

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "PRIESTESSES UNTO THE MOST HIGH GOD": LDS WOMEN'S TEMPLE RITUALS AND THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Nazneen Kane, Ph.D., 2011

Directed By: Professor Patricia Hill Collins, Ph.D., Sociology

This study enters into broader debates surrounding the study of women in traditional religions by examining the ways in which LDS women utilize temple ritual in the ongoing construction of religious identity. In-depth interviews with eighteen LDS women are explored to highlight themes in LDS women's perspectives regarding temple rituals. I demonstrate that LDS women's perspectives on these ceremonies reveal that LDS women draw from an amalgam of competing dominant, alternative, and oppositional discourses to define their religious experiences and identities. These self-definitions revealed that the women in this study drew from ritual symbols, gestures, images, and dialogue to shift normative definitions of LDS women as mothers who bear and raise children to more expansive identities of LDS women as "priestesses unto the most high God." I argue that examining the practices of women in traditional religions reveals hidden layers of their experiences, identities, and ways of knowing.

“PRIESTESSES UNTO THE MOST HIGH GOD”: LDS WOMEN’S TEMPLE
RITUALS AND THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

By

Nazneen Kane

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2011

Advisory Committee:
Professor Patricia Hill Collins, Chair
Associate Professor Jeffrey Lucas
Professor Deborah Rosenfelt
Professor Bonnie Thornton Dill
Associate Professor Katie King

© Copyright by
Nazneen Kane
2011

Dedication

*Lovingly dedicated to Imani Bea and to my father,
who rooted in me a sociological imagination.*

Acknowledgements

Many individuals have contributed to this dissertation in a variety of ways. I express gratitude to the eighteen LDS women who made this study possible by willingly sharing their personal life stories and intimate portraits of their ritual experiences.

I also gratefully acknowledge the warm mentorship and ongoing support of Patricia Hill Collins. I am grateful for her invaluable insights, countless revisions, and critical commentary. Her mentorship has stretched and compelled me to improve my skills as a researcher and teacher. I admire and hope to exemplify the ways in which she embodies social justice in her everyday teaching, research, and mentoring. I also thank the committee of stellar scholars who provided feedback along the way. Jeff Lucas, Katie King, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Deborah Rosenfelt and Melissa Milkie all contributed constructive insights that have helped me to develop and improve my scholarship. I feel fortunate and so grateful to have had such a remarkable committee and positive dissertation experience.

I also wish to acknowledge several othermothers who cared for my daughter Imani as I carried out this study. Thanks to Marya Myslinski, Tina Lindsey, and my DC home school momma friends—Mary Porter, Molly Langer, and Elizabeth Hulet. I owe an ocean of thanks to Debby Kane for providing uncountable hours of loving care for Imani. I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement of my parents, who sacrificed in many ways to help me accomplish this goal. I am forever grateful to my partner Jeff for his many unsung acts of love and for his encouragement throughout every moment of a very long academic journey.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	IV
LIST OF TABLES	VI
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Research Questions	3
The Latter-day Saint Context	4
<i>Demographic Profile of U.S. Mormons</i>	5
<i>A Brief Histor(ies) of the Mormon Church</i>	5
<i>Church Government</i>	7
<i>LDS Priesthood</i>	9
<i>LDS Women’s Institutional Roles</i>	10
<i>Motherhood</i>	11
The LDS Temple Ritual System.....	14
<i>Purpose</i>	15
<i>Temple Ceremonies</i>	16
<i>Gender</i>	18
<i>Sacred/Secret Rituals</i>	20
Organization of the Study	21
CHAPTER 2: RETHINKING WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS.....	28
Part I: Theorizing Women in Traditional Religions	29
<i>Structure: The Dominant Approach to Women in Traditional Religions</i>	30
<i>Agency: Alternative Approaches to Women in Traditional Religions</i>	32
<i>“Lived Religion”: An Integrated Approach to Women in Traditional Religions</i>	37
Part II: Mormon Women and The Politics of Identity.....	40
<i>Mormon “Correlation”: Centralizing Priesthood Power and Authority</i>	40
<i>Priestesses: Mormon Women’s Enactments of Spiritual Power</i>	43
<i>The Suppression of Mormon Women’s Self-Definitions</i>	46
Chapter Summary	54
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN	56
Description of Methodology	56
<i>Feminist Standpoint Methodology</i>	57
Methods and Data Sources.....	59
<i>Reflexive Ethnography</i>	60
<i>Managing Researcher Subjectivity</i>	62
<i>Fieldwork and Participant Observations</i>	67
<i>In-depth Interviews, Interview Questionnaire and Procedures</i>	69
<i>Sampling and Recruitment Procedures</i>	69
<i>Interview Procedures and Questionnaire</i>	70
<i>Data Analysis</i>	72
Introduction To The Interview Participants	73
<i>A Profile of Eighteen LDS Women</i>	74
<i>Pathways to Mormonism</i>	77

<i>Pathways to the LDS Temple</i>	77
<i>Ongoing Participation and Affiliation with the LDS Church and Temples</i>	79
Chapter Conclusion	81
CHAPTER 4: THE TEMPLE INITIATORY	84
Ritual Setting: Description of the Initiatory Ceremony	85
<i>Ritual Change</i>	88
LDS Women’s Perspectives on the Initiatory Ceremony	89
<i>Experiencing Women in Ritual Roles and Practices</i>	92
<i>Initiatory Ritual and Self-Concept</i>	95
<i>Initiatory Ritual as a Mechanism for Negotiating Religious Authority</i>	100
“Priestesses Unto the Most High God”: Rethinking Mormon Women	108
CHAPTER 5: THE TEMPLE ENDOWMENT	110
Ritual Setting: Description of the Endowment Ceremony.....	112
<i>Ritual Change</i>	117
LDS Women’s Perspectives on the Temple Endowment Ceremony	118
<i>Eve’s Role in the Creation: Imagining Goddesses</i>	120
<i>Eve and the Covenant of Obedience: Rethinking Connection to God</i>	123
<i>Eve’s “complete and utter silence”: Contesting LDS Women’s Lack of Voice</i>	134
<i>Eve Dons the Priesthood Vestments and Tokens: Negotiating Patriarchy</i>	138
<i>Eve in Communal Prayer: Toward Community</i>	140
Toward a New Understanding of LDS Women	142
CHAPTER 6: THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LDS WOMEN’S	
PERPSECTIVES ON TEMPLE RITUALS	145
Part I: Temple Rituals and the Content of LDS Women’s Religious Identities ...	148
<i>Negotiating Religious Identities</i>	149
“Priestesses Unto the Most High God”	156
<i>Women in Traditional Religions</i>	160
Part II: Temple Rituals and the Processes toward LDS Women’s Identities.....	162
<i>Ritual Processes</i>	163
<i>Ritual As An Alternative Way of Knowing</i>	170
<i>LDS Women and Ritual Change</i>	171
<i>Ritual Processes and the Sociology of Knowledge</i>	177
Conclusion.....	181
APPENDIX 1	183
APPENDIX 2	184
APPENDIX 3	187
REFERENCES.....	188

List of Tables

***Tables are located at the end of each chapter and are numbered according to chapter (i.e. Table 1.1 is located at the end of chapter one, Table 3.1 is located at the end of chapter three, etc.).

Table 1.1. Layers of Church Government.

Table 1.2. Levels of the LDS Priesthood.

Table 1.3. Church Auxiliary Organizations that Extend Callings to Women.

Table 1.4. Description of the LDS Temple Ritual System.

Table 2.1. Summary of Relevant LDS Women's Church History Events.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Summary of Participants, Self-Reported.

Table 4.1. Description of the LDS Initiatory Ceremony.

Table 5.1. Description of the LDS Endowment Ceremony.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

...practices themselves can, over time, effect physical, emotional, and spiritual developments for the individuals who engage in them.
Meredith McGuire 2008:13

The shift in focus from structure toward agency in studies on women in patriarchal religions has inaugurated a sea change in our understanding of women's religious beliefs, experiences, and identities (Rouse 2004). Scholars who emphasize agency have aimed to challenge stereotypical representations of women in patriarchal religions as being falsely conscious, deceived into colluding with their own subordination, by demonstrating that women redefine their religious beliefs in ways that deviate from the dominant theological and doctrinal interpretations of their particular faith traditions (Beaman 2001; Ecklund 2005; Ozorak 1996; Read 2003; Read and Bartkowski 2000) and that the production of alternative religious beliefs can have profound ramifications for women's self-concepts (Chong 2008; Gallagher 2004).

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that women produce alternative religious meanings and identities by creatively weaving an amalgam of nonofficial beliefs, often drawn from eclectic sources, into their religious beliefs. In these alternative representations of women in religions, individual religious beliefs and self-concepts are conceived of as hybrid knowledges that involve considerable reflexivity and deviation from official religious discourse. They illustrate that

religious and secular boundaries are hardly distinct, and that women exercise agency within structures of domination.

This scholarship provides many insights into the experiences of women in religions but few studies have examined the interconnection between religious rituals, especially liturgical (formally arranged) ritual and women's religious identities.¹ While there has been increasing recognition within the sociology of religion that rituals engender various forms of meanings (Dillon 2010; McGuire 2008), including meanings about the self that enable individuals to recast and continually construct their religious identities (Spickard 2005; Yukich 2010), studies on women in religions have focused primarily on women's beliefs. This emphasis on belief and cognitive reframing, and the de-emphasis on religious practice, overlooks a significant dimension of many women's religious worlds. The absence of scholarship on the institutionalized ritual practices of women in religions neglects the importance of practice in the production of beliefs and the patterned ways in which ritual practices matter for the ongoing transformation and reformation of women's religious identities.

In this study, I draw upon ritual theorist Catherine Bell's description of ritual as practices that embody and translate beliefs and symbols. In Bell's articulation, rituals entwine thought and action and are "cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds" (1992:19). As important forces in women's religious lives, this study explores the conflicting tendencies embedded in women's ritualizing within patriarchal contexts. In this study, ritual is understood as a practice through which

¹ It may be that scholars have overlooked liturgical ritual because it is viewed as an expression of dominant religious beliefs. This assumption is rooted in ritual theories that define religious practices and beliefs as distinct.

women remake their religious worlds and identities or alternatively, as a practice of power and submission that organizes, manages and suppresses subjugated identities.

Statement of Research Questions

In this study, I enter into these broader debates by utilizing feminist ethnographic methods to explore the relationship between LDS women's temple rituals and their religious identities. Because LDS (Mormon, or belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) temples embody an elaborate system of ceremonial rituals, and because these rituals are an integral part of Mormon practices, Mormon women's temple practices provide a rich context for examining the relationship between ritual and religious identities. This study is designed to examine two research questions. *First, in what ways do LDS temple rituals intersect with women's religious identities?* LDS scholars have suggested that temple ritual is vitally linked to LDS women's self-concepts (e.g. Madsen 1987) and this question seeks to understand the meanings that LDS women ascribe to ritual as it relates to their sense of self. This study explores the extent to which ritual provides a space for creative subjectivities to emerge, or conversely, the ways in which ritual reinforces dominant ways of viewing the self.

Second, if ritual is important to LDS women's self-concepts, what are the processes through which ritual weaves into LDS women's selves? This question seeks to understand why ceremonial ritual might be distinct from other kinds of rituals in terms of the construction of the self. Here, I seek to understand the ritual elements and the ritual process itself in order to augment our understanding of the

mechanisms through which ritual becomes meaningful to women's religious experiences and identities.

LDS women engage in a multiplicity of important religious rituals such as sacraments, personal and family prayers, scripture study, and subscription to a health and dress code. They are also integrally involved in their congregations through lay institutional callings that are attached to important kinds of social recognition and religious status. Previous research demonstrates that these kinds of personal investments and institutional affiliations are surely important for women's ongoing conceptions of the self (Chong 2008). However, temple ritual plays a distinct role in the production of Mormon identity because its ceremonial instruction embodies the core and heart of LDS doctrines and beliefs (Madsen 1987). The veneration of temple ritual in the Mormon tradition, combined with its distinct mode of worship and purpose renders it significant as a religious space and practice toward which LDS women turn, both historically and in contemporary religious life, for self-definition (Cornwall 1994:247; Madsen 1987).

The Latter-day Saint Context

The religious landscape within which any particular ritual takes place has important implications for patterning emergent religious identities and intersubjective experiences. Further, religious landscapes, and the systems of belief and practice that they authorize are not distinct from social and political domains of power (Asad 1993). Because religious identities are constructed and reconstructed within situated religious contexts that reflect particular histories and power dynamics (Narayan and Purkayastha 2009), it is important to provide a description of those institutional

structures and practices that are most germane to this study. In this section, I contextualize the study by offering a brief description of the LDS Church—its demographic profile in the U.S., a brief history, a description of the Church’s system of governance and priesthood organizations, and a description of LDS women’s institutional functions.

Demographic Profile of U.S. Mormons

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the fourth largest Christian denomination in the United States with approximately 6 of 13 million members residing in the U.S. (Ballard 2007, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2008). According to the 2009 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, U.S. Mormons are overwhelmingly politically conservative, middle-class, college-educated, and white (86%). The population of U.S. Mormons is heavily concentrated in the West, with one-third of U.S. Mormons residing in Utah (Pew Research Center 2009).

A Brief Histor(ies) of the Mormon Church

The LDS church was officially established in 1830, during a second wave of religious revivalism in the U.S. known as “The Second Great Awakening.”² It’s founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. organized the Church in the so-called “burned-over district” of upstate New York, a region known for the charged religious fervor and numerous revivals that swept through the region (Quinn 1998).

² The American religious revivals “resisted the tradition of mainline Protestantism to dismiss modern claims for visions and other spiritual ‘gifts’ as the domain of magic” (Quinn 1998:13). These enthusiastic and visionary movements spawned numerous Christian denominations and are usually referred to as “The Great Awakening” (mid-1700s) and “The Second Great Awakening” (early 1800s) (Quinn 1998).

From the outset, the LDS Church was beset by controversy, in part because of the challenging claims put forward by Smith and in part, due to Smith's character. As LDS historian Richard Lyman Bushman (2005) explains, Smith's resume hardly fit the criteria envisioned for a prophet. As a poor, young and uneducated boy immersed in the rural culture of magic,³ Smith's emergence as a prophet who claimed ancient golden plates (along with seer stones that would enable him to translate them) were delivered to him by an angel,⁴ was received by his farming community with skepticism. The translated writings became known as *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ* and the book was not well received by neighboring farmers and settlers.

Widely divergent standpoints toward this religious movement, toward Smith, and toward *The Book of Mormon*, generated widely divergent accounts of early Mormon history. Contest over the historical record aside, insiders and outsiders shared an understanding that Smith's unconventional deviation from mainline Protestant theology was the source of both attraction and aversion. Beyond presenting a newly revealed book of scripture, Smith restored religious ways of life that were anachronous to the emerging democratic, capitalistic era of the United States (Bushman 2005). This included Smith's call for a "Zion" economy,⁵ his

³ See D. Michael Quinn (1998) and Bushman (2005) for lengthy discussions of Smith's relationship to magic. Bushman argues that Smith's early practice of using seer stones to identify treasures for "money-diggers" prepared him for his ministry, including the use of seer stones (called a "Urim and Thummim") to translate ancient writings inscribed on gold plates into English.

⁴ According to Joseph Smith, at the age of fourteen God and Jesus appeared to him and, upon his asking which religious sect he should join, he was told to join none of them because all were incorrect (Smith 1991).

⁵ Smith deplored the social distance created by the unequal distribution of wealth and worked to establish a cooperative economic system that alleviated this social distance (Bushman 2005). He pushed toward a system of economy in which property was to be turned over to the Church and redistributed according to needs. This form of economic system is commonly referred to as the "Law

erection of an elaborate hierarchical system of Church government that he would himself lead, and in his restoration of Biblical practices. This restoration involved reviving the practice of polygamy (called celestial marriage), the belief in living prophets and apostles who received direct revelation from God, and the practice of building temples dedicated to enacting ceremonial rites.

These controversial practices bred hostility from neighboring residents in multiple states, pushing Mormons westward. The fatal shooting of Joseph Smith in 1844, while imprisoned in Carthage, Illinois marked the beginning of a difficult and deadly exodus of Mormons from Nauvoo, Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah under the leadership of newly erected prophet Brigham Young. In the Utah frontier, Brigham Young led and grew the Church. Mormons slowly assimilated back into mainstream culture and society over the course of the twentieth century (Mauss 1994). According to LDS historian Richard Lyman Bushman (2005), Joseph Smith's erection of an elaborate system of governing mechanisms was imperative to the Church's ability to survive his death and grow the Church from a fringe sect to an assimilated, large-scale religion.

Church Government

LDS Church Government blends administrative functions with the spiritual functions of the priesthood, resulting in an extensive and complex organizational structure (Bushman 2005, Cornwall 1994). The LDS Church is entirely run by laity. There are no salaried positions, no special clerical or clergy class, and no special

of Consecration" within Mormon teachings. The attempt was short-lived although Mormons continue to operate an effective welfare program.

educational tracks (Bushman 2005). Male members of the lay Church voluntarily fill Church administrative positions.

The LDS Church has three basic levels of administration—general, area, and local. Each level pertains to geographic units; in other words, the general church is divided into areas, which are further divided into two levels of local units.

[Insert Table 1.1 Layers of Church Organization]

The Church claims Jesus Christ as the head of the church, under which the three levels of government operate.⁶ The general (highest-ranking) level of the Church is headed by an organizing body of Quorums, members of which are referred to by the Church as “General Authorities.” The “First Presidency,” a unit of leadership that includes a President (also known by Mormons as “the prophet”), a First Counselor, and a Second Counselor act as the administrative heads of these quorums.

Headquartered in Salt Lake City, the central organizing body is further assisted by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Quorums of the Seventy under which area and local authorities lead local congregations. Bishops head local congregations, called wards or branches, under which local women’s, youth, and children’s auxiliary organizations and church programs operate.

⁶ This articulation of Church Government aligns with the Church’s official description of Church Administration. It corresponds with the description given on the Church’s official website (www.lds.org). Accessed April 8, 2011.

LDS Priesthood

Threaded through the levels of Church Government is an equally complex system of Mormon Priesthood. Defined by the Church as “the power of God on Earth,” (lds.org), the LDS priesthood is comprised of two levels: Aaronic and Melchizedek. The Aaronic Priesthood, or “lesser priesthood,” is an appendage of the Melchizedek, or “high priesthood” (www.lds.org).

[Insert Table 1.2 Levels of the LDS Priesthood]

All “worthy” males are eligible for Aaronic priesthood ordination at the age of twelve. According to contemporary Mormon belief, ordination to the priesthood occurs through physical transmission by someone with priesthood authority through the laying on of hands.⁷ The typical lifecourse expectation is that males receive the Melchizedek Priesthood preparatory to serving a mission, around the age of eighteen. Each level of the priesthood is comprised of a multiple offices, each of which entails enacting specifies functions and duties.

The LDS Priesthood serves both bureaucratic and spiritual functions. Bureaucratically, the offices of the priesthood involve carrying out administrative duties that serve instrumental purposes (i.e. Bishops execute local church operations, Deacons administer the sacrament). Those who hold the Melchizedek, or high priesthood, are also recognized as being authorized to enact the spiritual functions of

⁷ There is debate as to whether or not Joseph Smith believed that the Melchizedek Priesthood could only be administered through the laying on of hands. Early accounts of the temple ceremonies suggest that Smith believed that participation in the temple endowment ceremony conferred the high priesthood (Buerger 2002, Bushman 2005).

the priesthood. This involves healing, blessing, anointing, and bestowing physical and spiritual blessings upon people through the laying on of hands.

LDS Women's Institutional Roles

While Mormon women provide vital contributions at all levels of the organization, they have never been extended calls to serve in any offices pertaining to Church Government or Priesthood. Mormon women's institutional functions occur within Church "Auxiliary," or supportive, organizations and programs. The most visible of these organizations include the Relief Society (for women age 18+), Young Women (for female youth age 12-17), and Primary (for children age 18 months to 11). In these organizations, LDS women are extended leadership positions (commonly referred to as "callings") at the general and local levels to serve in positions of oversight (as members of Presidencies), and may also be called as teachers and leaders in weekly meetings.

[Insert Table 1.3 Church Auxiliary Organizations that Extend
Callings to Women]

Through local and general callings, LDS women play vital roles in executing the programs of the Church. However, their organizations, meetings, and decisions are overseen by a priesthood leader(s) (Cornwall 1994). With priesthood authority, men in the Church are permitted to officiate over the leadership offices of the Church, to preside over all the auxiliaries of the Church (including the women's organization), to

officiate in priesthood ordinances such as baptisms and confirmations, and to administer priesthood blessings for direction, healing, and so forth.

Because Church government and its multi-level priesthood are intertwined, women are institutionally excluded from the instrumental, governing practices of the priesthood, the ritual practices of the priesthood (i.e. passing weekly sacraments), from the spiritual, or mystical, practices of the priesthood (i.e. performing ordinances such as baptisms and healings), and from holding corresponding positions of church leadership and administration (Cornwall 1994). The Church's official standpoint on gender serves as the primary vehicle through which women's exclusion is explained; in the dominant framework of the Church, motherhood and priesthood are viewed as parallel (Cornwall 1994).

Motherhood

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints defines men and women as innately, divinely different. The Church's official standpoint on gender is defined within a widely disseminated document, entitled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1995).⁸ Authored by the "First Presidency," the Church's highest governing body, the document is presented as an authentic and direct revelation from God. It states that, "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose," and that, "Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan." The document then delineates the roles of men and women in families—"by divine design," fathers are to "preside over their families in love and righteousness," which

⁸ The "Proclamation" is a one-page document so I do not reference page numbers when directly quoting from the text.

includes primary responsibility for securing the material provisions and protection for their families. Women are to be mothers, defined as bearing and raising children, within the context of a heterosexual marriage. While scholars have demonstrated that this is a modern family form that extends a capitalist, white, patriarchal model of the traditional family (Dill 1988), and despite the Church's history of practicing plural marriage, the Church promotes these gender norms as timeless and divinely designed.

While sociological research shows that throughout the 1990s the LDS Church appeared more accepting of women in the paid labor force, the Church continues to teach that women's fundamental responsibilities are to bear and raise children (Iannaccone and Miles 1990). For example, in a 2007 talk entitled "Mothers Who Know," addressed to the worldwide Church, General Relief Society President Julie Beck declared, "Faithful daughters of God desire children... Women who desire and work toward that blessing in this life are promised they will receive it for all eternity, and eternity is much, much longer than mortality."

This traditional ideology has significant ramifications for LDS women's work-family lives. For example, LDS women in the United States have higher than average fertility levels and expectations (Stark 1994, Toney, Golesorkhi, and Stinner 1985), significantly lower levels of premarital sex (Harding and Holman 1996), greater adherence to a traditional division of household labor (Goodman, Heaton, and Holman 1994), and a decreased likelihood to participate full-time in the paid labor force (Chadwick and Garrett 1995). Relative to the general U.S. population, Mormons are more likely to be married (and more likely to be married to a person of

the same faith), and continue to have more children than any other religious group in the United States (Pew Research Center 2009).

Because LDS men and women are defined differently, and because they experience Mormonism in distinctly different ways, this study focuses on LDS women's ritual experiences. LDS women should be viewed as a heterogeneous group of women who are positioned differently within Mormonism. The formation of the LDS Church intersects not only with a history of making gender distinctions (Cornwall 1994), but also overlaps with racial (Bringham and Smith 2004; Embry 1994) and sexual (Phillips 2005; Quinn 2001) formations. While each of these categories of power and difference intersect and are intertwined with the formation of the LDS Church, I focused on the broad category "women" because all LDS women share some common features of Mormonism—all are excluded from the priesthood, from positions of church administration and all are externally defined in familial terms. Because LDS femininity crisscrosses with other categories of power and difference⁹ some LDS women are marginalized more than others by dominant definitions of LDS femininity.

This study on LDS women's religious identities was carried out within this context that defines women as mothers. This study seeks to understand how LDS women define themselves within this institutional framework and how they utilize temple rituals throughout this process. I was curious about the kinds of subjectivities that emerged through women's temple practices, and the ways in which they might be

⁹ The LDS Church's system of gender was salient in women's narratives (although the politics of sexuality and race were also referenced by informants), thematically patterning women's ritual interpretations and experiences. Had the sample of participants been more diverse, statements from informants indicated that other dimensions of power would likely have been more present in the interviews.

meaningful to these self-definitions. Sociologist Armand Mauss (1996) has suggested that LDS temple rituals are central to the production of collective and individual Mormon identities. If that is so, how does ritual specifically weave into Mormon women's identities? Would ritual further reproduce identities centered upon traditional motherhood, or were there other possibilities?

The LDS Temple Ritual System

There are currently 134 LDS temples operating worldwide (Hales 2011) with approximately twenty-two additional temples announced as under construction. Sixty-nine of these operating temples are located in the United States, although they are disproportionately concentrated in the Western U.S., where greater numbers of Mormons reside (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011b).

In Mormon belief, temples are “houses of God,” spaces set apart to experience and commune with the divine. Distinct from the abundant LDS church buildings that house weekly congregational meetings and activities, there are fewer LDS temples. Unlike meetinghouses, members are not assigned to any particular temple and can attend any temple at any time within open hours of operation.¹⁰ Many individuals attend the temple with a spouse but do not typically know the majority of those with whom they ritualize. In special or exceptional occasions, a family or congregation may arrange to attend together. Members are encouraged to attend the temple often; those living close to a temple are encouraged to attend once a month.

Also unlike meetinghouses, access is not open to the public or even to all members of the church. Entry into temples is accessible only to adult church

¹⁰ Temples are typically open Tuesday through Saturday. Members can attend any operating temple at any time during hours of operation.

members who possess a temple recommend. One's readiness to receive a recommend is assessed through a series of two interviews with local priesthood authorities (typically a bishop and stake president). The Church bequeaths recommends only to members who (1) express faith in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost; (2) who sustain the general and local authorities of the Church; (3) who fulfill their church callings and strive to participate in weekly sacraments; (4) who live the "law of chastity" which includes a code of sexual morality; and (5) who adhere to certain LDS standards including paying a full tithe (10% of income), and abstaining from the consumption of alcohol (Hunter 1995). Temple recommends expire every two years, after which individuals must be re-interviewed.

Purpose

The main purpose of temples is to provide a bounded and dedicated space wherein sacred ordinances can be administered to adult church members. The LDS Church defines an ordinance as "a sacred formal *act* performed by the authority of the priesthood" (lds.org 2011, emphasis added). Some ordinances, including the temple ordinances, are referred to as "saving ordinances" because they are viewed as essential for reentering into God's presence after this life and for receiving the highest degree of exaltation.¹¹ As *acts*, LDS ordinances are always administered through embodied ritual. Ritual serves as a vehicle through which ordinances are transmitted. In temples, the rituals that transmit ordinances are embedded within a system of elaborate ceremonies. After receiving these ordinances, individuals are encouraged to

¹¹ In Mormon theology, there are three degrees, or kingdoms, of exaltation—telestial, terrestrial, and celestial. Entry into the highest level, the celestial kingdom, requires that an individual has received all the saving ordinances and has lived according to the covenants associated with each ordinance.

return and receive the ordinances in behalf of their deceased ancestors who have not yet received them.

The practice of performing ordinances for the dead stems from the controversial LDS belief in “redeeming the dead.” According to this belief, members of the Church can “redeem” the dead through vicarious ordinations. By acting as proxies, members receive ordinances and enter into sacred covenants in their behalf (Neuenschwander 2010 [2001]). It is believed that the dead exercise free agency by accepting or rejecting these ordinances. The LDS Church’s dedication to doing family history and genealogical work is essential to vicarious ordinances because members are encouraged to perform them according to ancestral lineages (Packer 1980).

Temple Ceremonies

Four key sequential ceremonies compose the temple ritual system: baptism for the dead, initiatory, endowment, and sealing.¹² Table 1.4 presents a summary of each of the four ceremonies that comprise the temple ritual system.

[Insert Table 1.4 Description of the LDS Temple Ritual System]

Every participating individual must receive each ordinance in sequential order (as ordered in the table). Likewise, proxy work is performed sequentially and on an individual basis. The temple ceremonies are layered with symbolic meanings (Nibley

¹² The initiatory and endowment ceremonies were especially significant to the women in this study and are described in greater detail in chapters four (initiatory) and five (endowment).

1994) and involve formal ritual acts through which ordinances are conferred. Each ordinance requires the donning of white ceremonial clothing.

Baptisms for the dead are unique in that they are the only temple ordinance that Mormon youth and non-endowed members of the Church can perform. Proxy baptisms are performed when Church members, clothed in white, are fully immersed in a font of water in behalf of someone who is dead.

The initiatory ceremony involves symbolically washing, anointing, and clothing the initiate in preparation for receiving their endowment. Here, initiates are symbolically spiritually and physically cleansed and anointed through ritual involving dialogue and the laying on of hands by a temple officiator. They are then authorized to wear temple garments, sacred vestments that are to be regularly worn underneath their clothing at all times. I describe these ordinances in greater detail in chapter four.

The endowment ceremony, often referred to as a “session,” is the longest of the temple ceremonies (approximately 1.5 hours). The endowment is defined as a ceremonial process that confers knowledge in exchange for entering into sacred covenants with God (McConkie 1997, Packer 1980, Talmage 2007[1912]).

Ritual is the medium through which this exchange is carried out, therefore, the endowment is embedded within elaborate ceremony and utilizes multiple ritual mediums including audio-visual media, embodied movements and hand gestures, periods of instruction, changes in lighting, and changes in ritual vestments. Like all rituals, the endowment is deeply layered with symbolic meanings that unfold to individuals through repetitions of the ceremonial experience. Therefore, it is often referred to as a “house of learning,” a place where individuals go to co-produce and

increase spiritual knowledge of divinity, self, and society (Parry 1994). When individuals say that they are going to do a session at the temple, they are typically referring to the endowment ceremony.

