick a label and then that becomes a barrier."

Georgiana identifies prejudice toward feminism as a hindrance to feminist activism within the Mormon Church, but witnesses the Church working to support individual women.

"Okay both of those [support as a feminist in the Mormon community and as a Mormon in the feminist community] probably neither one really supports, well, that particular piece, you know. As a feminist in the Mormon Church no support. Very little. As a professional woman a lot of support and respect. (Described situation where she advocated for a single mom to receive support getting her RN when she was a Relief Society President)... We really supported her and the Ward said she could do that. But it wasn't because she was a feminist, it was because she was a woman who had ambitions to take care of herself and her children. So as a feminist, if they don't know the word, a lot of support. Equal rights for women yes. If I put the term feminist in there when they don't know [what feminism means] they draw away. That's why what I try to do is try to inform. But I think a lot of people don't know what that, what feminism is, and they state it in a derogatory way, and they pull support if it's couched that way. But for me to talk to young women about pursuing a career and solidarity I get great support."

Sophia also identified retribution within the Mormon Church in relation to feminism, but did not explicitly connect fear of retaliation with her decision to use subtle forms of activism to work for change from within.

Sophia: "Then I just sort of like woke up to the reality that I joined a Church that really I just didn't agree with a lot of that patriarchal order stuff and I thought, 'Well, this is something that surely will change in time⁴.' And you just kind of you just kind of wink at it like yeah you know. Some guy would say something in Church or something, a few of us would look over at each other and go, 'Yeah, believe that right?' You know the kind of thing."

Julie: "But you didn't see any danger in it?"

Sophia: "I didn't see any danger until they began to say, 'There is danger in not supporting the Church's position if you don't agree with this,' and I thought, 'Holy cow! Really?'"

An interesting difference in the ways participants interact with Mormon and feminist communities is that while they are more willing to self-identify as Mormon within the feminist community than as feminist in the Mormon community, they don't necessarily feel safer or more accepted within the feminist community than the Mormon community. Belle originally attended a public university because she thought her peers would be more open-minded in a public university than at a Mormon university. Ultimately, she ended up transferring to Brigham Young University (a private university run by the Mormon Church) because she found her peers at the public university to be intolerant of her belief system.

⁴ Sophia is not alone in her belief that Mormonism will become less patriarchal with time, and there is more detailed discussion on this topic under the heading Personal Revelation and Mormon Doctrine.

"I think people mostly think it's ridiculous to be Mormon, especially if you are feminist. You know, they don't understand how you can believe something that is that way and I don't talk about it I mean... I would say that my conversations with people that aren't LDS about [feminism] that it doesn't, it either doesn't go well, or it's just or it's just kind of embarrassing, or we don't really get into it you know...I had [a conversation] with a guy where he was just really slamming me for being LDS and how ridiculous it was and it was this very weird conversation, weird situation but you know in that situation I get just really defensive, right? So like if I'm talking to somebody within the Church I'll ...vent about all this stuff that just makes me so upset, but if I'm talking to somebody outside of the Church...I'm likely to highlight the things that work really well, the things that I do love about the Church and I'm not going to sit here and talk about the patriarchal structure of it, because that's not the part I'm proud of ... this is something I remember specifically about (college she attended). But I felt ridiculed for being religious and nobody there knows anything about Mormonism specifically...it's organized Christian religion and...I went there instead of BYU specifically. I didn't want to go somewhere where I felt like somebody was telling me what to think. I wanted to have open-minded people around me. I wanted to have lots of viewpoints. I wanted there to be, you know, open-mindedness and my experience was just so the opposite. But it wasn't open-minded it was different minded. It was okay if you believed the way they believed,... for me to be somebody who believed in family, and who believed in organized religion and who did not really support drugs, and that believed in abstinence before marriage, I mean I was a joke to them. And then I did actually end up transferring to BYU, and I was very nervous because I thought I was just going to get the opposite, and my experience at BYU was really great and positive. I had a lot, you know, very open-minded, lots of different great things. I was a humanities major so I'm hanging out with liberal arts kids and we are looking at nude art so, you know, maybe that's those people but I had a great experience there."

Belle expressed reluctance to talk about feminist analysis of Mormonism with non-Members, but she did not say anything about hiding her Mormon identity. In fact,

no participant specifically said she is reluctant to identify herself as Mormon. However, Belle is not alone in her experience of prejudice and intolerance as a Mormon among feminists.

Because the interviews were semi-structured, and because some of the participants do not have very much exposure to non-Mormon feminist communities, only nine of the participants talked about their experience as Mormons in the feminist community. Five of the nine participants identified intolerance or harassment as a Mormon in the feminist community.

Julie: "Describe the level of support you receive as a Mormon in the feminist community."

Gwyn: "Not very well. Not very high...and now recently women are starting to understand that I am my own voice and that whatever I do or think privately is really none of their business. But it's consistent with my overall life and the consistency may not be apparent to them but the consistency is very apparent to me. But, I will tell you that that has been another part of my life that has been very difficult. Now that's not to say that I have not had good friends [at work], because I do. I have a lot of good friends [at work] and a lot of good friends in [career field] but some women who don't know me very well have criticized me and said, 'Well how can you be a feminist and Mormon' and blah blah blah. Especially those women who have chosen to leave the Church, and there's been a lot from them and so I just [replied] to each one of them, 'You know, I'm really pleased that you have found a path that is peaceful to you and I hope that you will allow me the same courtesy.'"

Gwyn is not alone in her assertion that ex-Mormon feminists are less tolerant than other feminists. Victoria has experienced a great deal of acceptance as a Mormon woman in the secular world. According to Victoria, non-Mormons she has

encountered have allowed her to define her own experience, but characterizes feminists in Utah as having as having an angry agenda.

Victoria: "I think in Utah it's a little bit different. I think in other places where I talk to women outside they would, see they would want to know first as a Mormon, 'Are you oppressed?' and if I would say, 'Yes,' they'd go, 'I'm so sorry for you,' and if I would say, 'No, not at all,' they would say, 'Oh, awesome. So your Church honors women.' You know, like they don't really know. They don't have any information that, nobody would feel bad if I was a Mormon, just based on whether or not I feel bad. In Utah though, I think feminists have an agenda. They have a real ax to grind."

Based on interviews with participants in this study, experience of Mormon feminists within the Mormon community and within the feminist community may be summarized as varied (with champions for each community as welcoming and detractors for each community as intolerant or worse) and often difficult. Participants generally experience greater fear of retribution from the Mormon community and less credibility within the feminist community.

5.2 PRIVILEGE AND PATRIARCHY

Another way to look at the question of how Mormon feminists reconcile an ideal of equality with belief in a patriarchal religion is, "What leads some Mormon women to remain in the Church when they embrace feminist ideals while others leave?" I left the Church before I self-identified as feminist, but once I used feminist frameworks to analyze and deconstruct Mormon hierarchies and the inequities I witnessed and experienced within the Mormon Church, my relationship with the

institution of Mormonism irrevocably shifted. When I no longer bought into the rhetoric of “the Church is inspired, but individuals make mistakes” to explain away oppressive and violent acts, I came to the conclusion that exclusively male priesthood and paternalistic patriarchal structure create a precarious and oppressive situation for women within the Mormon Church. As I began this project, I wondered how women who identify as feminist (having similar tools with which to analyze oppressive structures) could submit themselves to an overtly patriarchal institution.

Privilege is a prominent theme within the experiences of the women I interviewed, and likely plays a large role in participants’ ability to reconcile Mormonism and feminism. All participants in this study have some level of privilege with which to minimize the power differential between themselves and male leaders within the Church. As illustrated in the demographics section of this study, all participants of this study are white, ten participants grew up in middle class families, two participants experienced upper-class status and nine experienced middle class status at the time of their interview. At the time of the interviews, all of the participants had at least some college with three participants holding doctoral degrees, two participants in graduate school working toward their doctorate degrees, one participant with a terminal master’s degree, two participants were close to completing master’s degrees, two participants with bachelor’s degrees, and three participants with some college but less than a bachelor’s degree.

Those who sit in privilege are less exposed to oppression and are less likely to recognize or question the oppression of less privileged groups (Hill Collins, 2009). Some participants recognized patriarchal structure as problematic within Mormonism, and others made distinctions favoring patriarchy within Mormonism to patriarchy outside Mormonism. Responses of participants suggest a relationship between privilege and understanding of patriarchy among Mormon feminists. Participants in this study who gave responses evidencing considerable work to identify their standpoint within Mormon hierarchy have experienced or witnessed socio-economic hardship and or patriarchal oppression. Participants who expressed patriarchy within Mormonism in only positive terms, or as non-existent within the Mormon Church had the highest levels of privilege, have careers that are most closely tied to Mormon institutions, and reported fewer incidents of patriarchal oppression. Several responses evidence inner conflict around oppression they witness and positive attributes of men in the priesthood or loyalty to Mormon ideals.

There seems to be a positive correlation between the level of equitable treatment participants currently receive and their opinion of patriarchy within the Mormon Church, and a negative correlation between negative interactions with priesthood authority and opinions of patriarchy within the Mormon Church. Those who were most conflicted in their definitions of patriarchy in the Mormon Church tended to have mostly positive experiences with male leaders in their present, but have experienced or witnessed patriarchal oppression in their pasts.

There is also some indication that positive presentation of patriarchy and gendered norms within the Church are necessary for women to obtain leadership positions within the Mormon Church. Participants who tow the party line in their presentation of patriarchy and the cult of true womanhood held career positions within Mormon organizations while those who were more outspoken in favor of women in the priesthood, praying to Heavenly Mother, gay rights, etc. were often in lower Church leadership positions (or held Church leadership positions in a liberal ward within a liberal city outside Utah), and held careers outside the Mormon Church.

There was one participant who withdrew consent after the thesis was complete, but had not yet been published. I honor her wish withdraw, and removed data collected during our interview, but I will say that she reminded me a lot of Sheri Dew. Dew is a conundrum to me, because she is almost like a microcosmic anthropomorphized version of the dance between feminism and patriarchy. While Dew is not a participant, her public life illustrates many of the same elements that came through in the interview that has been stripped from this thesis.

As a member of the General Relief Society Presidency, Dew brought attention to the prejudice single and child-free women experience in the Mormon Church. Dew called for more understanding toward women who want to get married and have children, or who are divorced or widowed. Unfortunately, she did not help the plight of women who do not wish to marry men, or who do not wish to have

children. In fact, Dew reinforced gendered norms in her role as Second Counselor in the General Relief Society Presidency.

“There isn’t anyone who wants to see me married more than I do” (Chudleigh, 2002).

“Two are usually better than one, as our Father confirmed when He declared that ‘it was not good that the man should be alone’ and made a help meet for Adam – someone with distinct gifts who would give him balance, help him shoulder the burdens of mortality, and enable him to do things he couldn’t do alone. For ‘neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’” (Dew, 2001, It is not good for man or woman to be alone).

“Motherhood is more than bearing children... It is the essence of who we are as women” (Dew, 2001, Are we not all mothers?).

Although Dew has given televised speeches to audiences of millions of Mormons, has served as Second Counselor in the General Relief Society, and brought Deseret Books back from near bankruptcy (Winter, 2012), when asked about several opportunities to run for United States Congress Dew replied, “If I had a hundred dollar bill for every time I have heard that, I could retire. But as a friend told me, I can’t even ask for the full can of apple juice on the airplane. I could never ask for votes” (Spangler, 2004). And yet, in 2004, Dew was involved in a controversy stemming from a public speech in which she condemned homosexual relationships and families with homosexual parents saying, “It is hard for me to stomach” the image of two men with twin daughters (Davidson, 2004).

I don’t know if Sheri Dew identifies as feminist or not, but while she has improved the condition of some women within the Mormon Church considerably,

she also reinforced oppressive ideas of bigotry and divinely appointed eternally gendered roles. When I was an active, believing member of the Mormon Church I absolutely loved Sheri Dew because she was the first role model within the Mormon Church who held leadership positions and was unmarried and single. After decades of shame and carrying stigma around because of my less than idyllic family life Dew shattered some deeply held stereotypes. It breaks my heart to see evidence of internalized patriarchy in her, and yet she facilitated a major shift in the attitudes of members and leadership toward single and child-free women.

If someone were unfamiliar with theories of internalized oppression it would be easy to assume that an individual who does not recognize their own oppression, the ways they participate in their own oppression, and the ways they are oppressive to others cannot be feminist. According to feminist theory everyone has internalized oppression so internalized oppression does not preclude feminism. Exorcising internalized oppression is arguably the most difficult form of feminist activism because it requires that we actively work to discover and fully explore our own blind spots.

Pam works for an institution run by the Mormon Church as well. She related an experience illustrating her attitude toward her relationship with Mormon priesthood authority.

Pam: "The other night we were in the Temple. We've been there almost 2 hours. We got there, it was just packed, and they told us that we could [baptize by proxy]. I brought a bunch of names, about 85 or something, of the people that were with me. We could do five cards each and just as we are, we had someone down in

the water actually. There's a shift change and a guy comes in and announces that we can only do two and I said, "No, excuse me, we have been here since 6:45 and we were told that we could do five cards and I have given away other cards for people to be able to do too." So anyway so we have this moment and so he turns around and he sweeps his hand and he says, we're looking back now at all the people that are sitting in rows and have been waiting and he said, "how could you basically insist on five?" and I said, "Well I'm not easily guilted." I said, "I'm a [named professional title]." And he just was like, and we said by the time we finished arguing we could have had the five down in the font already. And this woman finally came up and started shooing him away so that he would leave it alone.

