2019

# Limitation, Liberation, and The Latter-day Saints: The Establishment of Mormon Womanhood in The Woman's Exponent, 1872-1890

Meaghan Harrington
*Hollins University*

**Limitation, Liberation, and The Latter-day Saints:**

The Establishment of Mormon Womanhood in The *Woman's Exponent,* 1872-1890.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Department of History

Hollins University

Meaghan Harrington

Roanoke, Virginia

May 15, 2019

Contents

# Introduction

Mormonism represented everything that the American, nineteenth-century ideal it broke from opposed. Mormons broke away from the domestic, familial ideal through plural marriage; they challenged American government with their theocratic government and society; and they separated themselves from American religion with their non-Protestant beliefs, liturgy, and scripture. By the 1870's, this break from society resulted in Mormons establishing their own society in Utah, where they were geographically isolated from the many people who opposed them. This isolation caused Americans to view Mormonism as different, and popular stories that emphasized extremist attitudes in Mormonism made seeing past that difference difficult.

Gender played an important role in the shadow that was cast over Mormonism because the treatment of women in plural marriage was seen as a threat to the American way of life. Non-Mormons, especially non-Mormon women, saw it as their mission to save Mormon women from a situation that stole agency from them. Nineteenth-century, anti-Mormon writings depicted Mormon women as hypnotized prisoners living under an oppressive ideology. Plural marriage oppressed women because a woman's desire was monogamy, which allowed her to be the sole female head of household.[1] Women authors wrote in newspapers and novels about the woes of the woman who had strayed from domestic life; she who was dragged away not because she was willing, but because of the greater evil of Mormonism. These authors used domestic themes to which women were intimately connected to convince women to learn a lesson from their novels. These authors moved women towards emotion, though they did not seek to revolutionize them nor to create a collective anti-Mormon female identity in America. These women's oppositions

[1] Colleen McDannell. *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 127.

to Mormonism arose from the way that Mormon men treated Mormon women, and they depicted most Mormon women as brainwashed, powerless, downtrodden, and straying from domestic life.

But the articles of the Mormon women's magazine *The Woman's Exponent* show that Mormon women were not the hypnotized prisoners they seemed to be. From 1870 to 1890, Americans reached a fever pitch in their opposition to Mormonism, culminating in the Edmunds-Tucker act of 1887.[2] The *Exponent* emerged in 1872 out of Salt Lake City during this opposition. It was written by and for Mormon women. These women advocated for liberating women's rights. Women in the *Exponent* argued for a woman's right to education, within which she could better contribute to her society. They pointed out that Mormon women had liberating legal and political rights like divorce and suffrage, and they wanted all women to have those rights. Furthermore, women in the *Exponent* pointed out that the female body was seen in their society and the world at large as incapable. They argued that their culture's emphasis on the capability of young girls contradicted the way that they treated women as adults, and they created frameworks for understanding that contradiction. They established gender to think about the spaces they inhabited outside and inside of their communities. Mormon women were not hypnotized; in fact, they were far more self-aware than they were credited to be. The *Exponent* was an expression of that self-awareness.

Non-Mormon, Mormon historian Lawrence Foster cites the *Exponent* as "a respectable and well-produced periodical [that]… provided an important forum for the discussion of many problems of 'woman's sphere…' [it] served an important identity-building function and helped

[2] The Edmunds-Tucker act set a series of laws restricting the practices of Mormons, such as not allowing the children of polygamous marriages to inherit, disenfranchising women, and dissolving LDS assets. Three years after its passage, Mormonism stated publicly that they no longer supported the practice of plural marriage, and Utah was then able to become a state. Jan Shipps. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 167.

to reinforce a sense of pride and unity among women of the Church."[3] The *Exponent* demonstrated the value systems of Mormon women. A modern reader of any of the articles of the *Exponent* would be struck by the liberated beliefs these women held despite the limiting frameworks they participated in. The *Exponent* is important because it is not researched comprehensively. In an 1889 article about the work the paper had done over its first decade and a half, the anonymous author (presumably the editor, then Emmaline Wells) wrote:

> "[the *Exponent*] contains the history of the organizations of the women of the Church, and in a great measure the history of women themselves, and it also embodies the expression of the thoughts, feelings, and convictions of the majority of the sisters… the humblest sister has the opportunity to bear her testimony to the world in its columns; and this written testimony cannot be in vain."[4]

Despite containing unapologetic statements in which a woman publicly and explicitly proclaimed her gender identity, the *Exponent* is not included in historic research on gender identity like non-Mormon women's journals are.[5] The scholarly community needs to recognize the importance of the *Exponent* as important to its understanding of gender identity. Furthermore, there is even a gap within Mormon Studies as to the thoughts and opinions of Mormon women themselves in the religion's fundamental years.[6] Wide-ranging research has not

---

[3] Lawrence Foster. *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*. (Illini Books ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 215.

[4] Anonymous. "The Woman's Paper." *The Woman's Exponent*, June 1, 1889. Accessed 5/8/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_18_Issue_1-21&fromPage=markedList

[5] A simple google search will return 86,000,000 results for "Woman's Journal," whereas a search for "Woman's Exponent" returns 368,000; and many of these latter results come from the fact that there is a modern blog version of the *Exponent* called *Exponent II*. On a more scholarly basis, a search on JStor will return 289 results for "The Woman's Journal" and 104 for "The Woman's Exponent."

[6] Marybeth Raynes points that "no comprehensive research is available" on the thoughts, feelings, and desires of Mormon women themselves in the mid-to-late nineteenth century (Marybeth Raynes. "Mormon Marriages in an American Context." In *Sisters in Spirit,* edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson. [Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1987], 234). Lawrence Foster writes that "an invaluable source for women's own perceptions is the *Woman's Exponent,* a periodical by and for women published between 1872 and 1914," but he does not rely on the *Exponent* exclusively in any of his books and articles on Mormon women (Lawrence Foster. "Essay on Sources," In *Religion and Sexuality,* 349).

been undertaken on the *Exponent* within non-Mormon womanhood nor has it been undertaken within Mormon womanhood in the nineteenth century.

Modern historiography argues that attitudes towards gender were changing in the nineteenth century as women (both Mormon and non-Mormon) participated in defining their own womanhood through politics, religion, and gender discourse. The fact that these women were participating in this conversation aligns with the historiographical debate and challenges the separateness of the separate spheres. Until the 1970's, scholars argued that American women of the nineteenth century lived according to the ideology of the separate spheres. Barbara Welter and Caroll Smith-Rosenberg broke that framework with their respective articles "The Cult of True Womanhood" and then "The Female World of Love and Ritual," and scholars since them like Nina Baym and Laura Edwards have continued to blur the lines between public and private in women's lives to understand the complexities of womanhood. Many middle-class, white women in the Northeast may have been 'limited' to a domestic life. However, their establishment of gender found liberation in the limitation of the domestic ideal.[7] Domesticity was a method for women to claim a role beyond the domestic, but one which was rooted in their obligations to the domestic. Though limiting, the domestic ideal allowed women to think about their ideal and eventually expand upon that ideal.

However, feminist scholarship on the domestic ideal does not mention Mormonism. Mormon women in *The Woman's Exponent* can provide information on how women constructed and expressed gender. In their explorations of what womanhood meant to them, they asked questions about what roles they could and wanted to play in their country, in their society, to

[7] Laura F. Edwards "Gender and the Changing Roles of Women." In *A Companion to 19th-century America. Blackwell Companions to American History,* edited by William Barney. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001. 225-226.

each other, and to themselves. The period 1870 to 1890 was characterized by Mormon women expanding upon their ideal by adhering to the ideals they lived, just like non-Mormon women did. The women writing in the *Exponent* lived according to the doctrine of marriage and motherhood, too. The establishment of gender was a way for non-Mormon women to work through the questions they had about their world, and Mormon women's establishment of gender did the same.

Accepting the limiting rhetoric of non-Mormon women into the scholarship of women's rights is far easier because their culture was one that most people find themselves aligned with. Mormonism in the nineteenth century was an experimental religion that broke from society with a utopian ideal. In that separation from society and envisioning of an ideal society, Mormons excluded many from their ideal. Regarding gender, this exclusion came in the form of anyone who was not a Mormon wife and mother. Mormon women judged non-Mormon women just as much as non-Mormon women judged Mormon women. Mormon women saw Mormonism as crucial to their fulfillment and agency, and they wanted non-Mormon women to become Mormons. The 'Mormon' mission was to incorporate as many as possible into their ideal society, but in order to be a part of that society, those people would have to abandon other forms of identity. Nineteenth-century Mormonism did not allow for cultural difference. Mormonism served as a way of life that was more than just a religion. By the 1870's, they were geographically isolated in Utah and by that point, in many ways, their ideal society was achieved there.

However, this cultural difference allows the analysis of gender to come to new conclusions. Investigating the establishment of gender in a culture so vastly different from the Protestant American way necessitates new frameworks to understand that establishment; these

frameworks can be applied to gender outside of the context of Mormonism to try to understand it. Furthermore, this investigation provides distinct cultural markers that explain some of the contradictions of gender explained differently in Protestant American culture. The culture of Mormonism created an important mirror that ought to be held up to the rest of the world, but also that ought to be peered into on its own.

Chapter one of this thesis introduces the concept of women creating limiting frameworks to understand their world and argues that this desire to understand was a liberating intention. Documents written by non-Mormon women like Lydia Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Hale, and Catharine Beecher show how those women established gender via the 'domestic ideal' to understand their Protestant, American culture. These women argued that they were meant to be daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, but they could derive fulfillment and societal importance from these roles. Non-Mormon women used this domestic ideal to argue for women's social, legal, and political rights. Then, the chapter delves into articles from the *Exponent* to show how Mormon women played into the same rhetoric to establish gender. This chapter analyzes excerpts from writings by both non-Mormon and Mormon women in which the author argues educational rights ought to be expanded for women so they could be better daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. Upon seeing the similarities between the goals and strategies of these two groups, this chapter poses the question: why did these two groups find themselves so opposed? Non-Mormon anti-polygamy novels and Mormon articles from the *Exponent* show that these women established gender to navigate how they related across cultures.

Chapter two of this thesis explores how Mormon women established gender to navigate how they related within their own culture. Articles from the *Exponent* show Mormon women defining their own culture, beginning to weave metaphors of what it meant to be a woman, and

pointing out distinct cultural markers that provided them with gender identity. The analysis of these articles shows that women's experiences of Mormonism in 1872-1890 were based upon a 'pioneer identity,' plural marriage, social order, intracultural gendered communities, women's suffrage and other legal/political rights, and close mother-child bonds. Chapter two seeks to explore the qualities Mormon women attributed to themselves as a result of their culture. Within Mormon society, women were able to acquire divorce from their husbands, they had the right to own property independently of their husbands, and they even had the right to vote. The gender hierarchies of Mormonism actually allowed for more of a legal and political grey area between the genders than non-Mormon women experienced.

However, the third chapter argues that the grey area Mormon women inhabited did not extend fully into society or culture, and that Mormon women created limiting frameworks to understand how they related to each other and to themselves. The judgement they faced as a result of their gender within Mormonism meant that often, they were only truly heard amongst each other. This chapter thus argues that Mormon women established gender to understand the way they related to Mormon men and to Mormon women: they created a community of women because of the way they related to men. The Mormon doctrine of an incorruptible, divine human body was not the case for women, who felt discomfort and shame upon maturity inhabiting bodies that their society no longer viewed as capable. Mormon women experienced tight-knit intrapersonal bonds as a result of the gendered status they held within their society that allowed them to talk about themselves most freely and explicitly with each other. In these interpersonal bonds, Mormon women understood themselves intrapersonally: they explored their relationships to their own bodies, which influenced how they related to other bodies in and outside their culture.

Navigating the establishment of Mormon womanhood from 1872-1890 in the *Exponent* shows how Mormon women related to their outer world, their inner world, and themselves. This thesis analyzes the thoughts, feelings, and desires of a complex sociocultural grouping, and asks the reader to question their own attitudes towards gender and culture. The rhetoric of Mormon womanhood in the *Exponent* and the culture from which it stemmed have implications for understanding both "the rights of the women of Zion, and the rights of the women of all nations."[8]

[8] This motto appears as the headline on many issues of the *Exponent*, such as Anonymous. "Front Cover." *Woman's Exponent*. July 15, 1880. Accessed 4/25/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_9_Issue_4-21&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron

## Limitation: Reinterpreting the Domestic Ideal

Nineteenth-century womanhood created agency through contradiction. A woman's identity was based upon the roles she played in the family as daughter, sister, wife, and/or mother. However, many women did not imagine these spheres on a vertical plane. Women who argued for social change saw themselves as equals to men, and instead established the spheres on a horizontal plane. A woman could not be anything that a man could be; but a man could not be anything that a woman could be. Through the roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother, women realized the confinements that patriarchal society placed upon them. Women did not want to change these roles. Rather, women wanted to expand upon these roles. They argued that women could be better daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers if men gave the same social, political, legal, and educational rights to women as they did to men. Women explored questions they had about the spaces they inhabited in the world by framing them through the lens of how gaining rights in an arena would make women better daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. Women's educational rights was a hallmark feature of their vision for social change because an educated woman could better provide for the moral education of her husband and children. Women created a codified language that used the domestic ideal to argue for women's educational rights.

Mormon women drew upon the same concept of putting forth non-traditional ideas to expand upon traditional ideals and they played into the same codified language to fight for women's education, but these groups were not aligned. Part of the formation of the domestic ideal in American society has to do with the fact that Protestant morals were increasingly becoming part of American culture, and within that culture, the Protestant nuclear family allowed women a great deal of agency. Thus, despite having similar goals for women's rights in society, non-Mormon women and Mormon women found themselves at odds. After introducing

the concept of liberation through limitation that this thesis will continue to draw upon, this chapter will analyze the similarities in the goals and strategies of both groups of women in their fight for women's educational rights through their newspaper articles, novels, and guidebooks. Then, this chapter will analyze the dislike these groups of women had for each other despite their similarities. This chapter establishes the foundation needed to analyze the cultural differences of Mormonism that inspired this dislike.

Non-Mormon women themselves played a part in limiting their societal identities to roles within the family. They imagined the spheres as clearly cut with no crossover. Lydia H. Sigourney, a popular female author of the century, limited the role of woman as someone selflessly devoted to her husband within the home in her book *Whisper to a Bride.*[1] She wrote that upon marriage, a woman "hath promised to be no longer her own, [renouncing] self, as the aim of her existence."[2] As a daughter, a woman did what her parents willed; as a wife, she did what her husband willed; and as a mother, she did what her children willed. Sigourney's ideology centered on the concept that women were never devoted to their own wills, but they were always devoted to the wills of others. Sigourney encouraged her reader to "consider the sphere in which thou art placed, as the one in which God willeth thee to be."[3] She saw these roles as God-ordained, and thus, unchangeable. Deviating from these roles would have been to deviate from one's holy purpose. Sigourney pointed out that in housekeeping and wifehood "lies the secret of woman's happiness, more than in the haunts of pleasure, or the giddiness of mirth."[4] A woman was not to explore the potential for fulfillment outside of the family, as the family was her sphere.

