"A Different Perspective": Exploring the Influences of Religious Background and Family Upbringing in Mormon Women's Views of Marriage and Motherhood

Author: Allison Paul

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/3821

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC,
Boston College University Libraries.

"A Different Perspective"
Exploring the Influences of Religious Background and Family Upbringing in Mormon Women's Views of Marriage and Motherhood

Allison Paul

Sociology Honors Thesis
Boston College
Advised by Dr. Gustavo Morello
Spring 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must first of all thank Julie Berry, the public affairs person for the Boston Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This summer when I had no idea how to get in contact with young adult Mormon women in Boston, you called with an interest in my ideas and knew exactly how to help. Your conviction that my project would be fruitful as well as your introductions in the Mormon world in Boston is something I cannot thank you for enough. Without your help, this paper would not exist in the form it does today.

I pay much gratitude to Dr. Eva Garroutte of Boston College's Sociology Department. Beginning in my Introduction to Sociology class and continuing through this project, you have encouraged me to hone my ability to think sociologically. I cannot count the number of hours you have spent advising me and reading drafts of various sections of my thesis. Without your prodding, I would not have pushed myself to write something of which I am truly proud today.

To Dr. Gustavo Morello, my supportive and brilliant advisor. I cannot thank you enough for your continuing support and your constant reassurance that I was on the right path in my research. Your encouragement to pursue a topic I was interested in inspired me to work through the challenges on this project. No matter what questions I came with, you always had a story or piece of advice for how to work through that stage of research. I was lucky to find such a positive and encouraging mentor and will be forever grateful for your influence.

Lauren, you were the first person not only willing to read a draft of this dissertation but to repetitively ask if you could. You were so helpful in providing feedback to make my ideas more understandable to those without a background in the Mormon faith as well as in cleaning up many of my spelling and grammatical mistakes. Your humor throughout your commentary made it well worth listening to you!

To Addison, who listened to eight long months of stress, concern, and anxiety over finishing this thesis on time. You proposed ice cream breaks at the appropriate times and didn't let me forget to keep breathing. You constantly reminded me that what I was doing would be worthwhile in the end. As per usual, you are right. Thank you for the unending support, in this project and in so many other areas of my life.

David and Christopher, I must thank you for the minimal but essential role in this thesis. Your questions of "how the Mormons were doing" never got old. Your willingness to read this thesis, as long as I promised to highlight the "important" parts, really do mean a lot to me.

Mom and Dad, thank you for your continued support in all my academic, social, athletic, and leisure endeavors. Mom, the hours you spent helping to transcribe interviews saved me from a lot of stress. I'm sorry I gave you the hardest interviews to transcribe but am grateful for your help! Dad, your reminders that there was a light at the end of the tunnel helped me to finish writing every time I wanted to quit. I can't thank both of you enough for teaching me to challenge people's assumptions and arguments. I think those debates at the dinner table have shaped the sociological thinker that I am today. Thanks for sticking by my side not only through this thesis project but for the past twenty-two years.

Finally, my deepest gratitude and ultimate respect are for the women who participated in this project. Thank you to each and every one of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to meet with me. Your willingness to speak so openly about your experiences, your relationships, your goals, and your faith were truly inspiring to me. When people ask me what I learn from this project, I often explain what I learned about the Mormon faith and what my findings were on the interaction of faith, family, and future goals. But the first thing that always pops into my head is what I learned from my interactions with each of you. I've learned what it means to struggle with faith, how to find a belief system that works for your life, and the importance of putting others before yourself. I learned so much more from each of you than I was expecting to at a level that was so much more important than my academic endeavors. You each hold a special place in my heart. I hope that one day I can repay the kindness that you all have paid to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aims to understand how Mormon religious practice and individual family upbringing shape faithful Mormon women's goals for marriage and motherhood. The sacred canopy (Berger, 1967), which provides the theoretical context for this study, asserts that those who practice religion seek to act according to a religious worldview. This study examines the roles of personal faith, Church teachings, peer culture, and family upbringing in these women's lives to determine how the sacred canopy is maintained. The analysis reveals how religious perspective has a slightly different role in the women's lives than family upbringing, yet both work together to maintain the sacred canopy. This research is important for better understanding a demographic of a growing religious subpopulation and contextualizing their experiences.

PREFACE

I asked other people a lot of questions throughout my year of research, but there was one question people asked me over and over again. How did a Catholic girl from Virginia attending a Jesuit university become interested in the Mormon religion? What stake did she (or does she) have in the faith practices of a small religious population centered in the West?

I would never have had the idea for this project if it hadn't been for the faith of one of my best friends in high school. It seemed different in some way from how faith played a role in my own life and in my friends lives. I couldn't help but be interested in figuring out what that difference was. My high school classes started at 7:20 A.M. and many kids came into class just before the final bell. My friend, however, sat down in her seat just as the bell rang not because she had overslept but because she had come from her one-hour seminary class—a Bible-study type of class—at her Mormon church. She participated in her church's singing group on Tuesday nights and could never hang out on a Sunday because that day was dedicated to family. She stayed awake at night not trying to finish homework assignments but reading *The Book of Mormon* for guidance in her life.

As somebody who had grown up Catholic—sometimes in name and other times as a true believer—I was impressed with her dedication to her church and to her family. As I had more and more conversations with my friend, I began to understand how central faith was to her life. It wasn't that she moved through her days and remembered to pray when things got hard— rather, faith was the central tenant in her life around which everything else revolved. More than anything, I saw how happy her Mormon faith made her. Despite the extra hours to wake up early in the morning and the hours she spent at church activities throughout the week, it was clearly a part of her life that brought her much joy.

It is through her friendship that I was exposed to the Mormon religion and through her passion that I became interested in it. When I had the opportunity to write a senior thesis, I knew I wanted to explore the phenomenon of this faith more in-depth. There seemed to be a light in the eyes my friend. I wanted to figure out where that light came from and what made it shine so brightly. In high school, I couldn't believe somebody would wake up an hour earlier to study and pray. Today, I aim to understand the interrelationship between faith, personal values, and goals for the future in the lives of young Mormon women.

1. INTRODUCTION

Americans across the United States often think they "know" about Mormons. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as the LDS Church or Mormon people) is typically viewed as a small religious sect where men are allowed to have multiple wives, nobody drinks caffeine, and missionaries go door-to-door trying to convince neighbors to convert to their religion. Despite increased awareness of the Mormon religion through Mitt Romney's political campaign and television series such as *Sister Wives*, many non-Mormons still have these misconceptions about the believers and their faith practices. Polygamy was outlawed as a practice of Mormonism in 1890 (LDS Church, 2013). The Word of Wisdom, the law of health revealed by the Lord for both physical and spiritual benefit of its members (LDS Church, www.lds.org), encourages members not to drink caffeine; however, some faithful cut coffee out of their diet but drink an occasional soda to stay awake. The Mormon faith has a large group of missionaries who are sent to cities all over the world to spread the faith, but they are more interested in sharing their faith than on forcing it upon others. My brief exposure to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made clear how open Mormons are to visitors and how welcoming they are to people who want to learn more about their practices. This faith group has been misperceived throughout their religious history yet has continued to flourish in recent decades.

I am particularly interested in examining Mormon women's experiences in light of Peter Berger's work on the role of socialization in religion. Mormon women tend to have a particular set of views about the importance of having children (Darrington, 2005) and it is accepted that parents play an important role in transmitting ideas about religion, including marital and family values, to their children (Milevsky, 2008). Yet transmission of values is only one piece of the

socialization puzzle. Peter Berger writes extensively on the concept of the "sacred canopy" wherein religious belief provides a framework for believers in the world. He goes beyond parental transmission of values to identify how children internalize these values to form their own view of the world, which then guides their actions. Religion, including ideas about family and marriage, is used to define an order in the world and therefore explain any events that might seem chaotic (Berger, 1967). The "sacred canopy" provides a way to understand the events in life through the vise of religious faith in a way that organizes it and makes sense to the individual.

I am interested in this project to understand the extent to which religious experiences and current religious faith provide a context in which Mormon women frame their views of dating, marriage, and motherhood. As young Mormon women begin to search for a partner, determine their attitudes toward marriage, and enter into formal unions, it is important to understand how their religious background influence their ideas and goals for the future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the Mormon Church

The prophet Joseph Smith founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in 1830. More commonly known as the Mormons, people of this faith believe that Jesus Christ came to Joseph Smith while he was praying in the woods in 1820 and told him not to join any other church. He called Joseph Smith to be a Prophet and, in 1829, Smith received the priesthood authority that had been granted to Christian Apostles such as Peter (LDS Church, *Restoration*, p. 12). He received a set of gold plates, which he then translated and recorded as *The Book of Mormon*, one of the holy texts of the faith.

Jesus revealed to Joseph Smith that "Zion (the New Jerusalem) would be built upon the American continent" (*Articles of Faith*).   After substantial persecution in New York, where his followers first came together, Joseph Smith and his followers began moving west to Missouri. He believed that God had revealed to him a city in Missouri as Zion—one where he could establish his followers and grow the faith according to God's will. After clashes with neighbors, Smith moved himself and his followers to Nauvoo, Illinois. It was there that enemies of the church eventually killed him (Williams, 2011).

In 1846, Brigham Young, a strong church leader, began to lead the faithful followers West in the hopes of finding peace and a place to build a utopia for believers. Young envisioned the Great Salt Lake Valley as the ideal place to settle because of its isolation: nobody would bother the believers and they would be dependent on God to survive (Williams, 2011). In July of 1847, the Saints settled Salt Lake City (Johnson, 2013), now the capital of Utah. Today, Salt Lake City is the Mecca of the Mormon religious faith. Although estimates vary from year to year, the population of Utah is 58% Mormon and Mormons living in Utah compose 35% of the total population of American Mormons (Pond, 2009).

The structure of the Mormon Church today allows for local congregations to create communities in different areas of the world while still maintaining connections to the universal church and its main leaders. The center of the LDS Church, both administratively and religiously, is Salt Lake City, Utah. The President of the Church and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the most important religious leaders, reside in Salt Lake and the bi-annual Church conferences take place in this city. To better organize the many members of the Church, local congregations have been established. Church meetinghouses exist all over the United States, in

greater quantities where there are larger Mormon populations. There are, for example, seven meetinghouses within a fifteen-mile radius of Boston.

Each church meetinghouse has several "wards" that meet in it. A ward is the local congregation of people organized geographically so people can worship close to home. A ward can have anywhere from two hundred to seven hundred people in it and each has its own bishop who is the spiritual leader of the local group. Each ward has a separate three-hour church service on Sundays, meets individually throughout the week, and plans its own service activities. The lessons taught in each ward, however, are set by the leaders of the LDS Church and therefore are consistent across wards. A stake is a group of wards that are organized together for administrative purposes, similar to a diocese in a Catholic Church. The many local wards in the greater Boston area are all considered parts of the "Boston Stake" of the LDS Church.

Today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is growing rapidly both in the United States and abroad. Rodney Stark (1984), a prominent sociologist of religion, argues that the growth of the LDS (Mormon) Church is the "rise of a new world religion" that has been unprecedented since the rise of Islam. No other religion has grown so rapidly or has had such an impact on diverse populations throughout the world since Islam. Clearly, the Mormon Church and its followers are an important group of people to study. The Mormon religion is changing the landscape of religion in the United States and it is important to study the people of the faith as the country is undergoing this change.[1]

---

[1] [1] It is important to remember that the women in the sample were practicing Mormons who had been attending church meetings and often provided many other services to the church for more than six months. These descriptions and the relevance of the sacred canopy might be different if the sample had included inactive or "grey Mormons," a term used to describe those who only attend church and do not spend much time practicing their faith outside of Church hours.

Theoretical Context: "The Sacred Canopy"

Religion plays a nuanced role in people's lives in modern times, yet those who do choose to include religion in their life often use it as a structural support in creating a worldview. Events in their life are understood in light of their religious outlook and according to religious teachings. As Peter Berger (1967) argues, religion allows man to "attempt to conceive of the whole universe as being humanly significant" (p. 27-28). In this way, believers can structure life and reduce chaos. Religion locates social institutions and events that permeate life in a sacred frame of reference. It is through the creation of this "sacred canopy" (Berger, 1967) that men and women can understand life events and pass on their ideas to future generations. The maintenance of the sacred canopy is critical to ensure the plausibility of a worldview and continue the structure of one's life (Berger, 1967). Ultimately, the sacred canopy provides a way in which religion can guide human activity in order to establish routines and continue practices in future generations.

The concept of Berger's "sacred canopy" hinges on the idea that worlds are socially constructed and maintained (Berger, 1967). Religion is the epitome of the way in which a worldview is understood and maintained, especially through continued religious belief and practice of religious rituals to maintain structure. As Cornwall (1988) argues, religion provides a set of norms and expectations with regard to the behavior of group members; the extent to which these norms are adopted and practiced in everyday life depends on how integral the religious faith has become to a particular individual. Socialization—through family, institutional religious structures, and peer groups—determines the extent to which religion will play a role in the individual's life and shape their future practices based on their worldview (Cornwall, 1988).

Religion and religious faith continue to be interpreted, continually shaping ideas about the world throughout life.

Marriage and the Family as Central Institutions in Mormon Life

One major tenant of the Mormon faith is the importance of marriage and the family. Marriage is "ordained by God" (Hinckley, 1995) and families are central to carrying out God's divine plan for his eternal children. The Mormons believe that spiritual children exist in Heaven and are given a body through human birth; taking on a human body is an opportunity for souls to be tested and to prove themselves worthy of the kingdom of God (Oaks, 1993). Procreation thus provides more spirit children the opportunity to be tested in a physical body. Having children— and having them within the legitimating institution of marriage—are important parts of being a good member of the faith. Eternal destiny is dependent on marrying, having a family and raising children in the faith (Oaks, 1993).

Prophets and other members of the LDS faith have spoken on importance of the family and its role in present-day society. One oft-cited publications in the literature on the Mormon faith is President Hinckley's *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* (1995). The author emphasizes the ability of families to be together eternally in the Celestial Kingdom and how it is God's wish for families to be created in order to achieve eternal destiny. A Counselor in the Relief Society Presidency, the female branch of leadership in the Church, reiterated the importance of family when she argued that "it is not good for man or woman to be alone" (Drew, 2001). Men and women must be united in order to build a life with God; building a life with God is the goal of life on Earth but the only way to build that life is through the companionship of marriage. In order to reassure any women who had trouble finding a man to marry, Hinckley (1996) encouraged women of the Church not to give up hope but rather to focus on helping

others. As they concentrate on service to others, he assured women, everything else in life, including finding a partner, would work itself out.

Many studies have been conducted on Mormon families and have studied Mormon religious beliefs and practices (e.g. Cornwall, 1986; Darrington, 2005; Goodman, 2012; Loser, 2008; Smith, 2012). Many other studies have documented the ways in which Mormons are a distinct population with regard to family. In their review of research, Chadwick et al. (2010) found that LDS men and women marry at a younger age than that of the typical American. Mormon men marry on average four and a half years younger than other American men; their female counterparts marry on average one and a half years younger than American women. Mormons also have a lower divorce rate: Mormon men and women married in temple ceremonies have a divorce rate that is five times less than the civil divorce rate.[2] Chadwick et al. (2010) also found that Mormons also have larger families, which an average of more than three children for an LDS family as compared to just under two children per household for American families.