The sealing ordinance is considered to be the highest ordinance and is used to eternally connect people in family units. The sealing ordinance unites heterosexual couples in marriage for “time and all eternity.” Sealing ceremonies are also performed to unite children to their parents, to unite the dead, and to unite the living to the dead.¹³ Because the sealing ordinance is viewed as essential to achieving the highest degree of exaltation, there is a significant focus in Mormon belief on intrafaith, temple marriage. Mormons frequently refer to this as celestial or eternal marriage, and are strongly encouraged to marry other Mormons so that they can receive this highest ordinance. As sociologists Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason (1984) explain, this belief is related to the Mormon concept of “eternal progression,” which posits that, as married pairs, exalted individuals have not only become like God, but have become Gods and Goddesses in their own right, who will then go on to create their own worlds.

Gender

Gender organizes temple ritual in two important ways. First, LDS gender norms shape Church teachings regarding when boys/men and girls/women should expect to receive their endowment. The initial temple experience marks a significant religious rite of passage for LDS men and women because it is meant to symbolize a

¹³ For example, a living Mormon can be sealed to their dead parents and/or can seal dead siblings to their dead parents. Couples married in the temple do not need to have their children sealed to them because their marriage sealing includes the automatic sealing of biological children (adopted children have to be sealed).

person's intent to heighten their commitment to God and their religion. In practice, commitment and faith are overshadowed by LDS gender norms in shaping the timing of these rites in individual Mormon's lives. For lifelong Mormons particularly, men/boys and girls/women have different expectations regarding when to anticipate going to the temple. Boys learn that they will enter the temple just prior to serving a two-year proselytizing mission, typically at the age of 19. Conversely, girls are taught to expect and associate the temple with eternal marriage.¹⁴ The gendered framing of this rite of passage reflects the LDS system of belief in which a woman's increased commitment to her God and religious community is connected to marriage while for men these commitments are tied to institutional, priesthood obligations.

Second, gender organizes the temple ritual experience. Joseph Smith first introduced the endowment to Mormon men in 1842, and then to women one year later (Madsen 1987). Today, both men and women may equally access temples if they meet qualifying standards. While at first, there were no gender distinctions made in the performing of vicarious ordinances, in 1845, under the direction of the second LDS Prophet, Brigham Young, it was specified that men should perform work in behalf of men and women for women (Madsen 1987). Also, initiatory and endowment ordinances are sex-segregated and are conferred to women through LDS women. In the initiatory, this means that women perform the ordinances in behalf of other women but also means that LDS women who operate and oversee the initiatory

¹⁴ The church teaches that, "Most likely you will receive your endowment shortly before you serve a full-time mission or before you are married in the temple. Single members in their late teens or early twenties who have not received a mission call and are not engaged to be married in the temple are generally not recommended to receive their own endowment" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011b). Women must also receive their endowment preparatory to serving a Church mission (at age 21+), but they are not obligated or under the same institutional pressures as are young men to serve missions. If marriage is possible, women are discouraged from serving missions.

work execute the ordinances. In the endowment, men and women ritualize together although on different sides of the room. Endowment ordinances are also conferred through female temple workers and the content of the ritual varies in some instances (these additional gender differences are discussed in greater detail in chapter five).

Sacred/Secret Rituals

While covenants of non-disclosure are made only in the endowment ceremony, there is a pervasive ethos of non-disclosure surrounding the ordinances of the temple. Despite its central importance to Mormonism, temple ritual remains unexplored because “the ordinances and rites of the temple are held sacred by Latter-day Saints” (Madsen 1987:89), and leaders caution members maintain confidentiality regarding the temple ordinances.¹⁵

This creates an enormous paradox for women (and men) who participate in ritual—temple ritual is indeed, the heart and core of Mormon theological belief and has significant consequences for how women define their faith and identity. At the same time, there is no approved forum for discussing how it configures their everyday lives and religious identities. This study begins to examine the significance of these ordinances for LDS women’s religious identities and beliefs.

¹⁵ For example, the Church cautions members that, “You can talk about what the interior of the temple looks like, and you can freely share the feelings you have in the temple. However, temple covenants and ordinances, including the words used, are too sacred to be discussed in detail outside the temple. By avoiding discussion of these sacred things outside the temple, we protect them from mocking, ridicule, or disrespect. Do not be casual when talking about your experiences in the temple” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011b).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized around two research questions. First, in what ways are LDS temple rituals important to women's religious identities? Second, if ritual is important to LDS women's self-concepts, what are the processes through which ritual weaves into and onto LDS women's selves? I investigate these questions using a feminist ethnographic research design. Feminist ethnographic methods are particularly well suited for this investigation because they foreground LDS women's standpoints on their ritual experiences and identities. I utilized in-depth interviews with LDS women as a method for gathering information regarding the content of their self-definitions and the ways in which women in traditional religions act as agents in the production of knowledge, using ritual to (re)create meaning and identity.

In chapter two, "Rethinking Women In Traditional Religions," I first identify and explore two major social scientific approaches to the study of women in traditional religions highlighting their implications for theorizing religious identity. Second, I discuss major themes in the subfield of scholarship on LDS women, laying the contextual groundwork needed for understanding LDS women's experiences and interpretations of temple ritual. Drawing upon scholarship on "lived religions," I push toward an integrated framework that views religion as a contradictory institution, and views women in traditional religions as imbued with agency within structures of constraint.

In chapter three, "Research Design," I describe the feminist ethnographic research design. I discuss the methodological framework and the methods I used to investigate the specified research questions. I argue that a methodology informed by

feminist standpoint epistemologies equips this study with the tools to explore the relationship between ritual and LDS women's identities. I grounded the findings of this study in the experiential knowledge of research participants, pushing toward the self-definition of women's religious lives, identities, and experiences. After explaining the methodological assumptions that guide this study, I describe the data sources, data collection and recruitment procedures, and the analytic procedures utilized in this study.

In chapters four and five, I present LDS women's perspectives on the LDS temple ceremonies. LDS women focused their narratives on the initiatory and endowment ceremonies, so each chapter presents patterns in women's standpoints regarding these two ceremonies. In chapter four, "The Initiatory Ceremony," I describe the initiatory ceremony and three core themes in women's standpoints toward the initiatory ceremony. The women in this study shared an affinity toward the rituals that unfold throughout this ceremony, finding them to be especially meaningful. Women's affinity for this ceremony is tied to the unique representation of women as ritual actors who perform the laying on of hands. I highlight the ways in which these rituals opened women to new ways of experiencing their religious tradition and discuss the ramifications of these practices for LDS women's self-concepts and for negotiating their exclusion from the priesthood organization.

In chapter five, "The Endowment Ceremony," I describe the endowment ceremony and discuss five core themes in women's standpoints toward the endowment ceremony. The women in this study revealed layers of incongruent standpoints toward their endowment practices. These layers of incongruence were

tied to the fluctuating representations of women embedded in the ceremony.

Variations in meaning and in women's responses to the shifting representations are highlighted.

In chapter six, "The Sociological Significance of LDS Women's Perspectives on Temple Rituals," I discuss women's perspectives on temple ritual vis-à-vis the two research questions that guide the study. In Part I, I examine the ways in which LDS temple ritual intersects with Mormon women's religious identities. In this part, I suggest that exploring the connections between women's religious identities and the processes by which they construct these identities will shed light on broader themes concerning women's engagement in patriarchal religions. In Part II, I build on the analysis presented in Part I by identifying some of the key processes through which ritual weaves into Mormon women's identities. In this part, I argue that ritual constitutes an alternative way of knowing, connecting these ways of knowing to broader dialogues within the sociology of knowledge.

Table 1.1 Layers of Church Government*

Levels of Administration	Description	Administrative Positions**
General	The highest level of Church Government. Headed by a President (also called the Prophet) and his two counselors. Oversee the operations of the worldwide Church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Presidency: President (Prophet), First Counselor, Second Counselor 2. Quorum of the Twelve Apostles 3. Quorums of the Seventies
Area	An area is the largest geographic division of the Church. An Area President oversees the programs and offices of each area.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Area Presidency: Area President, First Counselor, Second Counselor 2. Area Seventies
Local	Each area is broken up into stakes, missions, and districts that are further divided into smaller geographic units called wards or branches (smaller than wards). Local wards and branches hold weekly Sunday meetings and execute the programs of the Church.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stake, Mission or District Presidency: Stake/Mission/District President, First Counselor, Second Counselor 2. Ward or Branch Presidency: Bishop or Branch President, First Counselor, Second Counselor

* Table Reference: This table is designed according to descriptions of the church administrative system as defined by the official website of the LDS Church. www.lds.org (see "study by topic": Church Administration)

**Positions of Church Administration are unpaid and are exclusively extended only to LDS men.

Table 1.2 Levels of the LDS Priesthood*

Level	Description	Offices	Duties
Aaronic	An appendage of the Melchizedek Priesthood (the lesser priesthood). Available to all worthy male members age 12 and up.	Bishop, Priest, Teacher, Deacon	Pass sacrament, collect fast offerings, baptize, and ordain others to the Aaronic Priesthood
Melchizedek	The high priesthood. Holds power and authority over all the offices and keys of the Church. The dominant expectation is that this priesthood is bestowed to worthy men prior to serving a mission.	Apostle, Seventy, Patriarch, High Priest, Elder	Prerequisite for serving missions and receiving the ordinances of the temple. Administer blessings of healing and spiritual/temporal gifts, bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost.
* Table Reference: This table is designed according to descriptions of the Priesthood as defined by the official website of the LDS Church. www.lds.org (see "study by topic": Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood)			

Table 1.3 Church Auxiliary Organizations That Extend Callings to Women*

Organization	Description	Offices
Relief Society	Each congregation operates a Relief Society to which all women aged 18 and up belong. Relief Societies meet during weekly Sunday meetings. A female President and two counselors head each Relief Society. The purpose of Relief Society is manifold but is especially focused on administering to the spiritual and temporal needs of women and families.	Relief Society President, First Counselor, Second Counselor
Young Women	Each congregation operates a Young Women's organization for all young women aged 12-17. Young Women meet during weekly Sunday meetings and are headed by a both youth and adult Young Women leaders. The main purpose of Young Women's is to "bring them unto Christ."	Young Women Presidency: President, First Counselor, Second Counselor
Primary	Each congregation operates a Primary for children aged 18 months to 11 years. Primary meets weekly during Sunday meetings and are headed by a President and her two counselors. The primary purpose of this organization is to teach children "the gospel."	Primary Presidency: President, First Counselor, Second Counselor
*Table Reference: This table is designed according to descriptions of each program as defined by the official website of the LDS Church. www.lds.org (see "study by topic": Relief Society, Young Women, Primary)		

Table 1.4 Description of the LDS Temple Ritual System

Temple Ceremonies	Brief Description of the Ceremony
Baptisms for the Dead*	An individual enters into a baptismal font and is baptized by a priesthood holder who fully immerses the person in water. This is done in behalf of someone who is dead, whose name is stated within the dialogue that accompanies the baptism ordinance.
Initiatory Ceremony	Involves washing, anointing, and clothing the initiate in preparation for the Endowment Ceremony. In women's initiatories, female temple workers perform the ordinances.
Endowment Ceremony	Participants view a film depicting Creation events, enter into 5 covenants with God, clothe in priesthood vestments, receive "tokens" (hand gestures) of the priesthood, participate in a collective prayer circle, and after having an interaction with a temple worker at the veil, move into the Celestial room.
Sealing Ceremony	Eternally uniting a husband and a wife in marriage, or uniting children and their parents. Involved individuals kneel at an altar and link hands while an ordinance workers delivers the ritual dialogue.

* Baptism ceremonies that take place in temples are only for and in behalf of the dead. Baptismal ordinances for the living are not performed in temples. Initiatory, endowment, and sealing ceremonies are performed for the living and for the dead.

CHAPTER 2: RETHINKING WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Religious belief and practice continue to be important for the formation of individual identities (Ammerman 2006). My theoretical approach to investigating the interconnections between identity and ritual has been foremost informed by studies on women in traditional religions,¹⁶ although this body of scholarship has approached issues of identity through varied frameworks. This chapter examines the extant body of literature on women in traditional religions including the subfield of scholarship on LDS women. In sociology, traditional religious institutions are typically those that emphasize the importance of the gendered division of labor and that exclude women from religious authority.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part, I explore two main approaches to studying women in traditional religions, highlighting relevant theoretical debates concerning women's identities in traditional religions. In sociology, most scholars have explored gender in religious contexts by examining the ways in which gender operates as an organizing principle of the organizational and governing structures of religion. Recent scholarship, however, has argued that these approaches are inadequate for understanding the content of women's religious experiences and identities. By shifting the lens of sociological studies to women's

¹⁶ The term "traditional" denotes widely different meanings across different contexts. In the context of sociological scholarship on women and gender in organized religions, this term most commonly refers to large-scale, official religions that espouse patriarchal structures and practices, especially those religions that emphasize the importance of the traditional family (nuclear, heterosexual, gendered division of labor). For example, sociologist Kelly Chong uses the phrase "women in religious traditionalism" (Chong 2006). In contemporary studies the LDS Church is viewed as a traditional religion and is typically viewed as a mainline Protestant, patriarchal organization.

descriptions of their own religious experiences, they emphasize the importance of women's agency and the ways in which they reshape and redefine religious institutions and religious identities.

I discuss the ways in which both approaches offer important insights needed for understanding and executing this particular study. In part two, I explore themes amongst extant scholarship on LDS women, a subfield of the broader literature on women in traditional religions. This part contextualizes the study and provides support for the feminist ethnographic methodology utilized in this study (discussed in chapter three).

Part I: Theorizing Women in Traditional Religions

In the sociology of religion, women in religious traditionalism have been primarily examined through two main approaches (Chong 2006). Each approach emphasizes different aspects of religion and religious life and has implications for the ways in which religious identities are conceptualized. Underlying each approach, are root differences in the ways in which structure and agency are emphasized and conceptualized (Ammerman 2003). In studies that focus on the structures of religious institutions, it is often assumed that identity is determined by religious institutions whose organizational dynamics craft and shape the repertoire of language and experience accessed by its members, thus structuring a unitary, stable, collective religious identity. In studies that focus on agency, religious identity is viewed as negotiable, emergent, fluid, evolving, and intersectional. In this part, I discuss these different approaches to the study of women in traditional religions and argue that an integrated approach is most useful for this study.

Structure: The Dominant Approach to Women in Traditional Religions

In sociology, studies on women in traditional religions have primarily focused on the ways in which religious structures and practices serve as vehicles of patriarchal domination that constrain women's religious practices and beliefs. Women's experiences in religions have primarily been conceptualized as gendered experiences (with less focus on other dimensions of power) and women's exclusion from religious hierarchy and authority has been of central importance.

At least in the field of sociology, a key area of emphasis has been on the "stained glass ceiling," the subtle barriers to women's advancement in positions of religious organizational leadership (primarily within Christianity). The politics surrounding the institutional barriers to women's ordination and advancement in religious occupations, and the conflicts that have removed those barriers in some denominations and congregations have been examined in depth (Chaves 1997, Finlay 2003, Purvis 1995, Sullins 2000). Studies have found that despite a number of policy changes regarding the ordination of women within Christian denominations (Konieczny and Chaves 2000), and despite that clergy positions are feminizing occupations (Nesbitt 1997), the numbers of women ascending into clergy positions remains strikingly low (Konieczny and Chaves 2000). Additionally, as women ascend in rank, the organizational barriers to women's advancement intensify (Adams 2007), partially due to the consequences of subtle dual-ordination tracking (Nesbitt 1993). Further, when women do lead congregations, they do so with fewer organizational resources (Konieczny and Chaves 2000).

Despite religious inequalities, it is widely accepted that cross-culturally women are more religious than men along a number of religious dimensions, a second key area of sociological inquiry. In the U.S. and Europe, women outnumber men as participants in both mainline and “new” churches (Stark 2002, Stark and Bainbridge 1985, Walter and Davie 1998). Women are also more likely than men to seek religious consolation (Ferraro and Kelley-Moore 2000), to engage in private rituals of devotion such as prayer and scripture reading (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997), to profess more devout religious beliefs, and to say that their religious beliefs are relevant in their everyday lives (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993). Thus, despite that women are generally excluded from mainline religious authority, their vigorous religious participation substantially outpaces their male peers.¹⁷ This paradox has fueled long-standing questions and debates as to why women participate in patriarchal religions. Scholarship focused on the LDS context contributes to this puzzle; focused primarily on women’s relationship to authority, scholars find little evidence that women are involved in institutional decision-making despite that they are central to the local operation of the Church.

¹⁷ A prolific body of scholarship in the scientific study of religion has consequently been invested in explaining why these gender differences in religiosity exist. Focused on the origins of these differences, scholars have debated about whether or not risk preference theories, gender orientation theories, human capital theories, or biological theories best explain these differences. While proponents of risk preference theory argue that men are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as non-religiosity (Miller and Hoffman 1995, Miller and Stark 2002), others have argued that risk preference does not explain women’s greater average religiosity (Freese 2004, Roth and Kroll 2007). Some have suggested that it is not one’s gender per se, but rather, one’s gender orientation, or the degree to which they express “masculine” or “feminine” traits, that explains gender differences in religiosity (Thompson and Remmes 2002, Thompson 1991). A third theoretical model, the human capital approach, argues that women generally score higher on measures of religiosity due to the gendered division of labor (i.e. women’s familial responsibilities give them greater time and propensity for religious activity) (Iannaccone 1990). Others have called for a return to biological sex differences to explain “universal” gender disparities in religiosity (Stark 2002).

The paradoxical findings that emerge from investigations on religious structure and organization have led scholars to ask why women participate in patriarchal religions. They pose the question as to why women continue to participate in institutions that disenfranchise them along many dimensions of their religious lives. While approaches to women in traditional religions that focus on religious structures are largely not designed to explore religious identity, several quantitative analyses utilizing large-scale survey data find that women in mainline Christian denominations accept their religious callings as submissive partners, and that they espouse identities and attitudes that align with their traditions (e.g. Brinkerhoff and MacKie 1985, Felty and Poloma 1991, Morgan 1987).

Agency: Alternative Approaches to Women in Traditional Religions

Many scholars have argued that the focus on religious structure overlooks the ways in which women exercise agency within their religious lives. They assert two main criticisms of the ways in which dominant approaches represent religious experience and identity. First, scholars have argued that the focus on structure has constructed a grand narrative of women in religions as being universally oppressed and/or as falsely conscious (Chong 2008, Rouse 2004). This assumption of false consciousness is rooted in identity theories that conceptualize the self-concept as tightly aligned with the cultural components of the larger institution. It has been argued that the emphasis on structure forecloses an understanding of how women exercise agency within any particular religious context. Consequently, religious institutions, and the women who participate in them, are taken for granted as universally oppressed (i.e. Chong 2006, Rouse 2004).

A second criticism takes aim at the lack of representation by those women who actually practice organized religions. Because these studies often base their analyses on large-scale survey data, many have argued that they offer superficial insights and cannot adequately grasp the shifting meanings that people attribute to their religious beliefs and practices.

Alternative approaches to studying women in traditional religions that focus on agency offer a different perspective on women in traditional religion. These studies aim for nuanced representations of women in traditional religions by shifting women from objects to subjects of research. Sociologist Kelly Chong (2008) names these latter approaches “interpretive” because they emphasize that women in religions are interpretive beings who self-define their religions and their religious selves; through re-interpretation and creative agency, women negotiate, navigate and subtly construct situated meanings, experiences, and identities in regards to their religious worlds. Far from acquiring a unitary gendered identity, women in patriarchal religions often weave creative architectures of meanings that enable them to negotiate their identities within the confines of their religious traditions.

For example, in Ozorak’s (1996) study of women belonging to a variety of conservative Protestant religions, she demonstrates that women’s religious beliefs are not simple reflections of their official religions. In contrast, she found that women engage in a variety of different coping strategies that allow them to negotiate gender inequalities in their faith traditions. While some women did report leaving their religions, Ozorak found that “interpretation,” a form of cognitive coping, was a far more common strategy of negotiation. In her study, several forms of interpretation

emerged, including “cognitive restructuring,” which involves reframing dominant religious definitions of gender by substituting “their own images, words, or interpretations for conventional ones” (Ozorak 1996:25). This was a powerful strategy of individual negotiation that allowed women to recast and redefine their traditions in alternative and empowering ways.

In a similar vein, Gallagher’s (2004) work illustrates that “Evangelical identity” is formed through creative imagination, rejection, and (re)appropriation of cultural and religious ideologies. Ecklund’s (2005) research focused on a sub-group of Catholic women who are dissatisfied with their exclusion from the priesthood. She found that they focused on the core components of their beliefs—rituals and scriptures—to self-define religious knowledge, including (and especially) egalitarian concepts of femininity. For example, one participant in Ecklund’s study felt women’s exclusion from the priesthood was unjust but was still active in her local congregation. Framing her participation through the terms of enablement, she viewed her continued participation, especially her church teaching appointment, as a strategy for social justice and a means through which she could teach Church doctrines in more gender egalitarian ways. These women utilized religion to augment both their faith and their feminism (Ecklund 2005).

Several studies have focused on the meanings that women attach to their traditional religious vestments, demonstrating the incongruence between official and individual beliefs. In Read and Bartkowski’s (2000) study of gender identity negotiation amongst Muslim women in Austin, Texas, they demonstrate the dissonance between Muslim leaders’ descriptions of the veil, and those of Muslim

women. They found that the veil served as visual symbol of women-centered community and as a protection from male desire and disrespect both at home and in the work sphere. In *Engaged Surrender* (2004), Carolyn Rouse advances these ideas through an ethnographic study of African American women belonging to a Sunni Muslim community. For the women in her study, the practice and meaning of hijab contrasted with Western ideologies of the oppressed veiled Muslim woman, highlighting that many women view their veil and body garments as powerful symbols of resistance to Western colonialism and to the objectification and hypersexualization of black women's bodies. Hijab became a collective symbol around which faithful Muslim women forged women-centered communities of support in the midst of multiple dimensions of oppression.

Sociologist Kelly Chong (2008) argues that exploring why women collude with religious patriarchy paradoxically reveals the ways in which women resist the suppression of situated meanings and reveals the ways in which official religions execute measures to craft and manage the identities of subordinate social groups. She argues that investigating the motivations underlying women's consent can ironically reveal insights regarding the ways in which women recraft their religious traditions. In her ethnography of Evangelical women in South Korea she does find that women recast patriarchal theologies in alternative ways and self-define their religions. Through these processes new gender subjectivities emerge, however, these subjectivities are highly ambivalent and not transcendent of power relations. She argues that many women still advertently submit for a variety of self-serving reasons. While several participants in her study expressed strong opposition to the teaching of

female submission, many reported that they strategically developed this characteristic in order to access greater respect and rights in their marital and familial relationships. Ironically, through subtle, everyday acts of submitting to their husbands (and mother-in-laws), these women accessed a level of equality and an improvement in gender-family relations that was not as easily accessible to their non-religious counterparts. Paradoxically, consent garnered women living in patriarchal societies greater freedom in their everyday lives and was a route to relieving gender-based inequalities in the domestic sphere. The women in her study also consented to normative femininity because it elevated their social status both in Korean society and amongst their Evangelical peers. In this way, consent can paradoxically garner women greater respect and/or rights domestically, but it also inevitably reinscribes gender hierarchies amongst women (Chong 2008).

These alternative representations of women in traditional religions have been replicated in Mormon contexts. Sociologist Lori Beaman (2001) argues that within this traditional religious structure, LDS women engage in cognitive work to maintain a positive sense of self. She argues that LDS women employ cognitive strategies to maximize their agency in light of church teachings on motherhood, male familial headship, and the priesthood. She argues that they manipulate dominant meanings and replace them with ideas and beliefs that are gender egalitarian. Mihelich and Storrs' (2003) interviews with LDS women in non-faith based Universities similarly illustrate that LDS women redefine femininity through everyday acts of "embedded resistance." In their study, women's pursuit of professionalism was disjointed with

LDS femininity and these women reconciled that paradox by recasting dominant gendered religious ideologies.

As these scholars shift the lens of the study onto women's subjective experiences, they illustrate that women in traditional religions negotiate patriarchy through subtle everyday acts of reinterpretation and imagination. Although the religious context varies widely, these studies make a crucial point that is germane to this study—women recast preexisting interpretations of religious rituals, vestments, doctrines, images and beliefs in ways that deviate from those authorized by established institutional authorities. In this line of thinking, religious beliefs and identities are formed through creative imagination, rejection, and (re)appropriation of cultural and religious ideologies.

“Lived Religion”: An Integrated Approach to Women in Traditional Religions

This study integrates the insights of both those studies that focus on the structures that shape women's religious lives and those studies that focus on the ways in which women exert agency to redefine the meanings of those structures and practices in their lives. Studies that focus on agency open this study to an understanding of women as agents in religious life whose identities are creatively forged through redefining, appropriating, rejecting, and recasting their faith traditions. However, studies that highlight religious organizations and structures are essential to understanding that local meanings do not occur randomly or in inconsequential ways. Interpretive approaches to women in religions guide and enhance the ability of scholars to understand and interpret the patterns that emerge across individuals' alternative systems of belief. Identifying and analyzing these patterns demonstrates

that women redefine beliefs and practices in ways that allow them to co-opt, reshape, connect with, and struggle against the religious structure within which they practice their faith. This study seeks to integrate the usefulness of both approaches--exploring LDS women's religiosity by both a "critical analysis of the causes of religious oppression and a creative revisioning of its elements" (Ahmed 2002:9).

This study utilizes an integrated approach to the study of LDS women and brings to this research the dimension of ritual. Because the sociology of religion emerged within and from the Enlightenment tradition, it inherited an understanding of spirituality and materiality as dichotomous. Consequently, scholars have tended to privilege religious belief and attitudes while marginalizing religious practices (Ammerman 2007, McGuire 2008). Studies focusing on women's religious identities have largely overlooked how concrete, material practices—including ritual—link to religious knowledge, identity, and experience.

The sociological tradition is, however, not entirely exclusive of the study of ritual. The canonical work of Emile Durkheim in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2001[1912]) provides a useful starting point for the sociological examination of religious ritual. In Durkheim's study of totemism amongst the Australian Aborigines he argues that collective ritual involves ways of acting that generate shared mentalities and feelings of social connection. At the same time, Durkheim assumed that religions were unitary systems of belief and practice. In his line of theorizing, rituals translate predefined beliefs. For example, he argued that, "The rite can be defined, then, only after defining the belief" (36). For Durkheim, religious belief and religious practices existed in states of harmony, unified by the larger religious system.

This assumption may be why studies on women in traditional religions have ignored established customary rituals. Many studies have dismissed ritual, assuming that liturgical rituals are inherently linked to and constructed through the unitary terms delineated by a male elite religious leadership. Liturgical rituals are often ignored by sociologists in part because they are assumed to be inseparable from and wedded to the institution. This project seeks to understand identity as it is informed not only by psychological reframing, but also by the experiential and practiced aspects of religion.

Like sociologist Meredith McGuire (2008), in this study I distinguish between official religion and “lived religion.” While official religions at least aim to present themselves as unified, tightly coherent systems of belief and practice, lived religion focuses on religion at the individual level as it is practiced. Unlike official religions, lived religion is “contradictory,” and is composed of an “amalgam of beliefs and practices” that are flexible, changing, and that make sense to those who espouse them (McGuire 2008:4). This means that the meanings LDS women generate through ritual may align with, but also contradict dominant religious beliefs.

In the Mormon context, temple ritual is the most important system of religious rituals. Therefore, I carried out this research by grounding it in historical context, open to both the ways in which women nurture and extend power relations but also how they negotiate, and even subvert those same systems of power. In Part II, I explore extant research on LDS women, grounding women’s perspectives on temple ritual practices in a Mormon context that is structured by historical practices.

Part II: Mormon Women and The Politics of Identity

In this part, I examine the subfield of scholarship on Mormon women. Varied themes and topics interlace this interdisciplinary body of scholarship, but each of these themes are connected by a unifying historical focus on women's evolving relationship to religious authority and priesthood. When placed in dialogue as a coordinated whole, this scholarship reveals that historical processes and events are crucial to understanding contemporary LDS women's experiences and identities. Largely authored by LDS and ex-LDS scholars, the overarching argument that emerges from this body of work is that the consolidation and centralization of LDS authority throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries coincides with the loss of LDS women's religious and spiritual power and autonomy.

In this part, I draw from this literature to discuss three major areas of focus, each revealing the historical processes and events that transformed LDS women's ways of engaging in and living Mormonism. In the first section, I discuss important organizational changes, highlighting the different ways in which the consolidation of Church authority modified the roles and functions of Mormon women. Second, I discuss how processes of consolidation impacted LDS women's administrations of priesthood ordinances. Third, I discuss how processes of consolidation impacted LDS women's ability to publicly define their religious experiences and identities.

Mormon "Correlation": Centralizing Priesthood Power and Authority

Mormon women's official institutional role began in 1842, when the Prophet Joseph Smith created the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, a charitable organization whose original focus centered upon charity, largely through alleviating poverty.

Joseph Smith stated that the Society would be organized “in the order of the Priesthood” (as quoted in Beecher, Cannon, and Derr 1992:41) and he placed his wife Emma, at the head of this organization. In the early Church, women were encouraged to operate the Relief Society independently and autonomously (not overseen by male priesthood or administration), “although within a separate and narrowly defined sphere” (Cornwall 1994:248).

In her foundational article, “The Institutional Role of Mormon Women” (1994), sociologist Marie Cornwall argues that the autonomy of the Relief Society drastically diminished in response to Church growth. Cornwall argues that many of the institutional roles of Mormon women were retracted as the Church increased its membership and expanded geographically. In response to Church growth, the First Presidency adopted and applied a bureaucratic model of reorganization through which institutional roles and functions were increasingly constructed, defined, and assigned. Throughout this process, LDS women’s rights and responsibilities were eclipsed by institutional positions that were assigned to male priesthood holders, a priesthood which women could not officially access independently (Cornwall 1994).¹⁸

The procedures that led to women’s loss of autonomy occurred under the auspices of “Correlation” Programs. Correlation consisted of the construction of

¹⁸ The centralization of religious authority and power is not specific to the LDS Church. Following the period of late medieval European religion, Catholic and Protestant Churches were deeply engaged in various reform movements that aimed to streamline authority over individual religious expressions and beliefs (McGuire 2008:25). Parallel to processes of Mormon “Correlation,” consolidation of religious authority during the Reformation era involved the construction of many kinds of boundaries, including the delineation of who and who could not channel and enact sacred power, the delineation of appropriate expressions of religiosity, and the centralization of control over belief, doctrines, and textual interpretations (Bell 1997, McGuire 2008). Additionally, the disenfranchisement of women throughout processes of religious centralization is also not specific to Mormon women. During the same period that Mormon women began losing organizational autonomy, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Unitarian Churches were all undergoing reforms that involved diminishing the functions, roles, and visibility of women in their congregations (Cornwall 1994).