---

[1] Mary Beth Norton. Introduction to "The Cult of Domesticity." *Major Problems in American Women's History.* (New York: D.C Health and Company), 112.
[2] Lydia H. Sigourney. "Home." 1850. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 113.
[3] Lydia Sigourney. "Home." 113.
[4] Lydia Sigourney. "Home." 114.

The editor of the popular women's magazine *Godey's Lady's Book*, Sarah Josepha Hale, similarly defined how women lived out the roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. As daughter, woman had a "loving eye… [and a] soft arm."[5] As sister, she had "[a] winning smile… [and acted] patiently."[6] As a wife, she was "angel-like."[7] Finally, as a mother, she was "pure."[8] A woman was to be soft, beautiful, patient, loving, and moral. She was to be rational in emotional expression, graceful and refined, and a moral guide to her husband and children. Hale separated 'man' from 'woman' distinctly in her description of brother and sister. She saw a boy as "wild as a colt, o'er prairies bounding free… spurning the rein authority would fling," whereas a girl had a "winning smile" and prompted "visions of angel beauty."[9] Hale, like Sigourney, defined the boundaries separating man and woman as insurmountable.

However, women like Sigourney and Hale did not think that the pure, graceful, and selfless nature of women made them inferior. When women discussed the separate spheres, they did not do so in a hierarchical way. In fact, women were able to assume an agency within the nineteenth-century American domestic ideal that could only be accessed by them due to the rigidity of the separate spheres. In the same chapter from her book, Sigourney told the imagined bride-to-be reader that she was "about to enter this sanctuary [of marriage], and to become a priestess at its altar."[10] Marriage was an agency-granting concept for women because it allowed them to take on a role that was ordained by God. By being wives, women were fulfilling their purpose on earth. Sigourney argued in this statement that wifehood was akin to holiness, and women could achieve purity, sanctity, and grace as wives (since they could not be priests). She

---

[5] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 1845. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 114.
[6] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 115.
[7] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 115.
[8] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 115.
[9] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 115.
[10] Lydia H. Sigourney. "Home," 1850. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 113.

wrote that a woman should educate herself so that she could be a better wife and housekeeper, and that upon doing so, "the wings of the guardian spirits [would] enfold [her] bosom, and give [her] strength from above."[11] A woman could be venerated by being a daughter and sister, but more so, by being a wife and mother. While men also derived identity through the roles of son, brother, father, and husband, the way society defined holiness/fulfillment for them was through their roles outside the family.[12]

Sarah Josepha Hale followed the same concept of women's roles being unique sources of fulfillment and agency. When she described the role of the sister, each of her limiting statements was contradicted by a liberating statement. The aforementioned 'winning smile' "will bring / a change o'er all [the brother's] nature." Hale argued that though a woman looked prettier with a smile, that smile was a way she exerted influence. The sister's 'angelic beauty' "may summon [angels] to be [her brother's] guide / Our savior listened to a sister's prayer, / when, 'Lazarus, from the tomb come forth!' he cried."[13] A woman's expression of her femininity was a way to acquire agency.

Women recognized gender inequality and conceived their rights by questioning their roles in society. In another article from *Godey's Lady's Book,* Sarah Josepha Hale pointed out that there was an inequal distribution of privilege between genders in the nineteenth century. She

---

[11] Lydia Sigourney. "Home." 114.

[12] However, this did not necessarily mean that their only focus was of societal good; in fact, Russell Stevenson points out in "Manly Virtue: Defining Male Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism" that American society was quick to dismiss men who were too involved in 'public affairs' like government, economics, and business because they did not have enough of a focus on virtue and morality. This is how women were able to modulate society to explain their role: women ought to mollify the male tendency to gravitate towards public affairs by making them more moral. There was a contradiction in what it meant to be a man in the nineteenth century as well. A man was to be virtuous and moral, but these were qualities that only woman could provide for him. Men were confused about where to draw their societal role from as well; hence, they would later participate in Progressivism that was not codified by femininity. Russel Stevenson. "Manly Virtue: Defining Male Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* 47, No. 1 (Spring 2014), 48-82.

[13] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Empire of Woman." 1845. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 115.

wrote that "men have been busying themselves these six thousand years nearly to improve society. They have… conferred on their own sex all the advantages which power, wealth, and knowledge have bestowed."[14] Here, Hale recognized the patriarchal nature of the society she lived in and pointed out that something was wrong with it. She wrote that "the mass of mankind are very ignorant and very wicked… because the mother… has been degraded by men from her high office."[15] Hale did not just point out that there was something wrong with society, but she also argued that the way to fix this was by granting women the same educational opportunities as men. She wrote that "if half the effort and expense had been directed to enlighten and improve the minds of females which have been lavished on the other sex, we should now have a very different state of society."[16] She pointed out that society privileged access to resources based on gender – here, that resource came in the form of education. Hale argued that women ought to have been able to know just as much as a man could. With her argument, Hale pointed to the possibility of women serving the same roles in society as men.

Catharine Beecher, a household advice author, wrote similarly that women were barred by society from the knowledge and education that was crucial to their contribution to that society. She wrote in a letter to her reader that she had "been as cruelly treated as the Israelites were by Pharaoh… [because] neither your parents, teachers, or husband have trained you for the place you fill, nor furnished you with the knowledge or assistance needed to enable you to meet all the complicated and untried duties of your lot."[17] Furthermore, though, Beecher recognized that women were held to an unachievable standard and offered a new standard for women to measure themselves. Beecher argued that a woman could do this if she would "first… make up

[14] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Maternal Instruction." 1845. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 116.
[15] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Maternal Instruction." 116.
[16] Sarah Josepha Hale. "Maternal Instruction." 116.
[17] Catharine Beecher. "Words of Comfort for a Discouraged Housekeeper." 1863. In Mary Norton. *American Women's History.* 117.

your mind that it is never your duty to do anything more than you can… it is all that man should require… [then] make a selection of… things you will persevere in having done as well as they can be done, and let these be only so many as you feel sure you can succeed in… then make up your mind that all the rest must go along as they do."[18] Beecher encouraged women in these statements to define success for themselves within the domestic setting. She encouraged them to start thinking about their unique capabilities under the pretext of housekeeping. She, like Hale, pointed out that society was barring women from education based upon their gender, and that women ought to have been able to know all that a man could. Though her solution for women was defined within the home and her relations to her family members, Beecher still provided an opportunity for women to think about what they were capable of, what they wanted to do, and how they wanted to interact with society.

The concept of a limiting ideal providing liberation is not a new one in historiography. Barbara Welter coined this the "cult of true womanhood," later becoming the "cult of domesticity."[19] Caroll Smith Rosenberg argued that women were able to foster close relationships that only they could access within their domestic sphere.[20] Laura Edwards explains that until these feminist scholars like Welter and Smith Rosenberg, historiographers had been "trapped within the very century [they] sought to explain" because they divided society into two gendered spheres and made no effort to delve into their connections. [21] She argues that historiographers placed a label of forward-thinking ideals upon the public sphere (and thus, to men) and traditional ideals upon the private (and thus, to women). In reality, Edwards argues,

---

[18] Catharine Beecher. "Words of Comfort for a Discouraged Housekeeper." 118.
[19] Barbara Welter. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 151-174.
[20] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-30.
[21] Laura F. Edwards. "Gender and the Changing Roles of Women." From *A Companion to 19th-century America. Blackwell Companions to American History.* Edited by Barney, William. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 224.

women were able to assume a unique and exclusive agency within domesticity.[22] They held a "special knowledge of… all things domestic" upon which they established gender identity.[23] Women established an exclusive, strategic language in which they could tap into the domestic ideal to make arguments about how society should look.

This concept of expanding upon gender roles without fundamentally changing them also applied to Mormon women. Mormon women had a similar ideal of domesticity as their American counterparts, but the emphasis on women gaining agency through their roles as mothers played out according to Mormon societal vocabulary, making their ideologies seem different. Lawrence Foster, one of the few non-Mormon historians of Mormonism, writes that Mormon women "[emphasized] that the family and related kinship ties were the key to all growth and development, not only in this life but also throughout all eternity, [giving] new status and dignity to women's role in the family," just like their anti-polygamist counterparts.[24] Mormon women played into the domestic ideal in a significant way. They held the same value in daughterhood, sisterhood, wifehood, and motherhood as non-Mormon women. Just like non-Mormon women, Mormon women established a limiting view of femininity defined by her roles within the family.

The *Exponent* did not fall short in providing examples of the limitations of the Mormon domestic ideal. 'Nannie World' began her 1880 article with the statement: "if there is one place more like heaven than another, it is a bright, sunshiny home; where love is the ruling element,

[22] Laura Edwards. "Gender and the Changing Roles of Women." 230.
[23] Laura Edwards. "Gender and the Changing Roles of Women." 226.
[24] Lawrence Foster. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 8.

and where each one's aim is to promote the happiness of the other members of the family."[25] The author used the language of Mormon celestial glory to esteem the home. She went on to say more unapologetic things like "home is the birthplace of good and evil."[26] She characterized mother-child and overarching parent-child relationships by encouraging parents to listen to their children. She wrote, "a mother or father's notice and appreciation of a child's wants and presence should never be overlooked."[27] In these statements, Nannie World challenged the stereotype of Mormon families as being strange, cold, and immoral. A Mormon family experienced the same close ties as a Protestant family. A Mormon woman derived the same strength from her roles as mother and wife as a non-Mormon woman. Mormon mothers loved their children just as much as Protestant mothers did, and their love for their families did not arise from the hypnosis that non-Mormon women argued for. Though the author did expand this article to both mothers and fathers, she ended by gendering the role of parent in terms of which parent has a greater influence on the home. "All our great men and women," she wrote, "who have obtained notoriety for their works, say that to home, and most of all to their mothers, is due the credit for the fame they have gained. Then you, parents, are the builders of our characters, and our lives."[28] Nannie World viewed the role that women played as wives and mothers intrinsic to the wellbeing of society just as non-Mormon women did.

'Aunt Ruth' emphasized the importance of the home to the roles of Mormon women in society. She wrote that a woman was only "complete" upon "the uniting of woman with man."[29] "Woman's true sphere," she argued, "… is wifehood and motherhood… [and her] advancement

---

[25] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent*, June 1, 1880. Accessed 2/8/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_9_Issue_1-23&fromPage=fullText
[26] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent,* 1880.
[27] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent,* 1880.
[28] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent,* 1880.
[29] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent*, 1880.

is dependent still upon these two conditions and is inseparably connected."[30] A woman in Aunt Ruth's sphere was someone who was a wife and a mother, and no one else. She stated "[woman's] desires, her hopes, her ambitions, if at all correct, are decidedly womanly: and when she assumes anything – either in speech or conduct – that does not legitimately belong to her she unsexes herself."[31] By defining every action of women being intrinsically tied to this sphere, Aunt Ruth made no space for women who did not adhere to the ideals she sets forth. Aunt Ruth defined more attributes that women were or were not to have. She wrote that women ought not "to enter the political arena" because of its "cunning, chicanery, fraud and corruption,"[32] attributes which a woman, thus, must not have. She said that "a woman would make a very poor marshal, sheriff, or policeman, or constable… [because of] her physical inferiority."[33] Women ought not serve in court as judge or jury according to Aunt Ruth; nor may they become surgeons or scientists. Yet, Aunt Ruth wrote that women were excellent educators and nurses. She argued that more opportunity should have been offered to women through those career paths.

Like non-Mormon women, Mormon women argued that wives and mothers needed more educational opportunities so that they could better provide for society. Author 'F.S.' wrote an article that poses some important questions about the role that Mormon women played in society based on how she adhered to the standards society set for her. She wrote that women had become "too fond of amusement and admiration; pleasure, to many seems to be the chief aim," but that was only because of "their education… Instead of reading history, they read novels; instead of going to lectures; they go to the theatre and instead of learning science, they learn to play the

---

[30] 'Nannie World.' "The Influence of Home." *Woman's Exponent*, 1880.
[31] 'Aunt Ruth.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent.* September 1, 1887. Accessed 2/ 11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_16_Issue_4-6&fromPage=fullText
[32] 'Aunt Ruth.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent,* 1887.
[33] 'Aunt Ruth.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent,* 1887.

piano."[34] Here, she established two spheres of education: one was of history, lectures, and science, and the other was of novels, theatre, and piano. Yet, she argued that the inaccessibility of these spheres was wrong. She wrote that "it is the duty of us all, to make our lives rich in good works… [you must] sacrifice self-love for the love of usefulness, and you will discover powers within yourselves of which you have never dreamed;" by accessing the sphere of history, lectures, and science, women could contribute better to their society. [35] Furthermore, her concept of the spheres of education served as a metaphor for the spheres of society. When she argued that women ought to be allowed to learn from the sphere of history, lectures, and science, F.S. questioned the gendered spheres. These sorts of arguments analyzed the spheres as having the potential to be a Venn diagram. In these statements, Mormon women began to build a bridge that a person of any gender could cross by nature of being human. The emphasis in this sentence ought to be on 'began,' for Mormon women certainly were nowhere near wanting to erase or even muddle the gender divisions of society. Mormon women argued that a woman still ought to act like a woman and a man still ought to act like a man, but they ought to have at least some of the same rights. The bridge was not meant to erase the separate bodies that it connected; the bridge was merely meant to allow the separate bodies to interact more efficiently.

This comparison of non-Mormon women's newspaper articles, guidebooks, and novels to Mormon women's articles in the *Exponent* shows that Mormon and non-Mormon women shaped similar visions for social change through similar visions of the domestic ideal. Historian Kathy Marquis argues that "these two cultures [middle-class eastern gentiles and lower-class Mormon pioneers], which saw their respective values as antithetical… [chose] roles and values for women

[34] 'F.S.' "Usefulness." *Woman's Exponent,* June 1, 1875. Accessed 5/9/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area+documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_4_issue_1-6&fromPage=fullText
[35] 'F.S.' "Usefulness." *Woman's Exponent,* 1875.

so fundamentally the same."[36] Both groups of women saw their roles as mothers and wives. Neither group argued that women should enter the professional world (except as educators or maybe nurses) or receive equal pay. They wanted to expand the role that woman played in society rather than fundamentally change it. Marquis says that "the furor over what form [the role of woman] took (monogamy vs. polygamy) pales before the consistent nineteenth-century conviction that its content should never be altered."[37] The only difference in the ideologies of Mormon and non-Mormon women was how they put woman's sphere into practice; both groups envisioned woman in the same role.

Yet, the persistent linkage of Protestant ideals to American culture in the second half of the nineteenth century caused these two groups of women to see their ideals at odds. Colleen McDannell in *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* lays out the ways in which Protestant families experienced change in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though Protestantism was extremely fractured with many different sects, Americans who identified as Protestant Christians were able to unite in their Christian ideology that the home was the source of all goodness. Domestic architecture became influenced by Protestantism: housing designs "expressed the character of the family, and they shaped that character."[38] A new emphasis emerged on making mother-child bonds like Mary and Jesus instead of having a lengthy extended family, and it meant that Protestant women served in a guiding role for their children like God for His followers.[39] The Protestant, American family was small and closer than ever

[36] Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell. *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States.* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 179.
[37] Wendy Chmielewski et. al. *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States.* 179.
[38] Colleen McDannell. *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 22.
[39] Colleen McDannell. *The Christian Home in Victorian America.* 127.

before, and it constituted an emerging culture of Protestant family values in America.[40] In a rapidly modernizing age, the goal of family no longer was creating a large household that could withstand disease and/or carry on a lineage; the goal of family now was creating a tightly-bound unit of good, Protestant morals. American culture was becomingly increasingly defined by this Protestant domestic ideal. The new concept of the nuclear family created an America in which "women and children [were] the focus of the family, and men [existed] on the periphery." Non-Mormon women thus could argue that Mormonism was a villain that lured women from the nuclear family because Mormonism was not Protestantism.