In an earlier study, Heaton and Goodman (1985) similarly found Mormons more likely to marry and less likely to divorce than the average American. He defined Mormons as both "pronuptial and pronatal" (p. 344). Moreover, he found that the changing structure of family formation—including higher marriage age, higher divorce rate, and an increased rate of cohabitation—is mitigated by the interdependence between religion and family. Others argue

---

[2] It is possible for Mormons to get married outside of the Temple. To be married in the Temple, faithful Mormons must be recommended by the bishop in order to be able to enter the most holy places of worship in the Church. For Mormons who do not have Temple Recommends, it is possible to get married in civil ceremonies or outside of the Temple. However, these marriages are typically seen as less sacred because they are not eternal unions. They are therefore not the goal for faithful Mormon women.

that this is especially true in the Mormon faith because religion and family are so closely tied together both in doctrine and practice (e.g., Dollahite, 2009; Goodman, 2012).

Place and Perspectives of Young Mormon Women

Despite the breadth of research that has been conducted on people of the Mormon faith with regard to many aspects of their lives and religious beliefs, some key gaps in the literature still exist. Few studies that I reviewed focused specifically on young Mormon women. Some focused on young people in general and others focused on the female adult population, but few recruited participants exclusively from the young, female Mormon population. It is important to study young Mormon women—especially with regard to ideas about and attitudes toward dating, marriage and family—because they are they beginning to search for a partner, determine their attitudes toward marriage, and enter into formal unions. Additionally, the majority of the studies I reviewed were quantitative studies on ideas towards marriage or religious values. As Klein argues, it is important that we try "to understand and explain the *why* and *how* beyond the *what* of our data about families" (as cited in Dollahite et al., 2009, p. 374). It is important to conduct qualitative studies in order to determine how young women's views are formed about dating and the future family, rather than just what those views are.

Young Mormon women are at an age when they can reflect on their childhood experiences, have a more developed sense of their personal faith, and are beginning to enter into formal relationships. They provide the perfect view into how religious faith and previous religious experiences can play a role in determining ideas about marriage and the future family. Accordingly, this project focuses expressly on young Mormon women: how their past experiences growing up inside or outside of the faith have influenced their aspirations and values related to marriage and family. A main interest is in how Mormon women find a partner and

thus take steps toward establishing their own family and realizing the goals of their faith. It is a task that is central to the stage of life that young adult women occupy, making them an ideal population to study.

Relationship Formation among Mormon Women

One way in which Mormon women begin to search for a partner is by dating. The Church, in a publication called *For the Strength of Youth*, advises young faithful that they "should not date until [they] are at least sixteen years old" in order to avoid temptation and relationships that are too serious. For Mormons, singlehood is generally viewed as a temporary state with the end goal of marriage (Darrington et al., 2005). Those who are single typically are looking to date a person of the opposite sex and do not intend to stay single forever. In concordance with previous research on the role of the family, Darrington et. al.'s study (2005) also found that the family and person religious beliefs shape Mormon views of singlehood. The family acts as a unit of pressure to encourage single persons to marry but also acts as a support system for those who are distressed with their single state (Darrington et al., 2005).

For young Mormon women and men, dating is a way to get to know members of the opposite sex for the purpose of finding a partner for marriage. In their teenage years, young people are encouraged to go on group dates to get to know members of the opposite sex as well as understand their own strengths. One publication from the Young Women General Presidency (2010) acknowledges "dating is an opportunity to get to know young men in preparation for marriage" (p. 52). It is clear that dating in the teenage years is casual and group-oriented, but dating as a young adult is focused on the goal of marriage. A church publication that provides guidance on dating notes "the ultimate goal of dating is to find an eternal companion you can make and keep temple covenants with" ("Dating FAQ's," 2010). The goal in dating is to

evaluate companionship, compatibility and worthiness of marriage with the goal of a temple

marriage in mind. Again, since temple marriage affords Mormons the chance to live eternally

with family in the celestial marriage, a temple marriage—and finding a companion who is

worthy of temple marriage—is a very important component of young adult life.

Furthermore, dating happens more frequently and is less casual for young Mormon

adults. In a survey study of students at Brigham Young University, the LDS-run university that

has a population that is almost entirely Mormon, researchers found that BYU students have more

dates in one month than the national average for college students in four years (Chadwick et al.,

2007). They also found that the "hang out" culture at BYU was more platonic as compared to

the "hook up" culture found on many other campuses, seemingly because of Mormon values of

chastity and the emphasis on no physical relations before marriage. Marriage for Mormons is a

very important step in the "Plan of Salvation" (Oaks, 1993) and an extensive amount of research

has been conducted on Mormon ideas of marriage as well as how those ideas are passed down to

future generations.

Religiosity and the Family

One major theme throughout the literature on religiosity is that family background has a

strong influence on religious faith, which in turn affects how people conceive of ideas about their

future family. Cornwall et al. (1986) found that individuals' degree of religiosity has an effect

on other aspects of life such as family and marital happiness. Religion and family are mutually

influential institutions that are tied closely together. As the same author argued, religious

socialization "influences the development of a religious worldview view, but is also important

because it channels individuals into a social world that maintains one's subjective reality"

(Cornwall, 1987, p. 54). Consistent with Berger's analysis of the role of the sacred canopy,

religion plays an important influence in life in both shaping the way people look at the world as well as providing a social network to which individuals belong.

The family plays an important role in determining the personal faith of individual members. In an early study on transmission of religiosity from parents to children, Myers (1996) found that the most important factor in determining adult religiosity is the parents' own religiosity. Parents' values, emphasis on religion and personal faith can have a significant impact in how their children choose to be religious as they reach adulthood. In support of this finding, Hardy et al, (2011) found that the religiousness of a family correlates with the extent to which an individual is religious.

Similarly, researchers conducted a statistical analysis of data of 2,169 survey responses (part of a larger data sample) from non-Hispanic white women ages 15-28 who were members of five major religious groups in the U.S.: Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, conservative Protestant, Jewish, and unaffiliated. They found that the more religious individuals were in their personal faith, the stronger the effect their faith was in guiding decisions in life (Lehrer, 2004). Faith has an ability to encourage individuals to follow the practices advocated by the Church more closely and therefore make decisions in their life that are in accordance with the Church's teachings. In a study about the more specific role of the Mormon family, Cornwall (1988) found that parents play a key role in encouraging identity within the LDS group. As the Mormon Church has a distinct focus on the family, it seems likely that these values would affect the future plans of those who identify with the faith.

It is crucial that the ideas both of the faith but also of traditions such as family values are passed down to the next generation. Berger would argue this process of "intergenerational transmission" (Willoughby et al., 2012) is an important step that maintains the sacred canopy of

a specific religious worldview for more than one generation; it essentially allows religions to flourish and grow in the future.

Both implicit and explicit communication of beliefs and ideals are important in transmitting beliefs to children (Milevsky et al., 2008). One key form of implicit communication to children are religious rituals that take place within the home. With the family as the basis for a support system, Dollahite and Marks (2009) argue that religion's "power lies in the sacred familial processes that take place primarily out of public view" (p. 380). Religion is an internal influence on the family rather than an external one (Loser et al., 2008). When the family acts as a religious unit from within, it has the ability to foster religious values for all members. These rituals work to maintain the sacred canopy by upholding a certain worldview as well as strengthen the family, which can shape beliefs.

The family can act as a religious unit by performing religious rituals in the home. Loser et al. (2009) found that religious rituals fostered spiritual growth and increased family communication when practiced regularly in the home. Religious rituals reinforce ideas important to the family, and in Mormon homes rituals encourage family values and a strong commitment to the strength of the family. Loser's study is a "spring board from which researchers can more deeply explore the interface between religion and everyday family life." My study begins where Loser's study left off, examining the ways in which religion can shape goals for the future family and that family's everyday life.

Mormon Practices of Marriage and Family Formation

Previous literature has discussed the relationship between the Mormon faith and the family, including the ways in which Mormon values with regard to the family stand out from trends in the larger American society. For example, the Pew Research Forum conducted a

19

groundbreaking study in 2012 that studied Mormon families on a large scale. It was the first research study that had not been completed or published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The study found many ways in which Mormons were a distinctive subpopulation, especially with regard to marriage and family goals. For example, seventy-three percent of Mormons surveyed said having a successful marriage is among their most important goals in life, compared to only thirty-four percent of the general public. Sixty-seven percent of Mormons in the sample were married, a greater proportion than the fifty-two percent of the general public. Overall, Mormons exhibited higher levels of religious commitment than any other group surveyed. Clearly, the beliefs about family that permeate the Mormon religious faith have a real effect on the practices of the Mormon people. The "prioritization of family life" (Smith, 2012) for Mormons affects how they structure and conduct their families, resulting in noticeable differences from general American trends.

The Mormons stand out even when compared to other highly religious families. In a study that compared married couples from highly religious families, Mormons were more likely to desire a large family (Carroll et al., 2000). The same study also found that the Mormon view on the desire for marriage and the possibility to be a parent were stronger in comparison to their cohorts. Study after study both on Mormon families as well as comparative studies on religious families have found that Mormons exhibit stronger family values that result in noticeable differences in family demographics.

Willoughby et al. (2012) made special note of the "marital horizon theory" in their writing. This theory argues that having ideas about certain things, specifically about marriage, can shape actions taken in life. This theory points to a relationship between socialization, religious influence, and goals for the future—a prime intersection from which to study young

Mormon women. It suggests that having a certain goal for marriage or a future family is likely to shape steps taken in young adulthood to find a marriage partner and make oneself worthy for marriage.

Even after families have been formed, Mormons believe God acts in marriage to encourage stability, unity, growth, happiness, and peace (Goodman et al., 2012). Many Mormon marriage ceremonies are Temple ceremonies in which the couple is "sealed" together for eternity. This "eternal perspective" of marriage, rather than being together only until death, strengthens marriage for Mormon couples (Goodman et al., 2012). In support of Goodman's findings, Dollahite et al. (2007) argued that the Mormon faith "makes no concessions" in relaxing ideas about the importance of marriage and the centrality of the family. They have unique ideas about the centrality and importance of the families and will continue to adhere to these ideas despite visible differences from the general American population.

3. METHODOLOGY

Setting

Today, almost twenty-six thousand registered members of the LDS faith reside in Massachusetts across fifty congregations. While less than one percent of residents of Massachusetts identify as Mormon, membership in Massachusetts increased 56% between 1994 and 2004 (Lindsay, 2012). Boston was one of the first major cities for LDS mission work in early church history and therefore was an important place of growth. One ward in the greater Boston area in particular was generous in allowing me to attend religious services, welcoming my ideas and feedback, and helping to teach me many of the basics about the LDS faith, as I did not grow up in the religion. The ward that I visited served multiple towns in both Eastern and

Western Massachusetts and had about two hundred people registered to it. It was located within fifteen miles of the Boston temple, a major religious landmark for Mormons in the New England area. The ward attracted residents from all over the state and some of the participants were not members of the ward I visited throughout my research. To provide demographic context, it is possible to describe the town in which the ward was located based on data from the 2010 U.S. Census. About three-quarters of the populations had achieved either a bachelor's degree or a professional degree. About four in ten did not participate in the labor force. Around twenty percent spoke a language other than English. The median income for households in this area was roughly $250,000. The areas are predominantly white with Caucasians composing about eighty-five percent of the population.

Sample

Eligible persons included any self-identified female members of the Mormon faith who were between ages 20 to 26 and attended services in a Boston-area ward. All participants had attended services consistently for at least six months by the time of the interview, indicating that they were currently active in the faith. These women's characteristics and circumstances especially suits them to give insights into their own and their families' religious background while navigating the difficulties of young adult life, such as finding a partner, determining attitudes toward marriage, and entering into formal unions. They constitute an ideal population to help me address the scarcity of research connecting individual, family, and religious development in the Mormon faith (Hardy et al., 2011).

Many women were very enthusiastic to participate, and fifteen people were willing to be interviewed. Due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts, the final sample consisted of eleven participants. The average age of the participants was twenty-three years and all

participants either had attained or were pursuing an undergraduate college degree.   Ninety

percent (10 of 11 females) of the participants held some sort of job. Race/ethnicity was self-

identified with no "option" boxes from which to select. About 63% of the participants (7 of 11

females) were white/Caucasian but the rest classified themselves as a minority race or ethnicity,

including African-American, Brazilian, and Latina. Of the twenty-two biological parents of the

participants of the sample, twelve (54%) were practicing Mormons at the time of the interview.

Three of the participants (27%) had divorced parents.

Data and Methods

<u>Instruments and Measures</u>

I conducted interviews in a semi-structured format, meaning that I had some questions to

ask the participants to guide the conversation but interviewees were free to respond on broader

topics that I may not have thought to bring up (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Many of the

follow-up questions I asked in the interview were "probes" meant to encourage the participant to

delve deeper into some topic they were speaking about (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). All of the

questions I asked in the interviews were open-ended questions to facilitate my goal of

understanding the participants' personal experiences and values (e.g. "Can you tell me about a

particular experience that has contributed to your view of marriage?"). The interviews last an

average of forty-four minutes, with the shortest interview at twenty-six minutes and the longest

lasting fifty-seven minutes.

<u>Concepts</u>

Family: Families are the basis of the social relationships that influence how members understand

current personal experiences and may influence how they frame their values (Goodman et al.,

2012). Parents and siblings may have special significance in the formation of religious values

(Milevsky et al., 2008). Family, for this study, included nuclear kinship groupings of parents and their natural and adopted children, regardless of whether they were living under the same roof as one unit at the time of study.

Religious Participation: Any self-identified Mormon women were eligible to participate the study. All participants had been attending Church services for at least six months and had been baptized.

Relationship Status: Participants were asked in the beginning of the interview to classify their relationship with descriptors that felt most authentic to their experience. In the interview process, they were asked to unpack the associated meanings with those descriptors. Based on previous research, I expected individuals' attitudes towards certain statuses of relationships to be nuanced (Darrington et al., 2005). It was important for participants to self-identify themselves in a relationship so as to include the entire range of possibilities rather than restrict them to what I had previously considered.

Religious Traditions: Religious traditions in the home both help to socialize children to certain belief perspectives (Milevsky, 2008) as well as increase family unity (Dollahite and Marks, 2009). Loser et al. (2008) found that religion often played a role in even non-religious home rituals. The connection between religion and the home has the ability to shape young women's views about future plans and therefore religious traditions are a key piece of the puzzle to understanding how these ideas develop.

Peer groups: Cornwall (1987) found that personal community relationships, including peer relationships, have an influence on religious belief and commitment. Because ideas about marriage and family are explicitly stated in many church publications, it is important to look at the connection between peer groups and the influence on personal belief about future marriage

and family plans. For this study, peer groups included the participants' five closest friends, as requested with demographic data at the beginning of the interview. They could be either Mormon or non-Mormon.

<u>Data Collection</u>

After the research project received approval from the Boston College Institutional Review Board, I recruited a convenience sample from wards in the greater Boston area. In December 2013, I began formally asking people if they would like to be interviewed by explaining the project in the all-female hour of the Mormon Church service, known as Relief Society[3] meetings. I also recruited some participants through snowball sampling methods. I began conducting interviews in December 2013 and concluded the interview process in March 2014.

For the interview process, participants met me at a mutually convenient location, which ranged from local coffee shops to restaurants to church meetings rooms. Before the interview began, I presented the participant with the informed consent form. After giving them ample time to read the form, I explained the study again and reminded them that, with their permission, the interview would be tape-recorded. I then asked if they had any questions about the study or its purpose. I reminded them again that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. Once I was sure they understood the process for which they were giving permission, I asked participants to sign the form. I was the only person who administered the informed consent procedure throughout this research process.