Correlation Councils whose primary responsibility was to oversee priesthood reorganization efforts to fully organize a functioning line of hierarchically structured priesthood authority. The goals were to coordinate the Church auxiliaries (i.e. the Church's Primary, Youth, and Women's Organizations) under Priesthood authority, in part, to reduce overlapping efforts (Beecher, Cannon, and Derr 1992).

Correlation reorganization began as early as 1880¹⁹ and continued throughout the twentieth century. By 1970, the Church had fully established and institutionalized a hierarchical form of priesthood through which administrative lines would connect local congregations to the highest governing body of the Church, the First Presidency. This restructuring had profound effects on every aspect of Church operations, and as Cornwall (1994) demonstrates, held enormous ramifications for the visibility and participation of LDS women.

Notable changes occurred in the ways in which the Relief Society operated. In 1880, in the first of major efforts to "correlate" and reorganize the Church under Priesthood Authority, the First Presidency issued a letter informing the Church that Relief Society officers were required to get local priesthood approval prior to calling meetings. Throughout the twentieth century, many of the institutional functions of the Relief Society would be withdrawn including its stewardship over the adoption and foster home care programs and its Primary Children's Hospital. As Cornwall explains (1994:258):

As correlation changes decreased the auxiliary responsibilities, women took a back seat in many areas in which they had formerly been prominent: welfare services, leadership training, publishing, and policy setting with regard to women's organizations.

¹⁹ According to sociologist Armand Mauss (1994), processes of priesthood reorganization would not be titled Correlation until the 1920s; however, efforts to streamline authority began much earlier.

The presidences of the women's auxiliaries (Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary) became less visible. Women of the church no longer heard from their women leaders through auxiliary conferences, newsletters, or conference visits. The tradition of women leading women became lost in an emphasis on priesthood line and priesthood authority...The change did more than subordinate women; it also implied that their contribution, although necessary, was of secondary importance to the work of men.

These efforts would also reduce localization of religious practices; Church meetings, curriculum, and administrative operations became uniform worldwide. The structural changes brought about by the streamlining efforts of Correlation extended to other arenas of Mormon women's lives. The retraction of Mormon women's ability to perform ordinances of blessing, healing, and comfort is amongst the most notable of losses amongst Mormon women. Table 2.1 provides an overview of some of these important moments in LDS women's history.

[Insert Table 2.1 Summary of Relevant LDS Women's Church History Events]

Priestesses: Mormon Women's Enactments of Spiritual Power

Highlighting LDS women's changing relationship to the priesthood is paramount to demonstrating the shifting role of women in Mormonism. While there is no consensus as to whether or not women were officially ordained to the priesthood in the early Church (for conflicting views see Cornwall 1994 and Quinn 1992) it is clear that in the formative years of the Church, LDS women freely performed priesthood ordinances. From at least 1842-1946, LDS women performed healing ordinances and practiced the laying on of hands (Quinn 1992), often to administer to

sick, pregnant, birthing, and nursing women (Newell 1987). It is well-documented that women were permitted to administer to one another, performing healings, washing and anointings, and offering to one another prayers of strength, hope, and other blessings of the body and spirit (Barber 1992, Lindsay 1992, Newell 1992).

According to LDS historian Linda Newell (1987), women's exercising of these spiritual rites grew out of the *temple initiatory rites*.²⁰ The initiatory rites involved women's performance of washing and anointing one another to become "priestesses unto the most High God." These washing and anointing rites involved women laying their hands upon other women's heads to transmit spiritual power and promises relating to the afterlife. The terminology and title "priestess" originated from the temple ordinances of washing and anointing and would be infused into Mormon women's identities outside of temples.

Throughout this formative period, women who performed the washing and anointing rites that take place in the temple initiatory ceremony were referred to as "priestesses," and those women who trained and organized women temple workers were referred to as "high priestesses" (Madsen 1987). For example, in 1843, when Emma Smith became the first woman to receive the temple endowment, she also became the first temple "priestess," officiating over women as they entered into temple covenants. Eliza R. Snow, Emma's successor as Relief Society President also served as a temple officiator and was frequently referred to as a "high priestess" in her position as head of the women temple workers in Salt Lake City (Derr 1987, Madsen 1987:90). Women then extended these initiatory practices into their

²⁰ The initiatory rites were first introduced to the Saints in 1836, upon completion of the first LDS temple in Kirtland, Ohio (Buerger 2002).

everyday lives as they healed, comforted, and uplifted other women through the laying on of hands.

To be sure, the practice of women performing ordinances was always a site of power struggle. As early as 1842, Prophet Joseph Smith chastised men in the Church for criticizing women's ordinations. Telling them to "hold their tongues," he stated, "Who are better qualified to administer than our faithful and zealous sisters, whose hearts are full of faith, tenderness, sympathy, and compassion. No one" (Smith 1976[1842]:229). Smith permitted the continuation of these rites, however, subsequent prophets would not.

Power struggles and conflict over women's ordinations continually resurfaced. Emmeline Wells, who served as the General Relief Society President from 1910-1921, foresaw the withdrawal of women's ordination rites. She stated, "In the early days in Nauvoo women administered to the sick and many were healed through their administration, and while some of the brethren do not approve of this, it is to be hoped the blessing will not be taken from us" (as quoted in Cornwall 1994:254, also see Madsen 2006). Nevertheless, in 1946, an official pronouncement from the leadership of the Church banned women from administering ordinances. In cases of need, women were to call on a male Priesthood holder (Newell 1992). The 1946 document marks a key moment in the consolidation of patriarchal power, officially ending LDS women's right to spiritual self-sufficiency. With the exception of the temple initiatory rites, women were no longer permitted to act as priestesses and accusations of apostasy threatened to punish those women who continued

practicing the laying on of hands. Throughout this period, temple priestesses became known as “temple matrons” or “temple workers.”²¹

The Suppression of Mormon Women’s Self-Definitions

A third significant area in which LDS women’s institutional functions were limited pertains to their ability to name and define their religious experiences and identities. Nowhere is this more apparent than in LDS women’s loss of their women-authored, women-centered newspapers and magazines. LDS women began authoring and publishing magazines and newspapers as early as 1872. From 1872-1970, LDS women routinely published one and sometimes two official magazines (Evans 1992).

According to Evans (1992), from 1972-1940, Mormon women’s publications, although orthodox in their general promotion of marriage and large families, also presented and defined women as independent. Moreover, these publications were authored by and overseen by LDS women and were a significant outlet through which LDS women could name, define, and describe their religious beliefs and identities. Women authors frequently referred to other women as “priestesses” and “prophetesses,” especially in regards to their enactments of healing rites (Evans 1992:53).

Content analyses of these publications reveal that the topics of interest were wide and represented women in a variety of roles—as mothers, plural wives, activists, paid laborers, suffragists, and students. Early periodicals emphasized women’s extra-domestic responsibilities including their labor force participation and their

²¹ This statement is based only upon my experiential knowledge. Female temple workers are absolutely not referred to as priestesses in official Mormon discourses, although I could not find any indication in the literature as to when the title changed. My thinking is that the loss of priestess titles was gradual, although it is not impossible that the change is linked to a Church policy.

educational pursuits (Evans 1992). Frequent topics of interest included reports on Mormon women's participation in political activism, including their central role in suffrage advocacy (Evans 1992). Mormon women were amongst the first to be granted suffrage in 1870 and formed alliances with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, regularly sending LDS representatives to attend NWSA meetings in the East (Beecher, Cannon, and Derr 1992, Iverson 1997). Because Mormon women's defense of polygamy was also central to their political activism, their affiliation with the NWSA was encouraged by Mormon leaders (Iverson 1997). Publications revealed their political efforts and alliances with feminist organizations.

In 1970, as part of "Correlation" efforts, the only women's publication still in regular circulation, *The Relief Society Magazine*, was discontinued at the request of The First Presidency of the Church (Evans 1992). The magazine was immediately replaced by the *Ensign*, which became the sole official LDS publication for both men and women in the Church and continues to be circulated today. The Church would take the first opportunity to use this publication as an outlet for defining appropriate womanhood and for denouncing feminist social movements. According to sociologist Laura Vance (2002:106), "The first article ever published in the *Ensign* takes aim at the feminist movement, which it accuses of 'deceiving' women to 'cunningly [lead] them away from their divine role of womanhood down the pathway of error.'"

Vance's (2002) content analysis of official Mormon periodicals written for both men and women between 1897 and 1999, found that the 1940s marked the beginning of a shift toward defining women's roles as being mothers, homemakers,

and wives. From the 1940s through the 1960s, definitions narrowed against the backdrop of post-World War II ideologies and the percentage of articles emphasizing extra-domestic possibilities for women began to decline, but the increased focus on domesticity did not entirely eclipse women's participation in the public sphere (Vance 2002). However, the *Ensign* was unprecedented in its obligatory and exclusive focus on traditional motherhood and womanhood, its castigation of feminism, and its warnings about the negative consequences that follow women's paid labor outside the home (Vance 2002). A 1987 *Ensign* article written by the President of the Church, *To Mothers in Zion*, exemplified the disciplinary (mis)uses of the magazine:

I beg of you, you who could and should be bearing and rearing a family: wives, come home from the typewriter, the laundry, the nursing, come home from the factory, the café. No career approaches in importance that of wife, homemaker, mother—cooking meals, washing dishes, making beds for one's precious husband and children. Come home, wives, to your husbands. Make home a heaven for them. Come home, wives, to your children, born and unborn. Wrap the motherly cloak about you and, unembarrassed, help in a major role to create the bodies for the immortal souls who anxiously await (quoted in Benson, 1987:8).

While Vance's content analysis found that the Church became more accommodating of women's paid labor throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the foundations for a traditional definition of LDS womanhood had been sufficiently laid.

Changes in church structure, policy, and practice required a powerful legitimating ideology to assuage women's concerns and, against the backdrop of post-World War II ideologies, "fascinating womanhood" wove into Mormon gender ideologies. The onset of the 1950s marked the beginning of an intense discursive campaign to replace women's previous practices with "the glorification of

motherhood” (Newell 1987:140). Gaining control over Mormon women’s definitions was essential to successfully defining LDS women in the terms of motherhood.

While marriage and childbearing have always been important features of Mormon womanhood, discourse analyses demonstrate the ways in which the inclusion of other dimensions of women’s identities and experiences have diminished.

LDS women’s ability to discuss the theological concept and belief in a Heavenly Mother(s) was also retracted, closing another avenue through which LDS women publicly discussed and defined themselves. The LDS Church does espouse an orthodox, although peripheral, doctrine of a Heavenly Mother backed by a history of tradition and supportive acknowledgement from ecclesiastical leadership (Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason 1984). Having scant scriptural basis, the LDS version of the theological concept primarily originates from a key revelation given through the formative prophet Joseph Smith who believes he (and two others) saw in a vision an image of female deity positioned next to God and Jesus Christ (Wilcox 1992).

Scholars have documented a numerous instances in which Mormon prophets and apostles throughout every decade of Mormon history have offered authoritative statements reaffirming the theological belief in at least one female deity (see Heeren, Lindsey and Mason 1984 and Wilcox 1992). For a Church intensifying its efforts to define LDS women as mothers, it seems ironic that they eventually restricted its members from exploring her identity in official forums and meetings.

The belief in a Mother(s) in Heaven is particularly significant to Mormon women because of Mormonism’s belief in “eternal progression.” The Mormon theology of eternal progression posits that spiritual development continues beyond the

boundaries of mortality; in this life, people should strive to become like Divinity in preparation for becoming Gods and Goddesses. Temple sealings (marriages) are central to this belief because Mormons believe that as “eternal companions,” married partners who are righteous will continue the process of creation as Gods and Goddesses of their own world(s). Within this line of theology, the concept of a Heavenly Mother(s) becomes immensely significant to women because the Heavenly Mother is not only someone that women desire to feel connected to, her figure is a literal model of LDS women’s potential. As one LDS woman commented, “her glory was my potential also” (as published in Hanks 1992: 270).

It was Eliza Snow, one of Smith’s plural wives and the General Relief Society President who would go on to diffuse the concept to the larger Salt Lake establishment via her well-known poem originally entitled “Invocation: or the Eternal Father and Mother.” First published as a poem in 1845, the text was assigned a musical setting and continues to be a popular and widely sung Mormon hymn (Davidson 1988). The lyrical content captures the mental preoccupations of Eliza Snow who, according to LDS historians, longed to articulate her “connection to the Mother who is in heaven” (Beecher, Cannon, and Derr 1992:57). In the poem’s third stanza, Snow inquires about the possibility of female deity and, according to historians, draws from the teachings of Joseph Smith to resolve her query (Beecher, Cannon and Derr 1992).

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

Sociologists Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason (1984) argue that the origins of the concept of a Heavenly Mother(s) are partially rooted in the literalist orientation of the early Mormons and their view of God as an anthropomorphic being (possessing a physical body). They taught that God, as a transfigured human, was the literal father of all his children, and following the laws of biogenesis, must be united to one or many goddesses who gave birth to spirit children, equally joined in the processes of creating offspring. This mode of thinking is evident in Snow's poem when she argues that "reason" suggests the logical conclusion that she has a Mother in Heaven.

The original title assigned by Eliza Snow, "Invocation: or the Eternal Father and Mother," was later changed to "O My Father." Significantly, the title change foreshadowed the silencing of LDS women's discourse on the Heavenly Mother. Conflict over the theology emerged when Mormon women involved in the feminist political movements of the 1970s and 1980s turned to the image and symbol of a Heavenly Mother for self-definition. During this historical moment, women's discussions on the concept of a Heavenly Mother intensified. The Mormon Women's Forum in Salt Lake City held a number of discussions on the Heavenly Mother and several publications, retreats and gatherings focused on understanding and expanding the elusive, but orthodox, concept (Wilcox 1992). For Mormons in support of the Equal Rights Amendment, the Heavenly Mother became an image and symbol legitimating their search for institutional equality with men (Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason 1984). In September 1979, Mormons for ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) flew a banner over an area conference where 17,000 Mormons convened that read: "Mother in Heaven Loves Mormons for ERA" (Bradley 2005:361).

According to Wilcox (1992), the Mother in Heaven concept experienced “a backlash” in the 1990s. In a 1991 regional meeting, Church representatives were counseled by General Authorities to correct anyone worshipping or praying to a Mother in Heaven. Alternative LDS press responded and one dissenter reportedly named the address a “gag order on the Mother in Heaven” (Wilcox 1992:16). Martha Pierce (1992) elaborated on the everyday implementation of the counsel, arguing that women’s expressions of their beliefs in female deities were met with subtle, but caustic methods of discipline such as “shaming” and “silencing” to the extent that contemporary Mormon beliefs in female deity are no longer recognizable within weekly Church meetings (Pierce 1992). More importantly, the Church made clear to women that theologizing was not in their sphere of responsibility.

The restrictions placed upon LDS women’s right to self-definition was contested most visibly in the late 1970s, when a group of Mormon women formed “Mormons for ERA.” The Church did not originally oppose the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), but, after polls indicated widespread support for the amendment in the state of Utah, the Church amplified its efforts to publicly and officially oppose the amendment (Bradley 2005). In 1980, Sonia Johnson, the founding President of “Mormons for ERA,” was tried before a Church court and was excommunicated for apostasy. At a historical moment of institutional accommodation to feminist politics, when a number of traditional religions seemed to be extending at least some rights, priesthoods, and organizational positions to women, the LDS Church sent a clear message to women in the Church—defining women in opposition to official Mormon ideals was a dangerous enterprise that could cost a woman her church membership.

Another way in which Mormon women's self-definitions were suppressed was through direct Church discipline. In September of 1993, the LDS Church responded to unorthodox LDS scholarship. In what is now infamously known as the "September Six," six prominent LDS scholars were disciplined by the LDS Church, five of whom were excommunicated, including Maxine Hanks and Lavina Fielding Anderson, the editors of two key Mormon feminist anthologies (*Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism* (1992) and *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (1987)).²²

Following the "September Six," several more scholars were formally disciplined by LDS Church officials for constructing, teaching, and publishing unorthodox versions of Church history, theology and doctrine (Vance 2007). This included the excommunication of sociologist Laura Vance whose dissertation focused on the historical evolution of Mormon women's institutional roles. Margaret Toscano, a professor of language and literature and the founder of the Utah Women's Forum whose scholarly topics including exploring the concept of a Heavenly Mother(s), was also excommunicated in 2000.

In sum, this scholarship demonstrates the ways in which exclusive boundaries were drawn around priesthood authority and administration—gender was an important organizer of these boundaries.²³ For Mormon women, definitional

²² Also amongst the six was prominent LDS historian D. Michael Quinn and feminist theologian Lynne Whitesides. Quinn wrote an essay entitled "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843." This essay was included in Maxine Hanks' *Women and Authority* (1992). Quinn continues to write on gender and sexuality in the early Church (2001). Lynne Whitesides was disfellowshipped from the LDS Church for speaking and writing on the concept of a Mother in Heaven.

²³ Race, sexuality and class were also integral to processes of boundary construction and maintenance. The overlap of religious and racial formations is the most obvious example of this. While black Mormon men were initially ordained to the LDS priesthood, Brigham Young institutionalized a ban that denied black men access to the priesthood. The white male hierarchy would be preserved until

boundaries surrounding appropriate femininity—traditional motherhood and wifehood—were integral to the centralization of Mormon authority and involved the loss of numerous rites, responsibilities, and functions. It also meant that they had no autonomous avenues through which they could publicly express and explore their religious identities.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I argued that incorporating the dimensions of both structure and agency is crucial to this research. I also argued that a focus on practices reveals additional layers of women’s religious experiences and identities. In this study, understanding the major ways in which restructuring reforms impacted Mormon women’s institutional roles—including their ability to enact spiritual rites, to author, publish, and construct knowledge—is important for historicizing the contemporary religious context within which the women in this study construct identity. Because the patterns of meaning and identity, as well as the patterns of consent and resistance, that emerge through religious ritual are informed by the larger religious context within which ritual is arranged and practiced, an integrated approach allows for a robust interpretation of LDS women’s perspectives on temple rituals.

1979, when the ban was lifted in the face of enormous pressure from Church members, anti-racist political organizations, black Mormon scholars, and the U.S. government (Bringhurst and Smith 2004).

Table 2.1 Summary of Relevant LDS Women's Church History Events	
Year	Event
1836	The first Mormon temple is dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio and the initiatory ceremony is introduced.
1842	The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo is organized.
1843	LDS women are introduced to the temple endowment.
1880	Approximately marks the beginning of Correlation reforms that impact women's institutional functions. Relief Society autonomy is restricted by the First Presidency.
1940	Begins the era of traditional motherhood.
1946	LDS women are banned from performing spiritual ordinances.
1970	The Relief Society Magazine is discontinued.
1979	Priesthood is extended to black men and temple worship is opened to black men and women.
1991	Restrictions placed upon everyday dialogue and use of the Mother in Heaven theology.
1993	Excommunication of the "September Six" for constructing unorthodox scholarship.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This project is designed to explore two research questions. First, in what ways do LDS temple rituals intersect with women's religious identities? Second, if ritual is important to LDS women's self-concepts, what are the processes through which ritual weaves into LDS women's selves? In the previous chapter, I drew from extant literature to argue that qualitative methods provide useful tools for exploring the complexity of real individual's religious experiences and identities. In this chapter, I describe the qualitative research design that I utilized in this investigation. I discuss the ways in which feminist standpoint theories oriented and shaped my research design as well as the specific ethnographic methods that I employed for this research.

Description of Methodology

A research methodology, or theory of how research should proceed, shapes a researcher's selection and execution of methods, and her ideas of what counts as data (Naples 2003). The methodological orientation of this research design draws from the larger multidimensional theoretical framework that I explicated in the previous chapter, a framework that emphasizes individual "lived religion" and the intersubjective patterns of religious identity and experience that emerge across groups of women sharing similar faith traditions. The methodology underlying my approach to examining the relationship between Mormon women's ritual practices and identities is foremost informed by feminist standpoint theories.

Feminist Standpoint Methodology

Approaches to standpoint vary, bringing with them a history of intellectual dialogues and debates, but share the foundational premise that power and knowledge are interconnected (Harding 2004, Naples 2003). Early explications of standpoint perspectives argued that social scientific knowledge is situated in “relations of ruling” (Smith 1990), and therefore reinscribe existing power relations by reproducing harmful stereotypes regarding marginalized social groups (Collins 1990). Feminist standpoint theorists have called traditional scientific methodologies and methods into question, and many offer alternative approaches to the production of knowledge. A key theme amongst standpoint theories is the emphasis on alternative methodological frameworks that employ methods foregrounding lived experience (Naples 2003).

While there are notable differences between the standpoint perspectives of Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins, their foundational scholarship in this field shared a focus on centering the experiences of marginalized groups as a means for challenging normative discourses (Kelley and Mann 1997, Naples 2003). In Collins’ work, this theory of method is integrally tied to social justice because rooting knowledge in the experience of oppressed social groups served as a means for reclaiming subjugated knowledge (Collins 1990). Applying a feminist standpoint methodology to my research meant that I needed to similarly utilize methods that would (re)center Mormon women’s intersubjective experiences and self-definitions, facilitating the production of internally defined knowledge about Mormon women.

I do not argue that all Mormon women share the same standpoint, that they do not reproduce systems of power, or that they are all similarly positioned within

intersecting systems of power. I recognize the significant differences amongst LDS women created by intersecting practices and histories of race, class, nationality, and sexuality. Surely, some LDS women have substantially more access to religious power and prestige than do others—Mormon women who are white, temple-married, have multiple biological children, and whose husbands’ single-earnings can sustain household needs are clearly privileged by LDS discourse and religious life. LDS women that successfully measure up to dominant LDS gender norms (in part, because their husbands can successfully “do” LDS masculinity) achieve status and recognition amongst their religious community (see Chong 2008). Regardless, all Mormon women share a history of institutional disenfranchisement, are measured against the same narrow definitions of self and family, and share the common experience of priesthood exclusion. Through their shared religious affiliation, Mormon women constitute a category and community of belonging and inherit a degree of shared religious experience. As Collins argues, despite differences created by intersecting systems of difference and power, women who share the same struggles likely will generate themes in thought and interpretation—a “specialized knowledge” regarding their selves (1990:22). Weaving together LDS women’s multiple perspectives, and identifying the themes that emerge as well as the contradictory ways in which women respond to these themes, illuminates different aspects of the same structured forms and relations of power (Smith 1992:91).

Grounding this study in the intersubjective experiences of Mormon women, by focusing on patterns across individual identities and experiences, also allows Mormon women to articulate and self-define the meaning of their religion in their

everyday lives and how they view themselves within the contours of their tradition. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Church Correlation resulted in the loss of LDS women's access to public self-definition. As the avenues to dominant discourse were discontinued and/or annexed, LDS women were increasingly subjected to narrow and homogeneous conceptions of who they are and what they could become. Today, LDS women are very involved in religious life, but they are not the authors, or the informants, of knowledge for and about them. Alternatively, this project practices a feminist standpoint approach by grounding its main interpretations in the complex lived religions of LDS women. I found reflexive ethnography to be well equipped with the tools and research strategies needed for constructing self-defined knowledge regarding LDS women's identities and religious experiences.

Methods and Data Sources

This study was informed by three sources of ethnographically gathered information, each of which I discuss in this section. Fieldwork in a Mormon congregation allowed for a site of immersion into Mormon religious life and facilitated informal conversations regarding temple practice with many women whom I came into contact. Participant observation in temple ritual allowed me to take copious notes on ritual that were very useful for describing the research site and for interpreting women's temple narratives. I also conducted eighteen in-depth interviews with endowed LDS women regarding their ritual experiences.

Reflexive Ethnography

Traditionally, ethnographic practice requires some degree of fieldwork, or “observation of participation”²⁴ (Fetterman 1998, Tedlock 2000:465). Generally, researchers utilize ethnographic methods in order to construct stories or representations that describe groups or cultures (Fetterman 1998). The idea here is that if knowledge emerges through situated activities within and through social worlds, then the pragmatic means for understanding these knowledges is to go into those worlds and study group life and collective meanings. Ethnographic methods value the use of observations that take place within empirical worlds as a valid means for interpreting those worlds. This approach works to ground the analytic and interpretive work of the researcher in everyday social worlds and interactions.

Ethnographic methods are particularly well suited for exploring the beliefs and practices of women in traditional religions. Lifecourse approaches to understanding patterns in religious participation reveal that individual religious beliefs and participation ebb and flow throughout a person’s lifespan (Dillon and Wink 2007). Large-scale quantitative studies are not designed to capture this and other kinds of dynamism across individual religious lives. Ethnographic approaches facilitate new ways of understanding women in religions, by capturing the nonlinear patterns that large-scale quantitative studies are typically not designed to unveil.

Feminist standpoint theorists, amongst others, have been critical of ethnographic texts that misappropriate and/or objectify groups and individuals, often

²⁴ Barbara Tedlock (2000) discusses the shift in ethnographic studies from “participant observation” to “observation of participation.” She is referring to the recognition within ethnographic studies that objective detachment in fieldwork is not possible, rendering “participant observation” an oxymoron. Shifting to the phrase “observation of participation” is as much a statement of postmodern theoretical orientation as it is a critique of positivism and pure objectivity.

due to a lack of reflexivity regarding power in social research (Naples 2003). Reflexive ethnographic practices, largely influenced and shaped by such feminist critiques of traditional ethnography (Ellis and Bochner 2000, Tedlock 2000), offer alternatives to conventional ethnographic practices including the use of reflexive practices that attend to issues of subjectivity and power in research. Although reflexive ethnographies can take many forms, reflexive ethnography often means that the researcher is a member of the community of inquiry.

In this study, I belonged to the congregation in which my fieldwork was based. My personal experiences served as an entry point into this research; as a practicing Mormon, I had experiential knowledge necessary for understanding women's temple narratives, for gaining entry into temples, and for finding women willing to disclose intimate stories and standpoints regarding their ritual experiences. By relying on others' stories, I decentered my personal life experiences and interpretations of temple ritual, focusing on multiple subjects and data sources (i.e. triangulation in conventional terms) (Ellis and Bochner 2000). Although I bring to this research my own perspective on temple ritual and a personal history of ritual practice, the use of multiple data sources allowed me to remain open to multiple directions in the data, and to multiple perspectives and interpretations, even when they significantly deviated from my own. In other words, this study is preoccupied with the themes and patterns prevalent in the lives of the informants who participated in this study.

Managing Researcher Subjectivity

There has been substantial debate as to whether or not a researcher's biography matters, and especially if being an "insider," a researcher who belongs to the community of inquiry, is beneficial to social research. While standpoint theorists have encouraged scholars to turn to their personal biographies as mechanisms for creatively expanding our sociological knowledge base and traditional paradigms (Collins 2004[1986]), traditional positive approaches to ethnography stress the importance of researcher detachment and neutrality. In this project, belonging was practically necessary and essential for gaining entry into the ritual setting.

Explicating my situated location vis-à-vis this project is one form of reflexive practice that many feminist standpoint theorists find useful for managing their subjectivity within research that is personally meaningful. I reveal some aspects of my life history because relevant self-disclosure informs the reader as to the angle of vision that I bring to this study.

I grew up in a household that practiced Mormonism and Islam. The interracial, interfaith marriage of my parents blended two very different cultural worlds. In our home, the religious and cultural worlds of both Mormonism and Islam were important, and neither tradition was left by the wayside. Throughout my childhood my three siblings and I attended weekly meetings of the LDS Church with my mother, born and raised in Springville, Utah. My mother's family tree branches into a rich Mormon pioneer and polygamist heritage. My father migrated from Karachi, Pakistan to Arlington, Virginia in 1969. A faithful Muslim, we also celebrated Eid and participated in the festive traditions of Islam. Although doctrine in

both traditions would criticize this religious blending (some Muslims would tell me it was a “damned” marriage, and some Mormons would tell me that we could never reach the “celestial” kingdom), these early experiences in dual faith traditions facilitated my ability to see the connections across faith traditions and across spiritual beliefs and practices. The fabric of our family religious life challenged conventional ideas about belonging, as well as the Western ideology that religions are distinct, bounded, and require membership in order to access spiritual power.

In my early experiences, our “part-member,” interracial family was not viewed as a unique addition and contribution to our congregation, but instead would locate us on the margins of Mormon privilege. While the LDS Church is becoming more sensitive to diverse family forms, the 1980s and 90s were not the era of Mormon diversity public relations campaigns. “Part-member” families, especially those in which a priesthood holder is not present, become liabilities to their congregation because they are viewed as being in need of additional forms of stewardship. My parent’s interracial marriage would heighten our marginalization, largely because of the Church’s history of racism and its ongoing discouragement of interracial marriage.

The Church’s discouragement of interracial marriage is linked to its history of denying full fellowship to Mormons of color, best exemplified by its pre-1978 policy which banned black boys and men from priesthood ordinations (Embry 1994). Ironically, the same 1978 *Church News* issue that announced the extension of the priesthood to black men also carried an article entitled “Interracial Marriage Discouraged.” The article drew upon earlier statements from a Church President in

which he cautioned members against interracial dating/marriage and against interfaith marriage (Embry 1994). Church spokesperson Don LeFevre issued a statement in the article emphasizing that despite the priesthood policy reversal the Church would continue to discourage interracial marriage because of the “potential negative impact of different backgrounds and cultures on marriages and on the posterity of the union” (as quoted in Bringhurst and Smith 2004:5). Studies demonstrate that interracial dating and marriage continues to be discouraged by church members and local leaders, albeit in more subtle ways (Embry 1994, Jacobson 2004).