So he finds me later as were waiting to go for the confirmation and he says, "You know we don't have appointments anymore. You can't just come in here on an appointment." and I said, "I didn't make an appointment. I have been patiently waiting sitting here for two hours." Anyway, and I answered him back anyway. So we had this little toe-to-toe thing and then he disappeared again and then later when we were getting ready to leave there were still a few of our names out at the baptismal font he came back and he was now overly nice and he went out and got the cards for us. Everything. And [male relative] was witness to all of this...(Interruption)

Anyways so that's an example of what I'm talking about. I just won't, and then they get all pissy and pull whatever and I just stand there and let them go through all their. Now it was unfair to come in there and tell the people who were standing in the font you can only. And not only that I just wouldn't let it happen to have these Native American names. People were having a great time with them they were distributing to all these people it was fun. We were having fun and then I just had these three or four kids I brought along that were needing to do their five and I just said, "No" and he just didn't know what to do with me. I said I'm just not easily guilted and he just. I said I'm a [profession] and he had to come later and he said. He called me sister [profession] blah blah blah well you can't have appointments here...

Another time, there was the stake president was just way out of line about some things and I was one of the people that

complained to the regional rep about it. So the next stake conference the stake president got up and apologized publicly. So they just grabbed him and said, "You can't do this" ... so there's always personalities and there's just always their kind of thing, and I guess having lived through the. Like when I lived in the Netherlands my Bishop, well branch president, was an Air Force officer ...and I was a hippie and I was always just sure that he was gonna come after me or do this or that and whatever. And people left me alone because of my testimony, quite frankly, and that's what it gets down to.

Pam recognizes that her education and career privilege her over men in the Church who may not have an education or have a less prestigious career. The man Pam went toe-to-toe with in the temple may have been an engineer or garbage collector, but she took her chances that he was not equally successful and used her privileged status to fuel her argument.

Pam also attributes having a strong testimony to latitude granted her in expressing views that are otherwise frowned on in Mormon culture. Again, we see that there is latitude in some areas as long as the institution of patriarchy and the Mormon faith are strengthened in some way. It is okay to be single or child-free as long as it is against your will. It is okay to call yourself feminist and to resist male dominance as long as you express the view that priesthood is equivalent to motherhood. It is okay to be a hippie in the 60s and 70s as long as you express a strong belief in the Mormon Church.

The master's tools may not be able to dismantle the master's house, but they are so common they are often the only tools we know are available to us. Like Sheri

Dew, and several other participants, Pam role models being a successful career woman and an active member of the Mormon Church. Pam identifies as feminist, and recognizes privilege as a way for her to level the playing field in her own life. Later in the interview she gave examples of using her privilege to advocate for less privileged individuals. Pam uses feminism to limit the impact of patriarchy in her own life, and she does some good for some women in her sphere of influence.

Georgiana makes a distinction between patriarchy in the Mormon Church and patriarchy in the rest of the world, but she does not deny patriarchy exists within the Church.

Georgiana: "Patriarchy would be, in my mind, a system that has male privilege. Male power."

Julie: "And do you understand the Mormon Church to be patriarchal?"

Georgiana: "Yeah, I see that. You know, I mean I think that that's true. In the purest sense I think it is a patriarchy. I don't struggle with that in the way that a lot of feminists do and I don't really. See, if you really know priesthood well, then you wouldn't find the discrimination that a lot of people would on a superficial or cursory view"

Georgiana is likely referencing the absolute power structure of the Church (the superficial or cursory view) as opposed to her lived experience of the way that power is wielded by the men in her circle of influence (a deeper level of knowing).

As a child Georgiana was privileged to have been raised in a more liberal environment and expanded beyond gendered norms with the blessing of her parents.

Georgiana: "My mother was quite a feminist and I grew up with one older brother three older sisters and there was never a difference in what was expected of us professionally, emotionally, in any way. We were expected to have higher ed as a goal and we were expected to have higher ed degrees. And as a kid I remember being perturbed at times that I couldn't play some of the sports that boys in my class could play and being perturbed about some of the things that I couldn't do (inaudible) and feeling like, 'Whatever. I'm gonna do it anyway.' So I wasn't allowed to participate in organized sports for boys but whenever we were playing I was just always able to. I just always played with boys and did whatever I wanted to do, and was out with my dad when he would be working on the farm. So I think as a child I was a feminist."

When asked how she might handle a situation where a priesthood leader abused his authority with her, Georgiana shared several situations where a priesthood leader could have abused authority, or where other women challenged her decisions, but each situation always worked out in her favor. I asked her if she thought her privilege might have played into those situations.

Julie: "I wonder, do you think that your education and your success here, you know out in the world, benefits you in that way? Do you think that they're more likely to..."

Georgiana: "Yeah I suppose so because I know he's aware that I [am a recognized expert in an area pertinent to position she held in the Church]. That's probably true. He trusted me."

A very interesting aspect of Georgiana's interview came when she was answering questions about her experience of support as a feminist among Mormons and her support as a Mormon among feminists. Georgiana answered the question and then began to recognize her privilege. She seemed to be referencing earlier in the conversation when we were discussing her positive experiences with priesthood

leadership in contrast to the lack of support she perceives as a Mormon among feminists and as a feminist among Mormons.

Georgiana: "but I don't think there's a lot of support from either direction and that's unfortunate. I don't see Mormons supporting feminist women. I don't see feminists supporting Mormons....And I'll say now I'm curious about how you do it. Because I couldn't, you know what I mean, question. Well, I think it sounds like I was really fortunate."

Georgiana shows genuine concern over the idea that other women may not have the same experience of a benevolent priesthood. She uses her education and status as an expert in her field to improve conditions of the women she comes in contact with. The reader will recall Georgiana's use of her privilege to influence priesthood leaders to pay for a single mother to go to nursing school so that the mother could earn a livable wage and support her family⁵. Without her intervention priesthood leaders would have provided the basic needs of that family expecting the single mother to eventually find another husband to provide for her and the children. Clearly, Georgiana has many feminist ideals and does her best to live them and to improve the condition of women within her influence. Unfortunately, she does not seem to have spent much time questioning the effect of privilege on her relationship with priesthood leaders before our interview, but she did give it some thought while we were together.

⁵ Found under the subheading Intersecting Mormonism and Feminism

Gwyn also has a lot of privilege, both in her childhood and as an adult, as a professional woman and as a Mormon with high ranking Mormon leaders in her genealogical line.

Gwyn: "Now, I think that one of the things that we [she and her siblings] had, one of the permissions that we had to think as independently as we did, was the fact that my great great grandfather was one of the early apostles with Brigham Young and so, I don't know, we just sort of felt like we helped develop this Church, you know, and so it's like, 'Don't tell us anything.' Plus our great great grandfather and our great great grandmother, and I mean I had several great great grandparents in polygamy as did my husband, and his great great grandfather was also a big hot shot in the Church too. But, the tradition was always passed down that, 'They're just men.' And the men themselves said that. 'We're just men. Don't revere us. All we are are people.' And so independent thinking for me was always emphasized. It was a family tradition. And it was a family tradition that you could think independently. And also, and this is again part of my husband's tradition too, that, 'Look, our grandfathers helped start this Church too, so don't tell us the way it should be.' And sometimes I just want to, and sometimes I do, I'll raise my hand and I'll say, 'My great great grandfather helped found this Church. Don't give me that.'"

"Our family tradition is education, free thinking, you know. So there is an historical arrogance in my line, but I think, I know, that that's what helped all of us probably stay within the Church. Remain independent and just sort of take a bystander's status on some things. For example when it comes to, well the latest deal, gay marriage within the Church, you know. My family and I all stand back and just shake our heads and say, 'Oh brother, how stupid.' You know, would the early patriarchs have even worried about such a thing? Would they have even cared? No. And obviously I'm a coffee drinker too and we were just very. It was just part of our lineage to just be independent. Do our own thing. To be very clear in our lives what the baseline tenants are of the Church and to adhere to those, but other stuff... Forget it."

Some of Gwyn's privilege comes from her heritage and she acknowledges that she is privileged to have been raised with an understanding of men with priesthood authority as "just men." Gwyn is unique in that she is among the most privileged participants, and yet she recognizes and acknowledges patriarchy within Mormonism, and she began questioning her privilege as a child because of disparities she noticed between her experience and that of her classmates.

"As a matter of fact I grew up, as I said, in [an economically depressed] town and so most of my friends were working-class kids. But when I tried to enroll in home ec classes, for example, my counselor said to me, 'You're too smart for that' and he refused to let me enroll in them. And so because I was kind of an independent minded person I did enroll in one or two, you know. But I didn't pursue this straight home ec track like a lot of young women did."

"... I kind of vacillated between middle-class and working-class you know. And I became very much aware of how fortunate I was to have parents who are real educated and who encouraged independent thought compared with friends of mine who might have grown up in a much less privileged situation in terms of money and of education and who probably had the same desires, if not more than me, to achieve and to express themselves. But they had that added layer of oppression of, 'Well, we need to do what the patriarch says we need to do.' It just seemed to me like there wasn't permission to think independently."

Gwyn has privilege, but she has come to understand patriarchy as oppressive even within the Mormon Church. Perhaps she has come to that conclusion because she recognizes that Mormon women are not all equally equipped to challenge or even to question priesthood authority. Yet the dominant discourse about patriarchy within the Mormon Church is so strong that she is almost apologetic about her negative view of patriarchy.

Gwyn: "I would define patriarchy, and actually I would define it in a negative way, although I realize it could also be positive too. But I would define it as suppression and oppression of people by virtue of the gender of the speaker and by virtue of the gender of the speaker [having] a pretension of having a closer relationship with God than others, than women. That's what I would describe it. Although, I realize there is a, probably. Well, certainly there would be a benign description of it as well which would be men guiding or leading the Church, you know, but still, I don't like that either. Patriarchy is men in charge."

"...the LDS religion is a patriarchal religion, but. Which means that outwardly have organizational authority, but through my study with the [divine feminine based spiritual] group, and just through my own personal meditations and intuitions, I firmly believe that in being a patriarchal religion women's energy has been almost completely eradicated. I mean it's discouraged. I believe it's stamped out... but it just pains my heart to hear them [women in Relief Society] mouth back these ridiculous patriarchal responses to things and when I'm there I will usually speak up, but it's not something that I can take each week. Now the women accept what I have to say. I don't believe in any way, that I am ostracized by that at all but it's just that I can't take it very often, you know. Probably two or three times a month."

Although Gwyn is one of the more privileged participants, she is also one of the most liberal in her feminist views. She resists by challenging assumptions, and she resists by leaving. As mentioned before, activity in the Church is one of the ways Mormons establish their status as upstanding members. Priesthood exercises its authority most violently through excommunication as God exercises authority most violently by "casting out" sinners. To voluntarily remove one's self from meetings without a culturally accepted reason (such as illness or caring for a young child) is a discursive act that risks stigma and marginalization. Gwyn is one of many participants who mentioned leaving or avoiding meetings as an act of resistance.

Most participants who resist by withdrawal counterbalance their rebellion with normalizing behaviors that reduce stigma and reaffirm their position as active members of the Church (more on this phenomenon later).

When asked to elaborate on her definition of patriarchy, Victoria gave a response similar to Gwyn's. She went on to point out women's contributions to the foundation of the Church, compared them to men's contributions, and touched on the idea that stories about women's contributions are exploited as well as the original contributions.

Victoria: "It's standard structure that's male oriented. Any kind of political, religious, community, any societal structure that would be male."

Julie: "Do you understand the Mormon Church to be patriarchal?"

Victoria: "Yes"

Julie: "All right, and do you want to expound on that at all or just leave it there?"

Victoria "Well, when I think about the real history of Mormonism, it's got huge matriarchal and feminine powerful symbols and expansion of rights and abilities and all of that, and yet it originated from a man seeking information from a man and getting information to empower men. And then societally brought women into that power in a more, search for wholeness as a religion, but it wasn't... If you add a little bit of the fact that it was Lucy Mack, who went into a grove of trees and asked which Church to join and then taught her son to do that then you've got a little more of a feminine foundation. But, historically we've got male figures all over the place in terms of initial leadership

Julie: "Okay now you touch on something in talking about Lucy Mack's influence."

Victoria: "It was huge!"

Julie: "Huge! And Eliza Snow, she was considered a prophetess at the time."

Victoria: "But because of the ratio of huge powerful women figures to male figures we don't really have a balance there that allows for real strong role models."

Julie: "Do you think the other role models that there were, the Lucy Macks and Eliza Snows and Emmas that there were at the time. Do you think that our perceptions of them are the same now as the perception of their roles would have been then?"

Victoria: "I think it's fluctuated. I think it's been completely ignored some decades, I think it's been sort of magnified in other decades. I think it depends on what background. If we're looking at a women's rights background, suffragettes as opposed to a 50s background of every woman in the home, and come back from the workforce as opposed to, you know, Pres. Hinckley was pretty clear women should get a degree. So whoever's telling the story uses them as a way to validate their story. Rather than look at them as real individual people, they become sort of icons for an agenda."

Victoria points out that patriarchy has dominated discourse around the foundation of the Mormon Church. The rhetoric of Mormon history as presented by the Mormon Church emphasizes the experience and leadership of men while using legends of women within the Church history when it suits the needs of Church leadership.

Susan, Sofia, and Georgia express conflicting ideas about patriarchy and seem to wrestle with the concept of patriarchy a bit more than participants who label it as strictly positive or negative. Each of these women have experienced positive and negative interactions with Mormon men and all of them experienced lower socio-

economic status in their childhoods. Georgia continues to experience lower socioeconomic status than most participants in this study.

Susan: "Well [priesthood is] where the man or men hold the last decision. Hold power. Power over resources. Makes decisions even for women. It's supposed to be a benevolent thing and in the hands of some it is. But I think we've all experienced some times when it feels like an iron hand crushing you. Things just, these things really hurt."

"I have interesting thoughts about priesthood and my main issue is voice. There's something pretty wonderful about good Mormon men. You look at society at large and you look at Mormon men and you see very good people who want to serve, and the priesthood is a way to bless and to serve. And it's sort of like the mission for young men, those two years you know, most young men are living fairly selfishly, whereas these young men are serving. They come to love people. They're learning something of the heart and soul, and I think priesthood at its best, when it's used at its best, does that to them. I think I'd like to stand in circle in the blessing of my own babies. I'd like to have done that. I have participated with [spouse] in blessings of my children, but interestingly, generally, [the children] are a little uncomfortable, you know, so that defeats its purpose. But [spouse] is open to that. But I don't mind that men get to serve us in those ways. I think it makes them very good, except when it's abused. And one of the wonderful things about the Church is that every five years I have a new Bishop and in 10 years a new stake president. This is excellent! It's excellent! So, and mission president, you know, I've served under two but this change is good. It's a very good thing. It's humbling."