---

[3] Relief Society is the women's organization of the Church whose purpose is to "build faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need" (www.mormon.org/faw/relief-society). This group meets for one hour every week in Church.

To gather data, I used a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviewing. In particular, I attempted to act as a "peripheral-member researcher" (Adler and Adler, 1987). I attended religious services on Sundays for eight weeks before I began conducting interviews, and six weeks in the spring as I initiated the interview process. This observational strategy allowed me to understand the culture and context of the group I was studying without completely immersing in it or adopting their core values (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 677). I then conducted in-depth interviews using a "responsive interviewing" model (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). This model structures the interview as a conversation focused on answering a research question, encourages depth and detail of response, and emphasizes finding the nuances in the respondent's words. All interviews were audio taped to facilitate analysis but names were removed from data and transcripts to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the raw data of the interviews, I followed the analysis steps recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012). I began by listening to each interview on the audiotape. While I listened to the interview, I made memos for myself about my general impression of the interview as well as any follow-up questions I wanted to incorporate into future interviews. These memos also included some self-reflection on how to improve in future interviews, such as specific areas to probe or different ways to phrase questions. After listening to each interview, I read my field notes from the interview to contextualize the meeting. I then created a "fact sheet" for each participant, which was a one or two page reference sheet that included demographic information, general comments on the person's faith background, and any key quotations or ideas that stood out.

I transcribed the interviews in their entirety, leaving out only the introductory information and some closing statements. In working with the data, I developed some preliminary codes based on previous literature. For example, the idea for the code "importance of Mormon peers" came from Cornwall's *The Social Bases of Religion* (1987) on the factors that influence religious commitment. Subsequently, I relied on low-inference descriptors meaning that I often used the participants' own words as the codes (Goodman et al., 2012). After I had coded three interviews and saw the breadth of codes created, I began combining some codes and developed a hierarchical coding system (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 203).

Once I had developed categories of hierarchical codes across all of the interviews, I placed all data that I had given the same code to into the same file. I then looked at all of the data under one category as a whole and summarized conclusions. When appropriate, I compared data across categories to examine relationships, such as in the case of dating culture and the Law of Chastity. Throughout this process I continued to reform my original conclusions and integrate new concepts and ideas into my analysis, in the hope of generating a theory that frames Mormon women's experiences with religion and family in relation to their current ideas about dating, marriage, and motherhood, grounded in their own words and experiences as the basis of analysis.

Multiple checks through a variety of methods helped to ensure the accuracy of analysis. As I analyzed the coded data, I continually looked for negative cases in the categories and themes I had created, such as exceptions in what women looked for in a partner, in order to refine my conclusions and more accurately interpret the data. Following the advice of Goodman et al. (2012), I made a specific effort to emphasize reflexivity in recognizing my own biases— especially from the perspective of a non-Mormon—and attempted to control for those biases in my analysis. Finally, I not only conducted in-depth interviews but also used methods of informal

participant observation at church services and studied major doctrinal texts to more fully understand the context in which these values and attitudes were created. This "data triangulation" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p. 66) offers additional assurance of accuracy.

4. LIMITATIONS

This study has limitations. Drawn from a small geographic area in New England, the sample is not representative of Mormon women across the United States. As the basis of the Mormon Church is in Utah, it is entirely possible that women in Utah may have more in-group ties to the Mormon Church and correspondingly stronger values about the importance of marriage and the family. Accordingly, efforts to generalize from my results must proceed with appropriate caution. The ability to generalize these results is also limited by the fact that the sample was taken from a limited number of wards in the Boston area. While young women from all over the state belong to these wards and were included in the sample, future research might sample participants from more wards over a more diverse geographic area to increase diversity.

Additionally, this sample was one of convenience and may imply a self-selection bias. The individuals who participated in the research all had high levels of involvement with the church, which might also have affected their willingness to be interviewed about their faith. The attitudes towards marriage and related values might be different for those women who do not associate with the Church as strongly or who are not as involved.

The sample was overwhelmingly well educated; all participants had a college degree or were working towards one. Past experiences and goals for the future, specifically with regard to career goals, might be different for women with less education or women with fewer financial resources. In particular, women with fewer financial resources—either in their past or

currently—might have more relaxed goals about marriage or might strive towards more of a work-life balance than towards a specific focus on marriage and motherhood.

It is also important to take into account my perspective as a non-Mormon. The interview questions were designed specifically not to guide participants toward "by the book" answers, but rather focus on their own experiences and values. However, it is possible that my position as a non-Mormon encouraged the women to give answers that were more in line with the Church's teachings.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

To understand Mormon women's views on dating, marriage, and motherhood, I posed three goals for my research:

1) To explore the attitudes and values that young Mormon women hold regarding dating, marriage, and motherhood

2) to examine the experiences that influence these attitudes and values in order to maintain the "sacred canopy"

3) to understand the interaction between family rituals, personal religious values, and peer culture in young women's lives

These research goals aimed not only to understand how Mormon women view marriage and motherhood, but also how their religious perspective and past family experiences might contribute to their future goals. My first task was to examine the attitudes and values that Mormon women hold regarding dating, marriage, and motherhood to find the commonalities among the women's views. Regardless of the women's relationship statuses, I asked them about their past and current dating experiences, their goals for marriage and motherhood, and any

experiences that influenced these two concepts. For married women, I asked them to compare their dating experiences with their current partner to former companions. Secondly, it was important to understand how these views are perpetuated by religious teachings. For this question, Peter Berger's concept of the "sacred canopy" provides a model by which to understand Mormon women's experiences and attitudes. How are these women's goals for the future an integral part of maintaining a worldview that aligns with the teachings of the Mormon Church? How does the LDS Church, both socially and in its doctrine, play a role in shaping these women's views? Finally, I worked to integrate the different parts of each woman's life to understand how they shape a whole person. Specifically, I looked at the relationship between family rituals, personal religious values, and peer culture in each of the women's lives to understand the importance of a religious context and family upbringing in shaping the goals these women had for their futures.

5.I. Attitudes and Values towards Dating, Marriage and Motherhood

To be able to understand Mormon women's goals for their future, we must first examine the attitudes they have towards dating, marriage, and motherhood as well as the value they place on each of these stages. Dating is important because it is the first step in finding a marriage partner. Marriage and motherhood goals will shape how the women act in the future and therefore play the most defining roles for their future lives. While each woman might have slightly different goals for her future, commonalities among the women provide a basis for analysis in understanding how these attitudes and values are influenced by both religious perspective and family background.

THE SEARCH FOR A PARTNER

As the Mormon Church teaches, one of the most important goals for people on Earth is to find a partner and to procreate[4]. Church authorities have written hundreds of messages emphasizing the importance of having a family, and young women and men are constantly reminded at Church about the goal of marriage. Dating, therefore, is a very important first step in finding a suitable partner. Mormons typically marry at a younger age than the average American[5] and their marriages in the Temple are believed to be eternal. For this reason, both young men and women consider dating a serious matter.

I found that the women I interviewed professed similar stories to findings in previous research on Mormon dating. Most followed the Church's rules on dating[6] and did not begin dating until they were sixteen years old. Most of the women I interviewed had dated both Mormon and non-Mormon men and were willing to speak extensively on the differences in dating the two groups. The key differentiation was that Mormon dating often began as a series of group dates in which friends of acquaintances could get to know each other better without the pressure of a one-on-one setting. As relationships progressed, they transitioned into individual dates and began to develop personal relationships. Women in the sample who were engaged to Mormon men had done so in less time than is typical in America today. One woman had gotten

---

[4] The importance of procreation stems from the emphasis the LDS Church places on the family. See *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* in Appendix C for more information.
[5] Read more about these findings in Chadwick et al.'s (2007) *A Survey of Dating and Marriage at BYU.*
[6] While there is no official restriction on dating non-Mormon men, the culture of the Church and its followers advocate for young women dating Mormon men. A couple cannot get married in the Temple (and therefore have an eternal marriage, an important part of reaching the Celestial Kingdom in Heaven) unless each partner is a faithful and practicing Mormon.

married six months after her first date with her husband, another had gotten engaged within four months and a third dated for just over a year before getting married at age twenty[7].

Faith was central to a dating relationship when it was between two young Mormons. Examples of dates early in a relationship included going to Church together, attending a Church conference talk, or participating in Church-sponsored dances and festivals. The women in the sample explained that it was important in dating to understand the other person's faith perspective and practice in order to gauge compatibility.   Many talked with their partners each day about their faith. One young woman was reassured that she is dating the right person when "he called [her] up one day and was just like talking about the Gospel and God and the Scriptures." Discussions of faith can ensure that each partner has similar views that are relatable to one another. One participant who had been dating a non-Mormon man for a few years even discussed her hopes that by sharing her faith perspective, he might recognize its importance in her life and begin to come to church with her. Faith played a central role for these women in determining compatibility and formed an important basis for a dating relationship.

There were no expectations of serious commitment or of physical interactions when dating Mormon boys. As one participant explained, "At BYU [the Church-run Mormon university in Utah], it's not all physical. You go and you get to enjoy the person and you get to know them and you develop a relationship that way." Dating for young Mormon women is an important step in getting to know a potential partner and understanding what it takes to build a family; it is not a self-serving experience for personal pleasure. The Law of Chastity was a fundamental influence on women to avoid many of the physical aspects of relationships: four

---

[7] This short engagement period and early marriage age was not the case for all women in the sample. Some of the women were in their mid- to late twenties and were single or not yet engaged.

women explicitly referenced it as guidance. As one young woman explained, remaining chaste is a way to grow closer with God and therefore receive blessings in marriage. If a couple can keep the Law of Chastity while they are dating, they believe that the blessings they receive in marriage will make them a stronger couple and in turn a more faithful one.

ROLE OF PERSONAL FAITH

The concept of faith continually arose in conversation with these women, often without my prompting. Although faith carried different connotations for different women, it generally referred to a connection with a higher being as well as a trust in the Heavenly Father to watch over their lives. One woman defined faith as "putting God first and having the willpower to do as he wants you to do regardless of what you want or believe."

It was surprising to hear the women discuss challenges they faced over the years in developing the faith in God that they had at the time of the interview. While all of the participants were faithful and practicing Mormons, many had not always been. Some converted to the Mormon Church from other faith backgrounds or from no faith background while others experienced periods of doubt throughout their younger years.   Each woman had faced a challenge or a crisis in her own faith, a time when they "need[ed] to figure out what you believe for yourself." Most typically during their late teenage years, each woman had experiences that made them question God and re-examine their faith (and, often, their sense of belonging in the Mormon Church). The women responded in one of two ways: some experienced challenges that made their faith stronger, while others fell away from the religion in response to these difficulties. For some women, their journey to find their own faith identity resulted in being baptized in the LDS Church. Others who were practicing LDS members turned to the Book of Mormon or prayer with God as a way to gain clarity on the teachings of the Church. These

33

tactics encouraged self-examination to understand how one's sense of God aligned with the Church's teachings. A few of the participants discussed periods of inactivity, or non-participation in Mormon traditions such as Church, prayer, and Scripture reading, as a result of their confusion over faith principles.[8]

The results of these faith journeys left the women with a sense that, in the end, everything would work out according to God's plan. Once the woman had gained or re-gained faith in God, they felt more confident in their ability to succeed in life according to what God wanted them to do. One twenty-four year old explained, "I try to think 'We don't understand now why [this happened], but someday we will.'" Even when they did not know what God's plan was for them, their faith allowed them to stay calm and have trust in God. Aside from providing a sense of security that God's plan was in the works, faith also reduced these women's worries over failure. Another twenty-four year old elaborated on the importance of including God as she said, "When you include God, when you have him in your decisions, you're not going to fail." Based on their faith in God, these women expressed the ability to live their lives for something more important than themselves and trust that any challenges or hardships in their lives would not cause them failure in light of God's plan.

Personal faith to each woman I interviewed was more than just an important part of her life: faith constituted the basis for each woman's being. One twenty-one year old woman described her faith as "the single most important aspect of my life" while a twenty-two year old claimed, "it is the center of my identity." It was not just a part of these women's lives, but instead the most important aspect of their life. It was often how the women chose to identify and

---

[8] All of the participants that I interviewed had ended their period of inactivity before I arrived at the Church. It is plausible that many other Mormon women not involved in this study had faith challenges that led them to break away from the Church permanently.

recognize themselves. One twenty-seven year old woman who had converted to the LDS Church explained how the idea of faith as central to identity was a universal sentiment within the Church. She explained, "Faith is my everything. As Mormons…our faith really permeates every aspect of our lives and really becomes our identity." Her experience was not unique in how central faith became to her everyday life. After discussing the importance of faith with each woman, I quickly began to recognize just how much of an influence it was on their lives, both in structuring their life purpose as well as determining how they went about their day. One twenty-one year old woman who had converted to the Church when she was sixteen explained, "After I joined the Church, faith was a part of everything: when you're Mormon it's a part of everything you do." The role faith played in these women's lives was larger than a religious portion of their being or something they turned to only when they were in need. Faith formulates the basis of their identity and becomes the characteristic by which they identify themselves.

These women also described the larger sense of purpose that faith provided in their life. One twenty-four year old woman explained that she has "this [faith] as part of the person I've became [sic] and it gives me a better vision of my purpose and destiny." Her personal faith provides her with a perspective that she is on Earth to do the work of God. Another woman similarly explained that "every major decision (or even not major) is based on my faith and is made while considering my faith." Once they conceive themselves as faithful beings in close connection with God, their faith provides a sense of purpose in their lives to structure their activities. Their sense of faith directly affects how they make their daily decisions. The important impact of faith in the women's lives can be classified as the *pervasive role of faith*. It not only affects their daily activities, but how they determine the purpose of their lives and how they build an identity as a person.

Because personal faith plays such an important role in each individual's life, it undoubtedly has an influence on decisions regarding marriage and motherhood. Primarily, faith gives the women a goal for the future. Their faith assures them that there is a life after that on Earth and that they will be able to live with their family together in Heaven forever[9]. The women maintain the goal of marriage because it provides a path to be reunited with the Heavenly Father in Heaven, with their family alongside. As one twenty year old commented, "[my] ultimate goal is, I want to live with the Heavenly Father again." By getting married, they were fulfilling the Church-proclaimed Plan of Happiness, which advocates creating a family on Earth as the path to reach Heaven. The women's Mormon faith encouraged them to have a long-term goal of staying with their family in Heaven and therefore encouraged them to get married and have children during their time on Earth. Mormons as a demographic are unique in that they discuss their faith in relation to their future goals. As one married twenty one year old explained, "I have faith that I am supposed to have kids and that I'm supposed to make that first in my life…My faith is kind of like that I need to have a family." Faith not only influenced the decision to have a family, but having a family in turn becomes part of a personal sense of faith.

Secondly, the women's faith provides assurance that the difficulties in planning when to start a family and how to raise children will work out according to God's plan for them. One married twenty-four year old discussed the challenges of determining when to have a family while finishing medical school and beginning her career:

> I've always believed that if I'm doing the right thing and feel good about my choices, then everything's gonna work out…even if I'm not sure what I'm doing, like right now. I have to have kids, how am I gonna have kids when I'm in school? But I just have always had faith that things are gonna work out like they're supposed to work out.

---

[9] A central tenet of the Mormon faith is that marriage in the Temple offers the opportunity for the family to be united in Heaven for eternity rather than "until death."