LDS definitions of gender and family, which embody white middle-class norms, made conformity impossible. Although the LDS Church is racially diverse, LDS sociologist Jessie Embry (1994) calls it a “white Church” because its dominant ideologies extend the norms and values of the broader white, patriarchal society. The emphasis on traditional motherhood privileges white, middle and upper-class families and furthers forms of household organization that have historically been inaccessible to men and women of color, as well as to working class families (Dill 1988). As a young child, my father drove taxis to support four children. Despite his long hours, his low wages would not afford my mother the luxury of foregoing paid labor. Both of my parents worked full-time and despite my parents relentless and exhausting efforts, over the course of my adolescence our household became an increasingly high-stress environment and was riddled with many of the social problems facing working class households in the United States—lack of economic resources and support, high levels of parental and child stress, mental illness and frequent exposure to violent conflict.

These experiences impacted far more than my religious worldview.

Throughout my LDS girlhood, I was very conscious of the ways in which my family deviated from the standards of many social worlds, not only Mormon worlds. I learned early to recognize the sea of taken-for-granted assumptions that create “normal” and “deviant” categories and, because of my positionality on the borders of religious, cultural, and racial worlds, I learned through experience how race, class, gender and family status operate as systems of power and privilege. By seventeen, “normal” wasn’t something I aspired to be—I sewed many of my own clothes, shopped only second-hand, shaved my head, and channeled my unarticulated feelings and experiences into an interest in child psychology and advocacy as a means for seeking a measure of social justice.

Moving forward into my adult life, my own marriage to an atheist (Mormon friends felt obligated to warn me that I was ruining not only my life, but that of my unborn children) and my political orientation would further differentiate me from the core of Mormon privilege. Nevertheless, my belief in the *Book of Mormon*, in Joseph Smith’s revelations and restorations, my temple endowment, and my ongoing participation in temple rites have provided me with a wealth of faith through which I am able to reconcile the contradictions inherent in my participation in the LDS Church. My participation in temple ritual has given me valuable experiences through which I have recognized that religions do the work of extending power relations, but they may also contain possibilities for constructing oppositional knowledge regarding the Church’s race, gender, class, and sexual politics. Through my personal reading of the temple rites, I have been able to redefine my religious beliefs in ways that align

with and infuse my spiritual beliefs with a commitment to social justice. I couldn't possibly be alone in my religious travels--did other women share my stories and experiences?

These early life experiences shape the angle of vision that I bring to the study of women in traditional religions. My experiences on the margins of my faith tradition, within the interstitial spaces of multiple racial and religious worlds, facilitated a recognition that dominant religious norms and taken-for-granted assumptions regarding social differences are systems of power, not divinely instituted or natural forms of organization. Standpoint theories have been particularly useful for grappling with these issues regarding marginal belonging and for navigating my role as an "insider" researcher employing ethnographic practice within a religious tradition to which I am personally affiliated.

Specifically, several standpoint scholars have offered metaphors of movement that demonstrate how and why marginal belonging can be a valuable tool for understanding social worlds and situations. Patricia Hill Collins' concept of "outsider within" describes how black female intellectuals use their marginal locations within academic settings as a creative space to generate new ways of seeing that enrich traditional sociological discourse (2004[1986]). For Collins, it is the process of traveling between multiple and contradictory worlds that gives individuals unique angles of vision through which they can identify taken-for-granted assumptions that may be less obvious to established members of an institution. Gloria Anzaldua (1987) uses the concept "mestiza consciousness" to describe her experience living on the borderlands. From the perspective of a lesbian Chicana, raised on the Texas-

Mexico border, she describes her movement through boundaries and borders as “creative motion” (80) that was productive of new paradigms and ways of seeing. Finally, Maria Lugones (2003) argues that women of color in the U.S. have long practiced world-traveling, the flexibility to move from insider to outsider positions, as a means of survival. “World”-traveling produces angles of vision that expand perception and illuminate social relationships across power differentials.

In each standpoint metaphor, the author describes a process of movement through which individuals interact with systems and practices of power from a variety of different locations, a process that gives individuals an ability to interpret social experiences in unique and robust ways. As Nancy Naples (2003: 50) argues, an insider does not describe a specific social identity, but rather refers to the interaction between shifting power relations. As an interstitial researcher, I was able to enter into the research site, find women willing to talk to me about their most intimate feelings regarding a ritual site that is protected by norms of non-disclosure, and to approach the topic with a unique framework in ways that may have been inaccessible to both insider and stranger researchers. My shifting positionality within Mormonism allows me to access a unique angle of vision—an ability to empathize with informants but also maintain a critical framework of analysis and engage the tools of feminist ethnography to weave together a story about ritual and identity.

Fieldwork and Participant Observations

The fieldwork for this study was based in a Washington, DC congregation from December 2008-December 2009. Mormon congregations, called wards or branches, are generally organized by geographical boundaries and therefore mirror

existing patterns of race and class residential segregation. The DC congregation in which my fieldwork was based was an affluent, upper class white ward, home to an economically privileged group of Mormons. While U.S. Mormons are ranked high on the status hierarchy of religious denominations, and its members are overwhelmingly middle class (Roof and McKinney 1987), this particular congregation clearly housed an elite group of Mormons, including high-profile politicians, business executives, and students earning degrees in elite law, medicine and business programs in the metropolitan area. The overwhelming number of highly educated and upwardly mobile women who participated in the in-depth interviews clearly reflected these demographic characteristics.

During the period of ethnographic fieldwork, I participated in sealing, endowment and initiatory ceremonies at the Washington, DC temple located in Kensington, Maryland. I attended weekly ward and Relief Society meetings as well as larger meetings such as the semi-annual conferences of the LDS Church (via Broadcast from Salt Lake City). I read the monthly “Ensign” (the official publication of the LDS Church) and official online church news. I contributed to my congregation by serving as the baby/toddler playgroup coordinator for parents with children, having a young daughter myself.²⁵ These activities served as points of immersion into LDS culture and connected me to the women of this congregation. The primary purpose of my fieldwork observations was to serve as an interpretive guide. Throughout the course of fieldwork activities, I compiled a log of relevant

²⁵ Most church members receive “callings,” or unpaid positions of church service.

fieldwork notes. These data supplemented the primary source of data for this project—in-depth interviews with eighteen women.

In-depth Interviews, Interview Questionnaire and Procedures

The primary method of data collection in this study consists of eighteen in-depth interviews with LDS women. In-depth interviews provide researchers access to women's identity narratives, the stories that women tell about who they are (Yuval-Davis 2006). Surely, individuals are always significantly more intricate than their stories can tell, but the telling of experience provides an interesting interface upon which subjectivities and power relations are mediated and translated into language. I used these narratives to understand the extent to which women drew upon temple rituals to inform their sense of self and to understand the processes through which these meanings were produced.

Sampling and Recruitment Procedures

For this study, I combined convenience and snowball sampling methods. Convenience sampling is a method that is frequently used by researchers whose work is based in their own congregations (e.g. see George 2005); it allows researchers to use their congregation as a base for gathering study participants. The majority of participants were drawn from the LDS congregation to which I belonged during the period of ethnographic work (December 2008-December 2009).

I initially recruited women for this study through a Relief Society (organization of LDS Women) list serve hosted by Yahoo Groups. Emails sent out through this list serve went to subscribing women who attended the congregation that

I belonged to during the period of ethnographic fieldwork. An announcement for the study was included in the regular weekly announcements bulletin for three consecutive weeks. I also made a one-time announcement in a Relief Society meeting of this same congregation and made recruitment flyers available in the meeting room for four consecutive weekly meetings (see Appendix 1).

I received several responses from women who expressed enthusiasm about the project and were willing to self-select themselves for participation. In a few cases, participants connected me with their friends or family members whom they felt would want to participate, although the extent of this snowballing technique was minimal. Most of the women contacted me either in Sunday meetings or via email to set up interview meetings. There was no compensation for participation but I expressed my appreciation by leaving the participants with fresh fruit, teas or other very insignificant tokens of thankfulness. This was in no way equal to the time and the very personal information offered by the participants.

Interview Procedures and Questionnaire

I always conducted the interviews in a setting that was most comfortable and convenient to the participants. Four of the interviews were conducted by phone, one took place in a Church meetinghouse, two were conducted in my home, and the rest took place in the participant's homes. The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes (the telephone interviews were shorter than the in-person interviews).²⁶ I began each interview by explaining the purpose of the study,

²⁶ I did not detect that the telephone interviews differed from the face-to-face interviews in any significant way.

discussing issues of confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent (see Appendix 2). In cases of telephone interviews, consent forms were obtained via mail.

The interview questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix 3) consisted of sixteen open-ended questions designed to generate avenues of conversation through which women could share their feelings and stories regarding temple rites. I asked women about the context of their first temple experience, if/how temple participation impacts their everyday lives and relationships, if/why they continue to attend the temple, and how they view and make sense of particular ceremonies.

I used the questionnaire as a flexible framework for the interviews, always allowing the participants to tell their stories and shape the direction of the interview. Most often, interviewees spent a significant amount of time elaborating upon their first endowment experience answering many of the interview questions while recalling this part of their life history. I always initiated the interview by asking women to describe the context of their first temple experience. Beyond that, the interviews varied significantly as did the extent to which I drew upon the interview questionnaire. Women disclosed specific parts of the ceremonies to different degrees and held very different ideas as to what could and couldn't be said regarding ritual. This also shaped the ways in which I asked questions and the degree to which I asked women to elaborate on their comments.

It is important to underscore that the interview questionnaire was an important research tool that accompanied me to all the interviews, but that the interviews were open-ended and I never simply asked each question in the order that they appear. I always began by asking women to describe the context of their first temple

experience. Each woman described a different experience and emphasized different aspects of their temple life. As an interviewer, I responded to what they wanted to talk about which meant that our interviews unfolded as mutually shaped spontaneous conversations (as opposed to researcher-led question and answer sessions).

All the women received a copy of their interview transcript and were given the opportunity to make changes or add/delete any information, although none of the participants requested any changes to the transcripts. One participant asked that I add one final comment to her transcript.

Data Analysis

Transcribing. I personally transcribed each interview and while this was a laborious process, it allowed me to thoroughly familiarize myself with each participant's narrative. Listening to the interviews also allowed me to improve my skills as an interviewer. I was able to identify questions in need of better articulation and I could hear the ways that I speak and present myself thus improving the general presentation of the interview questionnaire. As a novice qualitative researcher working on an independent project, transcribing my own interviews was invaluable. I was also able to initialize the task of data analysis immediately. The first wave of analysis began at the phase of transcribing interviews.

Coding & Analysis. I performed three waves of coding. The first wave was preliminary and occurred during the process of transcribing during which I made notes of significant themes and topics. During the second wave, I applied the method of open line-by-line coding to each transcript so as not to close off possibilities in the data. In this phase of coding, I did not code for specific topics or statements (I did not

code according to the research questions). The purpose of line-by-line coding is to keep the researcher attuned to the views of participants as opposed to assuming shared positions and/or imputing the worldviews of the researcher onto the subjects (Charmaz 2000). My approach was to read a line of the transcript and assign it a topic category (i.e. priesthood). I then generated a working list of key topics, and underneath each topic, I listed what each participant said, including corresponding page numbers. This gave me a general overview of the major themes that emerged in the interviews, and did not preclude significant themes that were outside the scope of the research questions. This method of coding was useful because it detailed the interviews and provided a thematic listing that can speak to additional future projects. Before the third wave of coding, I did an additional close reading of each transcript, ensuring that the second wave of coding was thorough.

In the third wave of coding, I generated a database of topics/themes that were directly relevant to the research project. In this phase I analyzed the larger list of codes and drew from them to identify significant themes that allowed for an exploration of the broader research questions.

Introduction To The Interview Participants

In her qualitative study on diversity across Mormon women's religious beliefs, sociologist Lori Beaman (2001) identified three typologies of Mormon women—Mormon Feminists, Mormon Moderates, and Molly Mormons. She argued that each typology was a simplistic category but continued to use them as heuristic tools for explaining how LDS women redefine their religious beliefs. While it was tempting to use similar categories to describe the participants in this study, I found

that exploring women's stories about ritual revealed a far more dynamic and incongruent understanding of who they are and how they live their religions than such categories convey (for instance, in-depth interviews did not reveal that "Molly Mormons," Mormon women who do not challenge LDS patriarchy, were any less likely to utilize ritual to recast dominant LDS femininity or vice versa). In this section, I introduce the research participants as they revealed themselves at the time of the interview. I present the general demographic profile of the group, and then discuss the texture of their religious participation in order to offer some context for understanding how they utilized ritual to (re)construct their identities.

A Profile of Eighteen LDS Women

The sample of participants for this study consists of eighteen LDS women who have received their temple endowment and, at the time of the interview, identified as Latter-day Saint. Sixteen of the women reported life-long affiliation with the Church and two identified as converts to the LDS Church. With one exception, the endowed women in this sample had a high level of institutional involvement and expressed a strong sense of acculturation and commitment to their tradition. Demographic characteristics were self-reported in the interviews and in a few instances, my interactions and friendships with women allowed me to access information regarding their social statuses. Table 3.1 presents a descriptive summary of participants' racial-ethnic background, relationship status, level of educational attainment, and age as reported at the time of the interview. Pseudonyms are used for all participants to preserve anonymity.

[Insert Table 3.1 Descriptive Summary of Participants, Self-Reported]

The participants ranged in age from mid-twenties to age sixty-nine. At the time of the interview, sixteen of the participants lived in the metropolitan Washington, DC area, one woman lived in Arizona, and one woman lived in Utah. Sixteen of the participants were White, one participant was biracial (Asian/White), and one participant identified as Asian American. Fourteen participants were affiliated with the congregation in which my fieldwork was conducted. The relationship status of the sample varied--one participant was in the process of divorce, four were non-married (one of whom identified as a “widow”), and thirteen were in heterosexual marriages. Of those women who were married, eight were married to members of the LDS Church, three were married to men not affiliated with the Church, and two were married to men who were no longer practicing Mormonism.

As a group, the participants had a high level of educational attainment and were economically privileged—all but one had completed four or more years of college (1 unknown). Many of the married women did not participate in the formal paid labor force but came from economically privileged families and/or were married to men in elite law and business schools. Nonmarried women were highly educated and had high-status jobs; one was a private school teacher, one owned and ran a private business from her home, and one was a full-time accountant at a prestigious firm in the metropolitan area.

Because Mormons in the United States are a college-educated social group (Pew Research Center 2009) participants in this study held high levels of educational

attainment. U.S. Mormons are also economically privileged relative to other Protestant denominations, a pattern reflected in the sample of participants. According to Roof and McKinney (1987), Mormon's shifted from the lowest position on the bottom rank of the status hierarchy of religious denominations to the highest position on the middle rank by 1987. Abandoning its original efforts to form a cooperative society, the LDS Church is committed to a capitalist economic model; as a corporate entity it has become heavily intertwined with U.S. political and corporate institutions (Mauss 1994, Gottlieb and Wiley 1984). This particular congregation was particularly well endowed financially, even relative to other Mormon congregations. In short, members of this congregation held high social status, and participants' high level of educational attainment is one reflection of that privilege.

Social science research demonstrates that U.S. Mormons living outside of Utah tend to be more politically and racially diverse (Heaton, Cornwall, and Young 2001). The urban congregation that I attended was commonly known as being moderately liberal, although, due to the residential organization of local wards, it was not racially diverse by any means. While all the interview participants were not drawn from this congregation, many participants did tend to be less committed to the status quo. Regardless of these unique demographic features, I believe that had I conducted this study elsewhere in the U.S., I would have found similarly complex stories and patterns regarding women's ritual lives. What may be unique to this particular study is that the women I talked to possessed the skills to artfully and confidently articulate their beliefs and experiences with clarity.

Pathways to Mormonism

The majority of participants were lifelong Mormons who were raised in the LDS Church. Emma and Isabelle, both in their twenties, were the only converts to the Church and their stories overlap in interesting ways. Emma and Isabelle were introduced to the Church by college boyfriends (both of whom had served missions) that they married. Both were also vegan, heavily involved in social justice organizations in college, and both continued to practice lines of work that aligned with their beliefs in social equality (Isabelle's work centered around immigration rights and Emma's around women's health).

Isabelle described her parents as “anti-Mormon,” and her friends didn't understand how she could be both Mormon and feminist. Isabelle married in the temple, which means that her parents were not permitted to attend the marriage ceremony. Emma joined the Church shortly after her marriage (so she had a civil wedding) but was later sealed to her husband and son and she described her family as supportive of her religious choices. Both Emma and Isabelle talked about their desire to explain the congruence of their Mormon and feminist identities to those who did not understand their participation in a traditional religion.

Pathways to the LDS Temple

While Mormon women are socialized to link their temple endowment with temple marriage, in lived practice, their pathways to the temple are diverse. The reasons that the women in this study decided to receive their endowment varied.²⁷

²⁷ Refer to the earlier introduction of the temple endowment in chapter one. I detail the endowment in greater detail in chapter five.

Church proselytizing and service missions, mitigating domestic challenges, religious commitment, spiritual growth, and a desire to receive knowledge and blessings were amongst marriage in influencing women's individual decisions to receive their endowment.

Half of the women in the study did report attending the temple in association with a temple marriage, but even amongst these women, nuances in their pathways to the temple were apparent. For example, Lydia was a senior in college when she became engaged and desired to go through the temple nine months in advance of her temple sealing to avoid an overwhelming experience. She contacted her ecclesiastical leader who told her that it was an inappropriate request and that she needed to wait. Lydia described it as a "difficult and emotional experience" because she felt like she was well prepared to receive her endowment. She said that after he realized that she wanted to "have time to think about it and process it on my own as an individual for months before I was married and enter into a temple marriage with that foundation," he finally agreed to schedule a temple recommend interview.

Some women also cited personal and domestic challenges as their reasons for turning to the temple. When Kara, a white woman in her late twenties, started a new graduate program and was overwhelmed by clinical depression, she felt inspired to receive her endowment. Ruth, age thirty, was married to a non-member and had three children. Several years before she received her endowment she had considered going to the temple but said she didn't because she "liked to drink." A few years later she arrived at a "crossroads," a time period during which she and her husband became alienated from one another due to his untreated depression and her lack of

commitment to her family. She said, “I felt like my family was going to fall apart if I didn’t go to the temple, if I didn’t make a huge change.” She decided to make the “gospel” and going to the temple a priority in her life. At the time of the interview she had been endowed for two years, and had a positive relationship with the temple.

Molly and Esther received their endowments as preparation for serving LDS missions. Lucy also prepared to serve a mission but her plans were diverted when she became engaged and got married instead. Lucy believed that she was far more prepared to receive her endowment because she prepared herself for the temple in a context that did not involve marriage. In fact, many women mentioned that they benefited by going through the temple as an individual. Jaime, Abigail, Mary and Isabelle believed that their first temple experience was clouded by their weddings and that they got more out of their temple attendance in later visits.

Desiring to further one’s commitment and increase one’s spirituality was another common pathway to the temple. Emma and Sara were neither getting married nor going on missions when they went through the temple. Both described their initial experiences as being very positive and as enhancing other areas of their lives.

Ongoing Participation and Affiliation with the LDS Church and Temples

At the time of the interviews, all the participants identified as LDS and with the exception of Ruth, actively participated in Church meetings and callings. Participants held a variety of church positions and had experience serving at multiple levels of the institution. They were Relief Society Presidents, adult and youth Sunday

school and Primary teachers and leaders, pianists, activity coordinators, temple workers, and served their congregations in a variety of capacities.

Ruth said that she was taking a break from Church meetings because she found it offensively heterosexist. While she hadn't been to the temple in a couple months, she described it as a place she wanted to attend soon and said that she did not feel offended in the temple. All the other women reported active participation in weekly church meetings, although other women reported some disenchantment with weekly meetings.

Ruth, Emma, and Isabelle mentioned the Church's opposition to same-sex marriage rights and their support of Proposition 8 as being a stumbling block to their participation. Isabelle was conflicted about belonging to a Church that promoted "hate" by encouraging their members to support the amendment that would overturn same-sex marriage rights in California. She had asked her local ecclesiastical leader for permission to give her 10% tithe to humanitarian aid, to ensure that none of her money would be used for Proposition 8 organizing efforts. Her Bishop allowed her to do this, but when I talked with her she was struggling with her membership. She said that she did not have a testimony that the institutional Church was "true" and turned to the temple as the foundation for her participation.

Emma came from a queer family and strongly believed in sexual equality. Navigating the Proposition 8 ordeal was difficult for her and made her question her participation. She rooted her faith in fundamental gospel principles and described her temple practices as integral to her participation. She described the temple as "so different than the Church" and said, "I feel like if people who didn't agree with the

Church politically could experience [the temple], could give it a chance and experience that, it would make it so much easier for them.”

The stories of Kara (late twenties) and Eliza (age 30) reveal a different pattern of participation. Kara and Eliza found some parts of the temple endowment ceremony to be highly problematic (I discuss this in chapter five) and felt that the Church’s standpoint on gender was oppressive. Because of this, Eliza attended Church and participated in Church callings, but stopped attending the temple. Kara said she still participated in both church meetings and temple ritual, but said that if she could not reconcile her feelings, would most likely leave the Church “in the next year.”

Most of the women in this study performed temple ordinances fairly regularly (approximately once a month). Members are encouraged to perform vicarious ordinances as often as their circumstances will allow, depending upon their proximity to the temple. Temples are typically open Tuesday through Saturday and depending on the temple, endowment sessions begin every hour or thirty minutes. In cases of “living ordinances,” when individuals receive the ordinances for themselves, an appointment is required. In cases of proxy initiatory and endowments, no appointments are necessary. While the women in this study described the initiatory as far more empowering than the endowment, as a whole, they performed endowments more regularly.

Chapter Conclusion

Women’s patterns of participation in church and temple worship are tied to the changing texture of their religious beliefs and identities. In the following two chapters I turn to significant patterns in their ritual stories. Categorizing them as

feminist, liberal/conservative, and so forth, does little to explain the meanings that women ascribed to ritual and how these meanings became significant to their identities and beliefs. Instead I use the initiatory and endowment ceremonies as organizing topics for the following two chapters. This categorization grows directly out of the feminist methodology I have outlined.

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Relationship Status	Education	Age or Age Range
Lily	White	Married	College Graduate	27
Jaime	White	Married	Some college	62
Isabelle	White	Married	Master's Degree	25-30
Lucy	White	Married	College Graduate	27
Emma	White	Married	College Graduate	26
Annie	White	Separated	College Graduate	40
Kara	White	Non-married	Master's Degree	25-30
Molly	White	Married	College Graduate	59
Eliza	White	Married	College Graduate	30-35
Sarah	White	Non-married	College Graduate	30-35
Abigail	Asian/White	Married	College Graduate	33
Evelyn	White	Married	College Graduate	50-55
Esther	White	Non-married	Master's Degree	35-40
Lydia	White	Married	Ph.D.	33
Rachel	White	Married	Master's Degree	31
Ruth	White	Married	High School	30
Mary	White	Non-married (Widow)	Unknown	69
Hannah	Asian American	Married	Master's Degree	30

CHAPTER 4: THE TEMPLE INITIATORY

Every person who has received the LDS temple endowment knows that women perform for other women the 'initiatory ordinances' of washing and anointing. Fewer know that LDS women also performed ordinances of healing from the 1840s until the 1940s. Yet every Mormon knows that men who perform temple ordinances and healing ordinances must have the Melchizedek priesthood. Women are no exception.

D. Michael Quinn, Ex-LDS Historian, 1992:365

In chapter one, I described the temple ritual system as embodying four core ceremonies. The findings I present in this chapter and in chapter five highlight two of these ceremonies—the initiatory and endowment ceremonies—because the women in this study emphasized the rituals embedded in these two ceremonies as being most meaningful to their senses of self.²⁸ The temple ceremonies are interconnected yet it is appropriate to examine these ceremonies in separate chapters because the women in this study made important distinctions between the initiatory and endowment ceremonies.²⁹ In this chapter, I identify themes in women's perspectives on the initiatory ceremony. In chapter five, I identify themes in women's perspectives on the endowment ceremony. Exploring patterns of emphasis on ritual situations provides insight into the meanings that women attach to ritual and into the ways in which ritual intersects with the content of their self-definitions.

Each chapter is similarly organized and consists of three major sections. In the first section, I describe the highlighted temple ceremony (this chapter describes the initiatory and chapter five describes the endowment). The descriptions provided

²⁸ There are several reasons why the women in this study emphasized the initiatory and endowment ceremonies in their narratives. The findings presented in this chapter and the next demonstrate why these two ceremonies stood out as meaningful to women's religious lives. I also discuss this more directly in the chapter syntheses.

²⁹ Revisit table 1.4 for a descriptive summary of the temple ceremonies.

are my own--I draw descriptive detail largely from my participatory experiences. I have also utilized the website ldsendowment.org to verify that my descriptions are accurate and properly sequenced. LDSendowment.org is an independent (not affiliated with or approved by the LDS Church) webservice containing transcripts from the temple ceremonies throughout LDS history, and uses official sources to document ritual change over time. Following these descriptions, in each chapter I identify themes in LDS women's perspectives on each ceremony. I conclude each chapter by identifying some of the main ideas that permeate these narratives.

In this chapter, I describe the initiatory ceremony in greater detail. I then present LDS women's perspectives on the endowment ceremony. Here I focus on three core themes including a discussion of 1) the ways in which temple initiatory rituals enable LDS women to experience their religion in entirely new ways, 2) the ways in which these rituals allow women to craft their sense of self and augment their self-esteem, and 3) the ways in which the women in this study utilized ritual to negotiate patriarchy.

Ritual Setting: Description of the Initiatory Ceremony

The initiatory ceremony is a formal rite of passage that occurs before an individual receives their endowment. Its purpose is to symbolically cleanse the body and spirit preparatory to receiving the temple endowment. Three ordinances are conferred in the initiatory ceremony including a washing ordinance, an anointing ordinance, and a clothing ordinance. Each of these ordinances is conferred onto individuals through an established ritual process. Initiates are instructed that these rituals are modeled after the Old Testament Book of Exodus, in which Aaron and his

sons are washed with water, anointed, and clothed in holy garments before entering the tabernacle.

The initiatory ordinances of washing, anointing, and clothing differ from every other religious ordinance administered in the LDS Church because they are conferred upon LDS women through the laying on of hands by other endowed women. The initiatory ceremony is the only ceremony that involves women officiators who lay their hands on women's heads to bless, administer and ordain. Consequently, they exemplify an exception to the LDS Church's contemporary approach to the administration of ordinances. Table 1 offers a visual representation of the core components of the initiatory ceremony and describes the ritual process associated with each ordinance, as performed by and for LDS women.

[Insert Table 4.1. Description of the Temple Initiatory Ceremony]

When a woman arrives at the temple initiatory, she is clothed in her temple garments and a white robe (called a shield). If it is not her first time attending the temple, she is given the names of several deceased women in whose behalf she is receiving the ordinances (she will repeat the ceremony for each individual, so if she is given five names, she will experience the entire ceremony five times in a row). She is then led to a small area designed for the initiatory ceremony—three small booths demarcated by suspended white linen curtains. She begins by entering the washing booth and is received by a female officiator. The officiator begins by placing a drop of water on the initiate's head and pronounces her authority to administer (i.e. "Sister

(initiate's last name), having authority, I wash you preparatory to your receiving your anointings..."). The officiator then confers the washing ordinance in the order by which all priesthood ordinances are performed in the LDS Church—by laying her hands upon her head while stating the ritual dialogue. The ritual dialogue carries a number of spiritual and physical blessings onto the woman's body (i.e. "I wash your head, that your brain and your intellect may be clear and active... your arms and hands, that they may be strong and wield the sword of justice in defense of truth and virtue..."). A second officiator enters the booth, places her hands upon the initiate's head, and "seals," or confirms the blessing, stating that the initiate is now clean.

The initiate moves into a second booth where she receives the anointing ordinance through a similar ritual. The officiator places oil on the initiate's head, pronounces her authority, and informs the woman that she is being anointed "preparatory to your becoming a queen and a priestess..." The officiator then anoints several parts of the body, repeating the same blessings that were delivered in the washing ritual. A second officiator enters the booth and lays her hands upon the initiate's head, offering a blessing that "seals" the anointing ordinance.

The initiate then moves into the third booth for the clothing ritual. In the clothing ritual, the purpose and meaning of the temple garment is revealed. The temple garments are generally white, short-sleeve shirts and knee-length bottoms that endowed women (and men) are expected to wear underneath one's clothing on an everyday basis. Four small markings, called the "marks of the holy priesthood," are sewn into the garments and are symbolic of covenants and knowledge received in the endowment ceremony. The officiator states, "Under proper authority, the garment

placed upon you is now authorized...” The initiate is further instructed that the garment is called the garment of the holy priesthood, that she should always wear it, and that if she is loyal to her temple covenants, the garment will be a “shield and a protection” to her.³⁰

If a woman is going through the temple for the first time, she will also receive a new name in the clothing booth. She is instructed that she should only reveal her name at a “certain place.” The initiate learns of the “certain place” in the endowment ceremony when she is asked to reveal her new name as a qualification for transitioning into the celestial room. The giving of a ceremonial name in exchange for entrance into a more sacred space is meant to be symbolic of spiritual renewal (Ricks and Sroka 1994).³¹ If a woman is acting as a proxy, she will not receive a new name (new names for the dead are given in a name booth that women enter just before participating in an endowment ceremony). This completes the initiatory ceremony.

Ritual Change

In 2005, several changes were made to the initiatory ceremony. Amongst these changes, two are particularly relevant because they have implications for the kinds of meanings LDS women can produce. The first change occurred to the anointing ritual dialogue. Formerly, a woman was anointed “preparatory to your

³⁰ LDS women are taught to continue to wear these garments underneath their clothing day and night. With a temple recommend, endowed members can purchase the garments online or from various authorized stores, some of which are located in temples.