There was only space for one wife as head of household in the Protestant ideal family. Monogamy was key to the Protestant domestic ideal, and thus, non-Mormon women saw Mormons and their polygamy as a threat to their culture. There was a contrast in the nineteenth century between what it meant to be an American woman and what it meant to be a Mormon woman that stemmed from the way these women related to their culture's concept of the family. This contrast upset non-Mormon women. The American, Protestant woman was involved in a tightly-knit unit of family in which she was the head of domestic affairs; the Mormon woman was involved in a large, extended family in which Mormon doctrine stated it was the man's responsibility for instilling good values in his family.[41] This threat to their way of life motivated each group of women to collectivize against the other based on a perceived cultural difference that neither actually understood.

---

[40] This statement is not to say that Protestantism was the only contributor to American identity. McDannell's book analyzes both Protestant and Catholic homes. She points out that scholars are quick to deny the importance of Catholicism to American culture. Similarly, Mormonism was important to American culture. Just because American society did not embrace these faith traditions or consider them part of their identity does not mean that they were not important to how America progressed as a society.

[41] See *Doctrine and Covenants*, 132, 64, 245: "If any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then she shall believe and administer unto him."

Women's anti-polygamist campaigns flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century, and they served as places for non-Mormon women to think about the rights of women within their domestic ideal.[42] There were many examples of non-Mormon women collectivizing against Mormon women based on the cultural threat of Mormonism that came in the form of novels and newspaper articles. From 1855 to 1856, the first four anti-polygamist novels were published successively that would inspire others: *Boadicea* by Alfreda Eva Bell, *Female Life Among the Mormons* by Maria Ward, *The Prophets* by Orvilla Belisle, and *Mormon Wives* by Metta Victoria Fuller. Though *Boadicea* was less than 100 pages, the other three novels were 400 to 500-pages each of murder, hypnosis, treason, and 'romantic' notions. The plot behind each novel was that a woman was seduced by a mysterious Mormon man whom she married and followed into Mormonism. After a lengthy journey across the continent in which she experiences the horrors of Mormonism, she managed to escape. Each book was based upon its predecessors, and the authors obviously plagiarized sections from each other.[43] These novels were popular literature.

---

[42] See Nina Baym. *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870.* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 18 and 264-275. Historic literary critic Nina Baym categorizes different eras and types of woman's fiction, and one of these categories is 1850's propaganda literature. She writes that "a number of novels written during [the 1850's] defined themselves as woman's fiction but were in fact propaganda novels for a variety of causes supposed to be of special interest to women," (see page 264). She even mentions Metta Victoria Fuller as one of these propaganda-fiction authors, a woman who was an author of one of the first anti-polygamy novels. Baym argued that these propaganda novels were meant to elicit a response from women so that they would go forth and advocate for a cause by drawing on a 'pragmatic' feminism based upon the domestic ideal.

[43] For example, in *Boadicea*: "[Mormon] females… are decidedly inferior beings… the women are treated as but little better than slaves; they are in fact white slaves, are required to do all the most servile drudgery; are painfully impressed with their nothingness and utter inferiority… and are frequently… subjected to personal violence and various modes of corporeal punishment" 54; and in *Female Life:* "[Women] are decidedly inferior beings, created to minister to the wants and passions of men… Hence the females were treated little better than slaves, were required to do all the drudgery, were frequently subjected to corporeal punishment, and painfully impressed with a sense of their inferiority in a thousand ways." 103. Alfreda Eva Bell. *Boadicea: The Mormon Wife. Life-Scenes in Utah.* (Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Buffalo: Arthur R. Orton, 1855). Edited and annotated by Austin, Michael and Parshall, Ardis E. (Draper, Utah: Greg Cofford Books), 2016.

In each of these novels, the author made an argument that Mormonism was evil, that Mormon women were hypnotized, and that their society needed to be saved by the Protestant domestic ideal. In *Female Life,* the domestic ideal played out in the story of Ms. Clarke, who abandoned her family to become a Mormon man's polygamous wife. Her first husband sought her out and cursed her for the moral wrong she had done. Ms. Clarke was already in a poor state of mind, and upon her first husband's appearance, she fainted and seemed very confused. Ward wrote that she was "clearly suffering a violent mental conflict," making it seem as if some sort of power was taking hold of her, and that she was hypnotized by the allures of Mormonism.[44] The domestic ideal appeared in the way Ward wrote about the duty of woman and Clarke's deviance from it. Ward went on to point out Clarke's hypnosis by saying that Clarke should have been allowed to believe in Mormonism "if she wishes to… do so," but that her role before Mormonism was something that "she assumed voluntarily."[45] Ward used words like 'voluntarily' to describe Clarke's familial duties as woman, emphasizing the involuntary nature of Clarke's conversion. Here, Ward drew upon the domestic ideal to evoke a response from her reader; she was able to horrify and inspire them by depicting Mormonism as foreign and Mormon women as sans-agency.

In contrast, Mormon women argued that non-Mormon women needed to be saved by the culture of Mormonism through the liberating domestic ideal. The *Exponent* had multiple articles addressed to 'gentiles,' and furthermore, to 'gentile ladies,' that challenged the womanhood of non-Mormon women despite the similarities in ideology that they shared. Mary F. in "Letter to a Gentile Lady" thanked 'Mrs. Scott,' a non-Mormon woman, for her kind words in support of the

---

[44] Maria Ward. *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experiences / By the Wife of a Mormon Elder, recently from Utah*. (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1857), 45.

[45] Maria Ward. *Female Life Among the Mormons.* 45.

Mormon cause. These kind words from Mrs. Scott were probably not in support of plural marriage, but more likely these words challenged the stereotype that Mormon women faced as captives hypnotized by their husbands and church leaders. Though she was thankful and though she called non-Mormon women her sisters, Mary F. spent most of her letter explaining why Mrs. Scott needed Mormonism and ought to convert. She said that "we do not feel as those who are not of our faith, because we know that if our children are faithful to the laws laid down in this Church… they will be saved from the sins and corruptions of the outside world, that they will be preserved pure and spotless, living lives of honor and peace. I wish you could believe as we do."[46] She said, "we know that [many]… Gentile wives could tell tales of abuse, heart burnings and jealousies, more cruel than was ever known by the great majority of Mormon women, for the simple reason, we have perfect confidence in the virtues of our husbands, and the man who would abuse a wife would be dealt with by those having authority in the Church."[47] Mary F. played into the very debasing of non-Mormon women that she angrily claimed Mormon women were subject to. She made them seem like jealous women with unfaithful husbands living in a corrupt world, and she championed her cause as the only just one. Furthermore, just as non-Mormon women wanted to cure Mormon women from their injustices with Protestant culture, Mary F. wanted to cure non-Mormon women from their injustices with Mormonism.

On both sides, the cultural identity of the author influenced the way that she interacted with the social group she was defining. Mormon women may have agreed that a woman ought to be a daughter, a sister, a mother, and a wife but that she ought not be limited by those limiting roles; but, their social identity as Mormons overpowered their identity as women in these

[46] 'Mary F.' "Letter to a Gentile Lady." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1882. Accessed 2/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_11_Issue_1-3&fromPage=markedList

[47] 'Mary F.' "Letter to a Gentile Lady." *Woman's Exponent.*

interactions. Non-Mormon women saw Mormon women's Mormonism as more important than their womanhood, and vice versa. Both groups prioritized sociocultural identity over gender identity. So, while Mormon women did play a part in writing some of the stories of the common American past, their Mormon identity caused them to write their own stories of their American past.

This chapter introduced the concept of liberation through limitation, and it explored the ways that both non-Mormon and Mormon women aligned with the domestic ideal to argue for change. The analysis of how these two groups interacted with the domestic ideal shows that non-Mormon and Mormon women were motivated by many of the same things, but that these groups passed judgements on each other because of cultural difference. The next step of this thesis is to analyze what those cultural differences were. Womanhood outside of the context of Mormonism in the nineteenth century has already been broken down by scholars like Welter, Smith-Rosenberg, and Edwards, and scholars like Colleen McDannell have even made efforts to think about how women derived agency from the limitations of Protestant Christian culture. This thesis will now think about the agency women derived from Mormon culture as seen in the *Exponent*, which has not been of the same interest to feminist scholars. The next chapter will analyze the aspects of Mormon culture which granted agency to Mormon women.

## Liberation: Reinterpreting Mormon Women's Culture

There were limiting values within Mormonism that created cultural difference, but Mormon women worked through these limiting cultural values to establish agency. This chapter analyzes the ways that Mormon women and Mormonism itself reinterpreted womanhood from the 1870's to the 1890's as a gender identity capable of legal, political, and social action. Mormon women tried in the *Woman's Exponent* to answer the problems they had within their society, but they also pointed out that there were values within their own culture that granted them rights that non-Mormon women did not have to the same extent. Through the persecutions that Mormons faced, they created a sacred story that emphasized the importance of community and of equality within that community. A community of equals living and worshipping together under the oppression of religious persecution meant that Mormon women played social, legal, and political roles that were not daughter, sister, wife, or mother. Mormon women framed these liberating rights through cultural values such as plural marriage and the Mormon domestic ideal. Within the all-encompassing nature of Mormonism, women held rights like divorce, the ability to own property independently of their husband, and the right to vote that allowed them to play social, legal, and political roles in their community.

Mormonism itself was a limiting framework through which liberated gender identity could be reinterpreted, for it was more than just a religious institution.[1] The practice of Mormonism established a cultural community beyond religion, and that community was nourished by women's agency. To understand Mormon culture, one first must understand the

[1] An attitude of nuance is necessary for the liberation/limitation framework. This statement does not seek to argue that Mormonism nor that motherhood/wifehood was inherently limiting. Instead, this statement seeks to argue that Mormonism was a set of ideas only accessible to some which Mormon women worked through instead of against. The concept of working upon, out of, or through something instead of against something is what the liberating/limiting framework points towards. The concept of limitation is defined simply by humans 'packaging' ideas and setting qualifiers to navigate different cultural concepts.

scope which Mormonism as an institution had in daily life. Lawrence Foster – one of the few non-Mormon, Mormon historians - argues that "Mormonism is both a religion and a culture system. Seeing itself as a church not a sect, it attempts to encompass the whole of life."[2] Mormon women saw the ideals of Mormonism as something that provided its woman followers liberation; however, they limited the identity of Mormon to someone who could adhere wholeheartedly to its strict values. In the article "Letter to a Gentile Lady" that was introduced in chapter one, Mary F. renegotiated Mormonism as something that could liberate non-Mormon women from social, legal, and political limitations. She wrote that Mormon women "would testify of their happiness and contentment, declaring that they would not exchange the sweet peace they enjoy, through obedience to the laws of the Church, for all the riches… [nor] for the queenly dominions pertaining to this earth."[3] She stated that Mormon women did not "see the miseries of life that [non-Mormon women] see, nor do we hear of them among our own people," referring to the social, legal, and political rights of non-Mormon women.[4] She argued that Mormon women had "perfect confidence in the virtues of [their] husbands, and the man who would abuse a wife would be dealt with by those having authority in the Church."[5] Mary F. in this article held perfect confidence that should she be repressed in her role as wife or mother (such as in the cases of domestic abuse, marital unhappiness, and so on) her Mormon community had the legal capability and desire to help her fix that repression so that she could best fulfill those roles.

One of Mormonism's most crucial pillars was that it tried to do whatever it could to foster a sense of community amongst its members, including providing some liberating social,

---

[2] Lawrence Foster. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." (Journal of Mormon History 6, 1979), 6.
[3] 'Mary F.' "Letter to a Gentile Lady." *The Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1882. Accessed 2/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_11_Issue_1-3&fromPage=markedList
[4] 'Mary F.' "Letter to a Gentile Lady." *Woman's Exponent.*
[5] 'Mary F.' "Letter to a Gentile Lady." *Woman's Exponent.*

legal, and political rights to women. But before delving into those specific rights, one must understand how this pillar of community-building played a part in Mormon culture. According to Lawrence Foster, "the Mormons viewed themselves as a part of a literal New Israel, restoring the polygamous practices of the Hebrew patriarchs and dedicating themselves to the group with an almost tribal quality of total loyalty."[6] A large part of Mormon culture thus rested on the all-encompassing, 'Israelite' ideology created by their experiences. Mormons saw not only their church but also their community as being ordained by God. They created a church-centric lifestyle with its own history to which Mormons were intimately connected. Whereas sects of Christianity were separated from their sacred stories by thousands of years, early Mormons were active characters in their sacred stories. As a result, the non-Mormon historian of Mormonism Jan Shipps argues that "in replicating sacred story – Mormon history itself took on a sacred history… [a] salvation history."[7] They saw themselves as special, holy, and saved.

Mormons created their salvation history through the persecution they experienced, their exile from Nauvoo, and their physical journey through the frontier to settle in the intermountain west. Frontier life held value to Mormon women's liberated gender identity. In 1846, Mormons fled their settlement in Nauvoo, IL, facing extreme violence and persecution, creating an "epic story of… migration to the west, with… heroism, suffering, drama, disappointments, and ultimate much-deserved success."[8] In their migration, Mormons faced the harsh realities of the frontier like limited food and water, extreme weather, and disease. Once they reached what would become Salt Lake City, they faced the creation of a new society.

---

[6] Lawrence Foster, "Frontier Activism," 7.
[7] Jan Shipps. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 64.

[8] Lawrence Foster. *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*. (Illini Books ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 196.

The construction of Mormon society in Utah was something both men and women participated in as 'active' citizens, and women took up pioneer language just as much as men. In the *Exponent,* pioneer language appeared in the very first issue. One anonymous author (presumably the editor, who then was Lula Greene) said that the aim of the *Exponent* was "to speak for the women of Utah at large… who in a spirit of noble self-sacrifice have assisted to build up this prosperous community, many of them having borne severe privation and hardships in so doing, and who, while thus engaged laying the foundation of greatness for a growing commonwealth, have been slandered in the most malevolent manner."[9] Another author referred to Mormon women as "the hardy pioneers of the Great Basin."[10] Mormon women established themselves in these excerpts as 'noble' because they actively participated in the formation of their society. The status of pioneers allied the formation of their own gender identity with the formation of their Mormon community.