This woman's comment illuminates the idea that faith resonates both on a personal level with the individual but also connects women with God's broader plan. Personal faith provides a sense of peace within the individual that, even if they aren't sure what God's plan is for family life, it will work out according to the Plan of Happiness so that they can live together with their family in Heaven for eternity.

Thirdly, a strong sense of personal faith in the LDS Church provides a context in which to raise a family. Each of the women in the sample discussed the importance of raising her children in the Mormon faith when she had them. While individual goals for getting married and having children differed among the women based on their backgrounds, their resolve to raise children in the faith was universal. They spoke of their desire to attend church on Sundays as a family, say daily prayer together, and have Family Home Evenings, a Mormon tradition, on Monday nights. Their own faith provided such a sense of guidance in their own lives that it was one of the most important pieces of themselves that they hoped to transmit to their own children. Many of the women spoke of the importance of agency[10] for their children. Instead of forcing their children to be practicing Mormons, they aim to teach their children the principles of the LDS faith while they are young and then allow them to decide for themselves whether or not to continue to practice in the faith. One woman explained her hope for raising her family in the faith and standing by her children's agency in all of their decisions:

> It's just you applying [the Church's good standards and good teachings] and teaching them to your kids. Then letting them try to experience them for themselves, you can't force anything…[My husband and I] will be there on the sidelines, rooting them on and if they fall, we'll still be there. It'll be hard but in the end, that's life.

---

[10] Agency, according to the LDS Church, is the God-given ability to make decisions for ourselves while on Earth. It is important to the Plan of Salvation, or the ability to live with God again after life on Earth, because the Plan is based on our decisions and behavior while on Earth. The Church promotes the agency of each individual person, something that these women have internalized and hope to nourish in their children.

While all of the women expressed hope that their children will have strong as they do, they recognize from experience that not everybody raised in the LDS Church stays in the Church. They explained the importance of having agency, a Mormon religious principle, and recognize that they are fulfilling their duties as parents when they teach their children the principles of the faith and then allow the children to decide for themselves how to act.

THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE: TEMPLE MARRIAGE

According to the doctrine of the LDS Church, marriages that occur in the Temple between two faithful and practicing Mormons last for eternity. While non-Mormon marriage ceremonies use the phrase "till death do us part," Mormon Temple marriages include no such claim. These marriages insist that once the couple is united, the family can live together for eternity in the Celestial Kingdom, the highest kingdom of Heaven. Accordingly, Temple marriages are oriented towards the family: Mormon couples married in the Temple have high expectations for raising Mormon families in the faith and living together in Heaven after death.

Almost every woman I interviewed noted that when they got married, they wanted to be married in the Temple. It was very important to these women to have an eternal union with their partner, both because it is what they desire and because it fulfills the expectations of the Mormon doctrine. Furthermore, many of these women indicated that getting married in the Temple was their primary goal at the time of the interview. Three of the participants had already gotten married in different Temples throughout the U.S. Only one woman in the sample was not focused on getting married in the Temple because she wanted her mother and father to get married in the Temple before she did.

Many of the women I interviewed repeatedly referenced an "eternal perspective" that they had in making decisions about their personal lives and their goals for marriage. The "eternal

perspective" is the view that they can live with God in Heaven after death for eternity and that, if they were married in the Temple, this Heavenly existence could be with their family. The perspective encouraged them to make decisions in their lives according to these goals. To explain the eternal perspective, one unmarried woman said, "It's about eternity. It's like, if you have an eternal perspective…you look far beyond what you could even imagine and say, is right this second worth giving up that eternal happiness? It just never is." This perspective encouraged the women to view their lives in longer terms, to look beyond death to the promises of the afterlife that their religious beliefs profess.

The eternal perspective is rooted in the concept of Temple marriage because this type of marriage is the only way to ensure that one's family will be together forever. Temple marriage is the first necessary step in reaching the eternal goals set by the Church. One unmarried twenty-seven year old woman spoke about how this has been a consistent goal throughout her life by saying "I don't like the concept of me finding my one true love and then having it end [at death]. It just never made sense. It's always been eternal, for me." Church teachings played a major role in her understanding of the concept of marriage and, in turn, her desire to get married in the Temple. Another unmarried twenty-four year old woman explained how seeing a Temple marriage increased her own desire to get one as she said, "When I saw a Temple marriage with two young people and I saw the union and the unconditional love and the confidence, I was like totally in…I wanted a marriage that is good and healthy and you're not gonna quit." The Church expresses the desirability of an eternal marriage beginning at a young age. Many of the women expressed their desire to be married in the Temple when they spoke of the benefits it would bring them, such as the ability to be with their family in Heaven forever, stay united with their companion beyond death, and experience a blissful union. The goal of Temple marriage shaped

decisions they made regarding marriage because they sought partners who would help them reach the Celestial Kingdom.

Aside from marriage, this eternal perspective applied to many of the decisions the women make in their lives. In decisions about honesty, chastity, and kindness, the women maintain an eternal perspective. As one unmarried twenty year old explained, "You have to think in that eternal perspective. You actions don't just affect right now. They affect everything." They recognized that decisions they made regarding both their family and their individual lives would affect their ability to get to Heaven. A woman's eternal perspective ensures her actions pronounce her faith and goodness, as well as move her towards eternal life with the Heavenly Father.

An important part of the "eternal perspective" is the help it provides to work through marriage issues in order to maintain a strong bond with a partner. The most commonly cited factor in these interviews to ensure marriage success was open communication. One twenty year old described its relevance by saying "That's kind of one of the commandments on foundation for eternal marriage: you *have* to be able to communicate and you *have* to show that Christ-like love to the person you're with." Communication between partners ensured that both are on the same page to reduce the risk of differences between the two or marriage failure.

Having an eternal perspective that encourages open communication helped partners work through struggles in married life as well. One woman described how her parents eternal perspective allowed them to overcome marriage issues: "I mean they [her parents] had rough patches but they worked through them, because they know it's an eternal thing. There's no giving up." The knowledge that a marriage that was ordained in the Temple will last forever gives people fewer options for "quitting" on the marriage. Divorce is seen as a less viable option

in the Mormon Church and therefore problems that arise in marriage must be worked through. Another unmarried woman echoed this sentiment as she explained, "I think [divorce] could totally be avoided if you just talk about things." Having open communication between partners allows each individual to be "on the same page" so that they understood the desires, goals, and thought processes of the other person. As they stay in tune with one another, they will be better able to work out any issues that arise in marriage so that they can stay united as a couple for eternity.

It is important to note that divorce still occurs in the Mormon Church and that open communication is not a cure-all for marital problems. Three of the participants' parents were divorced, although not all of them were practicing Mormons. One of the participants who had married in the Temple at age nineteen is currently separated from her husband and considering getting a divorce. She explained that even with open communication, a strong marriage could fail if the foundation of a strong marriage between to committed partners was not there. She said, "You're literally welding together your lives, your souls [in a Temple marriage]. You're not supposed to make that kind of a commitment until you know [it is with the right person]. And when you don't know, that's when trouble can happen." Having an eternal perspective and practicing open communication clearly can strengthen a marriage and help partners work through marital problems, but these factors cannot guarantee that a marriage will succeed.

One other tactic for helping Temple marriages succeed is involving God in the marriage. A few of the women explained to me the triangle structure of marriage. In this triangle structure, a man and a woman are united along a horizontal line and as they grow closer to God at the top of the triangle, they will inevitably grow closer to each other. One woman drew me a diagram to explain the triangle model:

God

Wife   **Husband**
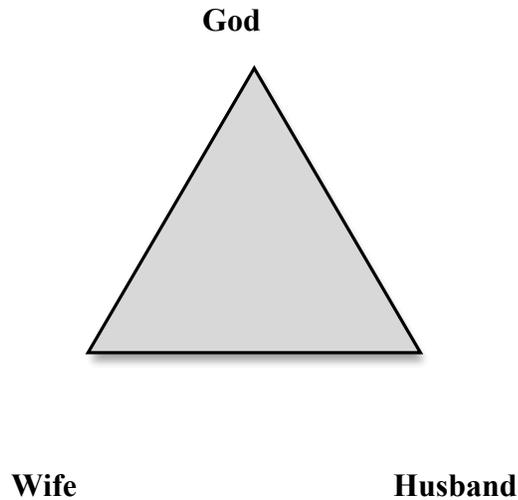
One engaged woman explained the triangle image by saying, "I think marriage is he, I and the Lord. If we are together and the Lord is here, we have to be a perfect triangle. We go together and get closer to Him. At some point it will be the three together."   From this image, it becomes clear that the union between a husband and wife in the Mormon faith necessarily involves God. God becomes a central component that unites the couple and helps them succeed through the trials and tribulations on Earth. Temple marriage is central to this process of developing a marriage in the triangle structure because the Temple involves making covenants, or promises, to each other and to the Lord. One unmarried twenty year old explained that an eternal marriage involves "going to the Temple and making covenants to one another—promises to the Lord and to each other to always treat each other well. When you make covenants to the Lord, it's bigger than when you're at the altar exchanging vows." These marriages are more than just being united with another human on Earth, they involve making promises also to the Lord to live a faithful life and to aim to be united, together, with the Lord in Heaven through those covenants.

"THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION": BALANCING A CAREER AND MOTHERHOOD

One of the fundamental teachings of the Church on marriage is that men and women have separate functions in marriage. The church teaches that men and women are fundamentally different in their roles and abilities, yet they complement each other in order to form a pair that can raise children well in the faith. One unmarried twenty year old explained that "I can teach [my kids] so much that they won't learn anywhere else except for the home…And the father…he'll be able to teach them the values that *he* can teach, that I can't teach. That's why a mother and a father are so important." Men and women have fundamental differences that cannot be accounted for by the other gender.[11] Families are based in that pairing and successful because of it. Marriage unites the strengths of each sex to teach children the principles of the faith both from a man and a woman's perspective to make them as successful as they can be in the Church. In one church lesson I attended, the teacher described the roles of men and women as "separate but equal." Each partner had a role to fulfill in raising children; these roles overlapped and complemented each other but were at their core fundamentally different.

In light of the Church's teachings, many of the women I interviewed spoke of the balance of roles they hoped to achieve in their marriage. One woman soon to be engaged explained how, despite the separate roles men and women hold, a husband and wife are equals in the strengths they provide to their family:

> I want to be that womanly figure who does the cooking and the cleaning and the nurturing and building the home but I don't want it to be the expectation that this is all me—this is all my job and this is all your job and we don't interlock. Because I think that

---

[11] These beliefs are a basis for why the Church as an institution, and many of its members, disagree with same-sex marriage. This also contributes to the view of divorce as a "faux pas," as one of my interviewees termed it, in the Church because the strength of families is rooted in a two-parent, heterosexual household.

> spouses are equals. That's taught in the church, too. Men and women have different roles, they're separate roles, but they work together too. What I've been looking for is someone that complements [me].

A key point in the woman's comment is that husbands and wives are seen as equals both by Church doctrine as well as by the women themselves. The Mormon religion frequently gets the reputation for having a patriarchal structure that puts women in a position below men.[12] The women whom I interviewed saw themselves as equal to men and believed they had the ability to achieve an equal partnership with their husbands, one in which both parties contributed to the household and the family, albeit in different ways.

While their faith provided a way to understand and interpret church doctrine on the roles of husbands and wives, the goals the women held in equalizing a partnership with their husbands was largely influenced by the family in which they grew up. Many women saw examples of their parents working together as equals to raise children, which inspired them to work in the same way. One engaged woman claimed "I see my parents as an example to us. I think I want to have the same kind of sweet relationship they have." Another woman explained the persistent influence of her parents in her life when she said, "I think for some reason I always come back to my parents. Everything I think about is always…I look to my parents for everything." Parents served as key examples of how couples can work together and raise children, which made an impression on these women growing up and shaped the way they hoped to build their own marriage partnership in the future.

---

[12] I chose specifically not to focus on the divide between men and women in existing Church structures and practices. Many articles have been written on the topic of the position of women in the Mormon Church and this topic is an outlet for another research project entirely. See, for example, Beaman (2001) *Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious diversity in and the Latter-day Saints Church* or Cornwall (1994) *The Institutional Role of Mormon Women*.

Other women spoke of the negative influence their parents had, which compelled them to hope that their future families would be different. One young woman's father had left the church before she was born. She grew up in a "part-member family" where she and her mother practiced in the Church but not her father or her siblings. She explained the influence this had and on her and how it affected her choice of future partner:

> I think my parents influenced me even though I say they didn't. I talked about how I d[o]n't want someone who is gonna leave the church because I know it, I believe it, and I have a testimony of it. I want that in my husband because [otherwise] it creates this unspoken divide in the household. [I had that growing up,] that sucked and I didn't like it.

No matter whether the influences were positive or negative, parents certainly played a significant role in shaping the way children viewed their future marriages. Parents affected the characteristics their children looked for in a marriage partner, how their children hoped to structure the balance of roles with their partner, and served as examples of "separate but equal" partnership, which their children hoped to emulate in the future.

As the women described what their roles would be in future marriages, I noticed that many of their duties were organized along a "traditional" gender divide. Women spoke of being in charge of raising the children, keeping the household, and teaching the principles of the Mormon faith to their children. Some indicated that their husbands would be the sole breadwinners of the family if that were economically feasible, while others hoped to work part-time or full-time in their future. For example, one unmarried twenty-seven year old woman explained that she "want[s] to be a stay-at-home mom. The [kids] need a parent at home, I want to be there. 'Cause at church, that's what we're taught. The mother is the nurturer and, if at all possible, she needs to be at home to take care of the family." Another unmarried woman spoke of the role of her future husband, as she desired "a husband that's loving and caring and can

provide for a family and can do all of the things that we've been taught we're supposed to do."
This traditional gender divide seemed to be most strongly influenced by the Church's teachings
of what constitutes motherhood and fatherhood. The women explained the Church's influence on
the expectations the Church held for them and therefore what they expected of themselves in
marriage and motherhood. One twenty year old who is married and considering having children
explained that "[having a family] is a big part of the Church so that influences my decisions."
The Church's emphasis on having a family encouraged the women to start families of their own
at a young age. A twenty-year old unmarried woman who is wary about having children
explained how she is reminded that "the greatest calling is being a mother and a wife" in Relief
Society meetings in an effort to encourage her to get married and have a family. The Church has
specific expectations for women as wives and as mothers. The women I interviewed expressed
these expectations for themselves, shaped by the Church, as part of their goals for how they
hoped to navigate motherhood. The teachings of the Mormon Church provide a framework from
which women begin to develop their goals regarding motherhood.

In developing and modifying their aspirations for motherhood, many of the women
brought up the challenge of figuring out how to balance a career and motherhood. When I asked
one woman about her career goals and how she balances those with the Church's teachings to
stay at home with children, she told me that I had asked the "million dollar question." Many of
the women talked through their challenge in both developing a career and being a "good" mother
according to the Church's expectations. Nobody provided a clear indication of the "correct" way
to balance a career and motherhood; instead, they had many responses and were still trying to
understand how to navigate their futures. While many of the women acknowledged the pressure
from the church to be a mother, they did not always feel that they had to give up their career in

order to fulfill their role as a mother. Women navigate this balance in different ways: some hope to leave the work force when they get married, others aim to be a stay-at-home mother, and some plan on developing a flexible schedule to balance their duties.