³¹ Comparative studies in religion and anthropology have examined the similarities in Mormon temple ritual and ancient Egyptian and ancient Near East ceremonies. Ricks and Sroka’s (1994) work examines kingship rites amongst ancient Egyptians. They examine the similarities in ritual acts, including the giving of a new name upon a king’s enthronement as representative of rebirth into a new and sacred state.

becoming a queen and a priestess *unto the Most High God.*” In 2005, the wording of this phrase was changed to “preparatory to your becoming a queen and a priestess *unto your husband.*” In this study, all the women who referred to this particular ceremonial phrase, referred to the earlier phrase (“unto the most high God”). Another important change was made to the clothing ritual dialogue in the initiatory ceremony. Formerly, the phrase “having authority...” was changed to “*under* proper authority...” In the washing and anointing rituals, female officiators still state that they have authority to administer. Both of these changes are important to note because, although they seem minor, they have significant implications for how women define their relationship to the priesthood and for the level of spiritual authority the temple ritual confers onto women.³² Women’s perspectives on the temple initiatory ceremony demonstrate that the initiatory rites shift women’s relationship to religious authority and priesthood power.

LDS Women’s Perspectives on the Initiatory Ceremony

I do like the initiatory. So my initial experience
was really good. –Ruth

I loved the initiatory. –Isabelle

I keep going back. Initiatories are pretty
amazing. –Hannah

That’s probably one of my favorite parts,
the initiatory. –Eliza

I love it. I’ve done it maybe two or three times and
I love to do it. –Annie

The washing—or, I should say initiatory—that
is my favorite part. –Evelyn

³² I return to this theme in the chapter synthesis.

Annie married a non-LDS man and, although she did not anticipate it, her husband joined the Church after they had been married for about one year. Seven years (and two children) later, they made a joint decision to receive their endowments together and be sealed for “time and all eternity” in the temple. In one overwhelming day, Annie experienced three temple ceremonies—she was initiated, endowed, and sealed to her husband and two children. She discussed her initial experience in depth and I asked her if there were any ceremonies that were particularly significant within that initial experience. She then described her sealing experience as somewhat humorous because the officiating sealer repeatedly misstated their names and her son kept removing his hands from the family grip on the sealing alter. Not wanting to minimize the experience, she explained that the infinite reflections of her beloved family produced by the surrounding mirrors was a powerful visual experience and manifestation of love, but she then responded, “...the initiatory, that’s the one that stands out the most to me.”

Annie’s feelings toward the initiatory were shared almost unexceptionally throughout the interviews and informal conversations that I had with LDS women. To be sure, the pathways that brought the women in this study to the temple were diverse, as were the meanings that they ascribed to temple rituals. Despite their diverse pathways and biographies, and despite the heterogeneity across women’s perspectives toward the Church and the endowment ceremony, the women in this study shared a distinctive standpoint toward the initiatory ceremony—they “loved” it. Kara, a woman who received her endowment amidst severe depression, had only

performed the initiatory once and had little memory of the experience, which she believed was due to her mental illness. But, unlike the endowment ritual she did not feel negatively toward the initiatory. With only Kara as an exception, the women in this study were unified in their unequivocal and enthusiastic appreciation for the initiatory rites of washing, anointing, and clothing. In our conversations, there was no hesitation or ambivalence in women's articulation of their feelings toward the rites of initiation that occur before the endowment. They most often described their love for the initiatory in lively and enthusiastic ways. "Amazing," "uplifting," and "empowering" were repetitively and widely used terms deployed by the women in this study to describe the meaning of these initiatory rituals in their lives.

In this section, I highlight three dimensions of the ritual experience that were particularly important to the women in this study. First, women found the initiatory to be especially meaningful because it offered them entirely new ways of experiencing and practicing their religion. Experiencing women in ritual roles, as officiators of ordinances, was clearly a powerful and moving ritual experience in part because women felt it offered to them a concrete manifestation of their spiritual power and possibilities. Second, women found the initiatory to be meaningful because they could draw upon the experience of women as ritual actors to redefine their religious identities. As one woman succinctly stated, the initiatory was "amazing" and shaped her sense of "how I view myself as a daughter of God, how I view myself as a woman." The emergence of new and alternative self-definitions had significant ramifications for women's self-concepts and for working through domestic conflict. Third, women viewed the initiatory rites as significant because

they allowed women to negotiate religious hierarchy and their relationship to the priesthood. Experiencing women in ritual roles and practices facilitated women's rethinking of their priesthood exclusion. In some cases, women argued that initiatory practices were evidence that women have a right to administer in the mystical practices of the priesthood.

Experiencing Women in Ritual Roles and Practices

A significant feature of the initiatory ceremony is the experience of being administered to by women temple workers who are authorized with "authority." As initiates are symbolically washed, anointed and clothed in the garments of the Holy Priesthood, they learn through ritual dialogue that they are being initiated preparatory to becoming "priestesses and queens."³³ Since LDS women learn through Church teachings that they are not ordained to the priesthood, and that they are not permitted to practice the laying on of hands, the experience is in part profound because it contradicts with these teachings. Additionally, LDS women arrive at the temple without a history of visualizing or experiencing women as actors in formal ritual and liturgical roles. Temple initiatory ritual is exceptional because LDS women accomplish the washing, anointing, and clothing ordinances. Not only are LDS women most often unaware that this occurs before their initial experience, but it is novel to LDS women's repertoire of previous religious experiences. Both these

³³ Prior to 2005, LDS women were ordained to become "priestesses and queens unto the Most High God." In 2005, the wording was changed and women were ordained to become "priestesses and queens unto their husbands." While some of the participants discussed ritual change, none referred to the changes made to this part of the dialogue. In instances where women talked about this specific ritual dialogue, they all used the previous wording.

factors are important in explaining why women's initiatory experiences are meaningful to LDS women's ritual lives.

The following quotes from women's narratives demonstrate that the experience of women performing ritual roles is one explanation for why the initiatory was meaningful and how it contradicted with their expectations.

The one thing that surprised me was how the women do everything for the women. That was kind of a surprise for me because in other parts of the Church, the men do things—they give priesthood blessings and stuff like that but in the temple women do it for the women. (Abigail)

I was really happy to see that women were performing ordinances in the temple. That made me happy...I really love the blessings in the initiatory and I love that women are doing it. (Ruth)

I love that women are performing the ordinances. (Isabelle)

I was really overwhelmed by my first initiatory experience. The biggest reason was that women were doing the temple work—no one told me—I could not believe it. I just loved it. It's my favorite part of temple work. (Hannah)

Abigail and Hannah were raised in the LDS Church, and neither knew that women in temples officiated in ordinances. Ruth was also raised in the Church but says she knew in advance of her endowment because a woman mentioned it in a Sunday Relief Society meeting. Ruth explained, "All the women who had gone to the temple were like, 'GASP!' And I was like, wow." For contemporary LDS women, the physical experience of being administered to by another woman is an often unexpected and entirely new religious experience culminating in what several women described as a transformative ritual experience.

Beyond that women officiate, the physical intimacy of the experience as well as the numerous blessings pronounced onto women's bodies intensifies its meaning in women's lives.

It's women officiating for women and that is really significant to me—that women are doing the work and that there is such a connection between the physical and the spiritual...that ceremony really gets at that—kind of, what are the promises embedded in the physical body—and so I really like it. (Lydia)

Lydia is referring to the anointing ritual in which numerous parts of a women's body are anointed with remarkable body/mind promises of endurance and power to do good (i.e. "I anoint your head, that your brain and your intellect may be clear and active") as well as the physical experience of having another woman lay her hands upon her head. For Lydia, initiatory rites transgressed the body/spirit dualism.

Another participant, Isabelle, also said that she liked the way in which different parts of the body are anointed with physical and spiritual blessings—and she liked the way in which the officiator of the ordinance physically touched each part of the body throughout the ritual. This part of the ordinance was changed in 2005, after which officiators would continue to pronounce the blessings but would no longer touch the corresponding part of the body. Isabelle stated, "I was actually sad that they have changed it because I like the whole idea--I've just heard that they don't touch like they used to do. I thought that was very powerful, a woman basically endowing another woman."³⁴ In narrative after narrative, women spoke about the power of being physically administered to by another women.

³⁴ Ritual change often occurs slowly and mysteriously, and it is unclear as to why this part of the ritual was changed. Some women have suggested that the ritual was changed to accommodate Mormon men's homophobia and discomfort with being touched by other men. This is a viable explanation.

Initiatory Ritual and Self-Concept

A second explanation for why women found the initiatory meaningful is that it served as a means through which women could redefine their religious identities and bolster their self-esteem. Lucy's narrative, and those that follow, provide excellent examples of how this particular ritual situation carries meaning into women's lives—using women's embodied ritual practices to bolster self-confidence, augment self-esteem, and enable LDS women to feel valued by God, their religious tradition, and their own self.

Like many other participants, Lucy described the initiatory as her favorite temple ritual.

The initiatory, especially when I was going through the first time, it was such a sweet experience to feel. Maybe because I've struggled so much in my life with [feeling of worth]. My mother grew up in a really harsh situation and there's been some tricky things in her life. So seeing that, I've kind of struggled with feeling of worth myself, even though we're told that [women are of worth] in different ways. But the initiatory was such a physical act of showing the worth of a woman and how special—it wasn't just somebody saying it, it was actually this beautiful service that another woman gives you in a sacred setting.

Lucy was an attractive, upbeat and very friendly stay-at-home mom. She was temple married to an active member of the Church and, at the time of the interview, had two young children. From an outsider's view, her life course nicely aligned with Mormon ideals and, appearing so confident, it was difficult to imagine that she had self-doubts. When I met with her, she explained that her father had recently been excommunicated from the LDS Church and her parents had just divorced. She described her fairly regular temple practice—she went about once a month—as a wellspring of hope as

she navigated through these life challenges and self-doubts. Like Lydia, Lucy identifies the power of ritual as being rooted in the physical experience of women's ordination. "It wasn't just somebody saying it," she pointed out, but rather "a physical act of showing the worth of a woman..." She continued her narrative:

...if ever I go to the temple by myself that's what I want to do. I want to go do an initiatory. Because I feel, it's almost like I feel like there's a Heavenly Mother—there's a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother, and you feel that closeness, you know what I mean? And for me, I felt like there was something for me, something so particular that the Lord has in store for me, just me, you know. So, I think it makes it so special to be able to do that.

Lucy identified the initiatory as imbuing her with a sense of purpose. Significantly, initiatory rites facilitated the development of a personal theology of, and relationship to, a female deity.

Lucy's comment is also poignant because it highlighted that making a distinction between LDS temples and LDS churches is important in many women's processes of identity formation. Indeed, this distinction was made thematically throughout the research interviews. Ruth, for example, differentiated between what she called the "lip-service" given to women by church authorities and the more authentic value placed upon women through the initiatory ritual. Another participant, Emma said:

I feel like they shovel out all the terminology on days like Mother's Day. Like, "Oh you're all going to be priestesses and queens"...it's just like, feel nice about yourselves, because you all hate yourselves [we both laugh]. The temple is really specific, more specific than people at Church.

In making this distinction, Lucy, Ruth and Emma draw attention to the ways in which initiatory ritual structure, practice, and dialogue constitute paths to self-knowledge

that have a greater impact or are at least viewed as more authentic and/or meaningful. Particularly for Lucy, living ritual was far more effective in forging positive self-concept than other avenues designed by the Church to empower women.

The initiatory rites also served as an important mechanism of support for women who faced personal and domestic challenges. Annie's story captures how the initiatory rites shape women's sense of self and through repetition of the rituals serve as an ongoing foundation of support through life trials. After explaining that the initiatory stood out to her as the most significant part of her temple experience, she explained that the dialogue of the initiatory rites were both beneficial and unexpected, and answered questions for her that she had not yet even asked.

In that portion of the day there were things that were said to me that were...answers to the questions that I hadn't thought to ask yet. Things that brought me so much peace and an added measure of confidence in terms of myself and the support that I had and the love that I had from Heavenly Father. It was just so affirming and empowering. I just felt so much love through that. That's the part that to me was the most special of the whole day.

She continued her story, explaining it's ongoing significance in her life. As the interview unfolded, she revealed that she and her husband were separating and in the process of divorce, although they had not yet announced this to others. She described it as a very difficult time for her and said she relied on her regular temple attendance for uplift when she felt "low." She continued her narrative.

I felt like it put me in a more complete place. It helped me to understand that shortcomings that I have can be filled in...just knowing that the self that I see as so flawed, you know, you see your flaws and other people see the things that you do and you sometimes focus more on the things you could have done or could have done better or should have done. Just feeling like you as you are, are complete.

It was really a great feeling.

When I asked her if she found weekly Church meetings to be empowering she replied, “It means to be.”

Several women viewed the initiatory rites as an important avenue for women’s empowerment and self-valuation. Sara commented on the connection between initiatory rites and her sense of empowerment.

I had no idea that went on. The words, I think, are just amazing. I think that’s where it becomes clear to me that as a woman you have amazing power, and a very divine role. I think that’s where it’s more clear than anywhere in the temple that a woman’s role is extremely important and looked upon as very honorable and powerful and spiritual.

I certainly would like to learn more about everything you hear there. The good thing about the initiatory is that you hear the words several time over and over again when you do it for someone else...it really puts it in your head.

That’s the one I’d say where you learn about how important it is to be a woman, especially in the gospel, as a daughter of God. My initial thoughts were *wow, interesting*. I did remember feeling very overwhelmed with love when I was hearing some of those words.

Sara was a single woman who was raised LDS and received her endowment because she felt personally ready to “learn a little more” and further her religious commitment. Like others, the initiatory rituals were unique to her stock of religious experiences. While she did not believe that the LDS Church was oppressive to women, she did feel that the initiatory imbued women with a unique potential. Her narrative simultaneously speaks to several issues, but particularly salient is the way in which initiatory rituals helped her to feel “important” and “powerful.”

Hannah also used the term “powerful” to explain why she liked the initiatory rites. Thinking about women as being valued equally with men, has clear implications for how women conceptualize their own self:

You know, I felt like women’s authority changed how I think. Like, how I think about myself. I guess it was such a powerful experience and I saw women as having such amazing abilities. I guess I knew that before, but when I do initiatories, I feel like I have a capacity to be an instrument in God’s hands, to have his power. I mean, in church I don’t really get that feeling. I don’t know if I should say this, but I’m a priestess and that’s a really cool, I guess, way of thinking about myself—and other women, too, you know. So I try to go back and do more initiatories when I feel like I need that feeling again.

Regardless of whether or not women say they believe women should have the priesthood, being ordained to become a “priestess” was a valuable religious experience for LDS women because it helped them to feel important, or as important as their male counterparts.

While the LDS Church continues to exclude women from performing priesthood ordinances outside of temples, arguing that their equal role is motherhood, in temples women have access to entirely new representations of women that are delivered through sacred ritual. The combination of women temple workers doing acts of administration in which they ordain women to be “priestesses” is a powerfully sensual and new experience that allowed women to view themselves in ways that were unavailable to them through other dimensions of their religious lives and practices. The experience of female ordinations was tremendously important for expanding the possibilities that LDS women envisioned for themselves, and had something to offer initiates regardless of their marital or parental status. Priestess acts

do not exclude or devalue motherhood. Alternatively, they encapsulate biological motherhood and nurturing by valuing the creative and spiritual power of women in ways that the Church's narrow and exclusive definition of motherhood simply does not.

Initiatory Ritual as a Mechanism for Negotiating Religious Authority

A third reason that women viewed the initiatory rituals as being particularly meaningful is that these rituals played an important role in helping women to feel valued by God and their religious tradition, and was also important for evidencing to women that they are valued equally vis-à-vis LDS men. It provided women with an authorized avenue through which they could renegotiate and even challenge LDS patriarchy, especially their exclusion from enacting the spiritual powers of the priesthood.

Women's interpretations of initiatory rites differed in the extent to which they challenged the gendered framework of the Church. In one line of interpretation, women used the initiatory as the most significant evidence that men and women are viewed equally in the LDS tradition, although, at the same time they supported traditional LDS gender and family ideals. Lucy, Sara, Esther, and Molly exemplify this common line of interpretation.

Lucy described the entire temple ritual system as something "separate" and "beyond" any other previous religious experience:

...it was like a whole new door opened up to the gospel that I never knew existed. I felt like, oh my goodness, here I've been sitting in primary, I've been sitting in Young Women's, I've been going to church and there's *this*. This is something so separate, beyond. It was just like a bigger picture that I

never knew existed and I felt like it opened this whole new world to the gospel of learning and experiencing...the gospel is so different to me now. It was just so different.

As Lucy and I continued our conversation, she worked to articulate the reasons that temple practice reshaped and expanded her religious knowledge. I started to ask her about her beliefs regarding women's potential after which she linked the sense of newness to a redefining of the priesthood. "For me," she argued, "it put a new spin on what the priesthood is and maybe [in temples] the priesthood is carried out a little bit different." Lucy highlighted the importance of the initiatory rites for (re)thinking what the priesthood is and for (re)negotiating religious power and authority.

Sara, discussed earlier, is a single woman without children whose life course did not align with traditional LDS ideals of marriage and family. Well-educated in the diverse fields of finance and culinary arts, she expressed that she didn't "just want to have a career" and that her greatest desire was to be a mother: "I feel like motherhood is the most important thing that I as a woman could do." She did not feel that LDS gender norms were problematic but recognized that many LDS women were conflicted and/or felt marginalized by these norms. She also felt that temple ritual, especially the initiatory ceremony, could help nonmarried LDS women feel included, valued, and purposeful. She also believed that ritual offered women "something" equal to the priesthood.

If you were concerned about not having the priesthood, I feel like in the temple you feel like you have something that's just as equal—if you don't count motherhood as something that's as equal. I have never felt jipped as a woman in the Church, but I have plenty of friends and know people that do. I never have, but I feel like if you had any question, if you go to the temple I think it's very clear that the blessings and opportunities as a woman are just as

divine and just as important as any man. I definitely think the temple does make that much clearer.

Sara didn't name or articulate what "something that's as equal" was (some women called it priesthood), but went on to argue that prior to her endowment she could not have said with the same degree of confidence that men and women are equally valued. "Now having had gone through the temple and hearing the words that I hear or the way things are portrayed I would probably say the temple is a place where it's clear that women are Divine...that women are just as important as men." Sara believed that initiatory rites offered to women "something" beyond motherhood that she felt was inclusive of all women. From ritual, she forged a belief in that her religious tradition was based upon principles of gender equality.

Esther was a politically conservative single woman who, after a successful corporate career ran a private business from her home. She defended the LDS institution, arguing, "I don't think the Church ever subjugates women. Sometimes some men try to do that. The Church doesn't because God doesn't. I believe that firmly." She continued, "I think it is good for men to have the priesthood. I think it is good for their development. I think it is good for women to be mothers." At the same time, it was not toward dominant LDS definitions that she turned to as evidence of equality. Instead she looked to the initiatory rites.

The blessings in the initiatory, I did not anticipate. They were amazing and I did not anticipate the grace of God would be so evident, so forgiving of us. The power given to women in the temple, I just didn't know. The authority that women will have in the hereafter—it was interesting to see part of that authority invade even here on Earth. As a woman, that was a beautiful thing to see. Under God, all are equal.

For Esther, Church and God are unified, motherhood and priesthood are equal. At the same time, Esther acknowledged that the initiatory rites imbued women with a spiritual power that was absent in LDS women's everyday lives. In her comment, she referred to women's laying on of hands and women's ordination to be priestesses to claim, "Under God, all are equal." Esther interpreted these acts as priestess acts but believed it indicated women's priesthood *after* this life, a common way of thinking amongst many Mormons, and a common way of dismissing and/or justifying gender inequality. Notwithstanding, for people who interpret ritual in this way, initiatory rites offer at least a momentary glimpse at what gender equality might look/feel like.

Molly is an LDS woman who was vigorously engaged in a time and energy consuming Church leadership position. She was not critical of the Church or its policies but used women's ordinations as evidencing gender equality and began redefining the priesthood through these practices.

Some people define the priesthood as the power given to men on Earth to act in the name of God, which isn't an inaccurate description, but I think that priesthood really and truly is God's power. It is something that he uses, that he has, and I see that as being, in the temple particularly, as being given equally to men and women... Women lay their hands on people's heads! So to me, obviously, the temple becomes hugely empowering because so many people outside the Church think somehow we are submissive and we're downtrodden and second-class citizens and [we are] anything but that.

Molly's statement indicates that women use ritual to expand their definition of the priesthood in ways that are inclusive of women. While she wondered why women could not perform ordinances outside of the temples—"somehow outside [the temple] we don't see that in the administration of the Church,"—she believed that, through

ritual women were endowed with a direct relationship to the priesthood. As opposed to demarcating proper channels of authority and administration, Molly redefined priesthood in non-authoritarian ways, simply as “God’s power,” a power that Molly viewed as being given to women through ritual. Molly’s narrative provides a bridge into a more oppositional way of interpreting initiatory rites.

A second line of interpretation involved direct challenges to LDS hierarchy. In this line of interpretation, women utilized the initiatory (amongst other rituals) to directly challenge their exclusion from the priesthood. In this line of dialogue, LDS women critically questioned and outright rejected the Church’s claim that motherhood and priesthood are equal religious identities. To support their standpoint, LDS women utilized the initiatory ritual as evidence that LDS women’s mortal experience involves or should involve direct access to the priesthood. I focus especially (but not solely) on Emma and Ruth’s stories in this section because they exemplify an important group of LDS women who are both conscious and critical of the loss of women’s institutional responsibilities.

Emma and Ruth loved the temple, but they were troubled by LDS (hetero)patriarchy. Both identified the Church’s role in inaugurating and supporting Proposition 8, the amendment that overturned same-sex marriage rights in California, as a significant barrier to their Church participation. Both also said that they relied on their temple practice to renew their desire to affiliate with the Mormon Church and to expand the religious boundaries around dominant definitions of gender and families. Each commented on the initiatory rites as evidence that LDS women have or should have access to the spiritual dimension of the priesthood.

Emma joined the Church in her early twenties after dating (and marrying) a Mormon man. As a college student, she was very active in campus social justice activism and continued to work in community-based jobs that are human rights related. She was vegan, very involved in her local congregation, and espoused a belief in Book of Mormon teachings and in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Emma (and Ruth) had knowledge of LDS women's Church history—a vital tool in forging alternative beliefs regarding women's relationship to the priesthood.

In my interview with Emma, I asked her to talk about her initial temple experience.

Clearly, most obviously, we've talked about this before, is the priesthood. I mean, I had read probably more than not just converts, but members, about women's history and the priesthood. So I knew that at one point we had the priesthood and then we were told we didn't have it anymore. Then you go to the temple and you're like, *Oh, here it is*. Nobody told you it's here and no one would even talk about it there, that they even have it which is crazy to me. It's like baking cookies and saying you're making chicken quesadillas or something. It's like, no, clearly these are cookies. So obviously that was really cool. Initiatories were really interesting...just to have women doing priesthood ordinances and saying that they have authority. Clearly there are women that hold the priesthood, we just have to do it silently, I guess. Because they keep telling us to go to the temple and we have to wear our garments. So basically, we have to hold the priesthood faithfully, but we just don't talk about it I guess.

Emma was amazed by the silence surrounding initiatory rites and clearly interpreted women's ordinations as acts of the priesthood. Her knowledge of LDS Church history helped her to articulate and interpret these acts in ways that challenged women's exclusion from the priesthood. In her interview, she also elaborated on the

garments of the Holy Priesthood that women receive through the initiatory clothing rite.

Why isn't it called the garment of the holy feminine-hood or, the holy motherhood?...I think we wear [the garment] because we have the priesthood. When we get it, we get it before our endowment. We get it after initiatories. and initiatories are even more symbolically, or even more blatantly pointing toward the fact that women have the priesthood. So, it makes sense that you get your garment because you can do these things.

Engaging logic and literalism, Emma viewed the garment as a tangible signifier of women's power. Another woman, Hannah, used a similar literal interpretation when she stated, "Can you really be a priestess unto the most high God without having the priesthood? You're a priestess, but you don't have the priesthood. This doesn't make any sense."

Ruth is another participant who utilized the initiatory to challenge priesthood authority.

I was really happy to see that women were performing ordinances in the temple. That made me happy...but it also made me sad because clearly, we have a right to do this. Also, there are some words in there about being ordained to be a priestess which clearly indicates Priesthood. So that made me happy.

Ruth also talked about the garments:

I liked my garments when I first got them and I feel that they're very comfortable. I like them. You asked me why I think we wear the garment of the holy priesthood. I think that's because that's how it's supposed to be. We're supposed to be equal. I just can't buy into the patriarchal system at all. I believe that's something we're doing wrong that will eventually be righted, I hope. There's no way I can make it in my head that that's something that we're doing right. It feels to me like we're not doing that right....They do a really, really good job of making sure we're not upset

about it—loudly.

Ruth no longer participated in weekly meetings and she cited the Church's role in Proposition 8 as the primary reason. However, she said that she continued to love the temple and her garments. The garment of the holy priesthood that women receive through the initiatory clothing ceremony is an important ritual vestment that some LDS women use to challenge their exclusion from the priesthood. As one woman put it, the garment is "a foundational part of their [Mormon women's] identity."

Because LDS women wear the garment daily, viewing the vestments as indication of women's priestesshood and their rite/right to enact spiritual authority is powerful for some LDS women.

The women in this study who questioned their exclusion from the priesthood were ardent believers in the Book of Mormon and faithful followers of their religion. They worked hard to fulfill their Church obligations and occupied a variety of Church positions, often exerting considerable time and energy in their efforts to execute their church work. Examining their perspectives on initiatory rites demonstrates the central significance of women's ritual practices for reconciling the contradictions of their participation. Initiatory ritual is an unspoken and unassuming vehicle for reconstructing relationships of authority and submission. In both lines of interpretation, LDS women's beliefs reflect individual desires to feel equal to LDS men and all created new definitions of equality that were alternative to the dominant view that priesthood and motherhood are equivalent roles and responsibilities. It is important to underscore that even though many women consent to LDS definitions of gender and family, it is toward women's acts of enacting spiritual power and toward

women's ordination to enact that power (being ordained as priestesses) that LDS women draw upon as evidence of gender equality.

“Priestesses Unto the Most High God”: Rethinking Mormon Women

In this study, the initiatory ceremony served as a tremendous wellspring of hope and empowerment in women's lives. Their attraction to the ceremony was rooted in its unique structure and content. Within the contemporary Mormon ritual system, initiatory rituals are unique because they embody ordinances that are conferred through women. Once called “priestesses,” Mormon women who officiate in temples perform the ritual ordinances of washing, anointing, and clothing. Through the laying on of hands, they initiate women to become “priestesses” and clothe them in “the garment of the holy priesthood.” The hope and empowerment that LDS women draw through these rituals is rooted in this unique representation of women as priestesses.

New and alternative self-definitions did not emerge transcendently but through situated, sensory experience enacted upon women's bodies. As an identity practice, ritual operated as an interface whereon meanings are contested as women and religious power and authority converge. Ritual was utilized in significant ways-- dominant religious beliefs were refracted, renegotiated, and creatively reimagined, illustrating that members of religions do not simply co-opt the dominant beliefs of its religious leaders and/or doctrines. The next chapter examines more closely the ways in which the Church uses ritual to manage LDS women as well as women's strategies of reconciliation and negotiation.

Table 4.1 Description of the Temple Initiatory Ceremony

Rituals	Brief Description of the Ritual
Washing Ritual	A female initiate enters a small booth where she is greeted by a female officiator. The officiator places a drop of water on the initiate's head, lays her hands upon the initiate's head and pronounces blessings on several different parts of the body (i.e. "I wash your head, that your brain and intellect may be clear and active..."). A second officiator enters and both workers place their hands upon the initiate's head and pronounce a blessing that "seals" the washing.
Anointing Ritual	Initiate enters a second booth. A female officiator anoints initiate's head with oil, then places her hands upon the initiate's head, and states that "having authority" she anoints the initiate "preparatory to your becoming a queen and priestess." The worker anoints several parts of the initiate's body. A second officiator enters and both officiators place their hands on the initiate's head and pronounce a blessing that "seals" the anointing.
Clothing Ritual	Initiate enters a third booth. A female officiator pronounces that the initiate's garment is "authorized," instructs her that the temple garment represents the garment that was given to Adam in the Garden of Eden, that it is called the garment of the Holy Priesthood, and that if the initiate remains loyal to her temple covenants, the garment will be a "shield and a protection to you against the power of the destroyer..." If the initiate is going through the temple for the first time (for herself), then she will also receive a new name.

CHAPTER 5: THE TEMPLE ENDOWMENT

*As the “mother of all living,” Eve is connected to each of us.
--Camille Fronk Olson 2009:7*

Stories about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden are vitally important to believers of many religious traditions. As a symbol of womanhood, beliefs about Eve and her transgressive actions in the garden have historically shaped gender ideologies and have justified both the oppression and elevation of women throughout societies. Contemporary LDS teachings define Eve as a model matriarch who is venerated for her intuitive decision to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a physically altering transgression that would set mortality in motion. The LDS church has directed its efforts toward counteracting the negative portrayals of Eve carried throughout centuries of Judeo-Christian thought, teaching that Eve’s transgression was purposeful and based upon considerable reflection of the choices that lay before her. Mormons today are most commonly taught that Eve was an important actor in premortal life and surrendered her personal immortality to inaugurate life. As a symbol of life giving and womanhood, the way in which the LDS Church portrays Eve is vitally important to women’s religious identities, knowledges, and expectations.

For LDS women who have experienced the endowment, the interconnection between women’s religious identities and the representation of Eve is amplified by the endowment ceremony, which for women, “centers on the person of Eve” (Madsen

1987). Beyond that her representation has significant ramifications for how women are viewed in the LDS tradition, the ritual dialogue instructs women to imagine themselves as if they are Eve. As the creation drama unfolds, women participate in the reenactment by imitating the pattern of Eve's life. This chapter examines LDS women's perspectives on the temple endowment ceremony, to which Eve's representation is of central importance. Like chapter four, this chapter focuses on themes in women's perspectives on the endowment ceremony—examining patterns in women's narratives regarding different ritual elements and situations. Again, examining the patterns in what women find both meaningful and problematic about ritual provides insights into how women in traditional religions use ritual to make sense of their religious identity.