This pioneer language was not restricted to the initial issues of the *Exponent,* and it continued to be used through the 1890's. S. A. Fullmer wrote that Mormon women "faced the trials incident to finding a home in an unknown land."[11] Mormon women valued home, family, and community. "Home" in this context referred not just to the home that a mother ruled over, but also to home as the place in which one felt comfort. It was not so much a room with four walls and a roof with a family inside as it was a place in which the values one deemed important

---

[9] Anonymous. "Our Position." *Woman's Exponent*. June 1, 1872. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_1_Issue_1-14&fromPage=fullText

[10] Anonymous. "Statehood." *Woman's Exponent*. June 1, 1872. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. Anonymous. "Our Position." *Woman's Exponent*. June 1, 1872. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_1_Issue_1-14&fromPage=fullText

[11] S.A. Fullmer. "Essential Freedom." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1885. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_14_Issue_1-23&fromPage=markedList

took root. The Mormon concept of home in this time was twofold – the home of motherhood/wifehood and the home of personal identity – and this latter concept of home came from the physical journey that Mormons went through and the pioneer roles that they took up. An undertone of this pioneer language was the individual and the community's search for home, which made that concept a crucial part of understanding Mormon gender identity.

Not only did Mormon women take on pioneer language, but they took on physical pioneer roles that created liberated yet limited gender roles. These roles included farmers, "heads of households" in census records, financial management, and even professional roles in the medical field, in education, and as writers.[12] In a society where there was more work to be done than men to do it, Mormon women filled roles that many women in Eastern cities did not. Another article laid out the specific ways in which women participated in the formation of their society. The anonymous author wrote that "Utah was once a vast desert, and the first thing for the pioneers to do was to build homes and cultivate the earth, that the [necessities] of life might be provided; in those days, with no railroads, no roads of any kind… it was impossible to obtain supplies from any source than the earth."[13] The author argued that women were just as crucial to obtaining these necessities as men, saying that "whenever there is work to do the women – wives and mothers – stand by and aid the men – husbands and fathers. It is perfectly right that they should, and we always find they are pretty welcome, too."[14] The author showed frustration towards those who did not recognize Mormon women as pioneers and said "we claim Pioneer

[12] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 15.
[13] Anonymous. "The Women of Utah." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1888. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_17_Issue_1-19&fromPage=markedList
[14] Anonymous. "The Women of Utah." *Woman's Exponent*

Fathers and Pioneer *mothers* too."[15] Mormon women "toiled hard and long, building homes and cultivating the earth."[16] Thus, another role women took up was as farmers.

By the 1870's, Mormon women were not acting as liberated pioneers of a new world; yet, the hardy pioneer mother continued to define Mormon womanhood. Mormons had been in Salt Lake City for over twenty years, and they no longer had to take up settler roles. However, this pioneer identity was something that remained intrinsic to Mormon women's gender identity. The pioneer mother continued to act as a liberator of her religion under the limitation of religious persecution. She faced harsh judgement for her religion, and she stood against that judgment by building a Mormon kingdom. Furthermore, the pioneer mother was a liberator of the limitations of gender. She saw the limitations that gender created, and she navigated through those limitations according to her own desires, thoughts, feelings, and emotions in a way that felt liberating to her. By the period studied in this paper, the pioneer mother became an important metaphor within Mormon women's negotiation of gender identity. When Mormon women no longer had to act as pioneers of the intermountain west, they were pioneers of their social, legal, and political rights.

When they were no longer farmers or settlers of a new land, one role that the pioneer mother would continue to play through the period of this thesis was within the education system. One author wrote that "simultaneously with the constructing of homes, the subduing of lands, began educational work in Utah… [and] the first school teacher was a woman."[17] The way that the author talked about the first school teacher, Mary Jane Hammond, nee Dilworth, put the use of pioneer language into a tangible context. The author quoted Mrs. Rebecca Riter, Hammond's

[15] Anonymous. "The Women of Utah." *Woman's Exponent*
[16] Anonymous. "The Women of Utah." *Woman's Exponent*
[17] Anonymous. "The Women of Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

sister: “She was indeed a pioneer in all her movements after allying herself with the Church, in teaching, in helping to settle new countries, in the missionary field, in philanthropy, and even in her burial, being the first person laid away in the new graveyard at Huntsville.”[18] A pioneer woman in the Mormon context was any woman who contributed to the Mormon cause in a productive way. Her contribution could be by farming, as in the case of the “pioneer mothers,” or by education, missionary work, philanthropy, medicine, motherhood, wifehood, or more strangely, even being buried in the right place. Mormon women, as pioneers, had many sources of agency and strength that were not recognized by those who deemed them hypnotized polygamists.

Plural marriage was a limiting framework that provided liberation for women. Mormon women expressed support for the practice in the *Exponent,* but sometimes their expression seemed tinged with frustration at the system. M.E. Kimball expressed initial confusion but eventual support of the practice in her 1882 article. She stated that at first, she had trouble accepting polygamy, but changed her mind because although “plurality of wives [is] a self-sacrificing principle… the motive is a good one: it being to regenerate and improve society.”[19] She wrote that many would say “polygamy… forms ties more binding: causing greater unity of our faith.”[20] Kimball believed that those who suffered in plural marriage “depended too much upon their own strength to support them and their own wisdom to guide them.”[21] She argued that plural marriage was beneficial when husbands and wives were good in morals and adhered

[18] Anonymous. “The Women of Utah.” *Woman’s Exponent*
[19] Anonymous. “The Women of Utah.” *Woman’s Exponent*
[20] M.E. Kimball. “Plural Marriage and Unity.” *Woman’s Exponent.* June 1, 1882. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_11_Issue_1-11&fromPage=fullText
[21] M.E. Kimball. “Plural Marriage and Unity.” *Woman’s Exponent.*

wholeheartedly to the ideal.[22] Though she initially found fault, Kimball gave up her personal disdain for societal coherence. She was able to argue for this societal coherence because that society – with plural marriage – was able to provide social and political rights for women.

Plural marriage provided these women with the potential to play a social role within their culture beyond mothers and wives as upholders of virtue. Plural marriage was a way for men and women to obtain benefits in the afterlife and was something highly valued in Mormon society. Foster argues that "polygamous wives held higher status through association with the most influential men and through the sense of serving as religious and social models for others."[23] Plural marriage was used between families of higher status within the church to create ties and increase each other's status. Plural marriage was practiced primarily by well-to-do Mormon families to vie for status within the social order, but furthermore, within the afterlife.[24] Mormons renegotiated the institution of marriage to suit their needs in creating a goal-driven social order.[25] Plural marriage thus related back to the concept of pioneer culture in Mormonism; Mormons needed to build community, and one of their efforts to do so was via plural marriage to its leaders.[26] There was a de-individualization in this process that created families as units with clear goals, and this process was transferable to society. Plural marriage's promotion of reliance upon others to relieve pressure on the self in the microcosm of the family carried over to the macrocosm of Mormon society. People who entered plural marriage became esteemed bastions of morality. Women, as wives, were harbingers of celestial glory.

---

[22] M.E. Kimball. "Plural Marriage and Unity." *Woman's Exponent.*
[23] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality,* 211.
[24] Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity," 11.
[25] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality,* 210.
[26] The fact that polygamy was practiced more often by those of a higher socioeconomic and church status is important to recognize because it shows how some of these sources are biased. Did poor Mormons, less educated Mormons, and Mormons without societal status engage in plural marriage? Mormonism implied that there was no economic hierarchy, and that the church would help those that struggled; was this actually the case? The *Exponent* does not outrightly discuss this, and thus, one can assume that the arguments made in this thesis about Mormon women thus apply more to women of higher socioeconomic status.

Monogamy has long been the only accepted way in American culture to have a relationship, to have a family, and to love. Thus, accepting plural marriage as a valid family system was difficult (and continues to remain so). Women's happiness within this system has long been questioned. A study done on Mormon polygamy by Kimball Young tried to shed light onto the lived experiences of these women.[27] In his study of 110 plural marriages, Young wrote that "approximately 53 percent were highly successful or reasonably successful, 25 percent appeared moderately successful, and 23 percent experienced considerable to severe conflict."[28] Though it is uncomfortable to see that 23% of polygamous marriages in this study were subject to conflict, this is actually half the modern rate of divorce in America today.[29] Still, though, there is no way to know whether plural marriage provided these women with happiness, or whether it was actually as oppressive as the anti-polygamists made it seem. Furthermore, it is unfair to these women to try to question if something that has been used to oppress some groups was oppressive to them. However, the women in the *Exponent* wrote that plural marriage was part of their gender identity.

One legal right within plural marriage that granted Mormon women agency was the right to divorce, which women could access just as men could. Though "Mormon theology holds marriage sacred and provides little justification for divorce… Mormons instituted systems of

[27] Kimball Young, though related to Mormonism through Brigham Young, was a proponent for monogamy. He wrote the book *Isn't One Wife Enough* and in it, he expressed frustration at Mormon marriage practices and was not a believer himself. While he may have been related to Brigham Young, he certainly was not conducting this study as a method to support plural marriage, and he serves as a more objective source than a Mormon reporting on plural marriage. Kimball Young. *Isn't One Wife Enough: The Story of Mormon Polygamy.* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954).
[28] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality,* 211.
[29] The modern divorce rate fluctuates, but the American Psychological Association says that somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of all married couples in America divorce (American Psychological Association. *Divorce,* https://www.apa.org/topics/divorce/).

divorce that were simple, nonlegalistic, and participant-run."[30] Both Mormon men and women had the right to able to petition for civil and ecclesiastic divorce in the territory of Utah, and divorce was readily granted to those who petitioned for it regardless of gender. While Mormonism would often try to solve these conflicts first and tried to support families with struggling marital relations, "it acknowledged that irreconcilable couples were better off apart," and that Mormon social order could only thrive with happy marriages.[31] Though Mormonism had the space for divorce, those who acquired a divorce were encouraged to marry again. "The primary purpose of Mormon divorce was not to break up families but to encourage the remarriage of those who were already estranged from their spouses," and divorce was crucial to the promotion of social order.[32] This thesis' survey of the *Exponent* fell short in articles that advocated for a woman's right to divorce. Divorce was mentioned in these articles from the *Exponent* only in passing. Divorce may not have been a call to arms for Mormon women's gender identity, but it certainly was a source of their agency.

A liberating source of agency for Mormon women that was often written about in the *Exponent* was the right to hold property independently of their spouse, and the prohibition of dowries within Mormonism. In an 1881 response to a non-Mormon *Woman's Journal* article that depicted Mormon women as hypnotized and powerless, an anonymous author included an excerpt from the February 1872 "Act Concerning the Property Rights of Married Persons" within the territory of Utah. The act stated that "all property owned by either spouse before marriage, and that acquired afterward… is the separate property of that spouse by whom the same is so owned… and [that] property… may be held, managed, controlled, transferred and in any manner

[30] Kathryn M. Daynes. *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 143.
[31] Kathryn M. Daynes. *More Wives than One.* 143.
[32] Kathryn M. Daynes. *More Wives than One.* 143.

disposed of by the spouse so owning or acquiring it, without any limitation or restriction, by the reason of marriage."[33] Thus, Mormon women were able to hold property independently from their husbands before, during, and after marriage. The act also decreed that both male and female spouses could "sue or be sued, plead or be impleaded, or defend and be defended at law," and that "no right of dower shall exist or be allowed in this territory."[34] The author wrote that Mormon women had "the homestead privilege" that allowed them to be property owners, under which they were "required to pay taxes in the same proportion as men."[35] The dowry, she pointed out, "would deprive the plural wife of any privilege in sharing the property of her husband, and would debar her children from a share of the family estate. And while the law as it stands is [helpful for those in plural marriages], it is equally good for the single, individual wife."[36] In this article, the author laid out in explicit terms that Mormonism required women to have legal rights so that the social order could thrive. Plural marriage could not exist without a woman's right to divorce, to own property, to sue, or to petition otherwise; and thus, Mormon social order could not exist without these legal rights granted to women.

But perhaps the most important liberating political right that Mormon women held was the right to vote within the territory of Utah. Suffrage was a crucial pillar of Mormon womanhood, and it defined Mormon women's liberation until it was abolished with the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker act in a wave of anti-polygamy legislation.[37] In the same article that detailed

---

[33] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.* November 15, 1881. Accessed 5/11/19, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_10_Issue_12-11&pagenum=1&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron

[34] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

[35] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

[36] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

[37] Sarah Barringer Gordon points out that "the woman's vote in Utah highlighted the central problem of consent in a political culture that embraced individual choice as the basis of state power… [and that Mormon women's suffrage} served as a lightning rod for concerns about women's political participation and marriage... The woman's vote in Utah also created significant… for suffragists, whose failure to disaggregate polygamy and the franchise marked the

women's property rights, the author detailed the importance of the Mormon woman's right to vote. She wrote that "the women of Utah hold their political and social destiny largely in their own hands by means of the franchise."[38] Mormon women's right to vote was liberation. However, the author situated suffrage within the liberating/limiting framework, for she went on to say that Mormon women would "not be blackguarded into voting for men to hold office who have so little respect for honorable wives, mothers, and daughters."[39] A woman with the right to vote had the power to work towards laws that would better the rights of women in their roles as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. The author wrote that since Mormon women gained the right to vote, "they have labored… to educate both the women and the children of the Territory, to a proper understanding of the principles, and executive power of the government of the country, and a just realization of the importance of political equality."[40] Thus, as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, Mormon women were learning, teaching about, and playing active roles in politics.

Mormon women even argued that women should be able to hold public office, for the author stated that "when Utah has a Governor liberal enough towards women to sign the bill passed by the Legislature, to remove the only difficulty now in the way of their holding office, then there will be an opportunity to see what the suffrage has done towards qualifying women to fill important positions in the Territory, that is if the people should nominate and cast a majority

---

1880's as a low point in the woman suffrage movement." The practice of plural marriage among women who were liberated pointed out a hole in suffragist strategy: if women who did not practice monogamy were politically active, then they could not argue that a woman could better serve as a monogamous wife in her society if she had the right to vote. With the only women allowed to vote in society being those who were deemed by that society to be immoral and hypnotized, non-Mormons could tint suffrage with that negative image and argue for the disfranchisement of women. (Sarah Barringer Gordon. "`The Liberty of Self-Degradation': Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century.." *Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 [December 1996]: 816-817).

[38] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

[39] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

[40] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

of votes for a woman."[41] Women participated in politics as voters, and they sought to participate as politicians. One would expect the author to go on to state that woman politicians could balance out the "big business," cold-hearted attitudes of men with the feminine sensibility that their gender was meant to embody; however, the author does not use gendered language to describe women participating in politics. She wrote that "intelligent, consistent women will naturally vote for [women], who maintain the institution which they believe to be for the highest elevation of the human race."[42] She referred to women who participated in politics as "virtuous" and "highminded," and she argued that not only were Mormon women "independent in thought… but they are fast becoming educated in the intelligent expression of the views they hold on all subjects."[43] Not only were Mormon women voters, but they were independent, politically-minded thinkers, and their culture had space for them to think this way.

The author also pointed out in this article that part of Mormon women's political participation was that they would "attend political, Primary, and school meetings in their several respective districts."[44] Women's organizations within Mormonism served as places in which women thought about, talked about, and created their gender identity in their exercise of social, legal, and political rights. These organizations were women-founded and women-run. These groups were non-profit, charitable institutions that handled lots of money and played an important role in society. In doing so, these groups also provided spaces to discuss relevant issues on what role a woman ought to play in society. The Relief Society - the 'parent,' or more fittingly, 'mother' of these organizations - by the period investigated in this thesis was solidly established. The Relief Society was a charitable institution, the meetings of which were a place

[41] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*
[42] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*
[43] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*
[44] Anonymous. "Woman Suffrage in Utah." *Woman's Exponent.*

in which many women came together in community and would have discussed identity. They held their own (and vast amounts of) property and funded themselves.[45] One article argued that "one great object of [the Relief Society] was that the daughters of Zion might learn their duties as mothers and towards each other; treasuring up everything that was good, and overcoming all that was evil."[46] The Relief Society was firstly a charitable institution, but it also was a space in which women could negotiate gender identity within the Mormon community.