Susan sees the priesthood as a tool for teaching men to be in service to others, but she recognizes that it doesn't always work out. She goes on to describe a difficult childhood from a broken home and lack of guidance as she entered adulthood. Susan is a convert to the Mormon Church and says she feels fortunate to have joined the Church as a young adult because when dating she was not treated

with as much respect by non-Mormon men as she was by Mormon men. She describes her husband as a man who started out with patriarchal ideas, but has softened over the years as he has learned from experience in service to others in his priesthood callings and in his relationship with Susan. She also recognizes abuse of authority within the Church and negative effects that has on men and as well as women within the Church.

Susan: "Sometimes, there are times when things get squelched. I mean I've seen in a really wonderful and creative Bishop squelched, you know, by a regional person. I just hate to see that. Hate to see that. It hurts, and hurt remains, that someone's treated... The September Six, the same thing. It hurts. Eugene England who was fired from BYU, that really hurts. He's, he was a brilliant and wonderful and kind man who had so much to offer. How could they? How could they? I don't know. I know it hurt him.

Julie: "And probably many of his students."

Susan: "Oh yeah. Lowell Bunion at the University of Utah he was one of the kindest best men, and the trouble is, I think that what happens is, it doesn't take a whole quorum or anything like that. One of them who thinks differently makes the phone call and it's acted upon and that troubles me."

Susan attributes what she calls the "obedience culture" with oppression within the Mormon Church and she identifies the obedience culture as a relatively new phenomenon. Likely, she is describing the phenomenon outlined in the literature review section of this study, which has progressively taken power away from women and those in lower leadership positions and placed greater power in the hands of men and those with higher leadership positions within the Church.

Julie: "When personal revelation and priesthood authority conflicts which wins out?"

Susan: "Oh well, how can you deny personal revelation?"

Julie: "I have one person who did."

Susan: "Oh really...Because of the big obedience culture that we have right now. It's quite troubling. The thing that

Julie: "Within the Church specifically?"

Susan: "Oh yeah. Yeah. The thing that's troubling about it is I think that people don't use their imagination. They like to be told. So I think we lose a lot of great thinking and possibilities you know so that's what bothers me most about the obedience culture.

Julie: "Now, from your perspective then, how long has there been an obedience culture, and what came before?"

Susan: "I think, well you know Hugh B. Brown, he said, "We care not whether your thoughts by orthodox or heterodox so much as you shall have thoughts." I think to some extent that has been the attitude among some leaders at the top levels and then, (inaudible). I've had some of the leaders who feel that way, and I've been very grateful for them because they've given me freedom which I need. I'm a creative person...I have had leaders of both kinds at ward and stake levels, and then of course worldwide with what the general authorities say. And there are some people who think very rigidly and everything's just so marked out, and some people who think much more broadly. And I can only really relate to people who think more broadly just because that's where I am and where I need to circulate. And so it's difficult if you have a sort of Bishop who tends to sort of squelch, but I've not had very many of those. One Stake President, maybe two. They're a little removed to me. And then things said from the general pulpit. Well, "obedience is the first law of heaven" was that written? I think that Bruce McConkey said that from the pulpit. Maybe that's part of where the obedience culture began. And then in the new primary they did "Follow the prophet he knows the way" (Hiatt, 1989) and serving in the primary at the time, oh my goodness I was a counselor so, you know, I thought, "Boy this song is a bit troubling," because we already were going in rather a sort of limited. I don't think a straight path is a limited path. So now I find in my own ward the people are, they are talking about obedience

a lot. Whereas for me the first law of heaven is love. I don't know where it went wrong."

The song Susan referred to was written while President Kimball was in office. You will recall from the literature review section of this thesis that Kimball is the first President of the Mormon Church to take a political stance as a Prophet of God. As a former music therapy major, I have witnessed Alzheimer's patients who can no longer remember their own names sing every word to "Bicycle Built for Two." I was trained to use music that was popular before the subject turned 20 because they are easiest for the brain to access even in cases of dementia. When Susan mentioned the song, its simple repetitive musical and lyrical phrases flooded my mind with, "Follow the Prophet, follow the Prophet, follow the Prophet, don't go astray. Follow the Prophet, follow the Prophet, follow the Prophet, he knows the way." I was a child when I was introduced to the song, and did not question its influence on me until Susan brought it up. As an adult convert Susan immediately recognized the song as an oppressive tool designed to squelch critical thought. Further research into the effects of Mormon curriculum on the development of critical thought would be a valuable contribution to this area of inquiry.

As with the majority of participants in Wiess Ozorak's (1996) study, Sophia responds to inequality with reinterpretation, and has taken specific steps to ensure she is buffered from the full effect of patriarchal oppression. She acknowledges the destructive nature of patriarchy, but she also points out some men within patriarchy have more egalitarian principles than others. She has taken steps to ensure she is

around men who are egalitarian enough for her to feel she is treated as an equal, and yet she struggles with concerns about women's voices within Mormonism.

Sophia: "Patriarchy is something I almost reject in principle and certainly in practice. I see the sense of an order to things. I see that. And no woman likes it that men have been at the hierarchy of that order from the beginning of time. But I see the sense of the idea. In my personal life, though, I have a companion who just never once, other than a joke, made reference to the fact that, 'I have the priesthood and I have the last say here.' Never once. And so all those principles that said that, 'You're to act in behalf of the Lord using the priesthood' my husband just does. He is a very secure man, doesn't need to make a show of anything like that, and so I just feel very equal now in terms of the Church. The hierarchy of the priesthood and them having the final say it bothers me that women's voices aren't more, I was gonna say included. That was my first impulse was to say included, but I don't know that. I don't run in the circles of the Church that make all of the policy. So I don't know, maybe they consult with women much more than I am aware."

"But there are certain principles that make me think perhaps they do it in quorums and not in open sessions with women being invited to fully participate. I'm sure they have groups where women come in and say what they think and all of that but I don't know. Once that's done, if there were a predominant thread from the women, I don't have any way of knowing if they would then incorporate that into whatever they are considering. I just don't know."

Sophia wants to give men in leadership positions the benefit of the doubt so she questions her perceptions and experience. Sophia is intelligent, contemplative, and insightful yet she diminishes herself. At times her behavior reminded me of ideas put forth in the book, Fascinating Womanhood: How the Ideal Woman Awakens a Man's Deepest Love and Tenderness (Andelin, 2007). Originally published in 1965 and written in response to Betty Freidan's Feminine Mystique,

the book advises women to act weak, helpless, and flighty while building men up with complements, treating men as experts on any subject, and giving men opportunities to be chivalrous.

Julie: "Could you tell me what your definition of patriarchy is?"

Sophia: "See, I don't even think about it. Gosh what it is that? What is that supposed to be? Patriarchy is the belief that the man is the head of the woman and the husband is the head of the family and the prophet is the head of the Church. I think that's the definition of patriarchy."

Julie: "Okay. What's your definition?"

Sophia: "I would say it's a hierarchical structure that places man at the top and their privileges. Men at the expense of women. And I think that our form of patriarchy, not specifically to Mormonism but specifically to Western culture, it specifically privileges white upper-class men at the expense of those of lower socioeconomic groups including people of color and white men who are uneducated and/or underprivileged economically"

"...When I said I reject it in principle and in practice, obviously that's not 100% true because I choose to remain a member of the Church which has that belief. But in my lifetime I've seen just a real pivotal shift in the way that we talk about patriarchy and I attribute that to many women who, most of them have probably left the Church. I don't, I'm sure you've done a ton of research and read dialogue and articles and all of that. Sunstone articles, I used to just eat those up. How women thought about it. How they defined it. How destructive they saw it was. And so I think their voice has been heard in an important way. Not that the Church said, 'Okay, now we're not a patriarchal society,' that they began to recognize. I don't know if they recognize that. See? How do I know what they do in Salt Lake? But [shrugs]."

Sophia has a lot of privilege that comes through her husband, but not as much personal privilege as participants who have a career. Sophia has a college education, but at the time of the interview she had not pursued a career outside the

home and Church callings. She has also experienced the negative impact of the cult of true womanhood within the Mormon Church, which leaves her feeling responsible for choices her children made that don't conform to Mormon ideals. She also watched and experienced the effect of male oppression in her childhood, and while she now experiences high socio-economic status she remembers living in significantly lower socio-economic conditions.

Sofia: "[I saw that] women lacked power and that you needed education, and uhm, yeah that you needed education to empower yourself, or you would be dependent on a man and then you didn't get to have a say. Any dependency I saw as really something to avoid. I had an alcoholic father and a mother who had health problems who couldn't just leave and go out and make a living and so that was how I saw things and that just pretty much shaped my whole view.

Julie: "So would you say that that wasn't something you were told but that that was something that you recognized?"

Sophia: "I was not told that. Well, no I was told, 'You're just a girl.' I was told, 'You're just a little girl you don't have anything to say here.'"

Julie: "But you weren't told you can get an education and if you get an education you'll be empowered?"

Sophia: "No. Oh no. I was not told that. I just saw the evidence of my mother's life. If she'd had an education she could have perhaps worked in a sphere that wouldn't have been hard on her, on her body. She was a waitress before her children were born, you know. She had an eighth grade education. I mean, what else was she to do, really? And that generation of women, you know, had to marry men to survive. It was the dustbowl. It was the depression, you know. That's what they had to do. And I still, it's an antifeminist view. It's probably the only one I hold but I think women are better off. Well, it's statistically proven women are better off if they're married. You know, economically."

Sophia learned early in life that depending solely on men disadvantages women. She also recognizes disadvantages in trying to make it as a single woman. Sophia found a way to work within the system. She earned a college degree to ensure she has options, and found a husband who provides well for their family and treats her with respect. She recognizes that women are in a tenuous position in the Church when men are exclusively in leadership, and she is privileged to live in an area where the Mormon men she encounters tend to have more liberal views about equality between sexes. She focuses on aspects of the Mormon faith that fulfill her and on positive change she sees in leadership, hoping men in the priesthood will eventually fully recognize women as equal.

Georgia is an outlier among the participants of this study in that she has experienced abuse of patriarchal power in the form of an abusive spouse supported by ecclesiastic leaders, has the least amount of privilege over time of all the women I interviewed, and yet she chooses to stay within the Mormon Church, and still has positive associations with patriarchy. One possible explanation for Georgia's position is the example her father set. Georgia's father held the Mormon ordination of Patriarch. The position of Patriarch within the Mormon Church is a man (usually a man of retirement age) who gives Patriarchal Blessings. Patriarchal blessings are: 1) given by the laying on of hands, 2) recorded, transcribed, and made part of the member's official record, 3) are considered personal prophetic counsel from God to guide a person's life.

Julie: "Would you define patriarchy for me? What does that mean to you?"

Georgia: "Well it's. The way that comes in my mind first is a negative terminology. It's kind of pejorative. But patriarchy. Wow. When I think of the word another thing that comes is the patriarch who is giving the blessing. Father was a patriarch. And now I'm feeling teary. I think he was a gentle soul, and yet I felt like the process of his giving these blessings is that he would kind of go into the heavens and he would see things that he would interpret in his own way the best that he could, and that he would, it was very intuitive, and he would see things and he wouldn't necessarily know how to interpret them in ways that made sense to everybody else. But that living your life some of those things, and you say, "Oh that's what it means to me now." Kind of like a piece of poetry. And I think a good patriarch is like a man who does not abuse his priesthood. That he uses it to be a seer, and to understand, and to create a ground for patriarchy and feminism to come together and to be whole.

Georgia's idea of patriarchy is directly linked to her perceptions of her father, who died when she was still a child. Oppression, in Georgia's life, came first from her mother who enforced very strict gender roles, and wouldn't allow Georgia to river-raft, skydive, or to work in a family business.

Georgia: "In spite of my mother took on a very feminist role as a business owner, as a [named and described work in an occupation that was predominantly gendered male at the time]. So I watched her do those kinds of roles and felt the door shut to me without. Even as a partner in the business, even as a [calling she served in with her mother]. So my growing up was mostly my experience with my mother more than my father that I felt doors were shut to me."

Georgia has experienced oppression within the Mormon Church, but she has also seen men act in loving and kind ways which she associates with a loving Heavenly Father. She associates warmth, connection, and understanding with her

father and her Heavenly Father, while the tumultuous relationship she had with her mother interferes with her relationship with her Heavenly Mother.

Georgia: "So I was gonna say one of the reasons that it's hard for me to pray to Heavenly Mother in my private time, is because I was so much closer to my father than to my mother. And so it feels, there's just some of that residual feeling when I'm doing that kind of praying. But it doesn't exactly exclude a Heavenly Mother, ...and as far as Heavenly Father I just feel like it's kind of, he's infusing that, we're melding in way of understanding. I have much more profound respect than to think that I was really going to him so much, but I mean it's part of (inaudible). That and he cares for me in ways that would never belittle me or put me down and you know. It's a deep understanding and it's without words usually. My best prayers are beyond words. It's simply being with Him and listening and feeling and coming to a new awareness. And when I do ask questions I can feel if, sometimes it's even if I used the wrong word and I'll change the word and I'll feel this flood of emotion, I mean spirit, coming through me. It's a communication that I trust."

Perhaps the most balanced perspective of patriarchy and feminism within Mormonism came from a participant who was born in the Church, left the Church, and then came back to it, twice. Angel experienced a disciplinary council, has experienced very low socioeconomic status and fairly high socioeconomic status.

Julie: "Define patriarchy."

Angel: "Well again etymologically it's father rule which means that, etymologically, it's a term that describes a belief system that the privileged class are fathers in a society, socially and politically. It's, again, that belief or tendency, cultural tendency to privilege and defer highest privilege and authority to the fathers in society. Religiously and spiritually it would be that authority, divinity, godhood, priesthood, are identified as belonging to the fathers and not others. That's how I would define that."