Parallel to chapter four, this chapter begins with a description of the ritual setting. Like the descriptions of the initiatory ceremony, the descriptions provided here are based on my participatory experiences and have been confirmed through the research site ldsendowment.org. I then present LDS women's perspectives on the endowment ceremony. I focus this presentation on five specific components of the endowment ritual that were important to the women in this study, each linked to the representation of Eve in the endowment ceremony. Unlike the initiatory ceremony, the endowment ceremony vacillates between representations of women that align with and deviate from contemporary LDS gender norms, resulting in far more heterogeneity amongst women's perspectives.

Ritual Setting: Description of the Endowment Ceremony

Substantive definitions of the endowment ceremony are rare within the canon of Mormon theology and doctrine. The second Mormon prophet Brigham Young gave one of the most detailed published definitions of the temple endowment.

Let me give you a definition in brief. Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being able to give them the keywords, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the holy priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell (1971: 416).

Subsequent leaders of the Church have more obscurely defined the endowment as a ceremonial process that confers knowledge in exchange for entering into sacred covenants with God (McConkie 1997, Packer 1980, Talmage 2007[1912]). As Brigham Young stated, the endowment is a saving ordinance, or an ordinance that is required for exaltation, that involves a process through which individuals give themselves more wholly to God (by entering into additional religious covenants) in exchange for further knowledge (the “keywords, the signs and tokens”).

Ritual is the medium through which this exchange is carried out, therefore, the endowment is embedded within elaborate ceremony and utilizes multiple ritual mediums including audio-visual media, embodied movements and hand gestures, periods of instruction, changes in lighting, and changes in ritual vestments. The endowment is deeply layered with symbolic meanings that unfold to individuals through repetitions of the ceremonial experience. Therefore, it is often referred to as a “house of learning,” a place where individuals go to co-produce and increase spiritual knowledge of God, self, and society (Parry 1994).

The biblical story of the Creation frames the endowment ceremony (Bushman 2005). The endowment ceremony presents a reenactment of the Creation, the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the establishment of the priesthood on the Earth bestowed through the figures Adam and Eve. For LDS women, the endowment is experienced through a reenactment of Eve's multi-dimensional journey through premortal (in the Garden of Eden), mortal (where she enters into covenants with God, receives her priesthood vestments, and receives the tokens, names, and signs of the Holy Priesthood), and postmortal life (interacting with Christ at the veil and re-entering into God's presence).³⁵

In practice, the endowment ceremony is a communal ceremony that men and women perform together, although seated on separate sides of the room. The endowment room resembles a theater, filled with cushioned chairs that face an altar above which hangs a large film screen. Dressed in white ceremonial clothing, and carrying with them on a small piece of paper the name of the deceased person for whom they are acting proxy, individuals seat themselves and wait for the ceremony to begin.³⁶ The endowment ceremony is the longest of temple ceremonies, lasting approximately one and a half hours. I provide an overview of the major components of the ceremony here, especially detailing those parts of the ceremony that are needful

³⁵ Many portions of the temple endowment resemble Masonic rites, a fraternal order to which Joseph Smith was inducted just six weeks prior to officiating the first endowment ceremonies (Bushman 2005:449). Acquaintances of Joseph quoted him as referring to Freemasonry as a "degenerate priesthood" (Bushman 2005). While Masonic rites resembled ancient temple rites, they bind men to one another whereas Mormon rites fundamentally differ in that they bind men and women as married pairs to God (Bushman 2005). David Buerger's (2002) history of Mormon temple rites provides a more detailed examination of the patterns of resemblance between Mormon and Masonic rites.

³⁶ Endowment sessions typically begin on the hour or half-hour. There are multiple endowment rooms in every temple, so there are often multiple sessions occurring simultaneously.

for understanding the findings of this study. The table on page nine offers a visual and descriptive summary of the major components of the endowment ceremony.

Audio-Visual Media: A Reenactment of the Creation and the Fall. The ceremony begins with an audio-visual account of God, Jesus Christ, and Michael (Adam) enacting six creative periods of Earth's organization. In the sixth period, Adam and Eve are formed. Adam states that the woman will be called Eve because she is the "mother of all living." A traditional depiction of "the fall" of Adam and Eve is presented in which Eve, "beguiled" by Satan, partakes of a piece of fruit from the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" and then persuades Adam to do the same. They are clothed and cast out of the garden into "the lone and dreary world" (mortal life on Earth). The reenactment continues as Biblical apostles Peter, James and John are shown descending to the Earth to instruct Adam and Eve and establish the order of the priesthood. The film is paused intermittently as endowment participants reenact Adam and Eve's journey, also entering into covenants and receiving the tokens, names and signs of the priesthood.

Covenant-Making. Following their transgression, God returns to the Garden and interacts with Adam and Eve, requiring them to covenant to obey the "law of the Lord" (also called the law, or covenant, of obedience). Adam makes the covenant directly with God, promising to be obedient to God. Eve is shown as stating, "Adam, I now covenant to obey the law of the Lord, and to hearken to your counsel as you hearken unto Father." The film is paused while all endowment participants are asked to enter into a parallel covenant. Women are required to "keep the law of the Lord, and hearken to the counsel of your husband as he hearkens to the counsel of the

Father.” As the ceremony unfolds, endowment participants are required to enter into four additional covenants, each of which obligates individuals to increase the intensity of their commitment to God, their religion, and to others.

Tokens, Names, and Signs of the Holy Priesthood. The ritual transference of the four tokens of the holy priesthood and their associated names and signs are the heart of the endowment ceremony. The tokens, names and signs are imparted through a combination of dialogue and symbolic handgrips and gestures. Women receive the priesthood tokens from a female temple officiator who physically transmits them through handgrips. Endowment participants learn that each token has a name and sign (body gestures and postures). All are instructed to never disclose these tokens, names and signs of the holy priesthood, except when instructed to in the temple. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the tokens and their names will serve as endowment participants’ gateway into the celestial room.

Robes and Vestments of the Holy Priesthood. In the endowment, men and women also clothe themselves in additional priesthood vestments that are worn only in the temple. The donning of these robes and clothing occurs intermittently throughout the ceremony and different ways of wearing the clothing are associated with the receiving of priesthood tokens. For example, participants will be asked to don their clothing a certain way prior to receiving a priesthood token, name, and sign. Men and women wear the same priesthood vestments with the exception of the headwear--a veil for women and a cap for men. When asked to, all participants stand and clothe themselves together—the ceremony continues only after all are correctly dressed and seated.

Prayer Circle. Donned in priesthood vestments and possessing all the tokens, names and signs of the holy priesthood, individuals are now ready to participate in a collective prayer circle. Participation in the prayer circle is voluntary and requires individuals to form a circle around the altar, physically connected to one another through the handgrip associated with the fourth priesthood token. The main purpose of the prayer is to ask a special blessing upon people whose names have been submitted to a temple “prayer roll.” Scattered throughout temples are small boxes into which individuals can anonymously place the names of persons who may be suffering, sick or in need of various kinds of support. The small boxes placed upon the endowment altar hold these names, which remain in circulation for two weeks.

Before the prayer begins, all the women in the room are asked to shield their faces using their veil. A male officiator offers the prayer line-by-line, pausing as members of the prayer repeat each line in unison. Unlike other parts of the ritual dialogue, the prayer varies in each session, but always includes a special blessing over those whose names have been submitted to the temple. Women then unveil their faces and all return to their seats.

Veil Ceremony. The endowment ceremony concludes when participants are brought forward to the “veil,” a suspended ivory curtain that acts as a physical boundary between the endowment room (representing the terrestrial/earthly sphere) and the celestial room (representing the celestial/divine sphere). Women are presented on the left, and men to the right, and are accompanied by a same-sex temple worker. On the other side of the curtain is a male temple worker who represents Jesus Christ. Women are presented as if they are Eve and are reenacting

Eve's transition into the celestial kingdom. Through the veil, a woman gives all the priesthood tokens and their names and learns the name of the fourth token, which she did not yet receive. After reciting the fourth token, the "Lord" grants her entry into the celestial room.

Transition through the Veil & Celestial Room. Eve, "having been true and faithful," moves through the curtain and enters the celestial room of the temple. Celestial rooms in temples are typically elegantly furnished with couches and chairs, white and neutral in color and tone. In this space, individuals are free to rest, meditate, pray, and so forth. A person who is endowed is now eligible to participate (for themselves or as proxy) in marriage and family sealings.

Ritual Change

In the 1960s, the "live" endowment was replaced by audio-visual technology. This involved a change from a dramatic reenactment involving temple patrons performing an account of the creation to an audio-visual account in which the creation drama is viewed on film.³⁷ Instead of reenacting the scenes as a group, participants would now watch a video on a large screen in the endowment room. This changed the endowment in many ways, including shortening the length of the endowment ceremony, and reducing the level of interaction and participation required of endowment participants. Rewriting the endowment also meant changes in how characters were represented and in the content of the ceremonial instruction itself. For example, Adam and Eve would no longer be represented by any participant regardless of age, race, and appearance but would be presented as white, young, and

³⁷ Currently, only two temples have not discontinued the live endowment (Salt Lake City and St. George, Utah).

stereotypically masculine and feminine. Various parts of the story would also mutate and even be lost.

I mention one only important substantive change that occurred through this process because it is relevant to the findings presented in this chapter. In the live endowment, Adam receives priesthood tokens through the apostles Peter, James, and John (all acted out by participants). Adam then delivers the tokens of the priesthood to Eve who then delivers them to all the women in the session. In the audio-visual version, Adam receives the tokens of the priesthood but the priesthood interaction between Adam and Eve was omitted. In the video, participants see that the priesthood is transmitted to Adam. In this modified version, a temple matron then delivers the tokens of the priesthood to all the women. What is significant here is that women no longer see the transmission of the priesthood from Adam to Eve. In a Church that emphasizes the physical transmission of the priesthood, the loss of this visualization is really significant.

LDS Women’s Perspectives on the Temple Endowment Ceremony

Unlike women’s perspectives on the initiatory, standpoints on the endowment were characterized by crosscurrents in thought—narratives were complex and inconsistent, mirroring the layers of meaning and complexity embodied by the endowment. Despite this heterogeneity, most of the women said they appreciated the symbolic dimension of their endowment experience and the ways in which meanings unfolded to them through repetition of the ceremony.

Discovering meaning was described as “motivating” and “exciting” because women felt that regardless of their level of knowledge and experience, they could

learn from ritual in ways that applied to their personal lives. For example, Abigail noted, “A lot of times I’ll think of something a different way or see something that I didn’t see before, or understand something.” Others agreed with Abigail’s perceptions on symbolism as an interesting way of learning. Lucy and Esther, for example, said the following.

I think as a learner it makes it kind of exciting. It makes it kind of neat to want to go back because you want to learn, you want to know more, you want to understand things in a bigger perspective and it’s amazing that the most simple things can become so profound. You know, so it makes it motivating to go. (Lucy)

There were so many layers of symbols and symbolic meaning in each of the rituals. It’s a lot to take in your first time, but it was really fun for me to go through and see the layers immediately. (Esther)

In no case did a woman express that she was uncomfortable with the symbolic dimension of endowment rituals, despite that these rituals were new and different from the low ritual life of weekly meetings.

The women in this study also viewed the endowment rites as a gateway toward eternal promise and possibilities for women, as practices through which they received insight and answers to pertinent questions and prayers, and as practices that generated feelings of community, hope, healing, renewal and self-resolve. At the same time, women’s perspectives on the endowment exposed a conflicted and untidy landscape. Some women’s narratives were fraught with unresolved emotional pain, feelings of disenfranchisement, and feelings of indignation fueled by ritual practices and representations that paralleled their broader religious experiences.

I discuss five specific components of the endowment ritual around which women's narratives gravitated. Each centers around the representation of Eve in the endowment ceremony: Eve's role in the Creation, Eve's covenant of obedience, Eve's lack of voice, Eve's priesthood vestments and tokens, and Eve's reentry into the presence of God. I discuss each of these components in the sequence that they appear in the endowment (for example, the Creation scene occurs first in the endowment ceremony, reentrance into God's presence occurs last in the ceremony). Although the meanings that women attached to these ritual components were heterogeneous, each section demonstrates that endowment rituals are a complicated, but significant pathway toward identity formation. As Jaime argued, the endowment ceremony, "helps define the kind of person I'd like to be and gives a goal for what to look toward."

Eve's Role in the Creation: Imagining Goddesses

The endowment film depicts the six-day creation as being carried out by the craftsmanship of men—Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael. However, several women articulated a belief that divine female creators were influential, involved co-participants in these primordial moments. This reimagining was envisioned in two different ways. First, some women talked about the likely presence of a Heavenly Mother, or female goddess, as a co-creator. Second, some women imagined that Eve co-facilitated the process of creation.

Lydia was the first participant I encountered that drew attention to the fact that women are absent in the temple video depiction of these primordial events, raising the issue as a matter of theological inconsistency. She argued that because the Church

accepts the theology of female deity, the video incorrectly depicted the Creation. In this line of thinking, it was problematic and theologically inaccurate to exclude a goddess from the creative period.

Molly believed that a Heavenly Mother *was* represented in the creation story, although not visually. Through scripture study, she learned that the Semitic meaning of the term “Elohim” is plural and means Gods. She began by quoting Bible scripture and then explained why she imagined women as co-creators.

Elohim created us in his image, male and female, created he them. Elohim, *they*. So to me I see the Mother very involved in this whole creation and I don't think its really doctrinally erroneous for me to say that but we don't talk about it. And even in the temple, curiously that's not there. Well, I should say, it's not there front and center but it is implicit when all is said and done. It...makes it quite clear that there is a Mother in Heaven and that she's very involved.

While Molly was curious as to why the film did not visually depict a Heavenly Mother, she believed that the term Elohim utilized in the ritual dialogue subtly evidenced her presence.

Others used an interesting style of deductive reasoning, infused with orthodox Mormon theology and a sense of gender equality (i.e. if Adam (Michael) was present, then so was Eve) to assert that Eve participated in the council. Hannah, who possessed a marvelous ability to articulate her alternative feminist theologies with a degree of surety, stated the following.

I believe Eve was a part of the creation. When I think about Adam as helping organize the world, it just seems to click with me, like, the mother of all living would have been a part of all that, you know? I wish they showed that in the video.

For Hannah, the meaning of Eve's name, "the mother of all living," powerfully evidenced Eve's role in the creation. Emma also believed that timeless stories could be recast in entirely new ways.

People in the Church still have negative images of Eve, I think, sometimes—and that's just because we hate women. But if she hadn't done that, Adam wouldn't have done it either. His total obedience was the flaw, which is interesting to me because Eve didn't obey and that was kind of necessary or else none of this would be happening. So, it's pretty pitiful. And her name is really symbolically appropriate. She's basically the creator, not *the* creator, but took almost an equal part in all of this.

Emma argues that Eve's choice set life in motion but also points to the idea that Eve's role was more expansive than the video suggests. The ritual itself embodies a tension in which women are excluded and yet by naming her the mother of all living, creating possibilities for new ways of envisioning inclusion. Isabelle also viewed Eve as a co-participant. She segued into this discussion by mentioning that she wished the representation of women in the initiatory extended into the endowment ceremony. Isabelle felt that Eve's roles were diminished by the video and she was particularly bothered by her absence in the Creation account.

I wish the representation of women in the initiatory were also in the endowment ceremony. I think representations of Eve are complicated and I think Eve was present in more conversations and moments than she is depicted in the temple video.

Isabelle then referred to a popular LDS book, *Eve and the Choice Made in Eden* (Campbell 2002), to support her alternative theology. In the text, the author argues that Eve was a "contributing partner in the Creation" (2002:16) and draws from the writings of high-ranking LDS priesthood authorities to justify her theological claims.

By incorporating women into the creation account, women recast and reimagined what they felt was ritual lacking in depictions and representations of women as creative, productive, and instrumental in crafting and executing the divine cycle and design of life. Women did not accept what they saw at face value, but instead, created their own stories grounded in orthodox scripture and theological study.

Eve and the Covenant of Obedience: Rethinking Connection to God

The law of the Lord, or covenant of obedience, is a second ritual component around which women's narratives gravitated. The law of Lord involves a covenant of obedience in which Adam and Eve promise obedience to God. Unlike Adam, Eve's obedience is mediated through Adam—she covenants to obey Adam, as he obeys the Lord. All the women in the endowment session likewise agree to obey their husbands, if he obeys the law of the Lord. The meanings that women attached to this covenant were heterogeneous. I begin with Eliza and Kara's stories, who rejected this covenant and challenged the verity of temple ritual--demonstrating that the formation of religious identities and beliefs involves considerable reflexivity and that women do not always co-opt meanings that they perceive as being inequitable.

Born and raised in Salt Lake City, the institutional heartland of Mormonism, Eliza descended from a rich ancestral lineage of faithful Mormons. Eliza described herself as "the perfect obedient child" who respected the authority and teachings of her parents and her Church leaders. She always expected that she'd marry in the temple. It was "the only option for me" and "there was just no other way," she explained. At twenty-one, she married in the temple to an LDS man whose own

personal biography included the completion of a two-year proselytizing mission for the Church, an important religious accomplishment for young LDS men. When I spoke with her, she and her husband had two children and an active married life of church service and regular temple attendance.

Eliza loved the initiatory rituals and temple worship was very meaningful to her but she eventually hit a wall of resistance as her negative feelings toward the law of obedience escalated. She emotionally recounted her story.

The temple has always been so special to me but every time I'd go I'd feel these feelings that I wasn't—my main issue with the temple is having to covenant to my husband while he covenants to God. That's not how I've always thought it to be—I've always felt like I have direct access to God. At first with the temple that really bothered me and just the more I went it really bothered me that I was required to do that.

The idea that a woman's relationship to God is mediated through her husband was a serious issue for Eliza because it did not align with her belief that each individual has a direct relationship with God. The connection between Eve, herself and all women made the covenant more problematic. "I guess I've always taken it more personal-- where Eve is representing all the women. I'm represented, I'm covenanting to my husband, it's not just Eve."

As Eliza's feelings of disenfranchisement grew, she did something that most LDS women don't do—in a meeting with her local ecclesiastical leader she broached the issue.

I even brought it up to the Bishop one time, and because I was questioning, he even denied me a recommend at first. He said, "we need to talk about this, we need to work this out together." Like it was something I needed to work out with him as a man. You know?

Eliza encountered negative reinforcement when she sought to reconcile her thoughts and feelings through proper LDS channels of counsel and authority. Turning to her ecclesiastical steward for insight and consolation, he instead asserted his authority by invalidating her concerns, even threatening her with repercussions such as denying her a temple recommend and access to ritual. As the everyday practices of power became far less subtle, Eliza was reminded that her access to the temple was always subject to patriarchal control. Moreover, since recommends are theoretically linked to one's faith and righteousness, she received the implicit message that her thoughts and feelings were unrighteous. Ironically, just as the law of obedience suggests a woman's relationship to God must be mediated, the act of revoking a woman's recommend because she has challenging questions, mediates her ability to connect to God through temple rituals.

Unable to reconcile her feelings, Eliza's strategy of reconciliation was to eventually withdraw from attending the temple and to stop wearing the temple garments that women are expected to wear on an everyday basis underneath their clothing.³⁸

Actually, I used to not have a problem with the garment at all. It was actually like a comfort to put on the garment every morning. It was a ritual, kind of like this is just my heritage, this is what I do, you know. I actually still have a lot of fondness toward the garment. I'm just so torn because I do feel that the garment is meaningful; the garment is meaningful to me. ...Then I stopped wearing my garment a few months ago and it kind of opened my eyes about just feeling free and liberated. Free from my--I do over the years have negative feelings toward some of the things within the temple and it has kind of made me feel free of those negative feelings that I have toward the temple

³⁸ Eliza was referring to the garment that women wear underneath their clothing on an everyday basis. Generally, when LDS women refer to their garments or "the garment," they are referring to these everyday undergarments, in contrast to the ceremonial temple clothing worn only in the temple.

...It was kind of really liberating to not wear them, feeling like I was free from that bondage.”

At the time of the interview, Eliza neither attended the temple nor wore her garments but she continued participating in weekly Church meetings. Eliza hoped that other Mormon women would inquire about her missing garments but no one brought it up, although she knew they noticed. Tearfully, she expressed that the interview was the first time she'd been able to tell her story: “I've never actually talked about or let loose with my feelings since I've stopped wearing my garment.”

Kara, a nonmarried woman in her late twenties, seemed to easily navigate through her story of ongoing inner conflict with the LDS Church. She identified herself as a feminist and had interdisciplinary doctoral training, which included a study of feminist theories. A nonmarried woman in her late twenties, she felt very troubled by the law of obedience.

Initially Kara really enjoyed going to the temple and she continued to find baptisms for the dead to be a spiritually enriching temple ritual. She received her endowment in the midst of a severe depression and described the celestial room, (the final meditative space of the endowment ceremony) as the only place where she could feel “peace and the most clarity.” For several months she battled an intense state of depression and the temple celestial room was the only place wherein she found any measure of solace.

It was almost like I would go there and the fog that was in my head would lift slightly. Initially, it ended up being something that I enjoyed going to the temple just for that.

As her depression lifted, she began processing the content of the endowment ceremony. Although she still enjoyed the celestial room, she described her current relationship with the temple as being “a lot more conflicted.”

Me: Why are you more conflicted now?

Kara: The gender stuff in the temple ceremony.

Me: In the endowment ceremony?

Kara: In the endowment, yeah... For me the most problematic parts are the differences in the covenants that men and women make and the implication that the husband is covenanting with the Lord and the woman is covenanting with her husband and she's not covenanting directly with the Lord. I don't really know what sense to make of that.

I think if there wasn't so much emphasis on Adam representing the men who are participating and Eve representing the women, if it was just a scriptural, Adam represents all of us as we go before God, I think I would find it less problematic than if they did that gender division...

The Church is really invested in women recognizing that they're women and men recognizing that they are men...you know, all this stuff on motherhood and all this stuff about men and the priesthood. The Church does want to teach that an essential part of your eternal identity is your gender, or your sex. I think that it's probably in the temple ceremony for that reason. Though like I said, I find that problematic in certain ways.

Kara was concerned with the implication that men and women have a different relationship to God. The theological emphasis on eternal marriage amplified Kara's concerns.

I think I struggle more with that...I can see what exists now as mortal and it's not the way things are going to last but the whole continuing that inequity even within husband-wife relationships within the temple ceremony when you're just talking--that's what I find the most problematic. To me, that

is what is supposed to last through eternity.

Kara believed this part of the ritual implicated women's eternal subordination, an implication that collided with her beliefs in gender equality. Kara knew that many women reinterpret the covenant and when I asked Kara if there was room for interpretation to which she replied that there was "some" but argued the following.

I don't think there is as much flexibility as [people] think there is in how things are interpreted. You can't [re]interpret that in a Church and in a society where there is as much sexism as there is. You can't just ignore that. At least I can't.

I asked Kara how she was able to continue going to the temple and to weekly church meetings amidst such dissonance and conflict. She then described her church life as being an ongoing process of negotiating conflict.

For a long time, I've felt, as I've taken my questions and my struggles to God, he hasn't really given me any sort of, "Oh here's how everything's going to work out" kind of answers but I've felt peace and I've felt okay being a feminist and being the person that I am and that God finds value in that. And so the fact that that is okay has made the Church stuff while aggravating, dealable.

Although Kara felt that the temple was "immensely valuable" as a place to go and feel peace, she felt conflicted because "I have to deal with the cognitive dissonance that the endowment ceremony causes when I do go." However, her relationship with God and her beliefs about God and women allowed her to negotiate her concerns and continue to participate. But the inconsistency between Kara's alternative theologies and dominant LDS theology as articulated through this covenant were becoming too difficult for Kara to negotiate. "I don't know if the issues are resolvable and if they're not, there's a good chance within the next year I'll be leaving the Church."

For both Eliza and Kara, consenting to the law of obedience involved negotiating conflicting identities. Seeking consistency, disaffiliation with the temple offered promise for reconciliation. Others also found this part of the ritual troubling, although were more comfortable with inconsistency, and engaged alternative strategies of reconciliation.

In Ruth's description of her first temple experience, she described the obedience covenant as the only part of the endowment ritual that she found really problematic.

[Being in the temple] was a very overwhelming feeling. I felt very happy that I was there. Probably my biggest issue, or my only issue maybe was promising to obey your husband as he obeys the Lord because I think that's unnecessary. They ask you to agree to that and I agreed to that but I don't really. That was probably my only issue.

The silence surrounding temple ritual meant that Ruth was not informed of the covenant that she would be required to make. Unprepared, she agreed to the covenant, although privately she rejected the covenant and found it "unnecessary." Ruth disagreed with the Church's stance on women and sexuality, felt that the Proclamation was "dangerous," was deeply upset by the Church's role in Proposition 8 and for their role in "persecuting people," and "prefer[red] the temple to the Church." Her strategy for negotiating all of these conflicts, including the law of obedience involved making distinctions between gospel (truth) and culture (socially constructed). She refocused her attention on the many other aspects of the ritual that she found meaningful and the way in which regular temple attendance augmented her

family relationships. Through reconciliation, she was able to enter the temple and feel spiritually transformed by the rituals she experienced.

Lydia also said that she entered into the covenant, despite that she found it to be problematic. In her detailed reflection about the portrayal of Eve she described various aspects of Eve's portrayal that she viewed both positively and negatively. I asked her about her feelings toward Eve's covenant.

I always feel like I am married to a man who I trust so much and who has made commitments with me to live in a way that feels parallel. I feel like I don't personally mind because of the person that I'm with, but, in theory I mind because it seems like it's not a direct relationship necessarily of covenanting between a woman and God, through a patriarchal line, and I feel like that is kind of arbitrary.

Lydia also expressed a lot of empathy for the many women she knew that she thought might be excluded when forced to make a covenant to hearken unto their husbands.

I've always pretty much gone through the temple in the context of being in relationship with someone who is also in the temple. It's hard for me to imagine how a single woman goes through and spends her whole life not even married and hears that over and over again. And then women, dear friends, who go through who have partners who are not members of the Church, or who are not going through the temple—what does it mean to them? I just feel like it is not the direct line I would hope for.

Lydia raised an important issue regarding LDS marriage ideologies and how they may marginalize different groups of women in different ways.

The interviews that I conducted did reveal that some women consent to the law of obedience. For example, Jaime argued that the divine order of a household is a patriarchal order and as such, men are the patriarchs of their households. She believed that if men are obedient to God's laws, then their wives are "subject" to

them. Mirroring the language of the covenant, she argued that when men are unrighteous, women's obedience is no longer required.

Sara was another participant who did not perceive the covenant as being inequitable. She said that she did know other nonmarried women who were not fond of this part of the ritual, but she did not personally feel marginalized or put off by the covenant. Although she was not married, she espoused the orthodox belief that "if [marriage] doesn't happen for you in this life, I feel like there is a lot more that is after this life. If you haven't had the opportunity in this life, then you're going to get it some other time." In her view, the covenant did not imply that women do not have direct access to God. Instead, she described the covenant as creating a relational triangle between a husband, his wife, and God. Married women, she argued, can interact and receive revelation through her own personal line to God and through her husband who also has a direct line to God. Sara emphasized that the covenant did not subordinate married women to their husbands but rather, gave them two routes of access to receiving knowledge and guidance from God.

At the same time, Sara recognized that the wording of the covenant might be a difficult part of the ritual for other women.

I think [the covenant] is also a struggle for women who are divorced. My mother is going through a divorce. In many ways I think she has a great perspective. In other ways, it smacks extra hard because she was used to going to the temple with someone.

Sara's comment illustrates that for divorced and/or separated women whose biography of the temple is inextricably linked to their temple marriage, the repetitive reminder of their deficient marital status can be hurtful.

Annie, a participant who was in the process of divorce, shed light on the issue of appropriation when she said, “the endowment is empowering and elevating” but also expressed hesitance toward the covenant of obedience.

There is the glitch that you need to be sealed to a priesthood holder. That is a glitch and that’s now a glitch for me and it’s a glitch for a lot of women. So there is a tiny sting maybe to just that...there are just a couple times when that’s actually spoken when it just stings a little bit.

While many women recast and even reject the covenant, Annie represents a significant number of women whose self-concepts are negatively impacted by gendered ritual. When continually repeated and co-opted, gendered ritual can cause women to feel that they are incomplete, or lacking all that is needed for eternal exaltation. Annie didn’t dwell very long on the covenant, instead refocusing on the aspects of temple worship that she found meaningful demonstrating her ability to encounter feelings of deficiency by focusing on the rituals that made her feel “complete.”

A third response involved neither co-opting the covenant in its literal meaning nor viewing it as problematic. Instead, the covenant was recasted such that its literal meaning is negotiated, even denied. Molly was vigorously engaged in her local congregation and when I interviewed her, she held a leadership position that required her to expend significant amounts of time and energy serving the women and families in her congregation. She was an avid and curious scriptionist and frequent temple-goer and she used both the scriptures and the temple to produce amenable definitions of femininity that were inclusive of the diversity of women over whom she held stewardship. For example, in the previous section I discuss how she utilized scripture

to re-imagine Eve as a co-creator and drawing from that, expanded the definition of womanhood from traditional motherhood to creator (a woman who creates knowledge/life as she journeys toward perfect love). She had an interesting way of faithfully supporting ecclesiastical leadership while simultaneously reframing their teachings. She never simply accepted dominant claims—instead, her narrative illustrates that a significant amount of reflection, ritual, and negotiation can be involved in the process of generating meanings about women’s religious identities. This was particularly apparent in her reflections on the covenant of obedience entered into through temple ritual.

Molly’s leadership position meant that she often counseled the women in her congregation. The following excerpt from her narrative is quite revealing in multiple ways.