The Relief Society ran alongside other institutions like the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) and the Primary Association - two youth groups that were akin to Mormon scouting – in which young girls (and in Primary, young boys too) both conducted charity and were imbued with cultural values. In an 1881 issue of the *Exponent*, A. E. Bowen wrote on the Primary Association: "realizing that the time will come when these associations will stand forth a great and mighty host battling for truth, and they petition to God for blessings on those who organized them and placed them in a position where they could be taught in the laws of their Heavenly Father while they were young… Oh mothers… assist your children in their organizations and encourage them to attend their meetings, and also attend them

[45] The Relief Society held $46,822.24 in assets and was comprised of 12,000 members as of 1881 (Anonymous. "Relief Society Report." *The Woman's Exponent*, June 1, 1881). When calculating for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index, that amount is equivalent to over $1.2 million today. $1.2 million dollars may not be equivalent to the assets of a non-profit for women's rights as, say, the Girl Scouts of America, who cited in their most recent tax audit statement that they held $272.7 million in assets (Girl Scouts of the United States of America. "Consolidated Statements of Financial Position," *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Information Together with Report of Independent Certified Public Accountants,* September 2018, https://www.girlscouts.org/content/dam/girlscouts-gsusa/forms-and-documents/about-girl-scouts/facts/GSUSA-2018_Audited_Financial_Statements.pdf, 3). However, the Relief Society's assets adjusted for inflation today are much higher than that of some other religious women's rights organizations. For example, the National Council for Catholic Women in their most recent tax audit statement cited $692,242 in assets (National Council of Catholic Women. "Statement of Activities," *Financial Statements for the Year Ended December 31, 2017,* June 2018, https://www.nccw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/National-Council-of-Catholic-Women-December-2017-FINAL-AUDITED-FINANCIAL-STATEMENTS.pdf, 5). $692,242 would have been $26,847.09 in 1881: this amount was roughly half of what the Relief Society held. This comparative data illustrates the magnitude of the Relief Society.

[46] Anonymous. "Relief Society Reports." *Woman's Exponent,* June 1, 1873. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_1-20&fromPage=fullText

yourselves."[47] Bowen negotiated the roles these organizations played beyond charity; she established them as spaces in which gender identity could be interpreted, shaped, and understood.

Bowen's emphasis on encouraging mothers to attend the meetings of these organizations harkens back to the concept that Mormonism had the same limiting yet liberating focus on the family as the non-Mormon, Protestant domestic ideal. Chapter one explored how the Protestant nuclear family provided women with liberated agency by fulfilling roles akin to the Virgin Mary; here, the Mormon family provided Mormon women with liberated agency by fulfilling roles as pioneers promoting social order. However, this emphasis on children within the ideal played out differently according to Mormon societal vocabulary. Children had a special role to play in Mormonism because they "they provided an essential work force to help settle the new land and build up… Utah."[48] Children were vital to the promotion of a Mormon world. The more children women raised, the more virtuous Mormons there were to settle the intermountain west, the more missionaries there were to spread the cause, and the more Mormonism could grow. Just as anti-polygamist women stressed the role women could play in producing public figures and thus influencing the public world, Mormon women did the same in their own language. Mormon women "[emphasized] that the family and related kinship ties were the key to all growth and development, not only in this life but also throughout all eternity, [giving] new status and dignity to women's role in the family," just like their anti-polygamist counterparts.[49] Mormon women bought into the non-Mormon ideal in a significant way, but the importance of the mother-child

---

[47] A. E. Bowen. "Relief Society Reports: Samaria." *Woman's Exponent*, June 1, 1881. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_10_Issue_1-2&pagenum=2&queryId=&resultNum=&entries=&source=&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron&browseType=&expandtolevel=&expandId=&zoom=100

[48] Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 212.

[49] Lawrence Foster, "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity," 8.

relationship played out in Mormon terms. While the non-Mormon woman linked her motherhood to the Virgin Mary, the Mormon woman linked her motherhood to the Mormon social order that granted her social, legal, and political rights.

The *Exponent* did not fall short in providing examples of the Mormon familial ideal. In 1889, 'Lula' (possibly former editor Lula/Louisa Greene) urged mothers to spend one-on-one time with their children before any other duty. She wrote, "there is nothing like entering into the children's sports with them, to make them feel that they have your sympathies, no other way of controlling them so entirely by force of love."[50] One can see here the close ties that are encouraged even within families that may have engaged in plural marriage. Even though Lula pointed out that these mothers were tired and exhausted, she urged them to surround their children with love. She went on to say, "oh! Mothers. Be with your little ones all you can, while you may. It will pay you better than any other business you can possibly engage in."[51] This evidence could have come from any advocate of the pro-woman domestic ideal. Mormon families, even those that participated in plural marriage, held many of the same thoughts, feelings, and desires as non-Mormon families. Women in Mormon families wanted good relationships with their husbands, good relationships with their children, and good relationships with themselves just as women in non-Mormon families. Mormon women desired a sense of community within the home just as non-Mormon women did. Family was a cozy nest that protected and nurtured its inhabitants, and as mothers, many Mormon women experienced comfort, fulfillment, and happiness.

---

[50] Lula. "Our Children." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1889. Accessed 5/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_18_Issue_1-9&fromPage=markedList

[51] Lula. "Our Children." *Woman's Exponent.*

Analysis of articles from *The Woman's Exponent* demonstrates that Mormon women crafted a liberated yet limited gender identity both within and beyond the sociocultural roles of daughter, sister, wife, and mother. Mormon women were also teachers, nurses, but beyond those roles that could also be fulfilled by non-Mormons, Mormon women uniquely could be pioneers with many social, legal, and political rights. Now that the culture Mormon women stemmed from has been explored, one can see how both Mormon and non-Mormon women drew upon different cultures and different social, legal, and political rights to negotiate gender identity. Their difference in gender identity stemmed from a difference in cultural experience. For Mormon women, gender identity came from the role they filled as metaphorical pioneers in an all-encompassing cultural community. They drew on liberating aspects of Mormon culture to establish their identity, and they held social, legal, and political rights that were liberating.

This chapter analyzed how Mormon women navigated the liberations of gender identity. But how did they navigate the limitations of gender identity? The concept of liberation implies that at some point, there were things that Mormon women felt were not liberating. These examples from the *Exponent* illustrated that Mormon women crafted social, political, and legal capability, but there were some aspects of capability that Mormon women were still navigating. The next chapter explores what it argues was the root of every relation that Mormon women navigated: that heteronormative gender identity implied that one gender was more physically capable than the other, and Mormon women were aware of this and challenged it. These social, political, and legal rights existed in tandem with the cultural discourse that Mormon society (and society at large) viewed women's bodies as physically inferior. Women's bodies being seen as physically incapable was not a new story. Yet, the cultural landscape of Mormonism influenced the language these women used to navigate their bodies. Just as Mormon women used the unique

cultural metaphor of the ‘pioneer mother’ to describe their social, political, and legal role, Mormon women would craft metaphors of the female body to describe the space it inhabited in Mormon culture.

Pious Embodiment, Profane Bodies

Despite the liberated legal and political rights that Mormon women held in their culture, there was a disconnect in the doctrine of Mormonism and their experiences. Mormon women's explorations of the human body in the *Exponent* showed that the priestly sanctity a woman was supposed to be able to achieve from Mormon doctrine was not the reality from 1872-1890.[1] Early Mormon doctrine stated that humans could physically embody their spiritual being in a way that made them feel capable, fulfilled, and happy. This model argued that God had a physical body that was incorruptible, and that he bestowed that same incorruptible, physical body upon his followers. The embodied aspect of early Mormonism was in stark contrast to the Christian belief that the body led one to sin, and that the sensations of the body ought to be feared.

The embodiment of Mormon identity gave liberated agency to Mormon women through marriage, allowing them to achieve eternal glory and theoretical priesthood by placing their physical bodies into a sacred contract. While women would continue to derive this liberated agency through marriage, scholars like Kathleen Flake point out that there are inconsistencies in the rhetoric used in marriage rites over time that show something in this attitude changed even though the doctrine did not. There is a lack of evidence as to why this change happened and what it meant, but investigating Mormon women's expressions in the *Exponent* regarding the perceptions of their bodies may provide some of this evidence.

Mormon women wrote in the *Exponent* about the limitations placed upon their bodies that did not fit into how the doctrine liberated their bodies. Their doctrine vested divinity within

[1] Embodiment here is the way that construction of identity is expressed via the human body. Embodiment does not mean just in the physical expression of identity (clothes, hair, movement patterns, behaviors), but rather, that a person or a group has created frameworks to understand and express identity. Embodiment can also mean mindsets, words, ways of speaking, theoretical frameworks, or decisions. Embodiment is the packaging of the many moving forces that construct identity; embodiment is, itself, a framework of identity.

their bodies, but these women found their bodies were seen as incapable and they wrestled with that. While their expressions of identity contested this incapability, they did not contest the shame they grappled with or the society that created this incapability. Instead, to turn the tables on the profaneness of their bodies, they ascribed pious words, actions, and behaviors to their bodies to meliorate their emotions. They created frameworks that helped them make sense of the way things were. They tried to understand the embodiment of gender rather than change it, but their understanding of the body fundamentally differed from Protestant, American culture.

The previous chapters of this thesis interpreted the intercultural and intracultural relations from which Mormon women established gender identity; this chapter will interpret the interpersonal and intrapersonal relations from which Mormon women established gender identity. Intrapersonally, Mormon women felt discomfort with their personal embodiments of gender identity. Interpersonally, Mormon women established community and tried to navigate that discomfort through the establishment of frameworks in the *Exponent.* This chapter will try to move towards a conclusion about women in the *Exponent* creating their own frameworks to understand gender rather than as something in adherence to or in opposition to Mormon cultural frameworks. This chapter will show that Mormon women from 1872-1890 created their own limiting framework to understand, and that creation and desire to understand was liberating. They defined characteristics of who could and who could not be a part of their gendered community. They "reorganized" the body to make space for the gendered incapability they were seen to have.[2] In doing so, they played a part in the creation of a Mormon dichotomized conception of gender.

[2] Eliza R. Snow. "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body." *Woman's Exponent.* December 1, 1873. Accessed 4/24/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs.

Mormon marriage may have been motivated by a desire to create a sacredly temporal community, but viewing this goal as the sole motivation of marriage does not consider the impacts of gender upon society. Kathleen Flake, a Mormon professor of Mormon Religion at the University of Virginia, tries to consider this impact, arguing in contrast to Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness* and Rex Cooper's *Promises Made to the Fathers*; and this phenomenon can even be seen within the secondary scholarship used in this thesis.[3] While he remains an important source of background information within this thesis, the evidence in the *Exponent* clashes with Lawrence Foster's argument on one important point. Mormon marriage did not exist solely for the promotion of a utopian social order. Foster argues that Mormon plural marriage was a "desexualization" of marriage for social order, and a repression of sexual desire that redirected that energy towards the creation of community.[4] This argument does not consider the objectification of the female body in societies with heteronormative standards of gender. Furthermore, this argument does not consider the immense value that the human body had within Mormonism. Without engaging women's identity building processes, scholars are not accessing the impacts of this objectification and of gender role imposition upon the members of Mormon society. Analysis needs to be done through the metaphors, the sentimental language, the strange poems; this analysis of Mormon womanhood necessitates the creation of frameworks as tools to question rather than as tools to answer.

---

http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_13-14&pagenum=1&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron

[3] Todd Compton. *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith.* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 342; Rex Eugene Cooper, *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization.* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 140-141; Kathleen Flake. "The Development of Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites, 1831-53." *The Journal of Mormon History* 41, 1 (January 2015), 85.

[4] Lawrence Foster. *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community.* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 210.

Flake claims that early Mormon marriage was shaped by gender roles in a way that honored the female body and allowed women to exercise sacred agency, but that something changed in this model over time. She contends that "early Mormonism [rejected]… Christian marriage's traditional role as a defense against carnality… [which] created a fork in the road of salvation, requiring the faithful to choose either ordination or marriage."[5] Whereas Christian marriage was temporal ("until death do us part"), early Mormon marriage was eternal, and its practitioners engaged with the divine. This access to the divine was something available to both men and women equally according to the doctrine. The doctrine of early Mormon marriage made the space for women and men to inhabit their bodies divinely, virtuously, and in a way free from all corruption, expressing "Mormonism's most controversial belief: that humanity had divine potential."[6] However, Flake points out that there is an inconsistency in the progression of the doctrine. Early marriage ceremonies in the 1830's used the word "rights," whereas later ones in the 1850's used the word "rites."[7] Marriage ceremonies "[began] to obscure the relation of marital sealings to priesthood," meaning that the ceremonies became less focused on "the priesthood right" that was gained through marriage and more so on "the marriage rite."[8] Ceremonial language became more flowery, the ceremonies themselves were longer; and though women still played a great role in the marriage ceremonies themselves (especially those of plural marriages), something changed. Flake points out that there is no evidence in transcriptions and other documentation of marriage ceremonies to understand what this change was, what it meant, or why it happened, and that additional documents are needed to understand the difference between the "right" and the "rite."

[5] Flake. "Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites." 78.
[6] Flake. "Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites." 93.
[7] Flake. "Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites." 101.
[8] Flake. "Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites." 101.

The *Exponent,* a database of gendered sentiments, may bridge this difference. In the article "The Woman's Paper," the anonymous author wrote that the *Exponent* not only "contains the history of the organizations of the women of the Church… the history of women themselves… [but] it also embodies the expression of the thoughts, feelings, and convictions of the majority of the sisters."[9] There is a gap in current historical documentation of how Mormons constructed gender this transitional period of Mormonism. Scholars like Flake have explained how early Mormonism had a more radical gender identity for women, and scholars like Foster have explained how later Mormonism adhered to a waning domestic ideal for its definition of womanhood.[10] The *Exponent* provides different data than the marriage ceremonies that Flake refers to or the memoirs cited by Foster: the *Exponent* deals with the expression of the individual through the language of and in the setting of the community (here, a Mormon sisterhood). Most of the articles in the *Exponent* from 1872-1890 were anonymous or written under pseudonyms. It was highly experimental and contained things like poems, philosophical ponderings, fictional didactic narratives, and even things as strange as 'the language of flowers.'[11] These women wrestled with the same concept as all humans do that something in their life (here, gender identity) was on the threshold of change, and they tried to look for the answer to that confusion in Mormon ideology.

---

[9] Anonymous. "The Woman's Paper." *Woman's Exponent.* September 1, 1889. Accessed 5/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_18_Issue_1-21&fromPage=markedList

[10] Lawrence Foster. *Religion and Sexuality*. 210.