Julie: "And do you understand Mormonism to be patriarchal?"

Angel: "Yes and no. Theologically, well it evolved. It changed and changed so much in that first ten to twenty years. Originally, yes, it was very patriarchal in terms of Mormon origins...the emergence of Mormonism, the book of Mormon and the early organization of priesthood. But then as Mormonism developed theologically in Kirtland and Nauvoo, no. The theological structure or emergent theology was actually very equality oriented. Men and women were defined as Gods having all power and glory and so godhood was defined as male and female, who were equal. And the Relief Society was organized as a "kingdom of priests" or female quorum like the men's priesthood. Also, women were inducted into the same "holy order" of priesthood in the temple together with the men. However, at the same time there was a patriarchal component of theology that manifested itself as polygamy. One male God with many female god wives. So theologically it was yes and no.

I would say Mormonism was very much co-created, co-constructed by Lucy and Joseph and then Joseph and Emma and then Joseph's other colleagues. So in terms of establishing the Church, founding the Church, Joseph's mother and his wife were the two most powerful players in his life, other than Oliver who comes along, and Hyrum."

Angel is a theological and historical scholar. She has a very sophisticated interpretation of patriarchy and feminism contemporarily and historically, theologically and politically. Since Angel brought up several dominant figures in Mormon history as significant influences on Joseph Smith, I asked her about the woman who introduced the idea of a Heavenly Mother to Mormonism when she penned the hymn "O My Father" (Snow, 1985) which includes the theological assertion:

*"In the heav'ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there."*

Julie: "And where does Eliza Snow fit into that?"

Angel: "That's a very interesting question because in the origins, the New York period, which Joseph Smith was in charge of and coordinating, there are two very strong female players, his mother and his wife. Eliza comes in later in the Kirtland period. She comes in with that whole Christian primitivist movement and all, you know, the Cambellites and all of that. Sidney Rigdon and that whole kind of movement, that influx of thousands of new people in the Kirtland period."

"Some of those women were empowered. They were practicing a female spirituality which they brought into the Mormonism with them. Eliza was a convert who brought a spirituality with her. So there was this intense infusion happening in Kirtland. So to answer your question, Mormonism was not patriarchal until a misguided Brigham Young took over. Joseph Smith wasn't very patriarchal, in spite of his polygamous tendencies, and polygamy would be the one place where I would say socially and organizationally it was patriarchal because of his need for polygamy that was terribly unfair to women."

"Although, in a way even that wasn't patriarchal because he was, again, equal opportunity. His polygamy was as much polyandry as it was polygyny. Joseph Smith's polygamy was founded on, and based on, and rose out of polyandry where women were allowed, and it didn't bother him at all. In fact, it was kind of required. In order for him to practice the kind of polygamy he wanted to practice, those women needed to be married to other men. So really I don't see Joseph as patriarchal. It was Brigham and afterward. So Mormonism became patriarchal organizationally, socially, and in practice through Brigham Young, and continued to be afterward. There were moments, there were people, at certain times who really shattered through that and brought in an infusion of feminism at different times."

"So there's been this tension back and forth between certain patriarchal leaders who clamp down on women, certainly those who break through that in various ways...From then to the present time and each decade is unique in terms that struggle and how that tension through patriarchy and feminism both very present

forces in the Church, how that played out in every decade with those leaders. Joseph Smith? No, not patriarchal. Brigham Young? Yes. And ever since then, the tension.”

Participants in this study vary in their understanding of patriarchy and priesthood in the Mormon Church. The most privileged and least oppressed by patriarchy within the Church define patriarchy within Mormonism in the most positive light. With the exception of Georgia, who had strong positive associations with her father (who was a Patriarch) and negative associations with her mother that she directly associates with her view of patriarchy within the Church, participants with the least privilege and with the most oppressive experiences with Mormon priesthood holders had the most negative associations with patriarchy in the Mormon Church. Participants in this study share an understanding of Mormonism that empowers them. All of the participants in this study believe they have a right to interpret Mormonism for themselves, although some would not characterize their interpretation as subjective.

5.3 THE ART OF SOFTNESS

I have permission from my mother to share that when I was reading a draft of section 2.10.1 to her, she audibly gasped at the statement, “...because there is not a single domain within her life or death where a man does not have ultimate authority over her as a priesthood leader”. My mother is not a participant in this study, and she has never, to my knowledge, identified as feminist. Her reaction and our subsequent conversation, however, sheds light on how Mormon women can

believe they are in partnership with men in the Church even while participating in ceremony where they make solemn covenants to submit to their husbands. When I finished reading the paragraph, my mother argued that she always thinks of the part of the ceremony where Eve is created from Adams rib to be “a companion and a helper” when thinking of the Endowment Ceremony.

An aspect of Mormon creation mythology that many Mormon women find empowering is the belief that the fall was a necessary step in evolutionary progression toward exaltation. In the Endowment Ceremony Eve convinced Adam to eat the fruit by telling him it is the only way for them to fulfill God’s commandment to have children. After Adam ate the fruit but before God returned Eve said, “It is better for us to pass through sorrow that we may know the good from the evil.” When God asked Satan what he had done, Satan said, “That which has been done in other worlds...I have been giving some of the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil to them.” Satan became angry when he was cursed because he felt it was unfair to be cursed for fulfilling a crucial role in progression toward exaltation. Mormon scripture explains that Eve and Adam rejoiced over their transgression in Moses⁶ 5:9-11

“And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth, and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall

⁶ From the Pearl of Great Price

have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”

Rather than being presented as a temptress (as Eve is in most Judeo-Christian sects) Mormons champion Eve as having foresight and understanding that went beyond Adam’s. Adam blindly followed God’s commandments, but Eve understood she would not be able to conceive until she took on mortal form, which could only happen if she ate the fruit. Similarly, women within the Church are often presented as being morally superior to men. Mormon folk wisdom says women are not granted the priesthood because they are already spiritual and do not need priesthood to develop spiritually or to commune with God.

Similarly, mythology surrounding Eve’s origin from Adam’s rib is used as an argument for equality of the sexes within Mormonism rather than evidence of male superiority.

“From the rib of Adam, Eve was formed (see Gen. 2:22; Moses 3:22; Abr. 5:16). Interesting to me is the fact that animals fashioned by our Creator, such as dogs and cats, have thirteen pairs of ribs, but the human being has one less with only twelve. I presume another bone could have been used, but the rib, coming as it does from the side, seems to denote partnership. The rib signifies neither dominion nor subservience, but a lateral relationship as partners, to work and to live, side by side.

Adam and Eve were joined together in marriage for time and for all eternity by the power of that everlasting priesthood (see Gen. 2:24–25; Moses 3:25; Abr. 5:18–19). Eve came as a partner, to build and to organize the bodies of mortal men. She was designed by Deity to cocreate and nurture life, that the great plan of the Father might achieve fruition. Eve ‘was the mother of all living’ (Moses 4:26). She was the first of all women” (Nelson, 1987).

As I contemplated my mother's response, I thought of the attitudes of participants, attitudes I witnessed as an active member of the Mormon Church, and Margarete Toscano's testimony:

"There's something vicious about niceness that struck me in this – that niceness covered over the violence of what was being done, because, in fact, excommunication is a violent action. And yet you had this veneer of niceness that covers it over."

I came to the conclusion that a lot of the disparity between actual power women have in the Mormon Church and power they believe they have likely comes down to the presentation. Just as Mormon feminists prefer subtlety over radical forms of feminist activism, Mormon patriarchs prefer subtlety over more radically oppressive tools such as scapegoating, dehumanization, denigrating, etc.

Eternal companion is a phrase frequently used to refer to spouses within the Mormon Church⁷, but it wasn't a popular term in Mormon literature until the 1980's. Most contemporary leaders of the Mormon Church convey a great deal of love and respect for women. During the past few decades the term Eternal Companion has nearly replaced the use of the word wife when a Mormon leader refers to a spouse. The practice of using the term Eternal Companion in place of wife or spouse conveys a message of equality, just as replacing Mormon with MORMON is intended to convey the message that Christ is at the heart of Mormon doctrine.

⁷ The phrase Eternal Companion first appears in a search of LDS.ORG database in 1972 (Brown, 1972). It appears 9 times in a search of General Conference addresses in the 1970s, 14 times in the 1980s, 27 times in the 1990's, and 28 times between 2000 and 2010.

My analysis of the Endowment Ceremony clearly shows Eve is subservient to Adam, but Eve's presentation belies her subservience. Eve walks tall, looks directly at whoever is talking, and when Adam faces the camera and addresses the audience at the end of the presentation Eve's stance and expression suggest the message is as much from her as it is from Adam. Eve conveys subservient actions without subservient attitudes. Mormon leadership practices patriarchy with attitudes of equality.

Foucault argued that resistance and power are inexorably tied. Power relies on resistance to demonstrate dominance, and there cannot be resistance without something to resist against. Any amount of resistance and any form of resistance simultaneously weakens power (by challenging norms, demonstrating deviance, etc.) and strengthens it (inciting re-entrenchment, providing context for power to exert itself). Foucault discussed the need for resistance and lay his hope in the power of resistance, but he never specified a form resistance ought to take because he honored the ability of an individual affected by power to find the best form of resistance for their particular social location, resources, and inclinations (Faith, 1994).

Mormon feminists in this study practice a gentle approach to feminism that complements the gentle approach Mormon men practice in maintaining patriarchy. Just as Mormonism's gentle approach to patriarchy retains disempowering elements, Mormon feminists' gentle approach to resistance is contributing to shifts toward egalitarianism in Mormonism.

While their approach to resistance is less confrontational than Sonia Johnson's, participants in this study are no less effective in challenging assumptions and creating change from within. They benefit from confrontational opposition from activists like Johnson, and they complement Johnson's approach with resistance that effects change in a collaborative manner rather than a confrontational one. It is an approach that allows them to maintain the benefits of membership, reconcile their religious beliefs with their ideological beliefs, and to enjoy the fruits of their labor as shifts occur within Mormon leadership.

Victoria: "I think [resistance I encounter is] probably as unique as the individuals I interact with. I usually tend to bring up stuff. Like, every time one of my kids are baptized, confirmed, ordained, anything, and they get the men around to put their hands on their heads, I always say, 'Bishop do you want me? Do want me in the circle?' And Bishop will always go 'Uhm, no.' But sometimes... after a while they started realizing, 'Oh, this is Victoria's game.' Because there's no reason for me not to be in the circle if it's my child and I've been sealed to my husband in the Temple and they're giving them a blessing."

Sophia: "Yeah, I don't know, when I said I reject [patriarchy] in principle and in practice obviously that's not 100% true because I choose to remain a member of the Church who has that belief. But in my lifetime I've seen just a real pivotal shift in the way that we talk about patriarchy and I attribute that to many women who most of them have probably left the Church I don't, I'm sure you've done a ton of research and read dialogue and articles and all of that, Sunstone articles I used to just eat those up, how women thought about it how they defined it how destructive they saw it was. And so I think their voice has been heard in an important way not that the Church said okay now were not a patriarchal society that they began to recognize I don't know if they recognize the, see, how do I know what they do in Salt Lake? But..."

Julie: "But in your personal experience in what you're experiencing you're seeing shifts away from the traditional patriarchy?"

Sophia: "Yes. Yes, I am. Of more equality, I see a change in the generation of men who have been bishops. I see a different way of interacting with women we just have a new Bishop who is my daughter's age and she said, 'You can't have (name) your Bishop. He's not old enough.' And I just had a temple recommend interview on Sunday and it was just a completely different experience than say when I was 20 years old..."

Julie: "And this shift that you see is in your direct personal experience are you seeing shifts in the coming from the general authorities at all?"

Sophia: "Well, as I said, I don't hear the emphasis they seem to be pretty prevalent in my 20s and 30s...I came up during the time of the equal rights amendment and the Church came down hard against that with a lot of money and a lot of power and I really resented that because it was it was a dilemma for me because faith is not my gift and so I try to have faith in Christ and in the teachings of the Church I try to have faith in that. But my intellectual mind makes me always question, you know, 'I don't know is this something I should have faith in?' ... And I think when I was younger I just resolved that, you know, in a way that was satisfactory for me and I haven't thought about it much. I mean, of course things will come up and you'll get know you'll just feel like, cringe and think, 'Oh my goodness, when will this change?' And then, and then you just realize, you know, the Church it changes. It just changes very slowly."

"It's way behind... the rest of the culture, at least our American culture and so I think change has come, and I think it will continue to come, and I have faith in that. But in terms of making it an issue that needed to be decided in a way that I just could not tolerate being in a Church that had those beliefs. I just, I don't know, I don't know if it was cowardice or whatever but for me I just feel like this is one of those things I can shelve that I don't have to have every answer to my satisfaction right now. If I can in my own sphere live a life that is comfortable for me if I can raise my daughters in a way that doesn't make them crazy outcasts in their Young Women class, you know, if priesthood issues came up or whatever. If I can

do that and if I can find like-minded people who I enjoy then I'm good. I'm good. And that's what I've done."

Sophia has positioned herself as a self-deprecating, dependent, supporter of Mormon leadership who quietly resists patriarchy by supporting her daughter's right to express her identity in a way that openly challenges oppressive Church doctrine, leaving meetings that narrowly define successful parenting, and avoiding meetings while she processed grief over an experience that Mormon culture is not sensitive or sympathetic to. She resists by presenting herself as a Molly Mormon who is also flawed, and who experienced life challenges that Mormonism does not provide satisfactory dialectic, theological, and practical support for⁸. She also resists by privately praying to Heavenly Mother, and by openly dialoguing about the need for reform in private settings with like-minded Mormons.

Sophia values the Mormon religion and resists domination by playing by the rules enough to retain her status as a valued member of the Mormon community, without sacrificing independent private thought and action. As a Molly Mormon, she firmly positions herself as an insider. Her vulnerability and dependence, combined with her support of Church leadership, appeals to ideals of chivalry among the Priesthood. As a flawed human being who has experienced some difficult challenges, she becomes a living example of the need for reform. Sophia identifies a slow shift toward a more

⁸ In order to protect Sophia's identity I have not included quotes that reference her challenges because the specifics may endanger her anonymity.

egalitarian leadership and patiently waits for leadership within the Church to catch up with secular American culture.