The majority of women in the sample wanted to develop a flexible schedule in which they could balance both a career and mothering duties. One unmarried woman planned her career choice around being a teacher because of the hours that matched the child's schedule.   She insisted that being a teacher "is just the perfect job for any woman…Because that way, I can have a family…I'll have the same hours as the kid." Flexibility in scheduling or having a job with good hours was important to the young women who were already thinking ahead to having children in the future. Other women defined flexibility as developing a true partnership with their husband in order to balance a career and household duties. One woman who hoped to be a professional doctor explained, "I just want to work *and* be able to spend time at home…We're both going to be working professionals. I figure if we're both committed, we can make it happen." Communicating with a partner about career goals and how to develop work-family balance was important to the women who hoped to continue in the workforce even after having children.

The women who indicated that they wanted to be a stay-at-home mother in the future were most strongly influenced by their personal or social background. Although the church does encourage women to be stay-at-home mothers, it was not for strictly religious reasons that these respondents chose this path. One woman who hoped to be a stay-at-home mother after her future husband finished school indicated that she did not enjoy the strict scheduling of working and therefore preferred to set her own schedule as a stay-at-home mother. Another unmarried woman

recognized the influence her own mother had on her decision to work part-time or not at all once she had kids, saying,

> I picture working for a period of time and then either work part time or not work and be able to stay home with my kids, especially while they're young. Because that's another thing I didn't have, a mom at home to take care of me and wake me up and make me food all the time. That's something I really want for my family.

In a similar pattern, some of the women had experiences growing up in which they "see the difference [in families whose parents work and those that don't.]" These differences encouraged them to stay at home and be a stay-at-home mother. With disclaimers such as "It depends on how we would be [sic] because of financial security," many of the women indicated the need to determine financial resources before making a final decision on how to balance a career and motherhood.

These research findings on the Mormon population in Boston may not hold true for other geographic areas. Many of the participants were born and raised in a "Boston brand" of the Mormon faith, which was in some ways more liberal than the traditional culture that exists in Utah, the Mormon Mecca. One young married woman who hoped to be a nurse after finishing her degree explained that "the culture in Boston is very liberal: there's moms that work, there's moms that don't work, it's kind of like accepted. I don't think there's any which way that's better than the other, it's just what works out for your family." The culture of the Mormon Church in Boston provides a more tolerable community for women who have professional careers—fellow churchgoers do not necessarily looked down on these workingwomen. In other areas of the United States, such as Utah, women with their own career goals who want to balance being a mother may feel like they are breaking church rules or that their goals are looked down upon by their community. By these responses, the women implied that geographic distinctions could shape their outlook on professional work.

No matter what type of career these women hoped to have—as a full time professional worker, stay-at-home mother, or anything in between—they universally acknowledged the priority they would give to their family over their career. One woman who planned on having a full-time professional career and children agreed that "it's always important to make kids your priority." The burden of financial stress would not disturb one unmarried woman's priority of her future family. She agreed with other participants when she said, "I'm gonna do whatever I need to do to take care of myself but my main priority is my family." Even amidst the need to work, she maintains the importance of the family. Another unmarried woman recalled "the big impact family has" on children and how her close-knit family impacted her well-being growing up. Women are influenced by the church to become mothers and make their family their priority; yet, their practical decisions on how to balance motherhood and a career were more strongly influenced by the families they had growing up in and the examples they had seen in other families, either in Church or through nanny jobs. While religious doctrine advocates the goals for which to aim, past family experiences provide a practical example of how to navigate their own lives to reach those goals and therefore strongly influence the women.

Although it is impossible for Mormon women to be classified into one "type" or that they would all have one set of goals, it may be helpful to contextualize this analysis with an example of a young Mormon woman who embodies many of the thoughts as the women I interviewed. If I were to combine many of the goals, ideals, values, concerns, and experiences of the women in the sample, she might look something like this "type." This woman would have started dating men around age sixteen. She would experience a struggle in understanding her own personal sense of faith around the age she began dating. She would date both Mormon and non-Mormon men and would begin to recognize the differences in each. This woman would go to college and

continue dating, most likely settling down with a faithful Mormon man with whom she is compatible either in college or shortly thereafter. She would be married without children for a few years as they pair settled down, but she would frequently be praying to God for guidance about when to have children. When the couple felt ready, they would have anywhere from three to eight or ten children based on the couples' own desires and financial resources. She would work with her partner to raise her family in the faith, be a nurturing mother, and provide her children with the agency to decide for themselves whether or not to practice the Mormon faith.

Although they come from different backgrounds, many Mormon women have similarities in their goals for dating, marriage, and motherhood. Most aim to find a Mormon man to marry in the Temple and include faith in all aspects of their lives, including decisions about marriage. While they may have different goals for choosing or balancing careers and motherhood, they all proclaimed the importance of prioritizing the family over other aspects of life. Many of these decisions about how to move into their futures were framed in the context of a religious perspective on life, which presented them with certain options and encouraged particular paths. Yet, practical decisions about marriage partners and how to raise a family were strongly influenced by past experiences growing up and what they had observed throughout their childhood and adolescent years.

THE ROLE OF FAITH IN DEFINING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, personal faith plays a pervasive role in the lives of faithful Mormon women. Each woman in the sample reached a personal understanding of her faith after a challenge to it or after a period of self-reflection. The women sought to ensure that the Mormon faith fit with their lives and was truly what they believed. Once they reached an established sense of faith, they explain their assurance that everything

would work out according to God's plan. As a part of God's plan, they feel connected to something larger than themselves. Faith for these young Mormon women is more than just a set of beliefs by which they structured their lives. Their faith is integrated into their identity and provides the basis for their being. Knowledge of Mormon religious teachings paired with an individual sense of faith provides a set of goals to achieve in the future with regard to marriage and motherhood. The women feel assured that with God in their lives they will know when the right time to start a family is. The Mormon faith also provides a lifestyle and belief system in which to raise the family for structure and support. Personal faith in young Mormon women's lives is framed by a belief in God's plan and is the pervasive aspect of these young women's lives that forms the basis of their identity.

5.II. *The Influence of Attitudes and Values in Maintaining the Sacred Canopy*

This section will explore the relationship between the attitudes and values of the previous section and the sacred canopy. Peter Berger's concept of the "sacred canopy" posits that religion provides people with a sacred frame of reference from which to view and understand the world around them. They aim to maintain the sacred canopy—in other words, uphold their religious worldview—because it ensures its plausibility and continues to provide structure in life. In this theory, ideas in the world and in the individual's own life are socially constructed. Socialization through church structures and family units as well as the Mormon community plays a major role in shaping young Mormon women's outlooks on life and expectations for themselves. How is the sacred canopy of young Mormon women's lives maintained? What experiences influence their attitudes towards dating, marriage, and motherhood in order to uphold the sacred canopy that exists in Mormon women's lives?

DOES THE SACRED CANOPY EXIST?

In order to support the idea that the sacred canopy is upheld by the women's attitudes towards their future marriage and motherhood, there must be evidence that these women exist in a life structured by a sacred canopy. This evidence is most apparent in the women's responses to the roles of faith in their lives. As previously discussed, faith was pervasive throughout these women's lives, not only determining their decisions about the future but also in their basic identity as a person. They spent years challenging and questioning the beliefs they had been brought up on in order to determine their own personal faith by which they could then structure their lives. The conversations I had with the women both in interviews and everyday conversations were testimony to how important their faith was in their daily lives. Many started their mornings or ended their days with prayer and Scripture reading. Some spent hours each week outside school and their jobs fulfilling their duties for the church. A few traveled with the missionaries in order to proselyte to the non-Mormon community in the Boston area. Their faith shaped how they lived their daily life; their daily life, in turn, was a profession of their beliefs to the wider community, a symbol that they are living the word of God.

With these examples, it is clear that the sacred canopy structures the women's lives. They understand misfortunes as part of God's plan, turn to God in daily prayer, and incorporate the teachings of the Church into their interactions with non-LDS counterparts. The religious doctrine of the Mormon Church permeates their life twenty-fours hours each day rather than only on Sundays. While Berger's concept indicates that the sacred canopy is a framework of life that provides parameters from which to understand the world, I would argue that the "sacred canopy" in faithful Mormon women's lives should be re-imaged as "the sacred air." These women's senses of faith and religious perspective are the life force that sustains them. It is not a structure

that is above them, as the image of a canopy implies, but something constantly around them, enveloping them, and becoming part of them. The sacred canopy for Mormon women is a perspective from which they can maintain their religious worldview: instead of just providing a framework it becomes truly the essence of their being.

PEER CULTURE

One important support structure for the sacred canopy, or the religious worldview these women maintained, is the advice and examples of their peers. The young Mormon women had many interactions with both Mormon and non-Mormon counterparts. I asked each woman how many of their five closest friends were practicing Mormons. On average, three out of five of the women's closest friends were Mormon, but a few said that none of their closest friends were Mormon and others said all five were.[13] These interactions as well as the examples of their peers drove them to certain goals for the future.

For a few of the women who converted to the Mormon faith, the initial peer relationships with other Mormons were important in the decision to be baptized. One woman who initially resisted joining despite her mother's conversion was later convinced to join the Church by her peers. She explained,

> That weekend there was a testimony meeting...and all my friends got up and bore their testimonies.[14] They were talking about how, kind of, the Church has changed their lives. It was kind of like I always knew that there was something different about Mormons, but I never really wanted to consider it, I guess. And then after hearing people who were my age going through the same things that I did, not just like my parents who were telling me

---

[13] Again, these findings could differ significantly if the same study was repeated in Utah or other densely populated Mormon areas. In these geographic locations it might be easier to have more associations with Mormons since they make up a greater proportions of the population.

[14] The LDS church defines a "testimony" as the spiritual witness by the Holy Ghost that the Heavenly Father loves each person, that they have felt the Spirit in their lives, and that the Church is true. Testimony meetings occur on the first Sunday of every month. People can stand up in front of the church to "bear their testimonies" to those in the audience.

to join some church, you know? I just had this overwhelming feeling that I should join the Church. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Other women had similar experiences in which they noticed something "different" about their friends, which made them interested in the Mormon faith and want to learn more. One young woman who converted to the Mormon faith in her late teenage years was encouraged to join when she felt isolated from her peers who were drinking and who, she felt, had different values than she did. When she recognized the similarities between her own personal values and her Mormon friend's lifestyle, she began to learn more about the faith and eventually converted. Peer culture within the Mormon Church is an important mechanism to convert people who are interested in the faith but do not come from an LDS background.

In some ways, the women in the sample felt that their Mormon peers provided a community and support group for them in various aspects of their lives. In determining career options and potential life paths, the participants found much support from their Mormon peers. One woman described the role of her friends as "put[ting] me where I'm at because I have a lot of friends who are [into] careers, planning, stuff like that and then I have friends who are stay-at-home moms. I'm just kind of in the middle." Having examples of women both with professional careers and without them gave this young woman concrete examples that there were multiple options for her future. She was able to observe how to balance a career and motherhood and shape her future plans based on those examples. Another young woman, who is now married and considering having children in the future, explained that her friend who got married as she finished her undergraduate degree and "inspired me to further my education" because "she kind of opened me up to the idea that like you can go further and you can still be a good wife and a good mom and everything like that." Having examples of workingwomen in their lives allowed these women to feel comfort in their ability to balance both a career and motherhood. Peer

examples showed them the options available to them and opened them up to new potential paths for the future.

The participants of this study indicated that their common faith basis allowed them to feel connected to their Mormon peers at a fundamental level despite other differences in personalities. One woman noted the connection between herself and "people my age who are LDS" because "even if they don't agree with my decisions, they can understand my mindset." The pervasive role of faith in practicing Mormons' lives allows Mormon peers to understand each other's perspectives. Despite differences in personalities or lifestyles, they can often immediately connect on a faith-based level. Another young woman concurred, saying:

> The similarities are that, at the end of the day, most of us have a firm belief in our Savior and in the standards of the Church. We just all have different experiences that kill us at different times, and we all have different struggles. But at the end of the day, we all come back to the same [faith tenets].

This woman, whose friends have been instrumental in guiding her commitment to her faith in life, illuminates the idea that different Mormons will have different life experiences and challenges. They may not always agree on certain issues or have the same ideas but in the end they remain united through their commitment to their individual faith and the guidance of the Church tenets in their lives.

In many ways, Mormons have distinct beliefs and lifestyles that do not parallel their non-LDS counterparts. Mormons typically do not drink or smoke and reserve Sundays for family and church. These basic differences can make it harder to associate with non-Mormon peers, especially in adolescent years or the twenties. One woman explained the difference between herself and other twenty-one year olds through the influence of the "drinking age." She claimed that "Everybody just parties all the time in their twenties: college years. I definitely think that, in regards to that, Mormons are a lot different from the world…in the twenties." Basic lifestyle

differences made it more difficult to relate to non-Mormon peers[15] because of different social activities. Other women I interviewed echoed these sentiments. One married young woman explained that, "it's hard to be friends with another twenty-one year old who is not Mormon, who doesn't have the same ideals as me, because I'm just thinking differently than them." The different roles of faith in the lives of Mormons and non-Mormons can prevent an immediate connection between the two groups. Because faith plays such an important role in the lives of Mormons, it can make it more difficult for them to relate to non-Mormons who may not understand their ideals or values.[16]

Even the women whose closest friends are non-LDS were able to recognize the differences that faith played in each groups' lives. One woman, whose closest friends were more frequently non-LDS than LDS, observed that "[her] faith plays a much greater role in my life than most people who aren't Mormon." The increased role of faith in these women's lives shapes how they view other aspects of life, such as the importance of marriage. One unmarried woman described that she "[has] a lot more faith in the family and what it means than most of the kids my age." Peer culture among the Mormons reinforced the faith of each individual and in turn made them more committed to some of the teachings of the church, such as the importance of family. In this way, peer culture among Mormons reinforces the sacred canopy by reminding

---

[15] Some women I interviewed occasionally expressed a tone of hostility towards non-Mormons and their values, especially in their dating lives. Those who did explained how their non-Mormon friends were focused on partying and drinking in their twenties. One twenty year old told me how her "[non-Mormon] friends are dating because they're like 'Oh I just want to sleep with him.'" While it may be true that the women's non-Mormons peers spend more time partying, drinking, and "hooking up" with men than their own Mormon values allow, I was surprised at how the women seemed to look down upon their friends who were engaging in these activities. Their views did not take into account the wide array of dating practices and alcohol consumption habits that I have seen characterizes non-LDS individuals in their twenties.

[16] Again, this is not always the case. Some women in the sample associated more closely with non-Mormon peers. In these cases, differences in faith would not prevent bonds across religious preferences.

individuals to keep their religious worldview and adhere to the teachings of the church as they live their daily lives.

All of these women associated with both Mormons and non-Mormons in their life through work, school, church, and daily interactions. No matter if their closest friends were non-LDS or LDS members, all of the Mormon women I interviewed recognized the importance of Mormon peer associations. One woman described the importance of her Mormon peers in her life by saying "I try and like stay around people who do have my values though. And…so I guess that's why it's easier for me to live the Gospel then." Relationships with other Mormons made living life according to Mormon principles easier because of the similar beliefs and lifestyles.[17] Feeling connected to other Mormons reinforced the role of faith in individual lives and the role of the Mormon community as a support system for individuals. A woman who chose to go inactive, or stop practicing, a few years earlier explained that "why I kind of left [was that] no one really reached out to [my family], no one made [us] feel comfortable." Those who did not feel connected to the Mormon faith and community could fall away from this lifestyle, as in this example. Peer culture was therefore vital in ensuring that people maintained a connection to the Church, allowed their faith to guide their life and therefore view the world from a faithful, religious perspective. Peer culture is one major structure that maintained the sacred canopy in these women's lives.