[11] There were almost always one or more articles in every issue found in this thesis' survey of the *Exponent* called 'Flowers' or something related to flowers. In them, authors used gardening tips to encode statements of love, anger, or happiness, as if flowers were the Mormon woman's hand fan. Here is an excerpt from one article: "Basil [means] I hate you… Dandelion, you are a flirt… Mignonette, I love you more for not being more handsome. Nasturtium, I love another better than you… Plum Branch, I am independent… Tansy, I declare war against you." The 'language of flowers' holds implications for how Mormon women were shaped by and shaped their environment. 'Ex.' "The Language of Flowers." *Woman's Exponent.* September 1, 1876. Accessed 5/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_5_Issue_1-19&fromPage=fullText

However, these women faced a disconnect between what their doctrine stood for and what they experienced. 'L.M. Hewlings' wrote a poem detailing first how she used to move freely through the world as a young girl. She wrote, "Oh, I was once a happy child… / With buoyant step I oft did glide… / gath'ring flowers on every side, / nor little dreamed they soon would fade."[12] Hewlings began by setting up what her childhood was like: it was free, lighthearted, and full of movement. She continues, "Across the hard and fretted rock, / with naked feet I oft did tread, / Heedless of scratch or gentle knock, / when birds were singing o'er my head. / I cared not for the tattered frock, / when climbing up the craggy tree."[13] As a girl, she could walk barefoot, she could climb trees, she could jump and she could then fall. She did not have to worry about appearances for she inhabited herself purely, chastely, and divinely. She had no gender roles to fulfill, or at least those that she did fulfill were not problematic for her. She was liberated. She wrote about how she used her voice: "laughing to see the bird house rock; / and shouting forth in childish glee. / The feathered songsters were my friends, / I fancied all could know my voice. / I called them mine, uncaged or penned."[14] Not only could she move freely, but she could express herself freely through words. She was uninhibited in thought and feeling.

Hewlings' Mormon doctrine revered girlhood, and it invested a holy purity in the bodies and in the voices of young Mormon girls. In a Relief Society report article, the secretary of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association chapter in Ephraim wrote that "every word that falls from the lips of a young girl, while speaking of the goodness of God, seems to come from

---

[12] L.M. Hewlings. "Happy Childhood." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1890. Accessed 4/26/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_19_Issue_1-17&fromPage=fullText

[13] L.M. Hewlings. "Happy Childhood." *Woman's Exponent.* 1890.

[14] L.M. Hewlings. "Happy Childhood." *Woman's Exponent.* 1890.

the bottom of the heart, and, as it were, takes root in the hearts of the hearers."[15] Here, the author established girlhood as a divine embodiment of purity. Young girls were the embodiment of virtue, and since Mormon theology invested the body with divine potential, a young girl who followed the ways of God was the epitome of purity. Her body exhibited that purity, and that wholehearted adherence to the divine meant that she could move through life freely and happily.

Mormon women embodied this freedom and happiness, but their embodiment was inhibited by their gendered experience. After she wrote about the freedom she experienced as a girl, Hewlings pointed out in her poem the ways that as she aged, her body became inhibited. The 'uncaged' birds in her youth became 'caged' in her adulthood. She wrote that she "knew but little then of laws" and that she had "a castle tall I reared beside… / and… decked myself a queenly bride."[16] When she became the 'queenly bride' of her kingdom, her expression of self changed. She wrote that "alas! My airy castle's down / tall battlements, lofty towers, / the skill to raise them is not mine / youth kept back the magic power."[17] When youth was no longer in her grasp, Hewlings no longer inhabited her body freely. As she changed, something changed. Hewlings did not identify what that thing was, nor did she seem to know. However, what she did know was that not being able to express herself in a comfortable way brought sadness to her.

The phenomenon of gendered incapability seen articles like Hewlings' does not appear to be a sexualization or even an objectification of the female body. As the previous chapter stated, Mormon social order could not thrive if women were merely objects. Rather, these authors seemed to point out that women's bodies were being viewed as being capable of less than. To

---

[15] Kate Madsen. "R.S. Reports." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1878. Accessed 5/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. Http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_7_Issue_1-17&fromPage=fullText

[16] L.M. Hewlings. "Happy Childhood." *Woman's Exponent.*

[17] L.M. Hewlings. "Happy Childhood." *Woman's Exponent.*

grapple with this perceived physical inferiority, they argued that women's bodies were capable of 'different' things. Perhaps this perception is why motherhood became such an important part of the Mormon woman's identity. If gender is a concept that humans create to make sense of the difference that sex characteristics create for how a person interacts with society, then it would make sense that cisgender women would establish motherhood – something that their bodies were uniquely capable of and that cisgender men were not capable of – as part of who they were.

Yet Hewlings did not engage with motherhood or wifehood at all to understand this sadness. Hewlings understood the societal roles she filled, and she was not questioning them. She instead questioned her self-expression. She negotiated gender identity as something separate from the sociocultural roles shaped by gender explored in the previous chapters of this thesis. Her discontent stemmed from the fact that she no longer was able to simply 'be.' As a girl, she was revered – and she revered herself – for her capability. She embodied the Mormon doctrine that she could be divinely inspired. Yet as her gender identity changed from girl to woman, she no longer could wear a "tattered frock," nor could she walk with "naked feet." She had to renegotiate how she embodied Mormon doctrine as a gendered individual, and she wrote about this embodiment as if her culture did not have the space for that. This change made her feel ill-at-ease and she did not know how to fix it, since the ideology that she would normally refer to for these questions provided an answer that contradicted her experience. Her doctrine said that her body was capable, but her experience said otherwise. These articles reflect a great sense of confusion in identity on behalf of the writers, for they consistently fall both into and out of traditional patterns of being.

As Hewlings pointed out that gender inhibited the voices of Mormon women through metaphor, 'E.E.D.' pointed out through explicit terms that many Mormon women felt

incapacitated by gender when trying to make change. She wrote to the editor of the *Exponent*, "when we get upon our feet to bear testimony, in a meeting, we feel incapable of saying anything that will do good."[18] The language that the author uses links the experience of gender to the body, which inherently was viewed as incapable. This statement could be translated to: 'when we express ourselves through this system of gender, we feel incapable of making change.' Here, gender inhibited the vocal expression (something intrinsically connected to the body, and thus, an important part of understanding what embodiment meant to these women) of thoughts, feelings, or desires. This woman had an experience where she sought to express herself through speech yet her gender meant that her words fell on deaf ears. She wrote this statement to her "sisters" and used collective language, as her community's unwillingness to hear her was something that many women in that community experienced.[19]

Authors like Hewlings and E.E.D. relied upon the community provided by the *Exponent* to try to understand why they felt incapable. Hewlings shared her poem with a community of women like her so that they could try to understand their experiences together, for it was something that they all experienced. E.E.D. wrote her letter as advice to her "sisters through our *Exponent.*"[20] The *Exponent* "in many a lonely cottage… carried joy and comfort… [where] the humblest sister has the opportunity to bear her testimony in its columns."[21] In their establishment of gender identity, Mormon women experienced community. They created a Mormon female social order with incredibly close bonds which fostered community. The language that these

---

[18] 'E.E.D.' "Woman's Voice." *Woman's Exponent.* May 1, 1874. Accessed 4/24/2019. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_24-23&pagenum=1&resultNum=10&entries=1000&source=config.cfg&queryId=../session/1556121867_29186&backto=RESULTS&fromPage=searchResults

[19] 'E.E.D.' "Woman's Voice." *Woman's Exponent.*

[20] 'E.E.D.' "Woman's Voice." *Woman's Exponent.*

[21] Anonymous. "The Woman's Paper." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1889. Accessed 4/24/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_18_Issue_1-21&fromPage=markedList

women used evoked an emotional response from the reader, one that would only have been felt by women experiencing the same feelings of shame and confusion in their self-expression. The *Exponent*, serving as the embodiment of the community of Mormon womanhood, was the place in which Mormon women explored and discussed their identities in explicit terms. The *Exponent* was the place in which Mormon women shared their self-expression, and in doing so, their confusion and frustration at being limited provided them with liberated feelings.

The framework of acquiring liberation through limitation may have prevented change itself, but the framework did not impede a desire for change. Though they worked out of 'limiting' roles like wifehood and motherhood, they wanted some form of change. They recognized something was wrong even though they did not know what it was or provide an answer for what it was. Whether this change aligned with or contradicted the ideals of Mormonism is not the goal of this chapter; instead, the argument within this evidence is that in desiring change, these women engaged in questioning what they wanted and what their identity meant to themselves that may help explain changes in Mormon attitudes.

Mormon women in the *Exponent* questioned the attitudes both they and their society held towards the way that women inhabited their bodies, but they often did so in implicit language. "One of the Goslings" wrote a poem that participated in this questioning and engaged the same metaphors as Hewlings. Often when these women questioned what their bodies meant and what their attitudes were towards their bodies, they did so in poems, metaphor, or some other form of figurative language. Learning how to embody something that their society saw as weak or incapable was theoretical for them, so they had to create new frameworks to think through embodiment. The poem was long and filled with interesting examples of these explorations of self, but the most important part was when the author wrote a brief narrative of a young boy

seeing his sister walk for the first time. The author wrote, "…when your young boy, / first seeing the 'little sister,' thinks her only a toy? / looking critically at her, in her very small bed / contemptuously remarks: 'she can't hold up her head.'"[22] She pointed out the ways that gender influenced the attitudes people had. The boy saw his new sister as a small, incapable being. The author put this attitude of seeing someone as physically incapable in the context of gender. She assigned words to this attitude through the metaphor: 'critical,' and 'contemptuous.' She said that the boy "seeing limbs, limp as rags, more amusing his talk / ending with the verdict: 'that thing can never walk.'"[23] Here, woman was not viewed as impure. Her virtue was not in question. Her capability, however, was.

This author pointed out that the divine purity of young girlhood may have promoted empathetic capability, but it did not promote physical capability. Purity was not strength. Virtue was not honor. Grace was not bravery. Mormons had their own dichotomized language of gender that used liberated words to limit genders. Feminine purity, virtue, and grace had the connotation of physical weakness. But even young girls were not pure simply by nature of being: they were pure by the roles that they fulfilled as daughters and sisters. Girls and women were not pure by nature of being, they were pure by nature of doing. In the promotion of girlhood as pure and virtuous, Mormon doctrine contradicted itself. God was viewed by Joseph Smith as a man who had flesh and bones. These Mormon women pointed out that perhaps the use of 'man' was gendered, and not referring to humankind. They seemed to say that from 1872-1890, Mormon divinity was gendered; furthermore, though they did not argue that this was wrong, they seemed to say that this gendering of divinity was indeed exclusive. Celestial glory was stated by Mormon

[22] 'One of the Goslings.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1890. Accessed 5/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_19_Issue_1-15&pagenum=1&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron

[23] 'One of the Goslings.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent.*

doctrine to have been capable for all those with a body, but the identity of woman required additional steps to obtain that celestial glory. Women embodied the societal roles of wife and mother to be virtuous instead of embodying themselves as individuals to be virtuous. Purity and virtue for women held the connotation of meliorating their inherent physical weakness. The alliance of motherhood – something many cisgender women's bodies were capable of that men were not – to womanhood was an effort to meliorate that physical inferiority.[24] While women in the *Exponent* seemed more than happy to fulfill these societal roles, they questioned the attitudes that emerged from the existence of this gender hierarchy.

The author of this poem argued that Mormon men could be manlier by supporting women, further establishing these spheres as horizontally ordered. She saw space within the doctrine for each gender to liberate themselves by liberating the other. She wrote, "is aught taken from his dignity as time's wonders repeat, / she can hold up her head and use her two feet? / No. And forgetting his prophecy, like a brave little man, / proud of seeing his sister walk as far as she can."[25] Still, she participated in the creation of dichotomized and thus limiting gender language by assigning words to man like 'brave,' but she renegotiated what masculinity meant. Masculine bravery meant admitting fallibility and standing up for those in need. Masculine bravery, as defined by a woman, implied vulnerability.

Some gender definitions in this poem were radical, but some were not. The author was not trying to change the order of society. She went on to write that "some [women] will strive for

[24] Did this framework have space for infertile women? Was motherhood something only experienced through childbirth? If Mormon women crafted an identity for themselves upon the intrinsic ability to bear children, how did Mormon women who were not able to bear children define themselves? And what about miscarriage in Mormon society? Settler life and pioneer life would have likely contributed to a higher infant mortality rate (lack of access to medicine/doctors, access to clean water or even food). This could be an interesting (and important) line of thought for future research.

[25] 'One of the Goslings.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent.*

the summit of wisdom's high hill / some will cling to the valleys and 'vacancies' fill. / many march to the 'heights,' should woman's cause be the winner, / but enough will be left to look after the dinner."[26] Just a few lines before, the author redefined what it meant to be a Mormon man, yet a stanza later and she confirmed the role of woman within the home. Poems such as these become frustrating for the reader when asking of the poem how it liberated or limited. Every word contradicts itself. These women followed no one solidified framework to understand their gender identity: they constantly renegotiated, reinterpreted, and tried to establish frameworks. They tested different identities to see which one best suited their needs and their society's needs.

In an article by a former president of the Relief Society and pioneer of Mormon women's rights, Eliza Snow reinterpreted the human body in a way that made space for the objectification of women's bodies. She followed Mormon doctrinal ideology that the human body was capable of divine potential, but she sought to elaborate on her/the reader's understanding of that through philosophical ponderings on the resurrection narrative. She wrote the article in response to an unnamed author who said that Jesus could not have been resurrected because it was physically impossible, and aimed to "remove" this "objection."[27] In this article, she "reorganized" the human body so that it had a "mortal" side and an "immortal" side.[28] These two sides were separate from each other, and furthermore, they were separate from the inhabitant's spirit. She wrote that the 'mortal' side "is gross, volatile – subject to change and decay… tangible to mortal sight and touch, and subject to all the laws of decomposition," whereas the 'immortal' side "is

---

[26] 'One of the Goslings.' "Woman's Sphere." *Woman's Exponent.*
[27] Eliza R. Snow. "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body." *Woman's Exponent.* December 1, 1873. Accessed 4/24/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_13-14&pagenum=1&fromPage=periodicalRecordRevchron
[28] Eliza Snow. "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body." *Woman's Exponent.*

pure, invisible, intangible and capable of resisting every law of infraction or dissolubility."[29] This immortal side stayed with the spirit in celestial glory or doom upon death (while still remaining a separate entity from the spirit) while the mortal side decayed on earth. She reorganized the human body so that Jesus' resurrection was not of the mortal body, but of the immortal body; and thus, no one could scientifically object to the resurrection narrative.

Snow's reorganization created a mortal side of the human body that could be subject to cultural attitudes like gender. Her doctrine stated that the body was innately pure, but upon the experience of womanhood, that doctrine no longer applied to her. She established a framework that included her experiences of oppression. Snow's "reorganization" of the human body was a visualization of the contradictions in heteronormative gender language. Yet she herself created a dichotomy: the mortal side stood exposed to forces like shame, discomfort, and restriction, while the immortal side stood in spiritual defense to these forces. The mortal side made space for concepts like childbirth making a woman impure, but the immortal side allowed women to embody the experience of childbirth with grace. The mortal side made space for concepts like sex being an expression of lust and thus shameful, but the immortal side allowed women to embody marital sex with purity. Overarchingly, the mortal side made space for the embodiment of profanity, but the immortal side could meliorate that profanity and allow the embodiment of piety. Yet, because the mortal side was "tangible" and the immortal side was "intangible," women's embodiment of piety was metaphoric rather than realistic. Snow's reorganization was popular amongst Mormon women, and the article was republished in 1875 because "both strangers and saints have been much interested in the explanations made in it concerning the

[29] Eliza Snow. "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body." *Woman's Exponent.*

future disposal of the elements composing the material body."[30] Mormon women made efforts to understand these concepts by creating frameworks.