I often times have to tell some of the sisters, “Listen carefully to the wording. Listen carefully to what is being said--what is said and what isn’t said--how it’s phrased.” I think there’s somehow this submissive—I just bring everybody back to the point that all of the covenants are made between the individual and the Father. There’s even one place where Eve covenants and then makes an additional covenant with Adam sort of. But the covenant is still with the Father, it’s not even with the Son. All covenants are with the Father and I think that’s important to understanding a lot of things and to understand that this is all about us individually, and our relationship to the Father, our relationship to the Son and our relationship to the Holy Ghost and how he facilitates all this.

On one level, the fact that as a leader of women Molly counsels on the law of obedience “often,” illustrates that women are not isolated in their struggles. It is also significant that women feel comfortable expressing that struggle only under the most confidential of circumstances. On another level, it shows how some women can

maintain their loyalty to an order while changing the more obvious mode of interpretation into one that is more amenable. In the above excerpt, Molly focuses on whom the covenant is with, as opposed to the content of the covenant, failing to address the actual concern that women have—which is less about who the covenant is with and more on what they are actually covenanting. She continued.

If all men and women would read carefully there is absolutely no room for interpretation of second-class status submissiveness and subservience to one another—but only submissive to the will of the Father. Those are two completely different things to me. So, even in the scriptures if we read them carefully and understand them and are taught by the Holy Ghost as we read them we see nowhere is the man to be unrighteously over the women or the women to be erroneously subservient to the man.

Molly's view is that ultimately, all must submit to God and since contingencies are placed upon women's obedience (a woman only submits to her husband if he submits to God), she is actually only submitting to God. In Molly's view, married men and women are equal and she uses a combination of scripture and "the Holy Ghost" to affirm her belief that a woman's relationship to God is exactly the same as her male counterpart. Throughout the interview, she expressed a strong conviction that men and women are equal before God—and she reads the temple and her religion in ways that neatly align with that belief. For Molly, these meanings emerged only through vigilant curiosity, personal scripture study, spiritual meditation, and ongoing knowledge production and temple practice.

Eve's "complete and utter silence": Contesting LDS Women's Lack of Voice

A third point of emphasis focused on the representation of Eve as quiet and submissive in relation to the portrayal of Adam. Eve ignites the fall, but relative to

Adam, her character is allotted few lines of spoken dialogue in the endowment video, especially after they are cast out of the Garden of Eden. Many women argued that while Adam is depicted as interactive, inquisitive and instrumental, Eve's character is depicted as passive and irrelevant to the instructional affairs taking place in her fallen world. Because women are instructed to imagine themselves as if they are Eve, this was particularly troubling for many women, particularly for those women who felt that they did not have a voice within their Church. Kara's belief--that the contrast between the representations of Adam and Eve parallels gender inequality in the Church—is a key insight that helps to make sense of why some women were so deeply bothered by her silence.

Lucy talked about the many ways the initiatory ritual positively augmented her self-esteem and about how she appreciated the use of symbolism as a primary method of instruction in the temple. At the same time, she expressed a lot of ambivalence about her ability to connect with Eve. When I asked Lucy about Eve, she worked through her thoughts aloud, commenting that she felt like she did not really understand the story and had a lot of questions about the Biblical narrative and about Eve's role in fall. As she verbally expressed her working conceptualization of Eve she finally concluded, "and she's so quiet that I wonder, what is she thinking? What's going on, you know? So, I mean, she's definitely more submissive." Self-described as a very loquacious person, Eve's silence was not only very noticeable to Lucy, but also made it difficult for her to connect with Eve.

Ruth tried to create a theological explanation for Eve's silence.

I found it interesting that Eve doesn't speak again after they're kicked out of the Garden of Eden. I'm not sure that

she speaks again....She never speaks again. She's there but she doesn't talk. I don't know what they're trying to say with that but it made me uncomfortable...It seemed like they'd taken something away from her because of what she'd done and then because we're all represented in Eve, at least through the temple ceremony, then that goes on.

Other women were more critical of Eve's lack of voice and did not believe that Eve's silence was a realistic or unmediated depiction.

For example, when I asked Lydia what motivated her to go to the temple, she gave several answers (a sense of duty, it binds her to others of her tradition) but also said that it isn't necessarily the place she'd like to go most in her spare time partly because "there is a lot for me that I think is difficult in the temple." When I asked her about what was difficult, she replied, "The biggest thing is the gender things going on in the temple." Like others, it was the differences between the representations of Adam and Eve in the Endowment video that focused her discussion.

The parts that are difficult for me involve the portrayal of Eve as a fairly mute person in the video. She quotes scripture that gives her a little bit more awareness but I still think that she comes off as someone who is more passive once she's done this act of disobedience that's also useful. She doesn't really have a voice after their conversation with God. So, every time I go I think I'm not going to be bothered by Eve, and then I'm just bothered by Eve again and the way that she is portrayed in such an imbalance with Adam.

A few others, Kara for example, felt that the reclamation of Eve in Church teachings is eclipsed by her silence.

I definitely think there's been kind of a reclamation of her in the Church...I think you can see that in the temple ceremony but you hit—she talks in that first part of the temple ceremony and then from then on she just stands and walks around and says nothing--just complete and utter silence...

Several women felt Eve's silence and submissiveness reflected the reality of their experience as LDS women, making the projection of Eve onto the self all the more real, and for some, emotionally disturbing.

Emma: Eve, how many lines does she have in [the video]? Two? She doesn't talk. She has no voice, which is crazy. Which is ironic because we just talked about how we're not supposed to talk about things. She talks in the beginning but she's talking because she's in trouble and then after that I don't think she talks the whole rest of the time....And I also sometimes have issues when the apostles don't look at her, like they're really just addressing Adam.

Eliza: ...after that covenant, Eve is gone. They don't show Eve at all—they show her but she doesn't talk. She doesn't say anything. She's silent. They don't address Eve, they always address Adam. So yeah, there's that whole thing. And then just the Church's history with women over the last 50 years and how they at one point wouldn't even allow women to say prayers in sacrament meeting—the way that the Church has practiced their policies.

Hannah: Eve is so quiet and restrained. It's like she just follows Adam around being so pretty but silent. I just kind of think that's what the Church ideally hopes for in its women—pretty and nice to have around as long as we don't talk too much. [Laughing] You know, I remember this one talk a general authority gave when I was in college at BYU--he told single women to try their best to maintain an attractive appearance so that they could increase their chances of getting married!

In each of the above excerpts, women linked the representation of Eve in temples to the lived religious experiences of Mormon women, arguing in various ways that LDS women lack an ability to openly express and dialogue their distinct concerns as women in a patriarchal order—at least without institutional retaliation.

Eve Dons the Priesthood Vestments and Tokens: Negotiating Patriarchy

The endowment imparts the tokens, names, and signs of the priesthood to men and women. Interspersed throughout instruction and ritual regarding the tokens, the men and women clothe themselves in sacred vestments, and different tokens are associated with different ways of wearing the clothing. This is the heart of the endowment ritual and is a fourth area that women highlighted in their narratives. Women's donning of priesthood vestments and their receiving of priesthood tokens, names, and signs was meaningful to women and extended the representation of women as depicted in the initiatory washing, anointing, and clothing ceremony. Women found these rituals meaningful because they felt it signified women's potential and allowed them to negotiate their exclusion from the priesthood.

Molly viewed this part of the ritual as exemplifying women's equality with men. She believed that through temple ordinances, the priesthood is given equally to men and women, although she was uncertain as to why women were not authorized to exercise the priesthood outside of temples. The initiatory rituals were central to this belief, but the endowment ordinances and vestments also motivated her belief.

I think that as I go to the temple and I put on the robes of the priesthood they're the exact same robes that the men have because it's the same priesthood. I see that connectivity of the priesthood...somehow outside [temples] we don't see that in the administration of the Church and even in the temple we somewhat see Adam takes the lead in the priesthood role of leadership perhaps, but...we all wear the same robes of the priesthood. We all participate in the same ordinances the same way...I don't see any elevation of women more than is in the temple...

Eliza shared this view, arguing, "Within the temple, as you are going through it, you basically receive the priesthood with all the gestures and everything." She believed

that this was different from the teachings outside of temples in which “the husband has the priesthood and [women] receive the blessings that [her] husband has.” She said that growing up within the Church she accepted that teaching but now viewed it as “a way to oppress women or subjugate them.”

Ruth liked the way in which the body and hand postures and gestures connected her to other kinds of spiritual practices. “I found interesting the signs and tokens and how they reminded me of Yoga mudras and what they symbolize to me...So I found that really interesting” (yoga mudras are hand and body postures used to awaken and heal the body). She also felt the priesthood vestments were significant. “I just find it interesting that we’re all wearing the same thing, except the hats. We’re wearing the same robes, we’re wearing the same aprons, everybody’s got the same thing. I find that very interesting.” She then linked this to her temple garments, arguing that the vestments meant, “We’re supposed to be equal.”

Abigail, who’d lived in Utah at the time of the interview and had performed several live endowments, also found this part of the ritual meaningful but felt that the turn away from live endowments lessened the experience. She explained that, unlike the film, the live endowment shows Adam delivering the tokens of the priesthood to Eve, who then gives them to all the women in the session. Abigail expressed that she was disappointed that this transmission was omitted from the ceremony when the live endowment reenactment was replaced by a video because it was informative and suggestive. It is suggestive, because the physical transmission is important within a theology that views priesthood ordinances as being transmitted to people through physical contact. The video does not portray this physical transfer of tokens, and

although women receive the tokens from a female officiator in the current ceremony, the shift from the live endowment to a technologically mediated endowment loses that important physical act. Abigail liked that specific part because it helped her think through the meaning of priesthood tokens, and think through women's connection to the tokens and the priesthood. As a woman who'd performed the ceremony both ways, Abigail felt the newer version of the endowment represented the scenario in ways that minimized the spiritual power of women.

Eve in Communal Prayer: Toward Community

Talk about social connectivity was a fifth important theme across women's narratives. The women in this study talked a lot about the endowment ceremony as facilitating a greater sense of community and social connectedness. They mentioned many different kinds of connections—connections to the past and future, connections to their deceased ancestors and to future generations, connections to non-LDS rituals and faith traditions, connections to other Mormons, and connections to their spouses and family members. Women talked about the ways in which vicarious ordinances heightened their sense of awareness of their social responsibility toward others and about the communal nature of the endowment ceremony as forging group cohesiveness. In Lydia's words: "Just the feeling of standing up with the whole group and moving together to me was a powerful metaphor for what I hope we are doing as a people at large." There were many aspects of the endowment ritual that women emphasized as being meaningful for engendering connection, but the concluding rituals of the temple endowment ceremony—the collective prayer circle, the ritual interaction at the veil, and the movement into the celestial room were most

commonly discussed. These concluding rituals occur after all are fully dressed in their priesthood vestments and have received their priesthood tokens.

Emma and Hannah enjoyed the prayer circle because of the way in which it fostered community. Both appreciated how it connected strangers, all very different from one another, who don't agree with one another on many issues, into a circle of love and connection.

I like the prayer a lot. I think it connects us...It's really nice to do that every once in awhile. There's something about ritual that I think people need...because it's not authoritative ritual, you're doing it together. It also reminds me of lots of other religions and makes me feel like it's all kind of connected. (Emma)

I like the prayer circle. I like it when I'm feeling like I need extra help in life but--when I'm feeling like I don't belong or that I'm not like other women in the church. I can go do this, and feel like I have something in common with other Mormons and like they should matter to me. Or like we have a common goal or thing we believe in together. (Hannah)

Others talked about the ways in which communal prayer promoted a sense of social responsibility and forged an ethic of caring. Lydia talked about how Mormon theology is often very individual-focused and appreciated the way in which the communal prayer circle promoted a sense of social responsibility in ways that exceeded that of other religious practices.

I think the prayer circle is very significant because it's a community thing that we do together. I really like the idea that we bring our energy together to think specifically about needs and people together.

Annie similarly commented on the ways in which the prayer circle allowed her to focus and express caring in behalf of friends.

I adore the prayer circle. I love it. I feel so great if I can go and put somebody's name in for that prayer circle because I think

it's just the next level of consideration for someone. To me, it feels really good to be able to submit somebody's name for that. I think its really special and I love to see the prayer circle take place. I love it.

Annie also mentioned that she liked the anonymity associated with submitting names to the temple prayer roll. She tearfully talked about a neighbor who lost her husband to suicide and on the anniversary of his death, she submitted her name to the prayer rolls. This was a meaningful way for her to focus her energy on the welfare of others.

Toward a New Understanding of LDS Women

The endowment rituals unfold inconsistently, shifting between the representation of women's spiritual power as being mediated and dependent upon her marital status, and the representation of women's spiritual power as being direct, unmediated and accessible through her priestess endowment. This incongruence shaped women's perceptions of the rituals, producing an array of conflicting meanings and experiences. LDS women's perspectives on these ceremonies demonstrate the ways in which ritual can be a vehicle of empowerment and oppression but also demonstrate that LDS women act as agents in the production of ritual meanings. Their perspectives also demonstrate the ways in which they imagined women in creative and productive roles, recast their connection to God and priesthood authority, negotiated religious patriarchy, and forged an ethos of social responsibility and community.

It is also important to highlight the connections between women's perspectives on the endowment and initiatory ceremonies. In both ceremonies, the LDS women in this study found representations of women as priestesses to be

meaningful. Ceremonial representations of women as priestesses were less prominent in the endowment, but were seen when women received the clothing, tokens, names, and signs of the priesthood. Many of the women I interviewed perceived these rituals in ways that expanded dominant definitions of LDS women.

Table 1. The Endowment Ceremony	
Core Components of the Ceremony	Brief Description of the Endowment Ceremony
Video Reenactment of the Creation and Fall	The film, viewed by all endowment participants, includes a depiction of the six days of creation. It also includes a depiction of Adam and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden, and their entry into the terrestrial world. The film is paused at various moments to allow for participant instruction and interaction regarding the priesthood vestments and tokens.
5 Covenants	Individuals enter into five covenants with God: 1) the law of obedience (the women promise to keep the "law of the Lord"), 2) the law of sacrifice (promise to sacrifice all one has for the kingdom of God), 3) the law of the gospel (promise to follow the guidelines as set forth by the scriptures), 4) the law of chastity (promise of marital fidelity) and 5) the law of consecration (promise to give of yourself wholly to building up the kingdom).
Priesthood Vestments	Women enter the endowment room clothed in white floor length, long-sleeved dresses, and white shoes or slippers. Throughout the ceremony participants are instructed to clothe themselves in additional ritual priesthood vestments: a white robe of the priesthood, a white sash, a green apron, and a veil (hats for the men). This occurs in conjunction with receiving the tokens, names, and signs of the holy priesthood.
Tokens, Names, & Signs of the Holy Priesthood	In exchange for making additional covenants with God, individuals receive two tokens of the Aaronic Priesthood and two tokens of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Women receive the priesthood tokens (various hand grips and gestures) from a female temple worker who is seated at the front of the endowment room. Through instruction, individuals learn the name and sign (hand gestures) of each token and learn that they are not to disclose the tokens, names and signs that they are receiving, unless directed to in the temple.
Prayer Circle	Individuals who would like to participate in a prayer circle are asked to convene in a circle around an alter at the front of the endowment room. Each member of the circle joins by gripping one another using a priesthood token. All the women in the room are asked to veil their faces and a male endowment officiator offers a prayer line-by-line. Following each line, the members of circle repeat the words of the prayer. The prayer is always different, but always involves a special blessing upon persons whose names have been submitted to the temple by patrons. All return to their seats.
Interaction at the Veil	Individuals are presented at the veil, a white curtain that separates the endowment and celestial rooms. Women are presented as "Eve" to a male temple worker (representing Christ) who is standing on the inner side of the veil. She is asked to present all the tokens and their names. She then receives the name of the fourth token, repeats it back, and is allowed entry into the celestial room of the temple.
Transition from the Terrestrial to Celestial Room	Participants walk through the veil curtain and enter into the celestial room. The celestial room is representative of the space wherein God dwells and is viewed as the most sacred space of the temple. In the celestial room participants can pray, meditate, quietly reflect, and so forth.

CHAPTER 6: THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LDS WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON TEMPLE RITUALS

This study explores Mormon women's self-definitions by highlighting their standpoints on temple ceremonies, the heart of Mormon belief and practice. At the outset of this project, I was hesitant to design a research project that involved recruiting LDS women to tell stories about confidential and sacred experiences. Who would be willing to breach directives regarding ritual discretion, I wondered? Despite my lack of faith that Mormon women would agree to participate in the study, I received several responses to my first recruitment announcement. Most of the women involved in this study expressed the novelty and importance of a study focusing on Mormon women in temples and conveyed excitement about the idea of it burgeoning from their own lived experiences. This compelled my efforts because it demonstrated that other LDS women saw a real need for substantive, women-centered discussions on temple ritual.

Beyond my doubts that women would participate, I was also hesitant to pursue the method of interviewing because I was inexperienced. Moreover, I was skeptical that Mormon women might not reveal new ways of understanding their experiences and identities—their narratives might be too opaque and too wedded to dominant ways of talking about temple practices. Since the genesis of this project was rooted in my personal temple experiences, I imagined a transparent reading of ritual that involved illuminating the ways in which ritual could be utilized to transgress boundaries of time, space, sexuality, race, and gender, amongst other

things. I hoped that this study would reveal new ways of understanding Mormon women by focusing on ritual. But what would I do if it didn't? I wrongly assumed that women would be too cautious to disclose the subterranean layers of their experiences, and that consequently, most of the interviews would center upon temple marriage and the glorious benefits of "forever families," hardly revealing new ways of understanding the meaning of LDS women's ritual experiences.

Contrary to my belief, the women I interviewed were not interested in discussing the temple sealing ceremony, even their own—in fact, most mentioned that they rarely (or never) performed proxy sealings in the temple. While some women were cautious about not replicating the actual words spoken in temple ceremonies, an ethos of indiscretion surely overrode prudence. Most women talked about ritual with a high degree of transparency. Further, they added insights regarding the ways in which ritual embodies oppression, an important dimension of LDS women's ritual experiences that I overlooked. I quickly realized I had "misrecognized" Mormon women, and had forgotten that they embody what sociologist Avery Gordon (1997) refers to as "complex personhood." Complex personhood is a concept that Gordon uses to explain the contradictions that beset subjectivities and the social world.³⁹ Like mine, the Mormon women who made this study possible narrated temple stories that "are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward" (Gordon 1997:4).

³⁹ At the very least," she argues, "complex personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning" (Gordon 1997:5).

Interviews with Mormon women quickly revealed the layers of their beliefs and subjectivities. I learned that “the personal is political” and that weaving women’s stories together is far more challenging to power relations than would be my voice alone. The LDS history of academic censorship demonstrates that sole authorship of a highly controversial topic might easily be labeled a work of apostasy and easily dismissed (as has been done to many faithful Mormon women).⁴⁰ It is far more difficult to debunk group standpoints, especially when those standpoints emerge from the experiential knowledge of faithful, active LDS women. Isolating women’s voices, and their standpoints regarding religious belief and practice, preserves LDS patriarchy.

Interviews with LDS women led me to revisit my two guiding research questions with fresh eyes. First I asked, *in what ways do LDS temple rituals intersect with women’s religious identities?* Through my own ritual practices, I had experienced the crisscrossing of identity and ritual, and I had read LDS scholarship suggesting that ritual was crucial to LDS women’s identities (e.g. Madsen 1987). This question pursues that suggestion by examining how ritual links to LDS women’s self-concepts. I examine the extent to which ritual provides a space for creative subjectivities to emerge, or conversely, the ways in which LDS women utilize ritual to internalize and reinforce external definitions of LDS women.

Second I asked, *what are the processes through which ritual weaves into LDS women’s selves?* If ritual was indeed a meaningful identity practice, then I was interested in examining the mechanisms through which ritual and identity converged.

⁴⁰ Here I refer to the many LDS scholars who have been excommunicated and/or disfellowshipped because of their unorthodox scholarship (see discussion on the suppression of Mormon women’s self-definitions located in chapter two).

This question pursues a deeper understanding of the ritual process itself in order to augment our understanding of the mechanisms through which ritual weaves into LDS women's religious identities.

In this chapter, I return to these specific questions by examining how Mormon women's perspectives on the initiatory and endowment ceremonies shed light on these two guiding questions. This chapter is divided into two parts, each exploring one of the original research questions. In Part I, I examine the ways in which LDS temple ritual intersects with Mormon women's religious identities. In this part, I suggest that exploring the connections between women's religious identities and the processes by which they construct these identities will shed light on broader themes concerning women's engagement in traditional religions.

In Part II, I build on the analysis presented in Part I by examining the processes through which ritual weaves into Mormon women's identities. In this part, I suggest that exploring ritual processes will connect this research to broader dialogues within two communities of practice tied to the sociology of knowledge—1) feminist standpoint theories and 2) critical pedagogy.

Part I: Temple Rituals and the Content of LDS Women's Religious Identities

My first research question asked: in what ways do LDS temple rituals intersect with women's religious identities? Here, I highlight what I have learned about the interconnections between Mormon women's identities and temple rituals through this study. In this study, temple rituals played a vibrant and dynamic role in women's ongoing processes of identity formation. The women in this study did not express identities that mirrored external LDS definitions of femininity. Each woman

expressed agency as she told unique stories that revealed the ways in which she used temple rites to refract dominant definitions into a creative array of alternative beliefs regarding her identity. Here, I first highlight four major strategies that LDS women used to negotiate their identities. Second, I discuss the overarching significance of these strategies for LDS women's identities, arguing that LDS women utilize ritual to reconstitute their identities as mothers to more expansive identities as priestesses. Third, I return to the broader sociological significance of LDS women's ritualizing for studies of women in traditional religions.

Negotiating Religious Identities

The women in this study revealed four main strategies through which they negotiated their religious identities: making distinctions, recasting meanings, disregarding ritual, and withdrawal. Their stories about ritual revealed thick layers of identity, complicated through conscious and unconscious strategies of negotiation. Each strategy highlights that ways in which LDS women stretch external definitions of their identities. As a shared practice, ritual shaped the ways in which women stretched these definitions resulting in a collective negotiated movement in, or opening up of, identity. I use the term stretch to describe this process, because this particular identity shift required women to struggle and push against the firmly established discourses and practices that press and constrain their lives. Although I discuss each strategy distinctly for analytic purposes, in practice, they often co-occurred and overlapped.

Making Distinctions. One way in which many of the women in this study demonstrated that they negotiate their religious identities was by making distinctions.

Most often, this involved distinguishing between regularly weekly church meetings and temple practices. Embedded in these distinctions, were women's beliefs regarding important differences in the way each dimension represents women. This was a subtle, often unconscious (but not always), strategy through which LDS women reappropriated LDS femininity. As McGuire argues, important social meanings underlie the distinctions people make when describing their religious lives often because "making distinctions involves trying to delineate acceptable from unacceptable beliefs and practices, desirable from denigrated identities and statuses..." (McGuire 2008:6). In this study, making distinctions between the temple and church was a strategy through which participants articulated the crucial link between ritual and the construction of "desirable identities."

Women such as Emma, Hannah, and Ruth, who directly expressed a belief that temple ritual endows women as priestesses, said they preferred temple rituals to church. Emma said she was unlikely to be offended in the temple, and while Ruth withdrew from church meetings she expressed a desire to attend the temple. Eliza, who stopped ritualizing and removed her garment because she found parts of the endowment very troubling, also believed that temples were distinct from church in that they endowed women as priestesses. Sara, Abigail, and Lucy all expressed consent and support of the idea that motherhood and priesthood were equal but the distinctions that they made between the temple and church are revealing. Sara and Lucy believed ritual opened them up to new ways of thinking about the importance of women and Abigail remarked that temples empower women in ways that Church doesn't.

As women used distinctions to tell their stories, it was often (not always) to express and convey its significance in their lives. Female enactments of ordinances, references to women as priestesses, and the elaborate performance of rituals that endow women with spiritual power that is parallel to their male counterparts was central to these distinctions. As McGuire argued, these distinctions were ways that women navigated their way between identities with different meanings, and through which they sought to open themselves up to a “desirable” identity—for many women, these identities centered upon priestess power.

Recasting Meanings. Another strategy through which the women in this study negotiated LDS femininity was by utilizing ritual to recast and redefine the content of their identities. As Dawne Moon argues, “Church members do not simply believe what church leaders, doctrine, or even Scripture says...members developed their own evolving everyday theologies as they sought a deeper understanding of God” (2004:25). “Everyday theologies” distinguish local and contradictory meanings from the official beliefs, doctrines and theologies ascribed by the LDS Church. The meanings that the women in this study attached to their ritual practices often deviated from official theology and doctrine, demonstrated the importance of “everyday theologies” to women’s ongoing construction of the self.

This is similar to the strategies utilized by the women in Ozorak’s research who substituted their own “images, words, or interpretations for conventional ones as a form of direct cognitive control” (1996:25). Emergent identities and meanings did not unfold randomly or transcendently; ritual and identity mingled dialogically.

Temple rituals acted as shared points of refraction through which meanings unfolded in patterned ways.

The recasting of meaning and identities is best exemplified by women's reactions to the initiatory ceremony. While each woman formulated her own interpretations, all shared a common ritual experience. It was evident that this experience boosted self-esteem. Beyond that, many women minted their identities, forging priestess concepts of the self that shifted, augmented, or entirely transformed women's identities. In narrative after narrative, LDS women found the initiatory incredibly meaningful because it enabled them to stretch their sense of self in authorized ways. The importance of the representation of women as priestesses in temple ritual was vitally paramount to their ability to recast and redefine religious experiences and identities.

Attending to women's perspectives on ritual also revealed that even those who argued priesthood and motherhood were equal utilized ritual to negotiate that belief in significant ways. Esther, perhaps the most strongly supportive of contemporary LDS gender norms, identified priestess ordinations, not motherhood, as evidence that "all are equal" before God. The production of "everyday theologies" was central to this strategy of negotiation. Through everyday theologies of goddesses and priestesses, women attached powerful meanings to ritual. This was important because it allowed them to construct empowered self-definitions. For example, imagining the presence of a creative Heavenly Mother is inextricably connected to women's ideas regarding their selves.

The endowment ceremony was far less congruent and inconsistent in its representation of women. It embodied an amalgam of fluctuating representations of women and LDS women's perspectives were heterogeneous. In the endowment, the directionality of the strategy of negotiation seemed to often reverse—here, women often redefined ritual to be more congruent with priestess identities. Women added parts to the story (i.e. the presence of a female creator) or recast meanings in light of their initiatory experiences. When women felt they could not recast meanings, they often either disregarded them, or withdrew their participation.

Possessing knowledge of LDS women's history played an important role in women's processes of recasting belief and experience. Emma, Ruth, and Eliza had a working knowledge of women's relationship to correlation programs and knew that implementing correlation was tied to the loss of women's spiritual power. These women also knew that LDS women had at one time freely performed the laying on hands. Pre-existent knowledge regarding these spiritual acts augmented their recognition of initiatory rituals as a continuation of women's spiritual power. Emma and Eliza both believed that women received the priesthood through the temple rites but were not permitted to exercise these spiritual gifts outside of the temple. Ruth believed that the temple rites indicated that they should have the priesthood. Knowing about the historical evolution of LDS women's institutional functions facilitated their ability to confidently forge oppositional identities.

Other kinds of study, not merely historical, also shaped the kinds of meanings women constructed. Women who arrived at the endowment fortified by scriptural and theological study possessed powerful tools for making sense of ritual. Women

who vigorously studied ritual out through substantive sources, were well equipped to channel ritual into stories that made sense in their lives. Ideas regarding female deity were often planted by literature and previous study. This also worked conversely, when ritual sparked curiosity and women followed up by searching out meaning.

Disregard. In attempts to maintain an expansive identity, many women chose to ignore, or disregard, ritual elements and situations that carried normative femininity into temple ceremonies. When ritual could not be reframed or reinterpreted, some women chose to either disregard it by viewing it as extending from socially constructed systems of power or to push beyond it by focusing on ritual situations and meanings that they perceived as positive and meaningful.

For example, this occurred often when women criticized Eve's lack of voice in the endowment ceremony. Emma, Hannah, and Lydia criticized the depiction of Eve as mute in the temple endowment video. They did not attempt to reimagine the video, but instead chose to focus on other elements of the ceremony that they did like. Emma made a distinction between the social and divine roots of the temple endowment—viewing the production of the temple video as influenced by cultural gender stereotypes. By doing so, she could continue participating in ritual despite that she didn't agree with every visual image or action that occurred. For many women, the creative imaginings spawned through ritual practice exceeded the repressive ritual elements to a degree that allowed them to overlook, reconstruct, and reach beyond them.

Withdrawal. A final, but less common, strategy through which the women in this study negotiated gender was by withdrawing from practices that did not facilitate

the production of desirable identities.⁴¹ This is a strategy used more widely by women in traditional religions who are uncomfortable with, or unable to reconcile the incongruence between self-definitions and externally prescribed identity categories.

Although Eliza really enjoyed performing initiatories and believed that the endowment extended the priesthood to women, repeatedly covenanting to obey her husband in the endowment was a microcosm of broader institutional inequality within the Church. Her strategy of negotiation involved withdrawing from the practice and removing her garments, which to her embodied reminders of that practice.

Withdrawal from ritual and the removal of her everyday garments was a meaningful avenue through which she reflected upon and reasserted control over meanings about women. By refusing to wear her garment, Eliza contested dominant meanings attached to the covenant of obedience, the idea that a woman's degree of spirituality is linked to her marital status.

Ruth also exemplified the strategy of withdrawal when she stopped attending Church. Ruth felt conflicted because she did not want to collude with LDS heterosexism, but she realized that she would not be eligible to renew her temple recommend if she did not attend weekly meetings.

Finally, recall Kara, a nonmarried woman in her late twenties, who said the temple endowment ceremony caused "cognitive dissonance." She still participated in weekly meetings but said, "I don't know if the issues are resolvable and if they're not, there's a good chance within the next year I'll be leaving the Church." For her the

⁴¹ That very few women chose this pathway is in part connected to the fact that I recruited interview participants for this study through a Relief Society listserv. Had I posted more widely, I may have been led to more stories of women who withdraw from the Church or who no longer practice LDS temple rituals.

broader context of LDS gender inequality was institutionalized through ritual that required women to submit to their husbands, and she found these issues difficult to reinterpret. When I talked to her, she was in crisis; seeking consolation but predicting it was unlikely, she foresaw herself leaving the Church. Kara said she would miss performing baptisms for the dead and would miss the feelings of peace that she experienced in the celestial room. Her experiences with healing and peace were not sufficient to sustain her participation.