ROLE MODELS IN THE CHURCH

Aside from peer associations within the Church, the Mormon Church structure provides young men and women with role models of "good" behavior. The participants in this project spoke extensively on how their goals for the future and the personas they hoped to embody were

---

[17] I would posit that associations with other Mormons translate into reduced fear of judgment in these situations because the values more closely aligned.

shaped by examples they had observed in the Church growing up. Older church members

demonstrated examples of love, compassion, and parenthood that they aimed to incorporate into

their lives as they got older. Two-thirds of the women in the sample explained that they "have a

lot of good examples around [them] to follow" and "you can learn a lot just from watching [other

families interact]." Faithful church members who embodied the Mormon ideals of marriage and

family provided a concrete example the women could look upon to shape their goals for the

future. One young unmarried woman looked upon the example of a mother of three in her

church who is "the best example I've seen of somebody that cares and is doing their best to make

sure their kids are well taken care of and that they're loved" and therefore is "probably the best

mother that I have seen." Seeing examples of good mothers and faithful parents gives women a

goal to strive to for their future. These examples reinforce the types of "good" behavior

according to Church doctrine.

Strong marriages and Temple unions they had seen in the Church growing up influenced

some women's ideas about marriage and "good" husbands. One woman who had belonged to

the church for two years found her search for a suitable marriage partner shaped "just by

watching how the husbands and boyfriends of the Church treat their wives and their

girlfriends…The more I observe anyone in the ward, the more I say 'Okay, I want that…and

that…that's what I want.'" Examples of strong love and marriages that have lasted for decades

stand as emblems of what is desirable according to Church doctrine, and encourage women to

achieve these goals in the future. A woman in the sample based her standards for dating on the

example of her cousin's husband. When she is dating somebody, she asks herself "Could he be a

good Trevor? A good breadwinner, a good man, a good priesthood holder, a good leader in the

church?" Finding a marriage partner who can live the tenets of the Mormon faith and who will

be active in the Church is important to most of these women. Examples of "good" faithful men in the Church encourage them to find faithful men of their own to marry in the future.

Additionally, the women whose families were part of the LDS Church influenced their goals and desires for the future, both in positive and negative ways. One woman who was engaged to be married said she "see[s] my parents as an example to us" for appropriate behavior in marriage. In some cases, the family provided an example to the women to recognize what they did *not* want to include in their future. One young married woman looked at the example of her mother-in-law and sister-in-law who were "very traditional [in that] they don't want to work and they don't want to do anything but be a stay-at-home mom" which "made [her] *not* want to be that way." Those women who embodied the ideals either of motherhood or careers that they did not hope to have in their future still influenced the women to re-shape their goals to avoid these certain lifestyles. The women's immediate and extended families played an important role in shaping women's goals for the future.

Some women independently had converted to the faith—not all members of their family were practicing LDS members. In these cases, their goals for the future were more shaped by the examples of LDS families they had seen in the Church rather than their own immediate families. One woman, whose parents got divorced when she was young, indicated that "my parents haven't influenced my view of marriage as much as my friends' parents and their siblings have." Successful Temple marriages in the Church were "better" examples of the ideals of the Church and the goals they should strive to reach; therefore, these images of marriage in their community were what they aimed to achieve. Another woman who converted to the faith independently but then struggled to maintain her faith her family's support described how "without having a foundation, especially with your family in the church, you get kind of lost." Examples of strong

and successful LDS marriages did provide a worthwhile goal for which to aim. Yet, for some women it was difficult to maintain their faith and commitment to the ideal Mormon marriage without a successful example of Mormon marriage in their own family.

The Mormon community is another support structure that helps to maintain the sacred canopy for individual women. Concrete examples of successful couples in the Church helped the women to maintain their faith and aim to embody the ideals of marriage and motherhood that these older church members provided. While the women frequently cited the availability of examples of faithful church members, some also pointed to their own families as examples of the goals to have in marriage and motherhood. Those whose families did not belong to the LDS Church or who were "part-member families"[18] focused on those couples in the Church with successful Temple marriages. Seeing other couples that had achieved the ideals of marriage and motherhood helped to support the sacred canopy because it reinforced the idea that the Mormon "ideal" of marriage was attainable and that they, too, could embody these ideals in the future.

ACHIEVING THE IDEAL FAMILY

When I asked one woman about the importance of family in her future, she explained that the Church publication *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*[19] was the most influential in shaping her idea of family and that she "totally live[s] by that." This one-page document explains the centrality of the family in God's plan for salvation and how God's first commandment to Adam and Eve was to procreate. Published in 1995, it is still the most oft-quoted document on the importance of the family in Mormon life. It was frequently referenced in talks at Church and Sunday school lessons throughout the time I was visiting. It is the basis of

---

[18] Families that only have some members were practicing the LDS faith are "part-member families."

[19] See Appendix C.

the church's teachings on the family and provides a short set of goals that many women aimed to achieve in their future.

Throughout the women's dialogue, there have been references to "good" husbands or "ideal" families according to the Mormon Church. Because the family is so central[20] to the Mormon faith's Plan of Salvation, Church leaders speak extensively on the importance of the family and how to structure it. These teachings, such as those in *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, influence the women's perceptions of an ideal family. As the women and I discussed goals for the future with regard to marriage and family, many of them spoke of the families they hoped to have in the future. While not all of the women had a plan for what they wanted these families to look like, some hoped to have their own version of the Mormon "ideal" family. Curiously, most of the women claimed not to have grown up in an ideal Mormon family. Some said they came from "broken" homes, others had childhoods shaped by divorce, and a few did not grow up in the Mormon faith. The women I interviewed were able to point to other examples of the ideal Mormon family that they had seen growing up, but not a single one claimed to come from an ideal family.

How did these women construct the "ideal" family in their minds and what concepts do these ideals incorporate? One woman explained how the examples that she had seen growing up formed the norm of the "ideal" Mormon family in her mind. A child of divorced parents, only one of whom is a member of the church, she explained,

> "I know a lot of Mormon kids that grew up in [families where] both parents are Mormon, all their siblings are Mormon; they grow up and are just taught the same thing, they're on the same page and I think that's like the norm."

---

[20] There is an entire department at BYU-Provo, the largest Church-run university, dedicated to "Family, Home, and Social Sciences" that includes the option to major in the "School of Family Life."

In this case, the "ideal" Mormon family constituted something other than what this woman had grown up with. In other cases, the women were influenced by Church teachings for their goals in the future. One woman, whose immediate family is LDS, described that the standards she wants for her future family are that "I want them all to be Mormon, I want them to grow up in the Church, I want them to go on missions." A third woman, whose immediate family was not LDS, looked to her extended Mormon relatives to provide an example of an ideal family. She explained,

> "[My cousin and her husband are] kind of like my ideal of what I would like. They live in Utah, they went to school and they've got five kids. To me, they have it all. They have beautiful children, they're happy and they love each other."

As these women described, it was important in "ideal" Mormon families for each member to be a practicing member of the Church. This helps keep a cohesive faith amongst the members of the family, which is the "glue" that ties a family together. Since the Mormon faith is so focused on family, having cohesive families that are all practicing the faith acts as social "proof" of the embodiment of the "perfect" family ideal. Following the Church's teachings, such as by going to Church or on missions, proves the "goodness" of a family, which is tied to their faith. As the women illustrated in the above quotations, they frequently hoped to achieve these ideals in their own future families.

Some women did not have a specific plan for how they wanted their family to look in the future. Rather than professing a goal for their family based on the image of a Mormon "picture-perfect family," these women discussed a family formed on the principles of the Mormon religion that would have its own dynamic based on the personalities within the family. One woman explained that she "[doesn't] really plan for what [her family is] going to look like but I really want everybody in my family to know that their Heavenly Father loves them and that He's

there for them and watching them." In her case, her future family is based on a relationship with God and the founding principles of the Mormon faith rather than on an image of an ideal family in her head. Another spoke about her own role in shaping her ideal family as she said that she could "get the cookie cutter life by just following your intuition and doing what you think is best for your family." Ideal families could be based both on the image that the Church presents as the ideal as well as personal goals for shaping a family based on a relationship with God.

When pressed to describe the aims for the future family, most of the women spoke of activities that corresponded with faith, activity in the Church, and relationships with God. They hoped that their future families would be "successful" according to the Mormon Church's teachings. Primarily, these families would have children because "that's what we're sent here to do on Earth, to, like, prosper and to follow the commandments of God to get married and have kids." With children, these women hope to raise their families in the faith, by "going to Church every Sunday…[and] it's important for my kids to be around the temple a lot, even though they can't go in." Staying close to church institutions provide stability and structure to the family lifestyle. At home, women hope to incorporate church social practices such as Family Home Evening, which one unmarried woman claimed is "the best aspect of the Mormon religion that I could ever think of." The ideals that these women hope will characterize their future families are strongly correlated with Church teachings. Church doctrine clearly influences their goals for having children and will guide how they structure their home life in the future. The teachings of the Church is the third crucial aspect to the maintenance of the sacred canopy that provides the basis for the women's religious perspective on life. Without these teachings, they would have no religious basis from which to build their ideal of their future family.

The path to achieving these ideal families and the goal these women have for their future families is not entirely individualistic. One-third of the women spoke about the sense of pressure they feel from within the church both to have a family and to attain these "ideals" set forth. One woman who is soon to be engaged spoke of the pressure she felt from the church when she graduated college with a degree but no husband: "I graduated college and I was single and I felt useless because the church is like "Where's your family? Oh, cool, you got a degree—where's your family??" The Mormon faith places such prominence on the family and its importance that it is easy for women to feel that they have "failed" if they have not started a family by a relatively young age, as many of their Mormon peers have. Especially at an older age[21] "it's easy to let the pressure get to you," one twenty-five year old unmarried woman explained, because "all of your friends are married, they're all having babies." Members of the Church are not necessarily directly pressuring women to get married but pressure still arises from seeing so many peers get married and having children at a young age. One twenty-one year old who is married explained that she feels "pressure to have kids because everyone else has kids so its kind of like you want to fit in a little bit." One unmarried woman who was wary about having children in the future spoke of the pressure specifically directed towards women, saying that there "is like an expectation of a woman, not just a man but a *woman.*" Because of their biological ability to bear children and the Church's emphasis on the importance of motherhood, many women begin to feel pressure about the timeline of marriage and motherhood.

These church teachings and the pressure from within the Church to have a family and children shape women's goals for the future in a variety of ways. The structure of the women's

---

[21] "Older" in this case was defined by the women themselves. In Mormon culture, women are either perceived or perceive themselves as "older" in the marriage pool by their mid- to late twenties.

families, especially in terms of size, is influenced by the church's emphasis on having large families. The women frequently hoped to have a family in the future centered on faith and involvement in the church, something the Church teaches as valuable and worthy. All of these factors contribute to a "knowledge" that LDS members have of what standards they are supposed to achieve. This phenomenon results in a sense of pressure the women often feel from within the Church—but not from specific members—to get married and have a family. This pressure serves to push them towards the ideals that the Church has set out for them as well as have a family at an early age. It is important in maintaining the sacred canopy because the knowledge of the Church's teachings influences women to maintain that religious perspective especially when forming their hopes for their future family.

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF PEERS

I will briefly revisit the role of peer culture in Mormon women's lives in order to better understand its role in the final analysis of the sacred canopy. Peer culture has many functions and is intimately connected to faith. Mormon peers in communities serve an important role to bring non-Mormons into the Church by their example and their lifestyle. Some women in the sample converted to the Mormon faith after meeting Mormon friends and learning more about the faith and values. Within the faith, Mormon peers acted as a support system. Many Mormon views are not mainstream in America, especially not compatible with the views of young adults in their twenties. Young Mormon women who do not drink alcohol, for example, find a community of support among their Mormon friends who would prefer to engage in other activities on the weekends. Similarly, Mormons frequently feel connected to other Mormons in their faith basis. Despite differences in personalities or lifestyles, many Mormons can connect with one another in their similar beliefs about God and his relevance to their lives. This common unity also

distinguishes people of the Mormon faith from their non-Mormon counterparts. Many Mormons recognize the role of faith that plays a more important part in their lives compared to many of their peers. While this difference is not recognized as a "bad" distinction by either side, the different beliefs can create a divide in lifestyles or values between the Mormon and non-Mormon community.

5.III. Interaction between family rituals, personal religious values, and peer culture

None of the systems that shape these young women's lives act independently. While they have been socialized into maintaining a religious worldview, these women are so much more than just a religious being. They are the sums of their personal faith beliefs, family background, past experiences, Church teachings, and peer relationships. All of these systems interact to create a unique life experience and religious perspective on life. The difficulty in this section is in recognizing how the interactions among these systems create unique and individual beings yet also produce trends among the population of Mormon women. What trends do we find among the women and how can we classify their influence on their goals for the future with regard to marriage and motherhood? I will look specifically at the interaction between past and future family rituals, personal religious values and peer culture in order to examine how systems interact to create unique religious beings who still remain united in their faith.

INFLUENCE OF THE "PAST" FAMILY

One of the most significant influences on young women's goals for their own future families is that of the family in which they grew up. As was hinted at in earlier sections, the sacred canopy and the role of religion in these young women's lives provide a framework from

which to understand the world. It essentially provides a matrix of "acceptable" options from which the women can choose to structure their goals for the future. Exactly which options these women choose and what goals they aim to have for their future families, however, are determined largely by their experiences growing up.[22] Products of different types of families and backgrounds, these women all discussed the role their parents and upbringing played in shaping their decisions about their future, either positively or negatively. It is, according to my analysis, the single most important factor that influences the practical decisions these young women make about their future families.

Some of the women in the sample unequivocally recognized the influence their parents had on their own ideas of marriage and motherhood and spoke openly about it. When I asked one woman about an experience that contributed to her idea of marriage, she responded, "Besides my parents?" In some cases, such as this one, they assumed I would understand the important role their parents played in shaping their ideas about the future and felt compelled to provide other examples of influences. When I asked the same question to another unmarried twenty-seven year old, she pointed to the example of her parents as inspiration for "learn[ing] how to, with their differences, still work through things." Parents who practiced in the faith

---

[22] The phenomenon of family influence in shaping future decisions is not necessarily unique to Mormon women. Although there is still much debate over the extent of family influence and exactly how a child's upbringing affects their future decisions, it is possible to confidently say that one's family shapes their goals and expectations for the future. Evidence of this influence in other demographic populations has been previously examined. For more information, see: Coleman, M. & Ganong, L.H. (1984). Effect of family structure on family attitudes and expectations. *Family Relations*, *33*, 425-432. doi: 10.2307/584713. For an international perspective, see: Rijken, A.J. &Liefbroer, A.D. (2009). Imfluences of the family of origin on the timing and quantum of fertility in the Netherlands. *Population Studies*, *63*, 71-85. doi: 10.1080/00324720802621575.

provided concrete examples of how to work together in marriage so that the young women in the sample could base their goals for the future on what they had experienced previously.

Some women spoke of the negative influences their parents had on their view of marriage. In these cases, "negative" influence refers to the fact that these women examined the families in which they grew up and wanted to change how their future families were structured in some way—their experience was a factor that will precipitate change. A product of divorced parents, one woman claimed that her "[parents' divorce has] kind of always been on my mind, you know, because they got married in the Temple so everything should be okay." This woman realized with much reflection and teaching that a Temple marriage could not guarantee a successful marriage. Her parents' experience with divorce allowed her to recognize other important factors that she would like to incorporate in her future marriage, such as communication and similar faith basis.