One function of these frameworks was to understand the physical differences between male and female bodies. Author 'Bruford' established a very limiting and complicated framework that addressed sex difference. To argue against co-education of men and women, Bruford wrote that sex created not only different bodies, but different minds. She began her article by establishing that males and females were created by God with different physical characteristics.[31] Her language after this statement is very difficult to access. She then wrote, "the clothes which cover our persons are greater than our bodies and the causes of the mental and bodily differences that exist between man and woman."[32] If one thinks of 'the clothes which cover our persons' as gender expression, this statement makes more sense. Here, Bruford established gender as an expression of sex difference. She separated gender from sex, albeit not using that language. She used 'sex' throughout the article in places where a modern author may use 'gender,' but still the fact remains that she understood gender as a complex cultural process that was simultaneously influenced by yet a separate entity from the human body. She wrote that "the two sexes are formed for different functions, and that the influence of these functions pervades and effects their entire lives."[33] Gender was these 'functions' and their 'influence.'

Bruford's framework sought to understand how the experience of gender was impacted by adolescence, puberty, and maturity. She argued against the sudden change that came forth in

---

[30] Eliza Snow. "Mortal and Immortal Elements of the Human Body [Republished]." *Woman's Exponent.* September 1, 1875. Accessed 4/26/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3.1_Volume_4_Issue_7-12&resultNum=2&entries=8&queryId=../session/1557688275_1587&fromPage=fullText

[31] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind – Woman's Education." *Woman's Exponent.* August 30, 1879. Accessed 5/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_8_Issue_7-14&resultNum=1&entries=6&queryId=../session/1557688919_8549&fromPage=fullText

[32] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind." *Woman's Exponent.*

[33] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind." *Woman's Exponent.*

Hewlings' poem. She wrote that an anonymous "learned physician [wrote]: 'The normal evolutions of nature… are never paroxysmal… It is almost impossible to conceive of a woman who is developed from a child in one year. Yet this sudden transformation is regarded as a fact in the genesis of woman;" and then she wrote that "the sex *structively* and functionally, from infancy to *pubity*, is in a state of slow and progressive evolution."[34] She understood the experience of Hewlings and so many other Mormon women of being viewed differently, and she expressed that experience in a written (albeit difficult to comprehend) framework. She even wrote that "the damage done to her health is often done in very early life:" a statement that recognized the impact that being viewed as physically incapable can have upon a woman's experience of life. Bruford pointed out that girls did not suddenly wake up as women, and from the minute they were born they navigated gender. Her ideology harkens to the poem by 'One of the Goslings,' where the young boy viewed his infant sister as incapable of walking.

Yet Bruford said that even though infants were subject to gender, "the law of the woman is not the law of the child."[35] This statement confirms the concept that the doctrine of Mormon culture did not embrace the experience of the female body; but the realization of that doctrine by Mormon women was one in which they embraced their own bodies. They saw strength and fulfillment in the experience of their bodies, even though at many points that strength was felt jointly with shame and profaneness. The discourse of confidence did not (and still does not) easily make space for these implicit feelings of shame and profaneness, but Mormon women like Bruford showed that confidence was more than a woman reaffirming her beauty (a physical manifestation of the body) on a tough day. Confidence was making choices and creating spaces of belonging that were "of the best good to those who [made them], and in the greatest happiness

[34] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind." *Woman's Exponent.*
[35] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind." *Woman's Exponent.*

to the human family."[36] Of course, the Mormon woman's view of the 'human family' was certainly limiting, and many of her choices were motivated by a desire to spread her ideology as the right one. This argument is not one that Mormon women's confidence was an inclusive one for race, socioeconomic status, or even gender. Yet, Bruford refuted claims made against her as being 'hypnotized,' and showed both a keen sense of awareness to the experience of gender and a desire to understand it. Furthermore, Bruford showed that regardless of culture and ideology, humans are motivated by an inherent desire to belong.[37]

'M.A.E. Watmough' stated how confused her culture was by the human body. She wrote that she loved the study of physiology because it "has kept me from doing things that would offend that great Architect [God] who framed this casement of flesh and bones, which baffles human skill and ingenuity."[38] Thus, she argues that people need to understand the mortal aspects of the body more. She had a desire to understand the side where the body expressed cultural concepts like gender. She argued that "we should learn of what elements these bodies are composed, how they are nourished, preserved and continually built up… in order that we may properly provide for these living temples of living souls, than which there is nothing greater or grander, save the Creator himself."[39] She encouraged her reader to learn about the space that she inhabited. Watmough continued to describe how "the world of nature is divided into three kingdoms" and came across as scientific in how she set up humanity.[40] However, Watmough seems more to have been encouraging her reader to think about what space she inhabited, to pay

---

[36] 'Bruford.' "Sex in Mind – Woman's Education." *Woman's Exponent.*
[37] And often, in the process of defining how they belong, humans define those who do not belong.
[38] 'M.A.E. Watmough.' "Man, Know Thyself." *Woman's Exponent.* May 15, 1874. Accessed 4/24/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_24-22&resultNum=5&entries=915&queryId=../session/1557689012_9712&fromPage=fullText
[39] 'M.A.E. Watmough.' "Man, Know Thyself." *Woman's Exponent.*
[40] 'Scientific' frameworks like these easily made space for scientific racism, sexism, and so on. That is not what appears to be happening in this article, but the potential for manipulation of this framework is noteworthy. 'M.A.E. Watmough.' "Man, Know Thyself." *Woman's Exponent.*

attention to the sensations in her body, and overarchingly, to find a way to embrace the mortal body that was a source of profanity/incapability. The title of the article proves the best example of the author's intent: "Man, Know Thyself." Watmough in this article wanted her reader to think about how they viewed themselves, not how they viewed others. She was encouraging women to foster intrapersonal relationships with their bodies that provided fulfillment, agency, and comfort. Upon knowing themselves, they could know others.[41]

One framework of intrapersonal embodiment was the creation of a gendered vocabulary. Author 'F.S.' in one article played around with some of the words that had been attributed to Mormon women and tried to argue for different embodiments of Mormon womanhood. She wrote that "it has been long the habit of the world to look upon a woman as a being fitted especially for adornment. Upon this name have the epithets of grace, fragility, and beauty been bestowed, instead of those expressions that give us the idea of solid merit."[42] The author pointed out that words like 'adornment,' 'grace,' and 'beauty' in the Mormon language were metaphors for incapability, and that when Mormons attributed those words to womanhood, they limited it.

F.S. established a framework within which women could argue that not only were they more than beautiful, graceful, or fragile, but that they did not have to be any of those things to be worthy within society. F.S. and other Mormon women argued that women should derive fulfillment through self-growth, not just the growth of society. F.S. wrote that "the opinions of society may have made woman think that her undertakings must be necessarily small, but it has not yet been proven that she is not mentally capable of performing labors which require the most

[41] This is where the ideology was problematic. They created a scientific world view in which they made space for themselves, providing liberation; however, there was not space for many others, providing limitation.
[42] 'F.S.' "Usefulness" *Woman's Exponent,* June 1, 1875. Accessed 4/2/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area+documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_4_issue_1-6&fromPage=fullText

determined perseverance and earnest thought."[43] She encouraged women to take up space. Furthermore, the space that she wanted women to assume was not just through their mental capacity, but through their physical capacity. She used words like 'small,' describing a physical state of being. Words like 'labors' invoked a physical image of Mormon women moving their bodies through space. Furthermore, words like 'labors' invoked the idea of childbirth: she was simultaneously referring to laborious work and to the physical act of a woman in labor.

Mormon women like F.S. argued that though their purpose was to provide for their families, their motivations for doing so did not have to be selflessness, grace, fragility, or beauty. She argued that a woman could do more than nurture a family, educate, or nurse. They established that a woman had the right to be self-motivated for what she wanted in society, and they helped women question what those self-motivations could be. In that self-motivation for society, a woman could express individuality through free will. They thus advocated for their free will through the acquisition of legal and political rights, and the changing of cultural attitudes. However, their definition of individuality was one that was intrinsically tied to society.

The article written by 'E.E.D.' mentioned earlier in this chapter can be further dissected with these frameworks established to show how much space there was for contradiction in the construction of gender. 'E.E.D.' later went on to say that even though women felt incapable of expressing their mortal bodies to make change happen, "if we will put our faith in God and cultivate the gifts which He has given us, we may become good speakers and perhaps good writers. If we truly trust in God, whatever we ask Him for, with a righteous desire He will grant."[44] She encouraged women to piously put their energy into the 'immortal' body and into their spirits, which was intangible, not well understood, and allowed space for the contradictions

[43] 'F.S.' "Usefulness" *Woman's Exponent.*
[44] 'E.E.D.' "Woman's Voice." *Woman's Exponent*.

that gender created. She wrote "I have put faith enough in Him to try and write a little [to help]."[45] Though her mortal body felt incapable of making change, her immortal body and her spirit potentially were. Yet, that immortal body made space for so many contradictions that change was unlikely to happen.

Though Mormon women defined and understood the uncomfortable embodiment of gender, modern viewers are separated from this understanding not only by a century and a culture, but by an entirely different generation of Mormon womanhood. From 1887-1890, events unfolded that changed what it meant to be Mormon, and thus, that changed what it meant to be a Mormon woman. In 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker act set restrictions upon Mormonism that created an all-out crusade against their way of life. With this act, the United States government dissolved the church's financial assets, delegitimized children of plural marriages and prohibited them from inheriting land, required plural wives to testify against their husbands, took away Mormon women's right to vote, and set more oppressive laws.[46] Many Mormon men who practiced plural marriage went into hiding, and many Mormon women married to them found themselves alone as heads of household.[47] Mormons experienced persecution which they called "the Raid" that was so extreme that by 1890, they questioned whether the church could continue to exist.[48] As a result, the church banned the practice of plural marriage. Finally, Utah was able to become a state and Mormons could practice their religion, but only if they did so America's terms.

The dramatic change that occurred in the Mormon way of life over those three years had been heralded by decades of slow change in Mormon cultural attitudes. Foster points out that as

---

[45] 'E.E.D.' "Woman's Voice." *Woman's Exponent*.
[46] Mormon Church v. United States, 136 U.S. 1 (1890). Accessed 5/14/2019, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/136/1/.
[47] Lawrence Foster. *Religion and Sexuality.* 223.
[48] Jan Shipps. *Mormonism.* 62.

Utah became settled, women found themselves fulfilling fewer pioneer roles.[49] As the previous chapter explored, the pioneer mother became a part of the metaphor of Mormon gender identity rather than remaining a part of its reality. Mormon women began to adhere to the "Victorian notions of culture and refinement" that they so violently opposed in early issues of the *Exponent.*[50] In "My Choice," Jennie Harrison hated the ways of the culturally refined, non-Mormon woman and argued that her womanhood was different. She wrote of her Mormon home as distinguished by motherhood and goodness, and the non-Mormon woman's home as distinguished by "fanciful leisure" in which she never mentioned motherhood.[51] In Harrison's Mormon home, "there are stains on my carpet / the traces of small muddy boots" whereas in the non-Mormon home, "I see your fair tapestry glowing / all spotless with blossoms and fruits!"[52] In the Mormon home, "I have jackets that wear out / and buttons that never will stay," whereas in the non-Mormon home, "you can embroider at leisure / and learn pretty arts of 'crochet.'"[53] Foster argues that the platform of Mormon womanhood changed, and the settlement and 'civilization' of Utah saw Mormon women beginning to enjoy 'fair tapestries,' crochet, and embroidery.

Thus, the period of womanhood investigated here was an intermediary step between one form of gender identity and another. This period as an intermediary step explains the contradictory notion of these articles and the difficulty of wading through self-expression because Mormons wrestled with crossing so many thresholds in this time. However, though the embodiment of womanhood in the *Exponent* from 1872-1890 may not have been one that erased

[49] Lawrence Foster. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity." 13.
[50] Lawrence Foster. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity." 13.
[51] Jennie Harrison. "My Choice." *The Woman's Exponent.* June 1, 1873. Accessed 2/12/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=documents&id=Gerritsen-GP205.3_Volume_2_Issue_1-20&fromPage=fullText
[52] Jennie Harrison. "My Choice." *The Woman's Exponent.*
[53] Jennie Harrison. "My Choice." *The Woman's Exponent.*

or even understood the profaneness of the female body, it did question that profaneness. Mormon women in this period would make the space for later Mormon women to continue to question that profaneness and create boundaries for what they would and would not accept from the church. These women slowly but surely established a grey area, and they themselves were a part of that grey area.

Accessing what this change was, why it happened, and what it meant is difficult because it requires connecting sources across Mormon history that talk about womanhood in very implicit ways. The survey of this thesis of the *Exponent* from 1872-1890 can only demonstrate so much. Writers of the *Exponent* did not often contradict Mormon ideology outrightly. It is thus difficult not to use modern bias to fill in the gaps here, and the survey of documents and the methodology applied to that survey ought to be expanded to try to understand what this change was. There are few secondary sources that deal with the embodiment of Mormon womanhood, and those that do are not aligned with the period of this paper. These women discussed what their culture practiced, but they did not discuss what it preached that caused this contradiction. Mormon scripture provides few answers to fill in this gap.[54] What the *Exponent* from 1872-1890 does illustrate is that there was a contradiction between what Mormonism preached and what it practiced towards their view of the female body, and women used this contradiction to establish and understand Mormon womanhood. These Mormon women saw their bodies viewed negatively even when they followed all the rules. As a result, they looked to values within their culture, social roles, and other manners of being for their agency. In the *Exponent* articles,

[54] Most of the discussion of women came from the Holy Bible and not from the Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, or Book of Mormon; thus, it is difficult to say whether these were attitudes characteristic to Mormonism or just to nineteenth-century America. A search on LDS.org's collection of Mormon scriptures for the term 'woman' returns over 500 instances in the Old and New Testaments, but only 58 in the Book of Mormon, 11 in Doctrine and Covenants, and 17 in Pearl of Great Price. The conclusions that can be drawn from these scriptures are nothing necessarily new.

Mormon women established both the incapability and the capability of their bodies in society. This chapter sought to identify and analyze how these women grappled with these questions.

# Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the construction of Mormon women's gender identity in the *Woman's Exponent* from its conception in 1872 to the elimination of plural marriage in 1890. The purpose of this thesis has been to ask how Mormon women constructed gender, why they constructed gender, and what that construction of gender concluded in by the end of this period. Chapter one analyzed how Mormon women established gender identity through the domestic ideal of wifehood and motherhood. Both non-Mormon and Mormon women played into the limiting domestic ideal to derive liberating agency. Both groups argued women should have educational rights so that they could be better wives and mothers, illustrating that they had similar goals. This chapter pointed out, however, that these groups were unable to relate because of cultural difference.