Mormon men are taught to use priesthood in service to others. They are told that using their priesthood to oppress is abuse of priesthood, and that abuse of priesthood can cause them to lose priesthood power. Although patriarchy undeniably exists within Mormonism some of the most gentle, affectionate, ethical, emotionally intelligent, and privilege conscious men I know are Mormon. All but one participant expressed gratitude for Mormon men in their lives who exhibit qualities such as those mentioned above.

All of the participants mentioned changes in official Mormon policies toward women, and anticipate continued progression toward a more egalitarian leadership. Several participants use their status as Molly Mormons to establish credibility, and they use credibility to resist aspects of Church doctrine or culture that they find problematic.

Participants varied in their approaches and demeanor from accommodating, self-deprecating, apologetic, and gentle to confident, abrasive, confrontational, and even domineering. On a deeper level, they have chosen to remain in and to support a religion and culture they simultaneously love and problematize. They work for change from within by prioritizing the establishment of their place within the organization and use their insider status to effect change from within. Participants have carefully chosen their battles and resist domination in ways that work for them.

5.4 PERSONAL REVELATION AND MORMON DOCTRINE

In God Speaks to Us Too, Susan Shaw (2008) identifies “soul competency, the notion of a free soul that stands alone before God and is therefore competent and responsible for its own decisions without need for any other mediator” as a liberating tool among Southern Baptist women. Shaw explains the doctrine of Soul Competency allows Southern Baptist women to determine their own doctrine and to go directly to God for direction, comfort, and forgiveness.

A similar concept in Mormon doctrine is personal revelation. Only one participant in this study said priesthood wins out over Personal Revelation. This section details participants’ use of Personal Revelation and the fluidity of Mormon doctrine to develop their own exegeses and to inform their interpretation of their standpoint within Mormonism.

It is important to note that the main difference between Soul Competence and Personal Revelation is that Mormon doctrine declares individuals cannot experience salvation as an unmarried individual. According to Mormon doctrine, “Although *salvation* may be defined in many ways to mean many things, in its most pure and perfect definition it is a synonym for *exaltation*” (McConkie, 1966 p. 257). In Mormonism to be exalted is to enter the highest of three kingdoms as a heterosexual married couple (or possibly as a polygynous married group), become parents to spirit children, and create opportunities for the spirit children to become gods and goddesses themselves by creating worlds for the spirit children to inhabit

in physical form and to prove themselves worthy. Women cannot enter the Celestial Kingdom without a husband to meet them at the veil and bring them through. Families cannot be together in the Celestial Kingdom unless they have gone through ceremonies in Mormon temples officiated by men holding the priesthood.

5.4.1 I Hold the Priesthood

Unlike Southern Baptists, Mormons do not have the doctrine Priesthood of Believers (laypeople have priesthood power to communicate with God, interpret scripture and minister in God's name). As outlined in the literature review section of this study, Mormon women used to be ordained to the priesthood, but men in the Mormon Church have suppressed that herstory and have worked to eradicate all traces of priesthood among Mormon women. Many participants in this study, however, strongly believe personal revelation trumps priesthood authority. Far from the Mormon joke, "I hold the priesthood...every night when I go to bed" several participants in this study believe they hold priesthood power that comes directly from God and is simply unacknowledged by contemporary Mormon leadership.

Georgia believes she has experienced priesthood power channeled through her, identifies verbiage in temple ceremony that legitimizes her belief that God grants priesthood to women regardless of whether that priesthood is officially acknowledged by Mormon leaders, and believes Church policy will eventually reflect the reality she lives.

Georgia: "A woman in my ward where I grew up and where I lived when I was raising my children, and her sister was the president of one of the new either the young women or I guess probably [General] President of the Young Women of the Church, so I'm just saying that she's someone who is knowledgeable. And her husband was my seminary teacher, and she turned to me and she said, 'It just feels so bad not having the priesthood in the home.' Because her husband had died. And I said [name of friend], I said, 'You are endowed.' And she said 'But I, I mean really the priesthood'... I said, 'When I go to the temple I put on the robes of the holy priesthood, you know.'"

Julie: "That's a really good point"

Georgia: "Yeah, and [quoting temple ceremony] 'Power in the priesthood be upon thee' and upon my children and upon posterity, and anyway as a single mother I had to rely on that power. I think priesthood, as an umbrella, is the ability to act in the name of God, and I have that power. And so it informed me as a single mother a lot. And how that informs my feminism, I think it's a very mellowing effect on my feminism. I certainly am not strident. I'm not trying to lord it over anyone else. I'm not asking for the priesthood, again, because I think I've got it. And I'm not feeling, you know, the blacks bided their time and the Church was finally willing to accept them. And I'm not looking at women getting the priesthood in the same way but I'm looking at people accepting the fact that women have it. But the power is there. There's the honor that needs to be paid."

Georgia's position is not supported by Mormon doctrine. Although Georgia does not specifically identify personal revelation as the source of her dissenting belief, the doctrine of personal revelation combined with the fluidity of Mormon doctrine create space for Georgia to develop empowering dissenting Mormon theology.

Victoria had a response to temple ceremony similar to Georgia's, and came to a conclusion that, although Mormonism is patriarchal in structure, it offers a female

deity and opportunity for women to perform temple ceremonies as officiants as well as receivers. Victoria expressed belief that motherhood and priesthood are similar in that a person can mess up, and won't do either perfectly, but a person will grow and be blessed for trying. She also equates motherhood to priesthood in that both roles allow a person to be a conduit for God.

"Well for me mostly I felt like [patriarchy, Mormonism, and feminism] were all one because I felt like, and I still kind of do, as truth evolves and we get closer and closer to actual truth, which may still be light years away but we're farther away from darkness, that Mormonism of all cultural boxed-in-tight belief systems allowed for some kind of woman deity. And so, unless I was gonna be Egyptian or Wiccan, most other Churches at the time I was growing up and learning about doctrine did not allow anyone, women, priesthood, to allow anything. And I remember going to the temple and having women put their hands on my head and anoint my body and going, 'Oh! We have priesthood. We just don't get to exercise it out there.'

"I remember reading Church history, 25 years old home with three little children, my husband's in law school. I just read and read and read about women laying on of hands, healing, speaking in tongues. To me, to be a Mormon woman meant one of the few people on the planet that actually got priesthood power and exercised it. And so I saw it as a powerful thing. I didn't understand at that time all the cultural influences of oppression. All the ways that men do oppress. I didn't understand that because I was just playing house at the time. I got married. I was a little girl. I read stories. Women were powerful and my husband didn't have any time for me so as far as I knew, 'Well he's in school and I'm at home having babies, and I want to be the most powerful woman at home having babies there ever was.' And then it wasn't until I started to try to move outside the box that I kept getting slammed back and slammed down and treated badly. But it's like I experienced it but I didn't internalize it so it was like, you know, you go to Hawaii and it's a place you visit. Or maybe not Hawaii. Maybe go to Auschwitz and you see the oppression and horrendous things that happened there but it didn't really happen

to you even though you're in the space of where it's happening. Or even going to India.”

Julie: “So you didn't find yourself butting heads with anybody until later in life.”

Victoria: “I never butt heads with anyone. I watched them do it. I experienced the way they did it but it never impacted me. Like even like my husband. He just butted heads against me and lost himself the most amazing wife he could've ever hoped to have had, and you know, you respect a woman or you lose her. And so I was in oppressive situations but they were the ones having the problem ...I actually always overstepped authority to God so that they couldn't, whether they wanted to or not, they couldn't help but be representing God. Because I didn't let them be a man. I let God work through them, and so I was always blessed. So it's like, for me, authority really is a matter of blessing the one doing it, and that in every religion, if you're a Catholic Nun or if you are a Hindu priest or whatever, if you're directing the source you're gonna be inspired in you couldn't not do what's best for those that you interact with and so I don't see it as limited.”

“And, for me, also my power as a woman was my creation by nurturing. My mothering, not my birthing and not my pregnancies, but my mothering ... This is an opportunity. You can be a bad mom, but as long as you just keep trying, God will bless your children anyway and bless you because you grow by acting in that role and I mean even if they're not your children you act in that role. And a woman gets her power. And men when they act in a role, they don't do it perfectly. But only men who step into that role have that option. And it doesn't mean you have to be ordained to the priesthood but it's that desire to be a conduit or connector for, ‘Here is God and here's people and I'm gonna try to connect people to God.’ And when you do that, that's what mothering is. That's what nurturing is. It's to say, ‘Let me give you some God energy.’

Victoria is a resilient woman who has raised several children. She recognizes that men in the Mormon Church have power that can be oppressive, but she has taken the view that God cares for her as his daughter and she believes that he

intervenes for her. Her belief in God as a loving father is very much grounded in Mormon theology. The girls who participate in the Young Women's organization recite weekly, "We are daughters of a Heavenly Father who loves us, and we love him." Victoria believes that people who take on the mantle of representatives of God cannot truly harm her because God will always turn situations to her favor.

Lois expressed belief that her connection to God makes her full participant in a larger structure, and protects her from abuse of priesthood power.

Lois: "So patriarchy, the levels of patriarchy that are in the Church, first is respecting my husband as a priesthood holder, respecting the Bishop, looking at the first presidency and how they speak for the whole Church. And looking and actually understanding that I have the ability to have revelation for myself, and understanding my husband and I have a very incredible, loving, open, equal relationship that is just a treasure in my life. And so understanding then that there are different, you know, that there is the bishopric the stake presidency, you know, the first presidency, the 12 apostles. Although, that said, they all have differing levels of authority in the Church, and that there is a patriarchy of governance, and yet I am a member who can receive revelation for myself, only strengthens me as a feminist. I think, really truly, that there is a pathway there. There's a line. There's a pathway for me, and my dad would probably call it a, 'Lois you're rationalizing,' but I really embrace it that way because I really have a confirmation of that."

Charlotte also points to verbiage in temple ceremony as transformative in her understanding of the role of women in relation to priesthood within the Mormon Church, but her experience is quite different from Georgia's. Charlotte relates her experience as a young newlywed participating in a temple ceremony where the women sit on one side of a room and men on the other with an aisle

separating them. During the ceremony women make a covenant to obey their husbands and men make a covenant to obey God.

Julie: "How do Mormonism, patriarchy, and feminism intersect in your life?"

Charlotte: "Feminism, patriarchy, and Mormonism. Well, not very well. I mean there are major disconnects going on. And the best thing that I've ever done is to decide that the God that I believe in is not the God that I hear described in the Mormon Church. I mean, the best thing in the world for me was to reject the idea that males are my mediator between me and God. And that happened... I had a very traumatic experience in the Temple and I was 23 years old."

"It was the third time I had done an endowment ceremony and the other two times I had kind of listened but I was too... You know there were people around, my family was around... I don't know. I just chose not to really pay attention. But then the third time it was just me and my husband, and there was no one else sitting next to me. And I decided to really listen and concentrate on what was going on. And I had a total emotional breakdown. I just started sobbing and this of course is the obedience covenant that the women make. And I was crying and crying. I could not stop crying; I was hyperventilating. And my husband is sitting across from me on the other aisle and he's just sitting there miserable because the gender lines are so strong that he couldn't even cross the aisle to come and put an arm around me. And I didn't know that I could get up and leave. I mean I had never heard... I mean, you just don't see people leave these things. So I just sat there in silence for like an entire hour. And it was just horrendous because I was disturbing everyone around me. It was not quiet. I mean I was wailing. And then at the end I think we were going to the veil or in the celestial room and other women were trying to be nice to me and were coming up and saying stuff like, 'Sometimes it hits me like that too.' They thought that I was overcome with the spiritual experience. And of course what I was crying about was the deepest despair I had ever felt about my relationship with God and about thinking that, 'This is what God thinks of me? That I need a mediator?' And so that was a moment of absolute disconnect from my community because I was thinking, 'My gosh,

who are these women, and who am I that they would have no idea why I'm crying?"

"So that was like a turning point. I had thought up until that time that I would be a somewhat normal Mormon, and then that happens and I realize that I can never be like them. Well, I mean, I do everything on my own terms. So the language in the proclamation on the family where men are supposed to preside, I mean, I've completely absolutely rejected that. My husband is my equal partner 100%. Anything that is in our religion that says otherwise, to me, is simply a cultural remnant from where... you know it was sexist. I mean the 1800s, and before if you want to go back to biblical times. I mean, these are patriarchal time periods, and it was culturally expected that men would absolutely be in control and making decisions and all that stuff. So anything that comes into the Mormon Church that even hints at males presiding I absolutely reject it and I think it is not what God wants. God wants every single one of his children to reach their full potential male or female and would not put these kinds of constraints on his daughters. So all this stuff, it's just the culture. It's just what it is and I hope that it will change."

Julie: "And how do you do that? I mean, how are you able to do that on your own terms within that culture?"

Charlotte: "I draw lines. For instance, I don't go to the Temple anymore; I am not a Temple Mormon. I mean, after that experience in the Temple I thought that I would go back, maybe in a year or two. I'd heal and then I would be able to go back. I just can't put myself in the position where I'm going to raise my hand and agree to my own subservience. I just won't do it."

Julie: "So you don't even go for baptisms [for the dead]?"

Charlotte: "You know I think I did go for a baptism, at some point afterward. But I certainly won't do... I won't do endowment ceremonies until they change it. And I won't do sealings either because there's all sorts of disturbing language in the sealings as well. And I won't do initiatories either because there's disturbing language in initiatories. So basically baptisms are the only thing left which I'm okay doing, but it's just not something I'm gonna go out of my way to do."