Similarly, a few of the women spoke about the role their non-religious parents played in their lives growing up. Seeing examples of both LDS and non-LDS faith encouraged them to raise their families as practicing members of the Mormon Church in the future. One twenty-five year old woman explained that it was important "to me to marry somebody who's also Mormon because I want like a consistency that I didn't necessarily have growing up." Her recognition between the difference of a Mormon household and non-Mormon household, having grown up in both, influenced her desire to have an LDS husband who shares her religious values. A twenty-four year old woman who grew up in a part-member family maintained the goal of "hav[ing] a husband that believes in the same things I do." Having parents in a household whose faith was the same was very important for the women who had grown up in homes with parents practicing different faiths. A third woman, now married, described the influence of her non-religious family

background and how she hopes to avoid this in her future family. She explained, "I guess that was kind of my upbringing in a way. Like, anti-religion…I definitely want my children to be Mormon. But I don't want it to be a condition of being a part of our family, I want it to kind of be like they kind of find it on their own." It is important for these women to raise children in the Mormon faith, backgrounds that they often did not have growing up.[23] While their personal family backgrounds shaped their goals in what they would like to change in the future, the emphasis on faith in their future family remained constant, surely influenced by the religious teachings of the Mormon Church.

Only one woman in the sample spoke of the way her family background had influenced her goals for the future that were not centered on her own future. This woman's parents remain unmarried. When asked about her goals for the future, she remained focused on her two role models getting married in the church before she focused on her own future marriage. She expressed her lack of concern for her own future as much as her parents' future, saying,

> So, if my parents don't [get married in the Temple], then I just kind of feel like 'Then what?' I just kind of feel like, honestly, for me, I kind of feel less motivated cause it's like, well if my parents aren't going to be together forever then I don't really care if I'm with my companion forever because I want to be with my parents, ultimately—which is hard.

Knowledge that the family can be united for eternity in Heaven is a practical incentive for these young Mormon women to begin to build a family. Yet without parents to provide this example, this young woman became more concerned with her own parents' marriage than her own. This woman's focus on future goals in relation to her parents rather than herself is unique, most likely

---

[23] The majority of the women who provided the responses in this paragraph had parents who had divorced sometime in their childhood. Whether or not their parents were divorced, all of these women grew up in households where their two biological parents were practicing different faiths or practicing no religion at all. Because the Church places such a high emphasis on family, they recognized the ways in which their family growing up did not succeed in living a faithful life according to the Church's ideals, and they hoped to change that in their own future families.

because she was the only person of this family background included in the sample. It is difficult to determine if such a response would continue in a larger sample size that included more women whose parents were unmarried.

For some women, the family they had growing up either positively or negatively shaped their individual sense of faith, rather than their specific goals for marriage and motherhood. This faith, a positive or negative product of their family background, was the basis for determining their future goals. In these cases, family background indirectly influenced the goals these women held for their future families. In one positive example, a twenty-seven year old woman explained that "[For my mom,] everything centered around prayer and faith [which] affected us." The importance of faith in the family lifestyle growing up is central in this young woman's life today and is something that she hopes to incorporate into the structure of her future family. Another woman who independently converted to the Mormon faith, and whose family is not practicing, explained, " I got my background of God and that he existed from [growing up Catholic] but I didn't necessarily get my interest for religion from the Catholic faith." Her family's faith background shaped her basic religious understanding but did not provide her with a faith she felt was fulfilling in her life. Her conversion to the LDS Church was a significant event in this woman's life and the foundation from which she wanted to raise her future family. She went on to explain the importance she wanted faith, prayer, and connection to God to have in her own family once she got married.

With these examples, it becomes clear that previous experiences in a family shape future goals in how to structure family life. While these women are all products of individual backgrounds and experiences, their faith and religious traditions unite them towards a common goal of a successful marriage and, most often, having children. The trends among the women

can be accounted for by their similar religious foundation; yet their individual goals in how to structure their future family is shaped by their individual experiences growing up. Their family background had either a positive or a negative impact on determining goals for the future. The presence of concrete examples in their lives of marriages and parenthood allowed them to recognize what they do and do not want for the future and shape their goals accordingly.

FAMILY AS THE ULTIMATE MEASURE

I have written extensively on the impact of the past family and have touched on the central role that future family has in shaping Mormon women's decisions in the present day. The role that the future family plays in influencing the decisions and lifestyles that Mormon women in their twenties choose to keep today should not be underemphasized. As the Church proclaims, family is the ultimate measure of success in life on Earth. It is an essential part of God's Plan of Salvation, according to the Church's teachings, and is the priority for many women throughout most of their lives. Even though the young women I interviewed did not yet have families of their own (although some of the women had husbands and had begun to think about having a family), they explained the importance of the family and its influence on the decisions they are making now. One engaged woman explained how the Church's teachings asserted that "the family is the most important thing in his [God's] plan" which inspired her to live her life not for her own pleasure but for God's will. The centrality of the family in the Church's teachings was so important to influence even her daily life. The decisions she makes today will affect her ability to marry in the Temple and to have a worthy Mormon family in the future. Even before marriage, the knowledge of the importance of the family plays an integral role in young women's lives.

One young unmarried woman explained how she worked to deepen her faith every day through her actions and prayers. She explained to me that her "ultimate goal" is that she "want[s] to live with the Heavenly Father again" because living in Heaven with God in the Mormon faith means being reunited with family for eternity. Again, the family becomes the central unit by which success is measured, namely through living a faithful life and being united for eternity in Heaven. This woman worked consistently on her faith in order to have the opportunity to stay with her family for eternity. A third young woman who is not yet married explained that her faith plays a different role in her life than it does in many of her non-Mormon peers' lives. She claimed that she "[has] a lot more faith in the family and what it means than most of the kids my age." For this young woman, the family was distinctly tied to her Mormon faith. It was an institution that shaped her daily decisions because her aim was to get married and start a family in the near future. The family plays an essential role in defining success for young Mormon women in the possibility to be united with them in Heaven for eternity. It is not only past family experiences that shape these young women, but also the goal they maintain of having their own families in the future.

MAINTAINING FAMILY RITUALS

Because family plays such an important role in shaping these women's goals for the future, it is important to look at how past family rituals both positively and negatively shape those they hope to incorporate in their future. The most important family ritual that these women hoped to maintain is the tradition of Family Home Evening. Typically on Monday nights, family home evening is a night when the family gathers for an hour to read a Scripture, discuss a Gospel lesson, and enjoy a snack together. Many young women described it as a time to just relax and spend time with family in an age where family members are constantly on the go. When I asked

what tradition they hoped to have in their future family, the women most frequently cited[24]

Family Home Evening regardless of by whether they practiced it growing up. One woman who

grew up as the only practicing member of the LDS Church in her family sang the praises of

Family Home Evening, saying "Family Home Evening is probably the best aspect of the

Mormon religion that I could ever think of…It's a great way for everyone to be on the same

page. And for everyone to feel like they are being heard, that they feel loved, that they feel cared

for, supported." The tradition brings together the family in a spiritual reflective space while

simultaneously allowing them to deepen familial bonds. It is central to the Mormon faith

because of the emphasis on the family in the Church's teachings.

Many of the women in the sample also mentioned the importance of church attendance

and family prayer as family rituals to allow for spiritual growth in the home. A focus on

spirituality and connection with God was central in most of the future family traditions they

mentioned. One woman, who was living in a different country from her fiancé at the time of the

interview, explained how much of their communication focused on reading the Scriptures and

growing together spiritually even when they were separated geographically. When I asked her

about the traditions she wanted to have in her future family, she responded:

> When we read the Scriptures and we are talking we just say one or two verses we liked.
> This is what we want to keep. This is something that, if we only have thirty minutes to
> talk in that day, part of that thirty minutes will be to pray together and read the
> Scriptures.

---

[24] The interview question that led to these responses was "What rituals or traditions do you hope
to have in your future family?" Most of the women gave Family Home Evening as at least one of
their responses—often their first response—and responded with this more frequently than going
to Church or family prayer (although these answers were frequently given as well). Part of the
reason for the frequency of this response could be that Family Home Evening is thought of as a
"tradition" in the Church, rather than things like "going to church" which is almost automatic
protocol rather than a family tradition. The way the question was worded to signify responses
with "tradition" or "family rituals" may have led the women to more quickly think of traditions
in the strict sense, such as Family Home Evening.

Traditions that start even during a dating phase of a relationship can provide the foundation for traditions for the family later in life. These traditions are typically centered on faith and aim to both connect the family with God as well as bring the family closer together. Future family traditions provide a sense of stability in the family's spiritual life and can be shaped by traditions that begin early in life.

Family Home Evening was often a tradition these women had growing up and therefore they recognized its value and wanted to continue it in the future. Some women were negatively shaped by their traditions (or lack thereof) growing up and aimed to change those in their future family. One twenty-four year old woman explained how her family ate dinner together growing up but "watched the news while we ate dinner." She lamented the lack of conversation and connection in her own family, recognizing the difference between her upbringing and those families' "table[s] where you're asking questions [to each other]" which made her family "less than the ideal." When asked about her goals for her own future family, she emphasized that she "want[s] that familial bond" and will establish that through traditions such as Family Home Evening and daily prayer. In this explicit example, women's experiences growing up often prompted them to set goals for how to change their future family to make life more spiritually fulfilling. Another unmarried woman similarly recognized that something she is "not good at is reading my Scriptures and understanding them" and therefore "with my husband and with my kids, I want to be a Scripture-reading family." The opportunity to have a family in the future provides women with a forum to make improvements on the family and traditions they have had thus far, with an opportunity to improve the spiritual aspect of their lives.

Some traditions the women mentioned focused on holiday celebration. Again, these traditions maintained the importance of family unity and "together time." Some examples

included singing special birthday songs for their children as their parents had done for them growing up while others involved reuniting with extended family for certain holidays. Some holiday traditions the women mentioned aimed to refocus the holidays on spiritual life. One young married woman explained how she feels holidays like Christmas and Easter "aren't focused on Christ when they're supposed to be." She resolved to "place more precedence [sic] on the reason [for the holiday] and less precedence on 'What am *I* going to get on the holiday?'" A twenty-seven year old woman explained her desire to re-focus Christmas on its religious meaning when she has a family:

> One of the other traditions I want to have, that we don't currently have in our family, is getting up on Christmas day and before opening the presents, read the story of Jesus' birth. It just puts in perspective, 'Hey, we're not here for the presents. We're here for something else.'

Because many of these women made faith the central aspect of their lives, their goals for future family rituals were similarly rooted in faith. Holidays that had turned away from their original religious roots were opportunities for these women to instill religious values and focus on their faith with their future families.

Ultimately, these women hope to develop families in the future that remain connected emotionally and spiritually. The traditions they aim to establish in their families provide opportunities to come together as a family to bond as well as progress together spiritually. Family Home Evening was an important tradition many women hoped to keep based on their previous experiences with it. Yet other traditions the women hoped to incorporate in the future were negatively shaped by past experiences, such as in the cases where they wanted to be more focused on the religious aspect of holidays or improve the quality of family time. With strong faith as the end goal, these women set aims for their future lives based on past experiences and what they hoped to achieve spiritually in the future.

5.IV. Conclusion: Integrating and Contextualizing Mormon Women's Experiences

As I have argued, Mormon women's experiences cannot be examined in isolation. These women are a product of many interacting systems that simultaneously shape their future goals and their current identity. The women in the sample have their own unique faith basis that shapes how they look at the world, peers that influence them, family backgrounds that they want to keep or change in the future, as well as a unique perspective on their lives. This section aims to integrate these systems of identity to explain they affect the women's experiences and shape how they formulate goals for the future.

"A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE"

The most important finding in this research is that Mormon women have both faith-based and peer experiences in their lives that provide them with a "different perspective." This "different perspective" is fundamentally rooted in the religious outlook these women have in all aspects of their lives. It is the support structure that maintains the sacred canopy in these women's lives. This perspective is also shaped by their peers, both Mormon and non-Mormon, who shape their faith and encourage them to maintain a religious outlook on life. The women I interviewed explained how they had a "different perspective" on life in regard to their views on family, their own faith, and in comparison to their peers. The claim that they have a "different perspective" was explicit in interviews: it is a phrase I have adopted for this analysis based on the women's own use of the term in the interviews.

With regard to family, the women in the sample spoke of their different perspective from non-Mormons in looking ahead to the future family. These differences begin even during the

dating stage. One woman described how Mormon dating is "a *different mindset*.[25] Peoples' idea of dating and what they're looking for is different…It's just a different level of respect and a different emotional game." The effort to find an eternal partner and expectations based on this goal create an alternative mindset while they are dating. They maintain a focus on their goals for their future husband and family while they are dating more people at a younger age. An unmarried twenty year old concurred, explaining that "we [Mormons] have *a different perspective* on life, we look to the future a lot more." Since having a family is one of the most important goals for young Mormon women, it becomes an integral part that establishes their perspective on life as "different" from young non-Mormon women.

These young Mormon women also differentiated themselves in their understanding of faith. They classified their faith as distinguishing themselves from non-Mormon peers as well as locating them within a system greater than themselves, which grants them a different perspective on life. In comparison to their non-Mormon peers, the Mormon women generally asserted that their lives were more faith-based than their counterparts. One twenty-four year old woman who was born into the Mormon Church explained that compared to "the outside world, I have a lot more faith." Faith was part of their identity and therefore necessarily provided them with a perspective different from those who are not as religious. Another young woman who grew up in the faith examined the difference between herself and her peers, saying "with my friends that aren't Mormon that I know, my faith, my spirituality, plays a huge part of my everyday life and it doesn't play a huge part in their life." These women saw themselves as different from their non-Mormon counterparts because of the all-important role that faith played in each group's lives.

---

[25] In this section, all of the italicized phrases are my own emphasis to demonstrate the explicit mention of having a "different perspective" on life.

The young women's ideas of faith also provided them with a connection to God and made them feel part of something larger than themselves. This realization provided them with a different perspective on life. One woman who converted to the LDS Church in her teenage years explained how faith made a difference in her life. She said, "When you have faith in something higher than yourself, your life is changed. To be able to have faith that you're watched over and our Heavenly Father has a plan for us, it just *changes your perspective*." A connection to God provides the women with a perspective different even from what they may have had before they were a firm believer in their faith. Another woman who had grown up in the Mormon Church explained how her sense of faith influenced her decisions: "Because of my faith, the decisions I make are different. Maybe because of how I see the world, even after death; maybe because we believe in a bigger and better world." Looking to the future and having the "eternal perspective" reinforced the participants' unique perspective that influenced their daily decisions. Faith provided the basis for having a "different perspective" than non-Mormons in life but that "different perspective" simultaneously reinforced a unique sense of faith in everyday decisions.

Finally, the women's different perspective separated them from their non-Mormon peers. The involvement of faith in their lives differentiated them from their peers in such a way that they lived life with distinct values and interpreted their life experiences through a different lens. One woman who grew up in the Mormon Church reasoned how her life was different from her peers of the same age. She explained, "My life feels like it's mine but it's being lived to bring something else to pass. I feel like that's a *different mindset* than a lot of people my age." Her connection to something larger than herself was a distinguishing characteristic that provided a perspective on her life different from her non-Mormon peers. Another unmarried young woman described how her individual life experiences gave her a unique perspective compared even to

her Mormon peers. Explaining the difficulty in some of her past relationships, she summarized that "Within the Mormon culture, my faith has been tried in different ways so I have a *different view* on marriage." While faith may provide a distinguishing characteristic between Mormon and non-Mormon counterparts, different life experiences and challenges can develop nuanced faith differences between those of the same Mormon religion.