The purpose of chapter two was to analyze the culture that Mormon women came from, and this analysis showed that Mormon women established gender identity through the cultural role of the "pioneer mother." The ideal Mormon family could not function without these additional rights for women because a large family with multiple wives could not exist if those wives were oppressed. Mormon society thus granted women liberating legal and political rights like divorce and suffrage so that marriage, families, and society itself was orderly. Within these large families that practiced plural marriage, women themselves renegotiated gender roles by vying for social and celestial status.

Yet, the success of Mormon society did not necessitate the reconstruction of cultural attitudes to be liberating for women like it did require the reconstruction of legal and political rights. Chapter three analyzes how Mormon women established gender identity through the questioning of those cultural attitudes. By 1872-1890, Utah had been settled and the role of the

'pioneer mother' had become a metaphor rather than a literal fact of life. Similarly, Mormon doctrine about the divine potential of humans seemed to have become a metaphor, because Mormon women were pointing out that their bodies were not being viewed as capable. They pointed out that there was a gendered difference in the way that Mormon society viewed bodies, and this frustrated them.

This analysis shows that Mormon women's gender identity from 1872-1890 was an intermediary step in Mormon womanhood reflecting a contradictory conscience. Mormon women were on the threshold of a new state of being where plural marriage was not a part of the way they viewed themselves. In 1872-1890, Mormonism as a culture was navigating what it needed to practice in order to be accepted into the American community. In this navigation of how to be an American Mormon, aspects of Mormon cultural identity changed in ways that made it confusing for Mormon women to understand their gender identity. This era of change is why understanding this period of Mormon womanhood is so contradictory. In every belief of Mormon women in the *Exponent,* statements that upheld the limitations of their culture contradicted statements that challenged those limitations. Analyzing them as being in adherence or in defiance to their culture is circuitous, and that analysis does not show much of note about Mormon womanhood.

Instead, these excerpts from the *Exponent* show Mormon women working through how they related to several social groups. First, Mormon women in the *Exponent* thought about how they related to non-Mormons. They experienced criticism and persecution for their way of life by non-Mormons, and they criticized the non-Mormon way of life as a result. Second, Mormon women in the *Exponent* worked through how they related to their own culture and society. They both challenged and upheld conceptions of Mormon gender that limited them. Third, Mormon

women in the *Exponent* worked through how they related to Mormon men. They envisioned roles for themselves that were defined by their relation to men, but they also challenged the gender roles Mormon men envisioned for Mormon women. Fourth, Mormon women in the *Exponent* worked through how they related to each other. They created community through the *Exponent,* which served as a safe space for them to think about gender identity. Finally, Mormon women in the *Exponent* worked through how they related to themselves. They asked themselves if their expressions of self were comfortable, and when they answered that they were not, these women exerted the agency they had acquired by working through all these relations.

Though these women answered that they were uncomfortable with their gendered expressions of self, they did not go much further in this period. Like anyone confused about who they are, these women could not provide definite answers for why they were uncomfortable, what that discomfort meant, or how to fix it. By the end of the period analyzed in this thesis, the Edmunds-Tucker Act had been passed, plural marriage had been outlawed, Utah had become a state, and the identities of all Mormons had been fundamentally changed. Mormon women in the coming years would not provide answers for why they were uncomfortable nor would they fix their discomfort; instead, they relied on a "neo-Victorian domesticity" that was even more limiting than the domestic ideal that they worked through before.[1] Mormon women created more boundaries to who was allowed to be a part of their group as they became separated from the pioneer roles that granted them agency. Through the twentieth century, few Mormon women created boundaries for what they would and would not accept within Mormon doctrine, resulting in women who either wholeheartedly supported the doctrine or who wholeheartedly denied it.

[1] Lawrence Foster. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979).

This research shows the rhetorical strategy Mormon women used to establish their gender identity evolved over time, and 1872-1890 provides just a glimpse into this evolution. Today, there is a middle ground for Mormon womanhood. Some Mormon women wholeheartedly support the church. Some Mormon women wholeheartedly deny the church. Some Mormon women craft unique gendered, spiritual personalities through supporting some and challenging other Mormon doctrines and practices. However, there are strains of thought that remain the same in Mormon women's gender identity. In 2017, Mormon woman Neylan McBaine wrote that "our global sisterhood thrives off of the varied spiritual strengths, perspectives, and contributions of our Church membership. Unfortunately, we too infrequently think or act along these lines, [and Mormon women]… are afraid we will disappoint others or the Lord; we conflate perfection with cultural markers."[2] She argues that if Mormon women focus on fostering a sense of self-identity in addition to their cultural-identity, they will feel a greater sense of belonging. Still, the rhetoric of Mormon women's self-identity is expressed through the rhetoric of their cultural-identity; thus, the cultural difference of Mormonism is still often unsurpassed. Though the church is aware of the cultural difference Mormons still experience today, many modern efforts to bridge this gap and change the perception of Mormonism are rooted in gender identities that much of the world stage finds limiting.[3]

---

[2] Neylan McBaine. "Mormon Women and the Anatomy of Belonging." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 201. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=124889306&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[3] For example, in the 'I Am a Mormon' commercial "Nadia: A Cultural Preserver," Nadia is a part Pakistani, part Persian British woman who "is devoted to passing on her Persian heritage by teaching her children Farsi, cooking her grandmother's recipes, and always making room for one more at the table." She spends most of the commercial talking about her role as mother, saying that it is "the most important thing you could ever do," and the commercial is filmed entirely in her home. She paints a more culturally diverse picture of Mormonism, challenging the conception of Mormonism as limited to something exclusive to Caucasian Americans or British. She does not challenge the role of woman beyond wife and mother (though, interestingly, her spouse is not included at all in the commercial, nor does she mention her spouse; this reaffirms the exclusivity of gender roles, and the liberation that women gained through this exclusivity). The Mormon Channel. "Nadia: A Cultural Preserver." Video, 2:42. Posted March 2011. https://www.mormonchannel.org/watch/series/im-a-mormon/nadia-a-cultural-preserver

The *Woman's Exponent* remains full of potential for accessing the construction of this cultural difference through gender identity. Mormon women in the *Exponent* created a gendered landscape that ought to be investigated further. How did the rhetoric change after 1890? How did Mormon women establish gender identity when plural marriage was no longer in the picture? How did Mormon women establish gender identity when they became Americans? As women obtained suffrage, as feminist protest thrived, as oral contraceptives and abortion and queerness became part of the American discussion of womanhood, how did Mormon women respond? Though the *Exponent* ran only until 1913, its successor *The Relief Society Magazine* continued and now its modern, online descendant the *Exponent II* continues to detail the thoughts, feelings, desires, and the various mediums of self-expression of Mormon women through American history. By visualizing the evolution of the rhetoric of Mormon women's gender identity, a more inclusive and comprehensive image of Mormonism can be created. This analysis construes a better understanding of how and why humans establish culture.

Analyzing the rhetoric of Mormon women's gender identity also construes a more comprehensive image of gender itself. Cultures like Mormonism that were a conscious break from the status quo provide a mirror for thinking about how members of modern societies use gender to work through how they relate to their cultures, the world, others, and themselves. By visualizing the implications of gender upon Mormonism, one can visualize the implications of gender upon modern society. Frameworks can be established that meliorate gender limitations and provide more access to gender liberation. The analysis of Mormon womanhood can negotiate an inclusive understanding of gender that allows for comfortable expression of self.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Author unknown. “Female Life Among the Mormons – a Narrative of Many Years Personal Experience, by the Wife of a Mormon Elder – Opinion.” *Northern Islander* (St. James, Michigan) VI, no. 2, February 14, 1856: [3]. Accessed 5/15/2019, *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*. https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2:11E8DA31DAFA3A59@EANX-11F12D6B6BCC2498@2398994-11F12D6B81107DD0@2-11F12D6BE49D36F8@%22Female+Life+among+the+Mormons+-+a+Narrative+of+Many+Years+Personal+Experience%2C+by+the+Wife.

Author unknown. “Notices of New Books.” *New York Times*, July 1855. Accessed 9/19/2018 via NY Times online archives.

Beecher, Catharine. “Words of Comfort for a Discouraged Housekeeper.” 1863. Edited by Norton, Mary Beth. *Major Problems in American Women’s History.* New York: D.C. Health and Company, 1989. 117-118.

Belisle, Orvilla S. *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled.* Philadelphia: WM. White Smith, 1856. Accessed 5/14/2019. https://archive.org/details/prophetsormormo00beligoog/page/n7

Bell, Alfreda Eva. *Boadicea: The Mormon Wife. Life-Scenes in Utah.* Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Buffalo: Arthur R. Orton, 1855. Edited and annotated by Austin, Michael and Parshall, Ardis E. Draper, Utah: Greg Cofford Books, 2016.

Burton, Richard Francis. *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California.* Classic Commentaries on America’s Past. New York: Knopf/Random House, 1963.

Hale, Sarah Josepha. “Empire of Woman.” 1845. Edited by Norton, Mary Beth. *Major Problems in American Women’s History.* New York: D.C. Health and Company, 1989. 114-116.

Hale, Sarah Josepha. “Maternal Instruction.” 1845. Edited by Norton, Mary Beth. *Major Problems in American Women’s History.* New York: D.C. Health and Company, 1989.

Harris, Sarah Hollister. *An Unwritten Chapter of Salt Lake, 1851-1901*. New York: Printed privately, 1901. Accessed 5/4/2019. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101079825822;view=1up;seq=7

Sigourney, Lydia. “Home.” 1850. Edited by Norton, Mary Beth. *Major Problems in American Women’s History.* New York: D.C Health and Company, 1989. 113-114.

Smith, Joseph. *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.* Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957.

Victor, Metta Victoria Fuller. *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction.* New York: Derby and Jackson, 1856. Accessed 5/14/2019. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101067486678;view=1up;seq=7

Ward, Maria. *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experiences / By the Wife of a Mormon Elder, recently from Utah*. New York: Derby & Jackson, 1857. Accessed 5/3/2019. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006534848

*Woman's Exponent* 1, no. 1 (1872). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37001539&divLevel=2&sort=#37001539

*Woman's Exponent* 2, no. 1 (1873). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37046766&divLevel=2&sort=#37046766

*Woman's Exponent* 2, no. 14 (1873). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37071467&divLevel=2&sort=#37071467

*Woman's Exponent* 2, no. 24 (1873). Accessed 4/24/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37096166&divLevel=2&sort=#37096166

*Woman's Exponent* 3, no. 1 (1874). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37099112&divLevel=2&sort=#37099112

*Woman's Exponent* 4, no. 1 (1875). Accessed 4/2/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37155355&divLevel=2&sort=#37155355

*Woman's Exponent* 4, no. 7 (1875). Accessed 4/26/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37167769&divLevel=2&sort=#37167769

*Woman's Exponent* 5, no. 1 (1876). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs.

http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37208688&divLevel=2&sort=#37208688

*Woman's Exponent* 6, no. 1 (1877). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37256217&divLevel=2&sort=#37256217

*Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 1 (1878). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37295856&divLevel=2&sort=#37295856

*Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 1 (1879). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37340562&divLevel=2&sort=#37340562

*Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 7 (1879). Accessed 4/26/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37353045&divLevel=2&sort=#37353045

*Woman's Exponent* 9, no. 1 (1880). Accessed 2/8/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37392077&divLevel=2&sort=#37392077

*Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 1 (1881). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37439166&divLevel=2&sort=#37439166

*Woman's Exponent* 10, no. 12 (1881). Accessed 4/10/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37460756&divLevel=2&sort=#37460756

*Woman's Exponent* 11, no. 1 (1882). Accessed 2/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37487572&divLevel=2&sort=#37487572

*Woman's Exponent* 13, no. 1 (1884). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs.

http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37583080&divLevel=2&sort=#37583080

*Woman's Exponent* 14, no. 1 (1885). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37636700&divLevel=2&sort=#37636700

*Woman's Exponent* 16, no. 4 (1887). Accessed 2/11/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37692003&divLevel=2&sort=#37692003

*Woman's Exponent* 17, no. 1 (1888). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37704561&divLevel=2&sort=#37704561

*Woman's Exponent* 18, no. 1 (1889). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37747290&divLevel=2&sort=#37747290

*Woman's Exponent* 19, no. 1 (1890). Accessed 5/14/2019, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. http://gerritsen.chadwyck.com/browsePeriodicals/toc.do?action=expand&queryId=../session/1557858052_15624&offset=37803010&divLevel=2&sort=#37803010

Secondary Sources

Barney, William. *Companion to 19th-century America. Blackwell Companions to American History.* Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

Baym, Nina. *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Beecher, Maureen Ursenbach and Anderson, Lavina Fielding. *Sisters in Spirit.* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 1987.

Brooks, Joanna; Steenblik, Rachel Hunt; and Wheelwright, Hannah. *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Brown, Susan Love. *Intentional Community: An Anthropological Perspective.* New York: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Carter, Alexandra. “Destabilising the Discipline.: Critical Debates about History and their Impact on the Study of Dance.” 10-19. Edited by Carter, Alexandra; Morris, Geraldine; Nicholas, Larraine. *Rethinking Dance History: A Reader*. New York: Psychology Press, 2004.

Chmielewski, Wendy E.; Kern, Louis J.; and Klee-Hartzell, Marlyn. *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993.

Compton, Todd. *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith.* Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997.

Cooper, Rex Eugene. *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization.* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990.

Daynes, Kathryn M. *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840-1910.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Ettari, Gary. “‘After the Body of My Spirit’: Embodiment, Empathy, and Mormon Aesthetics.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 25-47.

Flake, Kathleen. “The Development of Early Latter-Day Saint Marriage Rites, 1831-53.” *The Journal of Mormon History* 41, 1 (January 2015), 77-102.

Foster, Lawrence. "From Frontier Activism to Neo-Victorian Domesticity: Mormon Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Journal of Mormon History* 6 (1979): 3-21. Accessed 5/3/2019. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23286013

Foster, Lawrence. “Presidential Address: A Personal Odyssey Revisited: My Continuing Encounter with Mormon History.” *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 1-36. Accessed 5/14/2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23289334?seq=22#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Foster, Lawrence. *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons.* Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991.

Foster, Lawrence. *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community*. Illini Books ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

Furniss, Norman F. *The Mormon Conflict: 1850-1859.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Gordon, Sarah Barringer. “’The Liberty of Self-Degradation’: Polygamy, Woman Suffrage, and Consent in Nineteenth-Century.” *Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (1996): 800-817.

McBaine, Neylan. “Mormon Women and the Anatomy of Belonging.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 193-203. http://search.escohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=124889306&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

McDannell, Colleen. *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Moment, Gairdner B. and Kraushaar, Otto F. *Utopias: The American Experience.* Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1980.

Norton, Mary Beth. *Major Problems in American Women’s History.* New York: D.C Health and Company, 1989.

Shipps, Jann. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Sklar, Deidre. “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance.” 30-33. Edited by Dils, Ann; Cooper, Ann Albright. *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001.

Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-30.

Stevenson, Russell. “Manly Virtue: Defining Male Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism.” Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, 47, no. 1 (2014): 48-83. Accessed 5/3/2019. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=96992206&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 151-74. Accessed 5/3/2019. doi:10.2307/2711179.

Young, Kimball. *Isn’t One Wife Enough: The Story of Mormon Polygamy.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1954.