“Okay, so what were you asking about? Oh yeah, about how these things interact. Well, first of all, I take control of my relationships. Like, I've absolutely exorcised patriarchy from my marriage. I also don't play into a lot of it culturally within the Church. For instance, I call my Bishop by his first name. I'm just not really interested in hierarchy and I think that it's much healthier to interact with people on an egalitarian basis. So I don't play along with titles, and I just draw lines. And if it's a bad lesson I walk out, or I try to do my best to steer it back into a more productive place. I just decided that I'm not going to silently stay and suffer through stuff that drags me down. I mean I can stay and try to help that or I'm going to leave.

Georgia and Victoria found symbolism and verbiage in temple ceremony that they interpreted as evidence that God gifts women with the priesthood and as tangible permission to use priesthood power. They are patiently waiting for men in the Church to evolve to a point where their egos will allow for the reality of priesthood in women. Charlotte experienced temple ceremony as oppressive enactment of domination and submission from which she concluded any sign of patriarchy within the Mormon Church is not of God and she, therefore, has a right to reject it. Georgia also does a beautiful job of detailing how she has integrated Mormonism and feminism in her life. Georgia trusts herself to interpret the world and her place within it. As with other participants, Georgia has drawn her own boundaries, she does not feel obliged to submit to priesthood authority, and she engages Mormonism on her own terms.

5.4.2 Heavenly Mother

The concept of Heavenly Mother is an empowering element mentioned by 100% of participants. Although Church officials have tried to limit the influence of Heavenly Mother, Mormon women are unique among other Judeo-Christian sects in that they are able to identify with a female deity. Each participant expressed appreciation for their Heavenly Mother in one way or another, and several acknowledged beliefs and practices connected with their belief in Heavenly Mother that are in direct opposition with current official Mormon doctrine and policy.

Gwyn: “[Heavenly Mother is] A very liberated person who is very frustrated that Her power is not being fully explained to others and who absolutely rolls Her eyes in derision when She hears the philosophy that She’s... Her name and her power and Her very being are being kept from people because Heavenly Father doesn’t want Her to be ridiculed. I mean I just think She looks at that and says, “Oh give me a break.” And I actually think that the Goddess and Mother Mary are maybe some attempts to bring Heavenly Mother into things, and sometimes I pray to Her and talk to Her. I just feel like She’s there. Nobody said I couldn’t, and besides that even if they said I couldn’t then I still think I can so I will.”

Although Gwyn is well versed in Mormon doctrine, she seems unaware of President Hinkley’s public denouncement of the practice of praying to Heavenly Mother. Hinkley argued, “in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven” because we do not have any record of Christ praying to Heavenly Mother among several records of prayers to His Father (Hinkley, 1991). The reader will recall that Gwyn descends from Mormon founders who said, “All we are, are men.” She was raised to

believe she has a right to decide what is doctrinal and what are the philosophies of men⁹.

It is possible that if Gwyn has heard that Mormon leadership has denounced the practice of praying to Heavenly Mother, she dismissed it so completely that she forgot it ever happened. Or, perhaps she has only heard it second hand and chalks it up to hearsay. Fluidity of Mormon doctrine created enough doubt in my own mind that I wasn't comfortable asking her about it without a reference to verify praying to Heavenly Mother really is denounced by the highest offices of the Church. As Gwyn pointed out, she wouldn't care if she were told by the President of the Church not to pray to Heavenly Mother. She believes she has permission from her Heavenly Mother to pray to Her.

Gwyn is not alone in her opinion that Heavenly Mother does not need to be sheltered from the horror of having her name taken in vain. When asked about her conception of Heavenly Mother, Belle explained:

"Well, I don't think She's some silent thing. I mean my conception is that She's probably very much like, you know. Me, or any other mother. She's probably very involved, and She's probably pissed that we don't talk about Her. Well, I don't know, I mean She's a mother, She's very forgiving, She understands, whatever, but you know..."

Julie: "But you don't think She's happy about it?"

Belle: "No, I don't. I think it's stupid."

⁹ In the endowment ceremony, Satan tempts Adam by teaching "the philosophies of men mingled with scripture."

Julie: "You don't think She's like, 'Oh, thank you for'"

Belle: "'preserving me from profanity?' 'I just don't know if I could bear if somebody took my name in vain?' Yeah. Yeah, no! She's some weak thing that needs protecting? Oh, it just makes me want to throw up. Yeah, the fact that on Mother's Day we sing O my Father for Mother's Day because it's the only hymn that has a woman, that has Heavenly Mother in it. I really really, I mean, so I mock. But at the same time, as far as I'm aware we're like the only Christian tradition that has a Heavenly Mother. And I mean we have this tradition about Heavenly Mother and about Eve and about how Eve knew what she was doing, and I'm so grateful for those little bits of doctrine because they, you know they set the stage for the ability to be in this 21st century about our religion. Even if we're not really there, you know, I think our conception of women and womanhood is a lot better than it is in other places."

Belle identifies strong women in Mormon theology as role models for Mormon women that she does not see in other Christian sects. She doesn't buy into the idea that Heavenly Mother is worried about her honor being tarnished by having her name used as an expletive.

Even when participants said they haven't really thought about Heavenly Mother they revealed strong opinions about who Heavenly Mother is. While discussing the Holy Spirit, Sophia revealed a detailed subjective understanding of Heavenly Mother in spite of her assertions that she hasn't given Her much thought.

Sophia: "...you know, 'the Holy Ghost will be a companion for you.' 'You will be able to call on "Him'" (placed special emphasis on him denoting disapproval of pronoun) which I think it may be Mother in Heaven, maybe. You know?"

Julie: "Where do you get that idea?"

Sophia: "I don't know, because it feels like a mother's heart to me. 'I know you. I know what you want. I know what you're doing'

(Laughs). It just very much feels consistent with my own experience of mothering, where there is a deep way of knowing your own child, that my husband does not have, and so it feels like a mothering thing to me. Whether it is or not doesn't matter to me enough. I get up there and it's, you know (silence).

At this point I was on the edge of my seat, because Sophia had chosen a name for herself that means Wisdom and is synonymous with the Holy Spirit in feminist spirituality (Clifford, 2001). I told her that there is doctrine outside the Mormon Church that says the Holy Spirit is female and asked if it's possible that her concept of Heavenly Mother is influenced by any of those philosophies. Interestingly, Sophia was unaware of this particular aspect of significance in the name she gave herself, but she believed she must have picked it up elsewhere. It is possible that she came to these conclusions on her own, and my suggestion combined with her agreeableness may have influenced her response. She is certain, however, that she could not have come to these conclusions based on anything she has learned within Mormon doctrine.

"Oh I'm sure I do, because where else would I get it in the Church? You know we are not really taught to speak of Her. Because you know, that's the thing that bothers my husband, that She's superior and we don't want to offend Her and can't discuss Her and all of that. You know? I don't know if you were around when it was kind of the teaching..."

"You know Carol Lynn Pearson did a thing on the Goddess and talked about that and it was a very interesting piece. Kind of a, what you call those performances? Like art performances or something? And she has some very interesting ideas about Heavenly Mother and prays to Heavenly Mother, and see we're told that we should not do that. And you know I guess I'm just a creature of habit. I learned to pray to Heavenly Father, and I still do."

"Every once in a while when I'm in the throes of horror of a, 'Heavenly Mother are you watching? Can you hear? Do you have influence's?' You know. But I haven't a real picture of Her you know. And I suppose if I were a deeper thinking Mormon woman I would ponder and meditate upon Her and what Her role has been."

"I think She probably had a real creation in creating the earth. That's what I believe. And I think, I don't know if that's just from the term Mother Earth, and it feels to me like the earth spirit is such a holy thing. And you can actually feel it when you're in the mountains and by the ocean and so it feels like a connection to Her to be in those places of holiness that are, that Her. Earthly holy. Not created by people holy like the Temple."

Sophia said she hasn't really thought a lot about Heavenly Mother, and yet she has a very definite idea about who Heavenly Mother is. When Sophia is "in the throes of horror" she prays for a Heavenly Mother who is watching, listening, and intervening on her behalf. Katya also said she hadn't given Heavenly Mother much thought and then presented a detailed description of Her.

Katya: "I think my concept of God is interesting because we don't talk much about that. I think my concept is, I mean really I kind of have this philosophy that really our families here on earth is really how it is, and so I always kind of look at my family and think, 'What is my mom like?' and that's kind of what I compare Her to."

Julie: "Okay. Well, and since I didn't grow up in your family what does that look like? What does Heavenly Mother look like to you? Not look like, but you know, what did She do? How did She respond to things, and you know what you think of Her?"

Katya: "Yeah. So very educated, very thoughtful, very compassionate, very attentive to those around Her kids, spouses, other people. Very eager and willing to sacrifice for others. But also, you know, very opinionated, very not, you know, a pushover so I think yeah that's a pretty good description."

Julie, "Okay. And do you pray to Heavenly Mother?"

Katya: "No, I don't. But the image; I guess I kind of have an image of that of Her often that, I think about it not so much pray to Her."

Katya doesn't pray to Heavenly Mother, but she meditates on an image of Heavenly Mother which she holds in her mind. Mormon book stores are full of paintings and drawings of Jesus, Heavenly Father, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, and other women from Mormon canonized scripture. There are even paintings of the Holy Ghost as the dove, standing with Jesus and Heavenly Father (all identical with white hair and long, white beards and mustaches), and as Adam. To my knowledge, however, there is not a single artistic representation of Heavenly Mother that is sanctioned by the Mormon Church. If one exists, it is obscure enough that it did not leave an impression on me as an individual born and raised in the Church.

Katya is obedient to the dictate not to pray to Heavenly Mother, but contemplating an image of Her may be as subversive an act as praying to Her, because Katya is developing relationship with Heavenly Mother by giving Her form and character. Although a basic tenant of Mormon faith is the corporeal form of the Godhead, two respondents said their conception of God is not gender specific. When asked if she ever prays to Heavenly Mother, Susan responded:

Susan: "Well, I pray to her sometimes with my Father"

Julie: "Do you ever pray to Her separately?"

Susan: "I think I have on occasion yeah. My sister-in-law did when she was going through a terrible divorce, and I don't see my heavenly father as patriarchal in any of the negative ways at all. I

don't see Jesus as, I mean He was so approachable by women so it's not as if there needs to be separation between Father and Mother for me. That's one of the things I learned actually digging deeper into the Old Testament looking at the really remarkable translation and the notes and that you know. Well I've known for a long time that Elohim means God plural male-female you know. I don't know how to think of, I think the way that I know God both Father and Mother is a sense of life. That's what I know it's been in my life. I felt it very directly. Sort of a revelation. I can look back and see my life, you know, not steered, but guided and helped. That's what I know of them. I don't have a picture in my mind. I think I hesitate to envision and I don't actually like that when that's done. It seems limiting."

Without fully letting go of Mormon doctrine that God has a perfected physical body, Susan is open to an interpretation of God that transcends gendered physicality. She has not directly disobeyed Hinkley's dictate to only pray to God the Father, but neither has she blindly accepted Hinkley's interpretation of Christ's intent when He modeled prayer. Victoria also has a gender neutral conception of God.

Victoria: "Well, I was always saying, 'I need a mother. I need a mother.' Because she was a daughter for me and I raised her and I still am raising her. And when I needed female support and strength, there was no woman for me. I needed for there to be a Heavenly Mother. So when I went to do Initiatory I would feel like I was getting that from Her, until I started to understand that the concept of a Male God and a Female God may very well be the constructs of a human mind needing to connect in a way that their brains do, and that it may not even be. That the human form of God is something that helps us to relate to that energy but it isn't necessarily the only definition that that energy can express itself as, and that it may be that God is a combined being of male and female that does not have separate gender. There may not be two people. There may be one that's wholly integrated. There just are so many different possibilities."

Victoria's conception of God has mirrored the development of her self-concept. When she was a young mother in need of a mothering influence she found evidence of a female God. As a young mother Victoria said she, "want(ed) to be the most powerful woman at home having babies there ever was." Eventually, Victoria came to realize there was more to her than having babies. She also came to the conclusion that even the concept of a Female God is too limiting for an all-powerful being, which led her to conclude that God is beyond gender.

Personal revelation can be experienced as an empowering influence in the lives of Mormon women, but even Mormon feminists use patriarchal methods to disenfranchise women by invalidating personal revelation that does not align with their own interpretation of Mormon doctrine, as demonstrated in section 2.10. The majority of participants in this study feel entitled to their own personal revelation, even if they do not extend similar courtesy to others.

Pam: "Well my lifetime experience has been that whatever personal revelation someone is getting is probably wrong if it has to do with the Church. The people just aren't they're not privy to it....I always tell people that if you think you are getting revelation that you can act out on your homosexual, whatever, tendencies."

"So I have two clients right now that are homosexual. I say, 'Then don't be Mormon. That's your choice.' I mean this is a choice where anybody in this Church who is single has to be celibate you know. It isn't gender specific. Or if you think da, da, da, da, da, da...you know and it's like you're belonging to a group of people who define things in a certain way and if it doesn't fit you for whatever reason then don't keep trying to make it happen in this situation where it's not where you're at."

“It is the most demanding religion that I know, absolutely. I mean there isn't any of them that demand at all the things that are demanded, to get into the temple for instance. I mean there just isn't. And for a lot of people they just don't want to do it. I mean that's just not where they are in their spiritual path of any kind. And I mean for me it's just like, then don't do it.”

“But a lot of people can't. They've been raised in it. And so they become these vocal, strident characters that hated. And you know they sit here and mumble and they have to go to Church and they hate it and stuff. And for me it's like, you know, be a grown up and go somewhere else then. I mean I'm sorry that sounds really radical, but a lot of people will. Then [they] come back to the Church because they have a chance to get out and get a perspective and free to do what they want to do and find out that there really unhappy. And so I look at stages of spiritual growth and development and try to help people but that's another story so we won't go there.

When asked about personal revelation, Pam brought up homosexuality and presented homosexuality as if it were an individual choice. She connected homosexuality with personal revelation in the context of individuals who believe in Mormonism but do not conform to heteronormative Mormon ideology. During Pam's interview she gave examples of vocal resistance to Church hierarchy, but she does not extend the same right to individuals who do not conform to her own ideology. Pam used the fluidity of Mormon doctrine to legitimize her decision to postpone marriage and child-rearing while she established herself in a career during the era when Sonja Johnson picketed General Conference because of President Kimball's attack on the ERA. In the same conversation, Pam used Mormon doctrine to disenfranchise Mormons who are members of the LGBTQ community.