What becomes clear in the analysis of the three systems that interact in women's lives—namely family experiences, personal faith, and peer culture—is that all three overlap in the women's statements. Many of the quotations explained above refer not just to one of those systems but rather tie together personal faith and peer culture or peer culture and family. This provides further evidence that these three systems intersect in young Mormon women's lived experiences. They rarely can be teased apart from one another and instead work together to frame women's understandings of their lives.

The three major systems that shape women's lives—personal faith, peer culture, and family experiences—interact in a way that provides Mormon women with a "different perspective" on their lives. This perspective in turn reinforces their personal sense of faith and the emphasis on having their own family in the future. This perspective sometimes reinforces peer culture. In some cases, this "different perspective" encourages women to associate more closely with Mormons that have the same values and experiences as they do. Other women choose to associate more closely with non-Mormons, a diversity that was reflected in this sample. While the "different perspective" on life that Mormon women took did not always reinforce their peer associations, peer culture did always contribute to the unique perspective Mormon women held.

6. FINAL CONCLUSION

In this study of young Mormon women's perspectives on dating, marriage, and motherhood, I found that the sacred canopy plays a relevant role in providing women a religious perspective from which to understand the world.   The religious teachings of the Mormon Church shape how the women of the faith understand the importance of marriage and the family. Their emphasis on having a family in the future and their universal goals to get married aligns with the Church teaching that to have a family is an important part of God's plan. The doctrine of the LDS Church provides a framework by which these women can begin to navigate their own individual lives. The young women were most strongly influenced, however, by their family backgrounds and upbringing in determining their goals for the future. Their experiences shaped them both positively and negatively to indicate what aspects of their upbringing they wanted to maintain in the future and which they wished to eliminate or adjust. Mentors and role models in the church provided concrete examples of ideals for which to strive and shaped how the women wanted to structure their family lives in the future. While the religious doctrine of the Mormon Church provided the framework in which to understand the world and established a set of goals to strive towards, family upbringing and experiences most strongly influenced the goals that women set for their future. The only exception to this finding was in the case of women who desired to be a stay-at-home mother in the future. These women seemed to be most strongly influenced in this one aspect by the Church's teachings and the value it placed on the mother's role in raising children in the home.

The other most significant finding in this study was the pervasive nature of the Mormon faith in the young women's lives. All the women included in the sample were practicing Mormons and expressed their faith repeatedly throughout their interview as well as in my casual

interactions with them throughout the year. While many people who have had even brief

interactions with Mormon populations could have guessed that their faith played a central role in

their life, many would underestimate the extent to which their faith formed the basis of their

being. Each woman's individual sense of faith became incorporated into her identity. From this

perspective, they involved their faith in all decisions in their lives. The goals women set for their

future in regard to marriage and motherhood as well as their day-to-day decisions were

influenced by the pervasive role faith plays.

The systems of personal faith, past family experiences, and peer associations all worked

together in these young women's lives to maintain the sacred canopy.   If the sacred canopy is a

metaphor for a religious worldview that Mormon women aim to maintain in their beliefs, actions,

and attitudes, the intersection of personal faith, peer culture, and family experiences is the

keystone that upholds the sacred canopy for them.   Each system can be thought of as a pole in a

metal structure that holds up a tent. Each system works independently, might be shaped

differently or start at a different angle. Yet each pole intersects with the others in the middle to

reinforce one another and provide the strongest and most central support to the tent on top, in this

metaphor of the sacred canopy. While each individual woman's sacred canopy might be a

slightly different height, angle, color, or shape—as they each have their own unique

worldview—they all are maintained by the interaction between individual faith, past family

experiences, and peer associations. This interaction provides Mormon women with a "different

perspective" on life from non-Mormons but simultaneously unites Mormon women under the

umbrella of a similar faith basis.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. <u>Introduction</u>

      Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me for this interview. I am conducting about a dozen interviews with young Mormon women in order to prepare my Honors Thesis for the BC department of Sociology. I first became interested in the Mormon faith in high school because one of my best friends was Mormon. I was very impressed with her willingness to get up at 5:30 AM every morning to go to seminary and her passion for reading the Book of Mormon in her spare time. As we talked more, I learned about her commitment to her family and noticed she was dedicated to her family in a way many other people are not. I became very interested in the relationship between Mormonism and the family and now have the opportunity to study it more in-depth through this senior project. For this reason, the focus of my study is on young Mormon women's concepts of dating, marriage, and family, especially in regards to faith. I asked you to participate in my research based on your age, your gender, and your identification as a practicing Mormon. This interview will remain confidential—no identifying information including your name will be released in any sort of report published. I am asking your permission to tape record the interview so that I don't miss any important information or break up the conversation trying to write it all down. The interview should last about an hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II. <u>Interview</u>

I would like to start about asking you for some general information as a means to learning a little more about you.

(*At this point I will have them fill out the "Interview Demographic Data form." See example copy in Appendix B.*)

I would now like to learn a little more about your past experiences and your plans for the future.

<u>Family Experiences</u>

This domain is important because I think the family will be the major socializing agent both of religious ideas as well as provide examples for goals for the future with regard to family life. Berger (1967) notes that religion provides a "sacred canopy" with which to understand the world and the events in one's life. In this case, family provides a major role in providing a context for religious faith to flourish and influence ideas about marriage and family in order to continue living under the sacred canopy.

I would like to learn more about the role that family has played in your life until today to understand your own background and experiences a little better.

    1) Can you describe the family you grew up in?
    2) What were some of the family rituals your family practiced?
    3) What was the role of faith in your upbringing?
    4) Do you hope to have a family of your own in the future?
    5) If so, what do you hope that family will look like?

<u>Future Plans</u>

I am interested in learning about people's future plans with regard to dating, marriage, and motherhood because these will provide insights into the connections between past experiences

and one's plans for the future. These questions will illustrate how faith or previous experience has come to shape their ideas about or goals for the future family and its importance in the context of their life.

Now I would like to ask you a few questions about your plans for the future, especially with regard to family formation.

1) What has been you experience with dating, either your own experience or that you've seen of your friends?
2) Can you tell me about a particular experience that has contributed to your view of marriage?
3) Can you tell me about a particular experience that has contributed to your view of motherhood?
4) Have your friends played a role in shaping your ideas about or goals for the future? If so, how?
5) How many of your friends are Mormon? Which group of friends would you say influences your ideas and values the most?

Faith Basis

Ultimately, I want to understand whether or not—and in what ways—religion and personal faith in God has shaped young women's goals for the future, especially in regard to family. These questions are designed to focus specifically on personal faith and religious experiences to contextualize how they might influence an individual's plans for the future.

I am particularly interested in your Mormon faith and how that has played a role throughout your life.

1) What role has personal faith played in your life?
2) Does your faith differ from your peers or other people your age?
3) Are there ways in which you think your faith has shaped your plans for the future?
4) Do you hope to have any religious traditions in your future family?

III. Close

Thank you so much for sharing many of your experiences with me. They were very interesting to discuss and have helped me to get a better sense of how your concepts of faith and family relate. If you would like to read a finished copy of my thesis in April, please let me know. Again, my contact information is listed on your copy of the consent form if you have any questions or concerns.

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

LDS Ward: _____

Age: _____

Highest level of education attained (grade level): _____

Institution of highest level of education (e.g. Name of school): _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Months or Years as a Practicing Mormon (and any relevant description):
_____
_____

Parents' Religious Faith:
Mother: _____

Father: _____

What is your occupation? If you do not have a job, what is your father's and/or mother's occupation?
_____

Have you been on a mission? If so, how old were you and how long did you go for?
_____

Please think of your five (5) closest friends. How many of them are practicing Mormons? (Please feel free to include any qualifying information that you feel is relevant.)
_____
_____

Relationship Status: (For example: single, dating, engaged, married, or any other designation you feel describes your relationship) How long have you been in this "status" of relationship?
_____
_____

In a sentence or two, what would you say your faith means to you?
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX C:

THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim 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.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

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.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

REFERENCES

Adler, P.A. & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
Publications.

Albrecht, S.L. (1989). The consequential dimension of Mormon religiosity. In J.T. Duke (Ed,),
Latter-Day Brigham Young University Studies, 29, 57-108.

Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York: General Learning Press.

Berger, P.I. (1967). *The sacred canopy: Elements of sociological theory of religion*. Garden City,
NY: Anchor Books.

Carroll, J.S., Linford, S.T., Holman, T.B. & Busby, M. (2000). Marital and family orientation
among highly religious young adults: Comparing Latter-Day Saints with traditional
Christians. *Review of Religious Research, 42 (2)*, 193-205.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/3512529.

Chadwick, B.A., Top, B.L., McClendon, R.J., Smith, L. & Judd, M. (2007). A survey of dating
and marriage at BYU. *BYU Studies, 46*, 67-90.

Chadwick, B.A, Top, B.L., & McClendon, R.J. (2010). "Family life." In Chadwick, B.A, Top,
B.L., & McClendon, R.J. (Eds.), *Shield of Faith: The Power of Religion in the Lives of
LDS Youths and Young Adults* (247-264). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book. Retrieved from:
https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/shield-faith/8-family-life.

Cherlin, A.J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and
Family, 66*, 848-861. doi: 10.1111/j.0022-2445.2004.00058.x

Coleman, M. & Ganong, L.H. (1984). Effect of family structure on family attitudes and
expectations. *Family Relations*, *33*, 425-432. doi: 10.2307/584713

Cornwall, M., Albrecht, S.L., Cunningham, P.H., & Pitcher B.L. (1986). The dimensions of
religiosity: A conceptual model with an empirical test. *Review of Religious Research, 27*
(3), 226-244.

Cornwall, M. (1987). The social bases of religion: A study of factors influencing religious belief
and commitment. *Review of Religious Research, 29,* 44-56.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/3511951.

Cornwall, M. (1988). "The influence of three agents of religious socialization: Family, church,
and peers." In Thomas, D.L. (Ed.), *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science
Perspectives* (Chapter 11). Retrieved from https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/religion-and-
family-connection-social-science-perspectives/chapter-11-influence-three.

Darrington, J., Piercy, K.W., & Niehuis, S. (2005). The social and cultural construction of
singlehood among young, single Mormons. *The Qualitative Report, 10*, 639-661.
http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-4/darrington.pdf.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand
Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Dollahite, D.C. & Marks, L.D. (2009). A conceptual model of family and religious processes in
highly religious families. *Review of Religious Research, 50,* 373-391.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/25593754.

Dollahite, D.C. (2007). Latter-day Saint Marriage and Family Life in Modern America. In D.C.
Dollahite, *American religions and the family: How modern faith traditions cope with
modernization and democracy* (124-146). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Drew, S.L. (Nov. 2001). It is not good for man or woman to be alone. *Ensign*. Retrieved from http://www.lds.org/ensign/2001/11/it-is-not-good-for-man-or-woman-to-be-alone?lang=eng.

Duke, J.T. (1992). Eternal Marriage. In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. (Vol. 1, pp. 857-859). New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Goodman, M.A., & Dollahite, D.C. (2006). How religious couples perceive the influence of God in their marriage. *Review of Religious Research*, *48*, 141-155. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20058129.

Goodman, M.A., Dollahite, D.C. & Marks, L. (2012). Exploring transformational processes and meaning in LDS marriages. *Marriage & Family Review, 48*, 555-582. http://dx/doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2012.691081.

Hardy, S.A., White, J.A., Zhang, Z. Ruchty, J. (2011). Parenting and socialization of religiousness and spirituality. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 3*, 217-230.

Heaton, T.B. & Goodman, K.L. (1985). Religion and family formation. *Review of Religious Research*, *26*, 343-359. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3511049.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. (2006). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Hinckley, G.B. "The family: A proclamation to the world." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, General Conference. Salt Lake City, UT. 23 Sept. 1995.

Hinckley, G.B. "Women of the Church." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, General Conference. Salt Lake City, UT. October 1996.

Holman, T.B. (1992). Marriage: Social and Behavioral Perspectives. In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. (Vol. 1, pp. 855-857). New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Johnson, W. (2013). *Facts and statistics: USA—Massachusetts*. Retrieved from

    http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/united-

    states/state/massachusetts.

LDS Church. (2013). *Polygamy: Latter-day Saints and the practice of plural marriage*.

    Retrieved from: http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/polygamy-latter-day-saints-

    and-the-practice-of-plural-marriage.

Lehrer, E.L. (2004). The role of religion in union formation: An economic perspective.

    Population Research and Policy Review, *23,* 161-185.

    http://www.jstor.org/stable/40230854.

Lindsay, J. (2012, Feb. 6). Mormon church small but expanding in liberal Massachusetts. *USA*

    Today. Retrieved from: http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/religion/2006-02-12-lds-

    mass_x.htm.

Loser, R.W., Klein, S.R., Hill, E.J. & Dollahite, D.C. (2008). Religion and the daily lives of LDS

    families: An ecological perspective. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*,

    37 (1), 52-70. DOI: 10.1177/1077727X08322809.

Loser, R.W., Hill, E.J., Klein, S.R., Dollahite, D.C. (2009). Perceived benefits of religious rituals

    in the Latter-Day Saint home. *Review of Religious Research, 50,* 345-362.

    http://www.jstor.org/stable/25593746.

MacArthur, J.D. (Feb. 2009). The functional family. *Liahona, Feb. 2009* issue*,* 36-39. Retrieved

    from: http://lds/org/liahona/print/2009/02/the-functional-family?lang=eng&clang=eng.

Marshall, G. (1994). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University

    Press.

Mauss, A.L. (1984). Sociological perspectives on the Mormon subculture. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *10*, 437-460.

McCormick, J.S. (2013). *Salt Lake City*. Retrieved from:

http://historytogo.utah.gov/places/saltlakecity.html.

Milevsky, I.M., Szuchman, L., & Milevsky, A. (2008). Transmission of religious beliefs in college students. *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture, 11*, 423-434.

Myers, S.M. (1996). An interactive model of religiosity inheritance: The importance of family context. *American Sociological Review, 61 (5)*, 858-866. http://jstor.org/stable/2096457

Oaks, D.H. "The Great Plan of Happiness." Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, General Conference. Salt Lake City, UT. October 1993.

Pond, A. "A Portrait of Mormons in the U.S." In *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*. Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (24 July 2009) http://www.pewforum.org/2009/07/24/a-portrait-of-mormons-in-the-us/. Accessed 14 November 2013.

Rijken, A.J. &Liefbroer, A.D. (2009). Imfluences of the family of origin on the timing and quantum of fertility in the Netherlands. *Population Studies*, *63*, 71-85. doi: 10.1080/00324720802621575

Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Smith, G. (2012). Mormons and family life. In *Mormons in America—Certain in their beliefs, uncertain of their place in society*. Pew Research Center, Washington D.C. (12 January 2012) http://www.pewforum.org/2012/01/12/mormons-in-america-executive-summary/. Accessed 23 September 2013.

Stark, R. (2005). *The Rise of Mormonism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Unknown Author. (2010, April). Dating FAQ's. *New Era*, 20-24.

Williams, J.K. (2011). *The Mormons*. Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts Publishing.

Willoughby, B.J., Carroll, J.S., Vitas, J.M., & Hill, L.M. (2012). "When are you getting

married?" The intergenerational transmission of attitudes regarding marital timing and

marital importance. *Journal of Family Issues, 33,* 223-245. Doi:

10.1177/0192513X11408695

Young Women General Presidency. (2010). Advice to young women on dating. *Liahona,* Apr.

2010, 51-52.