My understanding of personal revelation, as one who was raised Mormon, is that personal revelation goes beyond opinion. Personal revelation is something that is felt deep within. It is described to children as the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. How personal revelation shows up varies from one individual to the next. In my experience, personal revelation is a deep knowing accompanied by a warm feeling, and it is common for personal revelation to *contradict* personal opinion. Lois believes that personal revelation and personal opinion are often confused. Although some argue that others should make sure personal revelation aligns with official Church doctrine, Lois believes the individual should be taken seriously and the individual's belief that they have experienced personal revelation should be respected. Yet, Lois still believes the individual should work together with their bishop to legitimize personal revelation if the revelation seems to contradict Church doctrine.

Lois: "... not to say that bishops are for example perfect, but I do think that a lot of times people will confuse personal revelation when just something that they hope to be true, you know what I mean, kind of like a self-serving bias, if that something that they believe and they had no, they kind of felt like while maybe they had some emotional experience not necessarily a spiritual experience but an emotional experience, and that coincided with kind of what they were thinking or feeling, no one could interpret that as a personal revelation, when really it wasn't. They're just really justifying it to fulfill their own belief."

"So I think in that case, I mean Bishop, and again I truly to believe that bishops are inspired by God because of the position that they hold. But if they have different opinion I think they should be very respectful of that person's, what they are saying and consider that they may have been a personal revelation to them but I do think that those people need to be open to explore because of, the

Bishop may not necessarily believe that that could have been the case you know.”

“He should be very careful of that because again it. That could've been. And they should have no problem with that particular, even though they may not think it's true unless it's something super controversy or something that they just cannot believe that could have been a revelation. I don't know I mean I guess they could work with that person and try to explore things and perhaps pray further or try to seek further revelation from both ends.”

Julie: “Alright, so I want to make sure that I'm hearing you correctly I don't want to be putting words in your mouth or anything. So it sounds like what you're saying is that neither one trumps the other that if there is a conflict then further communication needs to take place or that you believe that eventually a consensus will be come to. Is that it?”

Lois: “Yeah I guess so. And I guess I'm kind of comparing this to a general commandment. Right? And any Bishop, but the Prophet will tell you that, “Do not kill.” But then again we kind of read things in the scriptures that are different. And it's so I'm kind of thinking like, well if someone had a personal revelation that was, you know, it seems crazy to kind of the general population you don't be so quick to say, “No, that's not true. Here's what I want to do instead.” I think again most need to be respectful and kind of consider that could've been the case. And they need to, again, whether or not they need to pray more or seek more revelation or whatever it is definitely, yeah.”

Personal revelation along with the fluidity of Mormon doctrine within the Mormon Church can empower women to interpret doctrine for themselves, and to follow their instincts or intellect over counsel from priesthood leaders. I have known three women who used personal revelation to legitimize leaving abusive marriages after her bishop told her to stay. None of these women had more than a high school education. None of them had social collateral to fall back on when their fathers and

bishops counseled them to stay in their marriages. The legitimacy personal revelation gave her decision to leave varied depending on who was interpreting or judging her revelation. All three women were told by various priesthood leaders that she was wrong and that she should go back and fast and pray some more until she received revelation more in line with their interpretation of doctrine. In all three cases, however, she did not care what others said, because each believed she had already received permission to leave from the highest possible authority.

All but two participants in this study were significantly more privileged than the average Mormon woman. Their privilege shielded them from the most oppressive expressions of patriarchy within the Mormon Church, to the extent that most feel they are equal to men within the Church. Those who recognize imbalance in power believe the Church is headed toward egalitarianism and they are biding their time. Feminism and patriarchy within Mormonism use subtle approaches to advance their initiatives. The gentle approach used by the priesthood combined with the cult of true womanhood contributes to an environment where women who enjoy domesticity feel equal and empowered within Mormonism. Personal revelation combined with the fluidity of Mormon doctrine and powerful female role models within Mormonism empower women within the Church to define their own belief system, and to create an empowered self-concept.

6. CONCLUSION

Mormon feminists who participated in this study value Mormonism as a community and culture as well as a religion. The majority of participants do not feel oppressed, and those who recognize oppression within the Mormon Church believe it arises from 1) the imperfections of individual men or 2) because men have not evolved enough to receive a full understanding of equality between the sexes. Internalized oppression within Mormonism is facilitated by rhetoric of equality and relative scarcity of overt forms of oppression.

Some aspects of Mormonism, such as female deity and positive representations of Eve, are empowering to women. Women who are heterosexual and enjoy domesticity find refuge in Mormonism which glorifies, honors, and protects heteronormative domesticity.

The fluidity of Mormon doctrine gives women hope that doctrine will evolve to provide greater equality in the future. The doctrine of personal revelation combined with the fluidity of Mormon doctrine creates an environment that allows Mormon women to ignore doctrine and practices they disagree with. Privilege buffers many participants in this study from experiencing overt forms of oppression and provides further validity to dissenting views.

Mormon feminists have internalized patriarchy just like everyone else. Some participants have exorcized internalized patriarchy to a greater degree than others, but

it is important not to use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house (Lorde, 1984) by denying individuals the right to self-identify as feminist. Even so, change cannot occur without identifying areas for growth. Homophobia, horizontal hostility, unexamined privilege, and domination through intimidation were evident in interviews with some participants.

Because so little research has been done on Mormon feminists to date, there is a lot of room for continued study. My suggestions only scratch the surface of what is relevant to the discussion of Mormon feminists.

A quantitative study of Mormon feminist demographics would shed further light on the connection between privilege and feminists who remain in the Mormon Church. A comparative study of feminists who stay in the Mormon Church and those who leave is also indicated. The effect of Mormon doctrine on gendered identity development, correlations between privilege and perception of Mormon priesthood, nepotism within leadership, and the grooming of Mormon women to General Presidency positions are important questions to the development of Mormon standpoint theory.

One of the participants said her husband also identifies as a Mormon feminist and wondered if I would be willing to adapt the study to allow for male Mormon feminists. After I agreed to include him, he backed out. Other male Mormon feminists are members of feminist Mormon blog sites or have written blogs themselves. A study of men who identify as active, believing Mormons and as feminists would be a valuable addition to this discussion.

Further investigation into the influence of Mormon rhetoric on findings in research conducted by Mormons about Mormons is also indicated. Another area of interest that came up during this study is a correlation between a more liberal stance on women in the workplace and public attacks on gay marriage. Although it didn't seem to fit well into the findings of this study, a few participants mentioned the Church has been more supportive of women having careers in recent years. They also brought up the Church's very public opposition to Proposition 8 in California. A relevant research question is, "Has the Mormon Church thrown a bone to its more liberal constituents in order to gain latitude in its attacks on gay marriage?"

This study explored the question of how Mormon feminists reconcile an ideal of equality within a culture of patriarchy. I am grateful to the thirteen women who shared their experiences and insight in hopes of gaining some understanding. While this study shed light on dynamics that allow privileged women within the Mormon Church to negotiate this intersectionality within their lives, many questions remain. Mormon feminists said they do not feel understood or accepted among secular feminists. In addition to contributing to academic knowledge of Mormon feminists, it is my hope that this study will foster understanding among secular feminists and increase self-awareness among Mormon feminists.

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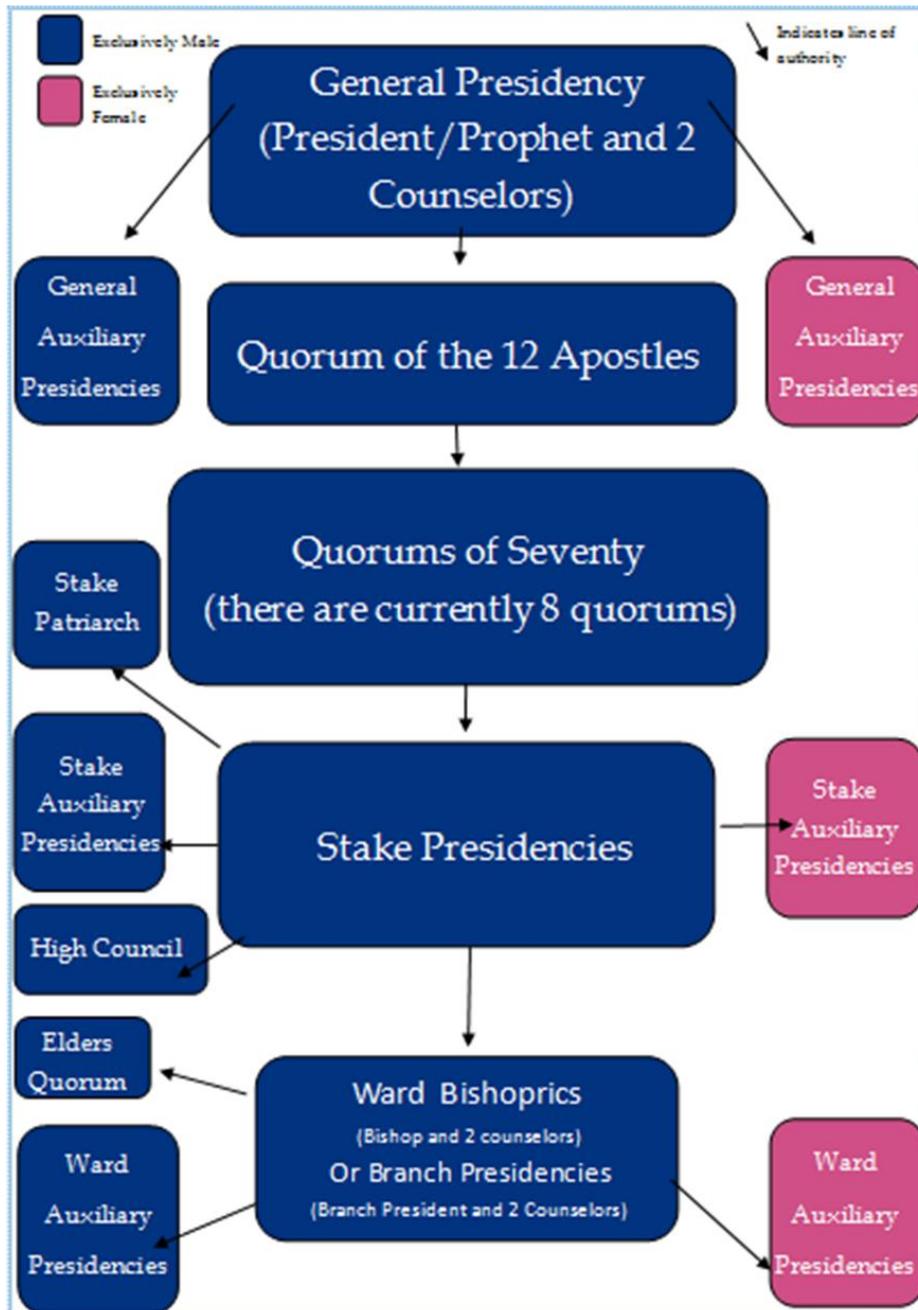
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8. APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX A



8.2 APPENDIX B

Table

Mormon Women in the History of Second-Wave Feminism

- 1963 Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*.
- 1963 Esther Peterson promotes State Commissions on the Status of Women.
- 1966 The National Organization of Women is founded.
- 1966 Boston-area Mormon women publish *A Beginner's Boston*.
- 1968 New York Radical Women demonstrate at the Miss America pageant.
- 1970 The *Utah Historical Quarterly* publishes a special issue on women.
- 1970 Boston feminists publish the pamphlet that becomes *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.
- 1971 Boston-area Mormon women edit a women's issue of *Dialogue*.
- 1972 *Ms* magazine is founded.
- 1972 Mormon feminists teach women's history at the LDS Institute of Religion in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- 1972 Rosemary Ruether teaches feminist theology at Harvard Divinity School.
- 1973 Carol Lynn Pearson publishes *Daughters of Light*.
- 1973 National Black Feminists organize.
- 1974 *Exponent II* begins publication.
- 1974 The Berkshire Conference on Women's History is held at Radcliffe.
- 1975 Elouise Bell delivers a forum address at Brigham Young University on feminism.
- 1975 Catholic women hold the first Women's Ordination Conference in Detroit.
- 1976 Boston women publish *Mormon Sisters*, edited by Claudia L. Bushman.
- 1976 Maxine Hong Kingston publishes *The Woman Warrior*.
- 1977 Sonia Johnson leads Mormons for ERA.
- 1977 The National Women's Studies Association is formed.
- 1977 Utah holds its state International Women's Year conference in Salt Lake City.
- 1977 In Houston, Bella Abzug presides over the First National Women's Conference.

Table (cont.)

Mormon Women in the History of Second-Wave Feminism

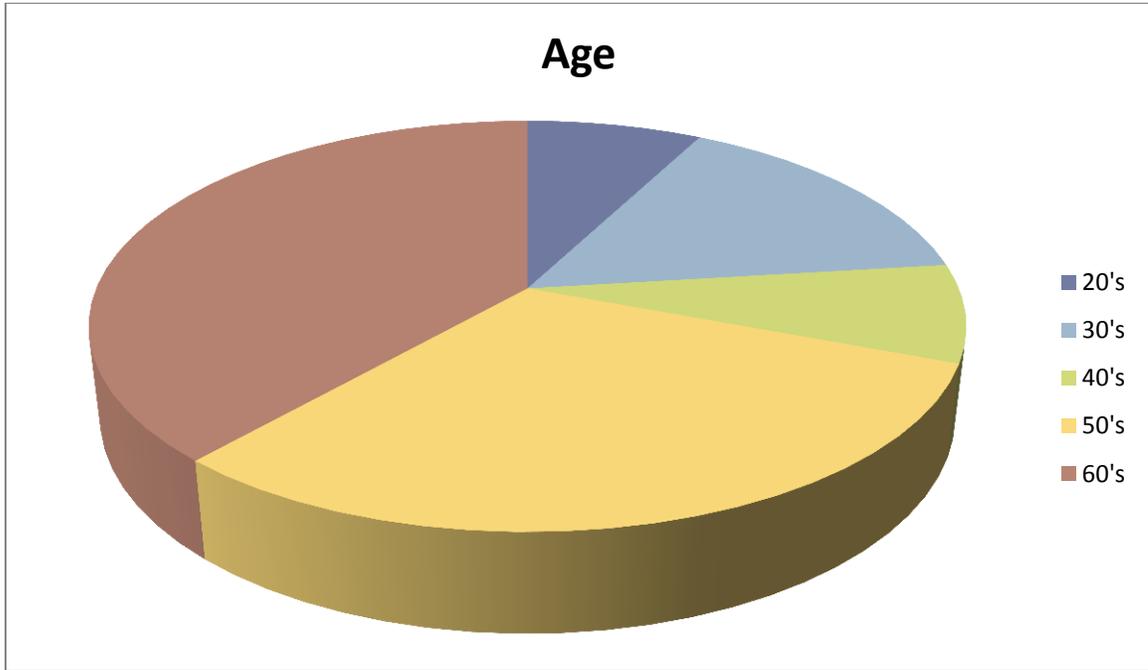
- 1978 The Alice Louise Reynolds Club is organized in Provo, Utah.
- 1978 100,000 demonstrators march in Washington, D.C., to support the Equal Rights Amendment.
- 1978 Marilyn Warenski publishes *Patriarchs and Politics*.
- 1980 Evangelical feminists publish *Daughters of Sarah*.
- 1980 Peggy Fletcher becomes editor of *Sunstone*.
- 1981 Jewish feminists found B'not Esh.
- 1981 Sonia Johnson publishes her autobiography, *From Housewife to Heretic*.
- 1982 The ERA fails of ratification.
- 1982 Mormon women make a "Pilgrimage" to Nauvoo, Illinois.
- 1982 Alice Walker publishes *The Color Purple*.
- 1982 Mary Lythgoe Bradford publishes *Mormon Women Speak*.
- 1983 Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza publishes *In Memory of Her*.
- 1984 Margaret Merrill Toscano speaks on women's priesthood at the Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium.
- 1984 Emily's List is founded to encourage women political candidates.
- 1984 Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery publish *Mormon Enigma*, the biography of Emma Hale Smith.
- 1985 14,000 women attend the Third International Conference held in Kenya.
- 1985 The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints (now Community of Christ) ordains women.
- 1985 Wilma Mankiller becomes the head of the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.
- 1986 Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson publish *Sisters in Spirit*.
- 1987 Congress declares March National Women's History month.
- 1988 The Mormon Women's Forum is founded.
- 1988 Barbara Harris becomes the first female bishop in the Episcopal Church.

8.3 APPENDIX C

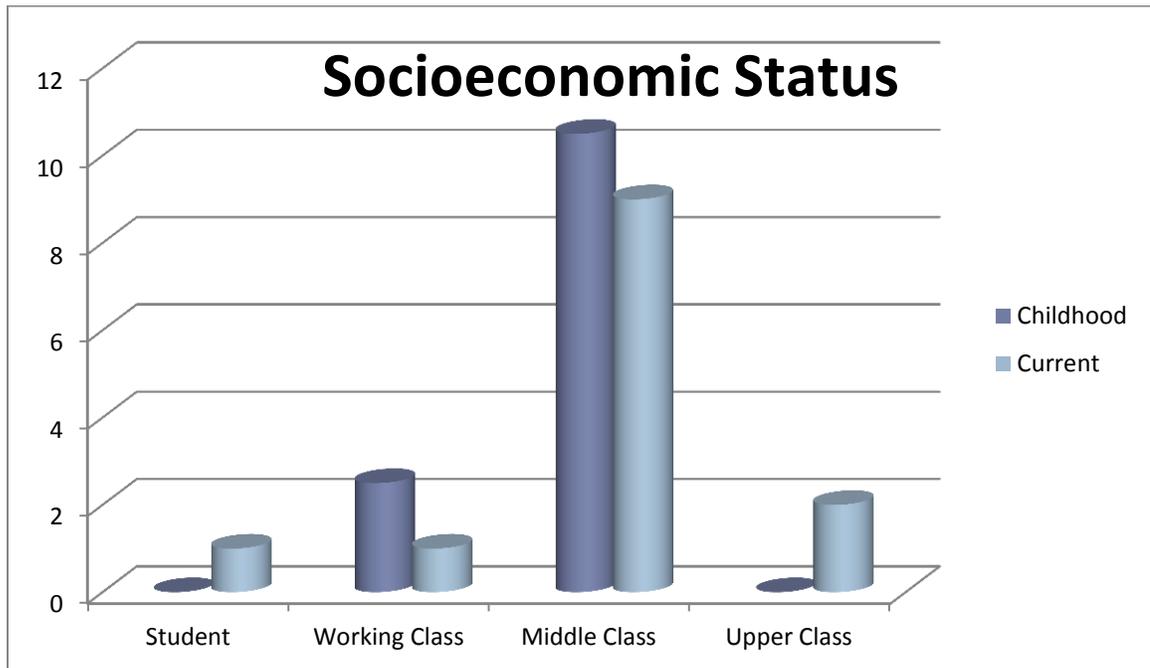
Interview Questions

1. How would you define feminism?
2. How would you define patriarchy?
3. Do you understand the Mormon tradition to be patriarchal?
4. What does being a Mormon mean to you?
5. When did you first identify as a feminist?
6. What led you to embrace feminism?
7. When did you first identify as a Mormon?
8. What led you to embrace Mormonism?
9. Describe your activity in the LDS Church.
10. Describe your activity as a feminist?
11. How do the concepts feminism, patriarchy, and Mormonism intersect in your life?
12. What issues of gender have been most important to you as a Mormon woman?
13. Describe the level of support you receive as a feminist in the Mormon community.
14. Describe the level of support you receive as a Mormon in the feminist community.
15. Describe your relationship with male leadership in your ward. In your stake?
16. Describe your relationship with female leadership in your ward. In your stake?
17. What leadership roles have you taken within the Church? Within the community?
18. What did you learn about gender and/or gender roles when you were growing up?
19. What is your concept of Heavenly Mother?
20. What is your concept of Heavenly Father?

8.4 APPENDIX D

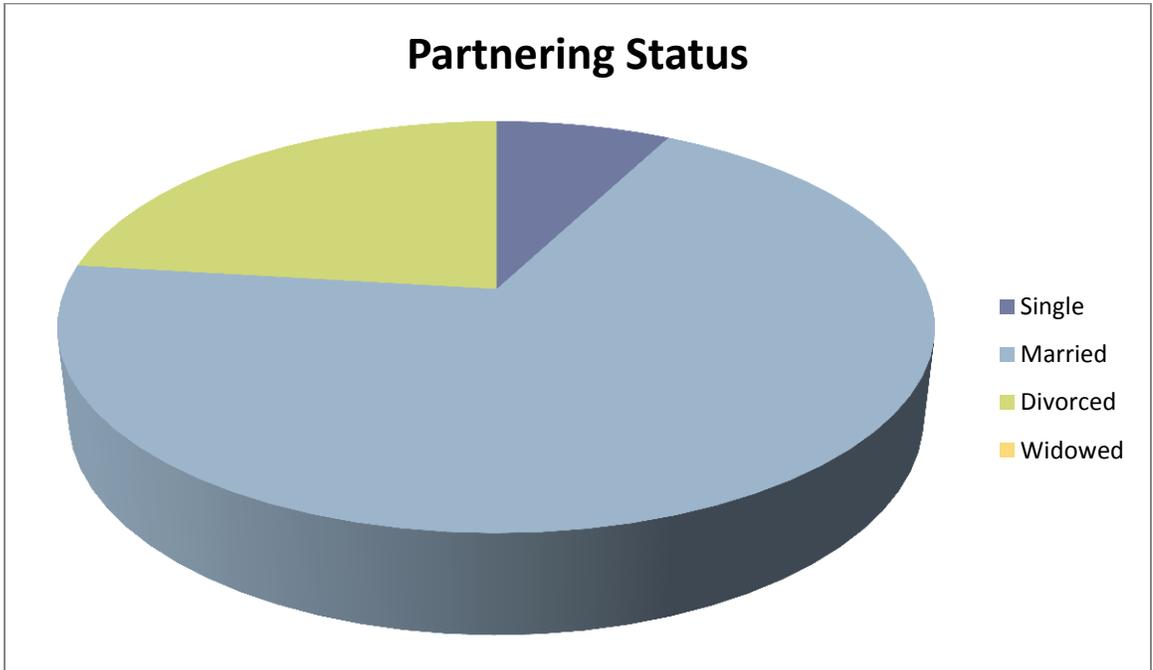


8.6 APPENDIX F



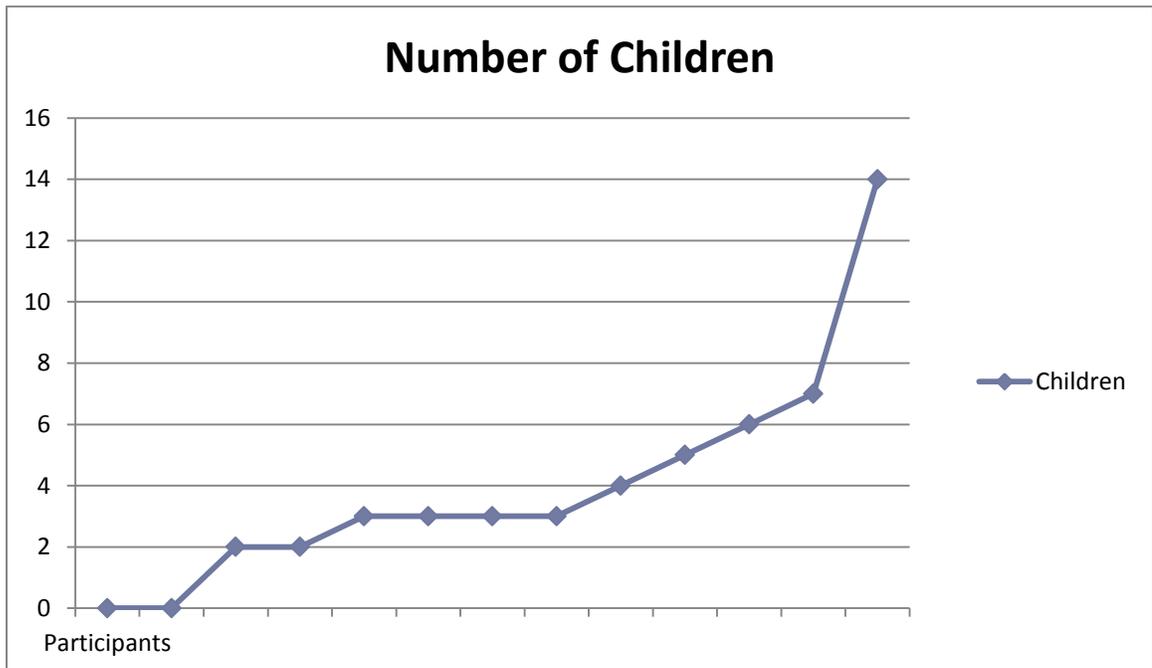
8.7 APPENDIX G

Partnering Status



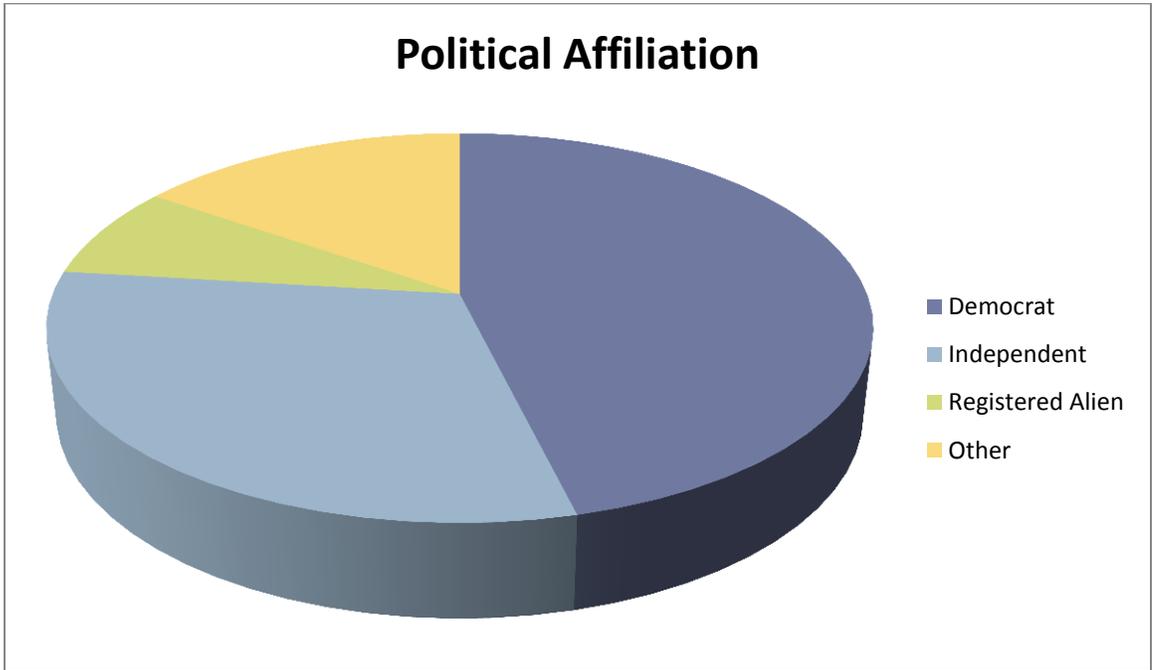
8.8 APPENDIX H

Number of Children



8.9 APPENDIX I

Political Affiliation



8.10 APPENDIX J

Workforce Participation