Paradoxically, ritual introduces LDS women to the concept of priestess power, while at the same time quickly closing their avenues for pursuing these openings. Consequently, unlike the strategy of recasting meaning, withdrawal may not offer reconciliation to Mormon women seeking a congruent identity. Ruth indicated this when she mentioned that she did not feel that she could find another Church because ritual opened her to a broader vision of herself and society.

“Priestesses Unto the Most High God”

These common strategies of negotiation highlight the interconnectivity between ritual and identity. When LDS historian Carol Cornwall Madsen wrote her essay on LDS temples, she made a similar argument regarding the relationship between rituals and LDS women’s identities.

While these ordinances were applicable to both men and women and promised the same level of exaltation to both, they had particular significance to women. They opened up a new concept of spiritual participation relating to the ‘privileges, blessings and gifts of the priesthood’ which not only enhanced their position in the church but offered limitless potential in the hereafter” (Madsen 1987:83-84).

This opening up of identity constitutes a stretching beyond the boundaries of normative LDS femininity. Ritual intersected with identity in a myriad of incongruent ways and women exercised agency at the points of intersection, opening up their identities to new conceptual layers.

The LDS Church presents the temple to women through a framework of traditional womanhood. In this framework, Mormon girls and young women are taught to associate their endowment with temple marriage and eternal families, with little attention paid to the meaning or content of the initiatory and endowment rites. In this dominant paradigm, LDS women's personal spiritual progress and increased religious commitment is inseparable from marriage and motherhood. However, the women in this study severed the connection between temple rites and traditional womanhood in notable ways.

Many of the women in this study received their endowment outside of a temple marriage demonstrating that Church ideology, and the lived practices of LDS women, are incongruent. Lydia, whose local ecclesiastical leader initially denied her a temple recommend because she desired an experience that was not clouded by a temple marriage, revealed that local Church leaders play a role in managing women's attempts to forge a personal connection to the temple ceremonies. In different ways, many of the women in this study believed that the Church's dominant framework regarding women and the temple was problematic, narrow, and/or misleading.⁴² This

⁴² For example, Jaime and Abigail believed they would have had a better initial experience had it not been experienced in conjunction with their marriage and Sarah and Lucy believed their ability to understand the endowment was enhanced because they prepared for the temple without marriage in mind. Esther and Emma expressed that they thought the connection between marriage and the endowment was misleading.

demonstrates women's attempts to forge personal, independent relationships to temple rituals.

More significant though, is that the LDS women who did marry in the temple, talked little about their temple sealing or their eternal families. Annie, the only woman who was initiated, endowed, and sealed in the same day, said that her initiation was most significant to her. In fact, regardless of whether or not LDS women followed conventional pathways to the temple, their narratives were fixated upon conveying the significance of the temple initiatory to their religious identities. I focused on this in chapter four, aiming to articulate the ways in which 1) the initiatory augmented self-esteem, 2) was utilized to redefine LDS experience and identity, and 3) to directly challenge women's exclusion from the priesthood.

The ways in which women disconnected their temple endowment from traditional marriage and family, their lack of discussion regarding the temple sealing ceremony, their almost universal discussions on the significance of the initiatory rites, and their problematizing of some aspects of the endowment, powerfully indicate that LDS women use temple rituals to expand their religious identities and their definitions of their religious experiences.

In this study, the most salient layer of identity was that of priestess, an identity that held significant ramifications for LDS women's self-concepts and negotiation of LDS femininity (discussed in chapter four). The content of priestess identities is distinct from that of mothers and wives that define women exclusively acting within and toward a nuclear family. The women in this study emphasized the significance of qualities and practices of priestesses such as laying on of hands, autonomous power to

access the power of God (“having authority”), and direct connection to God and the power of God (“priestesses unto the Most High God”). This differs from external definitions of LDS women that sever women’s connection to God by placing intermediaries between women and priesthood power. Identities wedded to the category wife/mother are dominantly defined as performing a familial role, and as dependent upon a priesthood bearer to access God’s power. Defining women in familial terms also excludes scores of LDS women. In contrast, priestess identities may include the familial work of wife and motherhood but stretches beyond the domestic realm in notable ways. Priestess identities are inclusive of all women who enter the doors of the temple regardless of their sexuality, gender expression, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, and ability.

As women’s identities were opened up to new ways of envisioning their spiritual power, they envisioned their religion as possessing the seeds of gender equality. Unlike dominant definitions of the priesthood, the priestess power that they articulated was not the priesthood as defined by LDS authorities as an institutional, hierarchically defined administrative position. Priestess power was far less about Church government and institutional hierarchy instead emphasizing their ability to enact the spiritual and mystical aspects of the priesthood—conferring ordinances, blessings of wholeness and healing, laying on of hands to uplift, support, and connect to one another and God(s). They were uplifted by the powerful ways through which the initiatory rites convey to them their ability to channel spiritual power in a religious tradition that has stripped women of that right/rite outside of temples.

Priestess identities include, although do not require motherhood as a prerequisite for performing and engaging spiritual rites. Motherhood involves everyday unsung and creative acts of healing, supporting, lifting, teaching, and nourishing. But it extends far beyond traditional motherhood in its representation of women as creative, agentic, spiritual actors. The Mormon women in this study utilized ritual to breathe substance into definitions of who they are and in ways that enable them to experience spiritual equality. Women's perspectives on the temple initiatory, and their shared affinity for the ritual practices that it embodies, demonstrates how they struggle and reach for new and better meanings. The women in this study find the initiatory meaningful because it is the most consistent and powerful instantiation of their equality with men—it is the only religious practice toward which women can turn to experience women with unmediated access to spiritual power. Even Esther, who argued that the Church does not subordinate women, chose to draw upon women's performance of ordinances to claim that “under God, all are equal.”

Women in Traditional Religions

In chapter two, I drew from sociologist Meredith McGuire's (2008) research to argue that studies on women in mainline religions have tended to privilege religious belief and attitudes while marginalizing religious practices. Studies on women in official religions have ignored established customary rituals, in part due to the assumption that liturgical rituals are distant from women's daily lives and are inherently linked to and constructed through the unitary terms delineated by a male elite religious leadership.

The interviews I conducted complicated these assumptions. While the women in this study did feel that temple rituals were distant from their daily lives they returned to the temple when they felt the need to renew their negotiated identities and beliefs, revitalizing its affect in their everyday lives.⁴³ The stories told by the women in this study also confirmed and troubled the assumption that ritual extends dominant power relations by illuminating the many ways in which they utilized ritual to rethink the unitary terms of their tradition. Their stories revealed openings for creative agency, for recasting religious belief, and for redefining their religious identities in meaningful and even oppositional ways.

By shifting the focus to ritual, this study opens up both insiders and outsiders to a new dimension of LDS women's beliefs, experiences, and identities. My study may have unfolded differently if had asked women to explain their religious beliefs. For example, if I had asked, "Do you believe priesthood and motherhood are equal?", many women (although not all of them) would have responded, "Yes." Asking them to talk about the meanings they ascribe to ritual practices reveals the nuances attached to women's consent and resistance and the ways in which LDS women negotiate the contours and constraints of their religion.

The meanings that the women in this study ascribed to customary rituals interrupt dominant paradigms regarding their experiences and identities. This study has broader implications for studies of women in traditional religions. Like LDS women, women practicing traditional religions engage in an amalgam of religious

⁴³ Eliza's story was the exception to this pattern. Eliza withdrew from the temple because it conflicted with her beliefs about womanhood and with her commitment to gender equality. Like the others, the temple and her struggle for self-definition carried into her everyday life through her resistance to wearing the garment.

rites, most of which are largely overlooked in studies aiming to understand women's religious lives. A few scholars have examined Muslim women's donning of the Islamic vestments such as the hijab, but what about their daily prayers, their elaborate lifecycle rites such as wedding and death rituals, Ramadan fasting and food rites, and so forth. All traditional religions carry out systems of religious rites that embody symbols, practices, histories, beliefs, and meanings. Attending to women's lived practice and situated interpretations of these rites has potential to reveal new ways of understanding women in traditional religions.

Part II: Temple Rituals and the Processes toward LDS Women's Identities

My second research question asked: if ritual is important to LDS women's self-concepts, *what are the processes through which ritual weaves into LDS women's selves?* This question seeks to understand the ritual elements and the ritual process itself in order to augment our understanding of the mechanisms through which ritual becomes meaningful to women's religious experiences and identities. This question asked about the processes through which ritual weaves into women's selves.

Part II is presented in four sections. In the first section, I identify and present four significant processes through which temple ritual and LDS women's religious identities wove together. In the second section, I discuss how these ritual processes constituted an alternative way for the women in this study to define and understand their religious identities. In the third section, I discuss the important issue of ritual change and how the Church uses it as a form of social control over LDS women's alternative ways of forging religious identities. Finally, I discuss how these issues

regarding ritual processes connects to conversations within the sociology of knowledge.

Ritual Processes

I have identified four significant processes through which ritual experiences translated and wove into the religious identities of the women in this study: ritual embodiment, symbolism, reenactments, and the situated imagination. Each constitutes a pathway through which the women in this study created knowledge pertaining to the negotiated and contradictory senses of self I discussed in the previous section. Each process is best understood as mingling and overlapping with the others in the construction of knowledge, although I discuss each of them separately.

Embodiment. The central importance of the body to the process of LDS women's ritualizing was strikingly apparent throughout the interviews that I conducted. The women in this study talked extensively about the ways in which physical bodies ritualize—they experienced the laying on of hands, they traveled through rooms and curtains, they stood up and sat down, they donned, removed and shifted sacred vestments, they received tokens through physical contact, they performed gestures and movements, they spoke, visualized and listened. In contrast to a transcendental experience, the women in this study described ritual as tangible and deeply rooted in their bodies. The ramifications of these rituals for identities is very much linked to the corporeal and embodied practice of ritual.

Ritual gives emergent beliefs and identities a form and, as a vehicle for transmitting beliefs, rituals can produce openings for the construction of alternative

identities. The women I talked to offered key insights into the ways in which embodied ritual operates as a process through which alternative priestess identities materialize and become experienced as real. The women in this study mentioned several ritual practices—the laying on of hands by women in the initiatory, being ordained as “priestesses unto the most High God,” receiving and wearing the priesthood garments, and receiving the tokens, names and signs of the priesthood through handgrips and body gestures. Through these practices, many LDS women reimagined their spiritual capacities and repeated these practices as important reminders of their spiritual power and self-worth. Engaging with and through the body was an important way for LDS women to construct self-knowledge, saliently exemplifying how movements weave into identity.

Ritual theorist Catherine Bell (1997) explains that ritual is constitutive of meaningful experiences because of its sensory and embodied character. By giving beliefs a tangible form, ritual makes things real and authentic, it gives new and reformulated identities a concrete form and material experience. The paramount role of initiatory ritual in opening up women to alternative priestess identities was underscored in chapter four. For LDS women, initiatory rituals were particularly meaningful because engaging in them constituted an alternative, but authorized, way for women to construct a more expansive (and egalitarian) self-knowledge. As an alternative way of knowing, ritual meaning is conferred not only through discourse, but also within and through bodies.

The corporeal experience of ritual also imbued women with a greater sense of social connectivity. Experiencing collective ritual, particularly the prayer circle,

forged an ethic of social responsibility. While service and sacrifice are important Mormon values, the corporeal experience of being physically connected to other people, often strangers, through a priesthood handgrip, conveyed those values through concrete experience. Moving in unison with others, and waiting until all ritual participants had completed ritual before moving on, gave religious beliefs a tangible form through which individuals could physically access meaning. As people move their bodies in harmony they experience what it means to be connected to others, making possible the development of an ethic of social caring and responsibility.

When Joseph Smith first introduced temple ritual, he aimed to offer an experience that was deeply corporeal. Ritual was to confer a shared sensorial experience that engaged people to experience and commune with the Divine, his “governing passion was to have his people experience God” (Bushman 2005:451). In Smith’s earliest articulations of his revelations regarding temple ritual, he envisioned a world of ritual practice through which sacred priesthood power could be manifest. Although ritual would undergo modifications, Smith’s teachings and beliefs in direct access to God “would be realized now through ritual rather than a transcendent vision” (Bushman 2005:451). Smith’s hope for translating a system of beliefs into an enduring system of rituals was realized and women’s inclusion in those rituals is centrally important for women’s struggle for self-definition.

This can work in dual ways—empowering women through ritual perceived as inclusive, and devaluing them through repetitive acts of submission that map onto women’s bodies. For example, Eliza performed several endowments and said that

each time she was required to say “yes” to the covenant of obedience, it bothered her more. The donning of priesthood garments reminded her of those covenants of submission. For Eliza, infrequent ritual covenants linked to her daily clothing ritual; dominant ritual meanings mapped onto her body, making this an emotionally disturbing experience. Ruth, Lydia and Kara also identified this part of the ritual as troublesome and difficult to recast. LDS women live in a religious world of ideological contradiction and subjugation, but the covenant of obedience is particularly problematic because it requires women to invest their bodies in their own subordination, pushing their subjugation to a deeper level. For Eliza and Kara, it would be the mitigating factor in their withdrawal from the temple.

Symbolism. Interpreting symbols is a second significant process through which women forged meaning and identity. The temple ceremonies, and the edifices themselves, house an elaborate system of symbols. As a “house of learning” symbolism was designed to instruct, and to embed sacred knowledge in levels, to be disclosed according to the degree of individual study and desire. As one LDS ritual scholar put it, “it is not all a single package” (Nibley 1994:539). Constructing knowledge through ritual symbols does not require a specific starting point or prerequisite insider knowledge. This complexity, openness, and sense of continual learning and (re)discovery made ritual both “mysterious” and “exciting,” for the women I interviewed.

Discussions of women’s appreciation for the art and pedagogy of ritual symbolism wove into most women’s storytelling. Artfully, the women I talked to emphasized their active role in generating creative insights through discovery of

symbolic meanings. Pedagogically, many talked about symbolic learning as an important alternative to predefined, authoritative forms and packages of learning. From symbols the women in this study could formulate flexible, shifting, and evolving meanings. These meanings could simultaneously result in marvelous imaginings (discussed next) or in forms that further entrench inequality and exclusion.

Politically, the process of creating meanings through experiencing symbols is especially important for LDS women. Lacking access to authorized avenues for group and self-definition, experiencing symbols opens women to a ritual world that necessitates situated, local interpretations. The symbolic structure of temples gives LDS women a religious sphere in which they play an active role in knowledge production. When stepping back to reflect upon the study as a whole, it is fascinating to discover that the components of ritual that the women in this study found oppressive were only those that are predetermined and/or straightforward, offering little space for reinterpretation and creative imagination (i.e. Eve as represented by the endowment video, Eve's covenant of obedience). While the Church offers a dominant framework for making sense of symbols, women select from a variety of competing dominant, alternative, and oppositional discourses to define their experience. So, while they may have chosen to define ritual in ways that align with dominant religious beliefs, they may also produce creative and alternative meanings. As Emma stated, "it's not authoritative ritual" and "how you interpret [ritual]" speaks to the "kind of person you are." Regardless of interpretation, ritual symbols make

possible a process of knowing through which LDS women can self-define their identities.

(Re)enactments. Participation in ritual reenactments is a fourth process through which ritual and identity were linked. The women in this study discussed two layers of their ritual reenactments. First, the endowment involved women in reenacting Eve's journey through the multiple dimensions of her pilgrimage through premortal, mortal, and postmortal life. Second, all temple ceremonies required that women repeatedly reenact their own ritual experiences in behalf of the dead. Women's participation in these reenactments involved shifting subjectivities—women acted for themselves while simultaneously projecting Eve and a dead woman onto themselves. As women entered these “other” worlds, they recreated subjectivities and authorized dominant realities.

Women had little to say about the dead, although what they did say was significant. Reenacting rituals in their behalf imbued them with a greater sense of social responsibility because it made them feel more connected to people in the past, present and future. For Mary, who had experienced the loss of her spouse at an early age, feeling connected to the dead was a means of seeking peace and healing. Beyond that, talk about the dead was peripheral.

Reenacting Eve was central to women's narratives. This reenactment was perceived heterogeneously, a process that produced conflict for many of the women in this study. On one hand, women perceived the reenactment in ways that opened up possibility while on the other hand, it was also perceived in ways that excluded and constrained. Reenactments emerged as a highly contradictory process that allowed

women to recreate their subjectivities but also authorized and gave form to dominant beliefs regarding LDS women.

Situated Imagination. A final significant practice through which the women in this study defined themselves involved the active use of a “situated imagination.” According to Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002), the situated imagination is described as a process of knowing through which experience is transmitted into knowledge. They argue that the situated imagination is imperative to understanding how “sensual data” translate into knowledge. The situated imagination helps explain how ritual (sensual data) translated into self-knowledge in this study.

The women in this study discussed many kinds of imaginings. They imagined themselves as priestesses, goddesses, and as Eve. They imagined themselves interacting with the dead. They imagined other temporalities and worlds. They imagined themselves reconnecting with God and with others. Priestess imaginings were of the most salient of these imaginings, at least given what I encouraged women to talk about.

The situated imagination is described as a “social faculty” (325) because patterns emerge in the ways in creative imagination unfolds. Creative imagination is situated because it involves “only those dimensions of the specific situatedness that are considered/imagined to be the most relevant to it and to the politics involved” (328). Themes emerged across LDS women’s creative imaginings because they experience the same system of rituals within the same religious system of patriarchy. The performance of women’s ordinations in the temple initiatory is one example of sensual data that women utilize to imagine themselves as capable of exercising

priestess power. Their shared exclusion from the priesthood in every other realm of religious experience makes this imagining particularly meaningful for almost all of the women that I interviewed.

Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002:327) argue that through agency, social imagination can change the order of meanings. All of the women that I talked to reflected agency as they each expressed the layers of imaginings that had the effect of negotiating dominant meanings and displacing externally imposed definitions of who they are. The degree to which they were critical and conscious varied but all imagined as an important pathway to the ongoing, shifting construction of identity. Like the other processes discussed—embodying ritual, discovering symbolic meaning, and reenacting—the situated imagination is alternative knowledge practice through which LDS women construct self and social knowledge. For the LDS women in this study, ritual is an alternative way of knowing.

Ritual As An Alternative Way of Knowing

This study reveals the content of women's self-definitions, but also reveals ritual as a way of knowing. Highlighting LDS women's subjugated perspectives on temple rituals reveals that initiatory and endowment rituals are an important alternative way of knowing. Ritual is also a powerful and challenging way of knowing because it is authorized by the LDS Church and is viewed as *real* and *authentic* in ways that other aspects of Mormon life are not. Ritual is an alternative way for women to generate new knowledge, and is difficult to contest ritual as a route to alternative knowledge. Ritual gives women's alternative knowledge a concrete form, and because these forms occur in official spaces, their knowledge is far more

difficult to dismiss. For example, when women systematically utilize rituals, such as women's laying on of hands, to produce knowledge about their priestess power, it is difficult to contest because it is undeniable that women perform ordinances in temples. In light of external definitions of LDS women, and in light of their exclusion from the priesthood, knowledge rooted in ritual experience can be challenging to dominant ways of thinking. As pedagogy, bodies, symbols, reenactments, and the situated imagination, confer knowledge in meaningful ways. In this study, the rituals that women found meaningful and that constituted shifts in consciousness were directly tied to the processes through which practice transformed into beliefs.

LDS Women and Ritual Change

Change is a universal feature of ritual systems (Bell 1997). In chapters four and five, I discussed important changes made to both the initiatory and endowment ceremonies. Subtle shifts in endowment utterances and gestures made in 2005 meant that 1) LDS women were no longer anointed to become priestesses unto the Most High God, but unto their husbands, 2) women officiators no longer physically touched women's bodies in the anointing ceremony, and 3) women officiators in the clothing ritual no longer stated that they had authority, but were acting *under* proper authority. In the endowment ceremony, 1) a "live" ceremony would be replaced by a technologically mediated ceremony and 2) superficial changes were made to the content of Eve's covenant of obedience. I return to the issue of change in light of the research questions I have asked because it demonstrates how LDS women and LDS leaders struggle for power over meaning.

Modifications made to the initiatory ceremony exemplify how social power moves through the texture of religious ritual systems. I have aimed to demonstrate that LDS women utilize the initiatory ceremony to expand their identities from mothers to priestesses and that some women use these identities to challenge LDS patriarchy. The changes made to the initiatory should not be viewed as random, but as concerted efforts to reclaim power over women's identities and to remove those aspects of ritual that allow women to construct identities that allow them to access gender equality and to garner spiritual power in equality with men.

As an alternative pathway that women found meaningful and that challenged patriarchy, ritual has been subject to control. The LDS Church has tried to change and control these processes in efforts to repress Mormon women's self-definitions and to maintain control over how they define themselves. Despite these changes, the LDS women in this study were still able to draw upon ritual to construct alternative definitions of who they are. Those who utilized the ritual wording regarding priestesses used the previous wording as if they did not even notice. Women endowed post-2005 are still experiencing numerous practices that lead to alternative identities. They would have to keep the tokens, signs, names, change the name of the second token of the Melchizedek priesthood in order to remove priestess imaginings from the temple.

As sociologist Meredith McGuire (2008) argues, religions are dynamic and historically situated institutions whose systems of belief and practice are neither consistent and unchanging nor unitary. Focusing on ritual demonstrates that traditional religions, and the systems of ritual that they embody, are inconsistent and

constantly undergoing change. Even if the terms and arrangements of ritual are under the ultimate control of religious authority, ritual cannot be conceived of as being consistently and wholly subsumed by patriarchy. LDS women's perspectives on temple ritual pose significant challenges to the Church because they bring to light inconsistent representations of women and of the priesthood. Official religions seek to promote unitary, tidy, and consistent packages of belief and practice (McGuire 2008), and like most religious institutions, the LDS Church (through efforts like correlation) takes ongoing measures to present itself as espousing beliefs and practices that emerge directly through divine revelation. Women's perspectives on initiatory and endowment rituals challenge the Church's presentation of itself as a consistent, whole, pure, and unitary system of beliefs and practices.

Contextualizing these changes within the larger history of Christian ritual modifications demonstrates the important links between ritual change and social power. During the medieval period of European Christianity, Christian ritual underwent numerous changes in order to streamline the faith. This also served to establish rules of participation and commitment, boundaries between priesthood authority and laity, and definitions of correct religious expression (Bell 1997). Like those modifications made to early Christian ritual which served to focus and specialize the priesthood as exclusive to clergy, key changes to LDS women's ritual does the work of delineating the boundaries between women and the priesthood. Each change is carefully orchestrated and while the church claims women are viewed

equally, Church leaders are carefully working to mediate how women view themselves.⁴⁴

Those aspects of the endowment that seemed quite significant to women have been, and continue to be slowly removed. The shift from the live reenactment to the audio-visual reenactment meant that not only was much of the interactive form of ritual lost, but also media became a powerful tool of social control. No longer could Adam and Eve be represented by anyone regardless of social differences, and Eve would now be stereotypically feminine (white, young, thin) and as one participant mentioned, women would no longer see her receiving the tokens, names, and signs of the priesthood from Adam. Since Mormons believe in the literal transmission of the priesthood—it must be physically transmitted through those with authority—the ritual interaction between Adam and Eve signifies her receiving the same priesthood Adam receives. There is no indication as to where the matron, and therefore all the women, received the tokens or by what authority the matron delivers them. While the omission may seem insignificant, it is a ritual nuance that further entrenches women's exclusion from priesthood authority. Finally, as many women mentioned, Eve would be problematically depicted as silent and submissive, a representation that paralleled many women's experiences in the LDS Church.

⁴⁴ Of course, ritual can also be accommodating to social groups with less power. The covenant of obedience is an example of how the Church tries to use ritual to manage subjectivities. To be sure, this covenant has been modified in ways that appear to accommodate women's concerns. According to lds.endowment.org, a 1990 revision to the ceremony involving revising the title of the covenant of obedience from the "law of their husbands," to "the law of the Lord." The content of the covenant was also changed. In the old version, Eve covenanted to obey Adam's law (and women the law of their husbands), in comparison to the new version in which Eve/women covenant to obey the law of the Lord. Additionally, in a few instances, dialogue referring to Adam was modified such that Eve was also included. While these changes are noteworthy, they do not change the underlying message being sent to women regarding their relationship to authority. In short, the Church is willing to make accommodations to ritual, but only in superficial ways that keep structures of power intact.

Endowment rituals also leave out one of the most interesting and women-centered aspects of its own theology—the concept of a Mother(s) in Heaven. Its belief in female deities is radically deviant from mainline Protestant denominations and has marvelous potential for women’s identities. Yet, as a few women mentioned, goddesses are deposed from the more widely accepted version of Creationism depicted in the audio-visual. The theology of eternal exaltation, in which men and women are exalted together as Gods and Goddesses, means that including women is more accurate to Mormon beliefs than is the patriarchal version currently shown. Even church apologist Beverly Campbell (whose book on Eve was discussed by three participants) argued that Eve was a co-participant in Creation events, using commentary from LDS general authorities to show that these ideas have been supported and validated by authorized sources. Since ritual contributes to the experience of making beliefs real, including women in this scenario has potential to elevate women in substantial ways. This raises significant questions as to why the Church continues to depose Eve from the audio-visual account of the Creation. Although some of the women reimagine this scenario, all women don’t--the stories told by ritual can be a powerful tool for transmitting institutional power into women’s beliefs about who they are.

Conveniently, Mormon women (and men) are not permitted to talk about the temple ceremonies, let alone ritual change. Ritual is powerful because faith traditions characterize it as authentic and timeless. The reality of ritual modification could potentially present a major dilemma for the LDS Church. As ritual theorist Catherine Bell argues, “any suggestion that they may be recently minted can give rise to

consternation and confusion” (Bell 1997:210). The mystification surrounding temples and the utter lack of conversation regarding ritual content is a powerful form of social control that makes gradual ritual change unquestionable terrain. A woman who contests ritual changes can quickly be identified as profaning the temple, betraying her covenants of silence, and therefore, betraying her religious community.

Conformity to norms of non-disclosure surrounding ritual is a key force in keeping women’s ritual knowledge, and their alternative ways of knowing, subjugated. The Church emphasizes secrecy because temple ordinances are viewed as sacred, and we don’t talk about sacred things because we don’t want to collapse the distance between the sacred and the everyday. But in practice, the LDS Church and its members do talk about ordinances all the time—baptisms, healings, baby blessings, and sacraments—even temple sealings and baptisms for the dead have been demystified. These are all arguably sacred ordinances. In practice, norms of non-disclosure apply only to the initiatory and endowment ceremonies. It is one thing to keep certain keywords, tokens, and gestures to oneself but in the LDS Church silence is taken to a whole new level in which entire ceremonies, its purpose and its covenants are never points of discussion. While the intention of this silence may not be exclusively to control women, it serves that purpose well.

What is at stake for LDS patriarchy if LDS women start talking to one another about the implications of these ceremonies for their ability to autonomously enact spiritual/priestess power? My own conviction is to view the silence surrounding temple ritual as a powerful mechanism of social control over women. While my study is not designed to address social change, it is important to note that if women

aren't permitted to talk about these ceremonies in meaningful ways, they cannot forge a collective alternative knowledge that forces the issue of disenfranchisement and social change.

Ritual Processes and the Sociology of Knowledge

Placing ritual practices at the center of this discussion on processes toward identity formation offers fresh insights into epistemological conversations germane to the sociology of knowledge and to scholars exploring transformative knowledges and pedagogies. When thinking through the major interpretations advanced by this study, I found it interesting that the self-knowledges that the women in this study found the most meaningful, were those that they constructed through ways of knowing that involved them in the creative process of knowledge production. Conversely, they tended to be more critical of ritual representations that were mediated (i.e. the endowment video) and that were wedded to normative LDS gender norms. Openings in identities were forged through bodies, through the process of translating symbols, and through creative imaginings.

Women's perspectives on the initiatory exemplified how ritual processes shift from what Avery Gordon calls "cold knowledge" into "transformative recognition." Transformative recognition occurs when ways of knowing push knowledge into effectual experience, "sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience..." (8). In all its contradictions, the women in this study used ritual to transform what they imagine into reality. As Lucy said, "The initiatory was such a physical act of showing the worth of a woman...it wasn't just somebody saying it, it was actually this beautiful

service that another woman gives you in a sacred setting.” As a learner-teacher who is interested in ways of knowing that are transformative, I thought this study opened up possibilities for thinking about critical pedagogy and transformative knowledges in an era where oppositional knowledges are widely accessible.

Several scholars have become apprehensive of the institutionalization of and accommodation to challenging discourses (Bonilla-Silva 2003, Collins 1998, hooks 2003, Lee 2002, Mohanty 2003, Wiegman 2002). A major concern is that oppositional knowledges are becoming an “industry” (Mohanty 2003) where discourses of resistance are widely accessible but in commoditized institutional and pedagogical forms that are decontextualized, collapsing histories of colonization, racism, and patriarchy into empty categories of difference, multiculturalism, and diversity. The consequence of this cooptation is a loss of critical consciousness and the transformative power of knowledge (Collins 1998, hooks 2003, Mohanty 2003). Many scholars working through critical traditions have sought to construct critical knowledges and pedagogical practices that would disrupt power relations and teach for social justice (i.e. Freire 1981 & 1989, and hooks 1994).

LDS women’s perspectives on ritual offer fresh insights for engendering strategies that might allow for ongoing shifting of strategies that push toward heightened awareness and knowledge that is tied to practice. I suggest three ways in which this study might link to these broader discussions. This section should be read in the spirit of opening up this study to further directions of research and inquiry and not as my personal directives, or specifications of the universal ingredients as to how classrooms should or ought to operate.

First, understanding embodied ritual as integral to LDS women's alternative ways of knowing speaks to the importance of sensory and corporeal experiences for transformative learning. LDS women's bodies were at the center of their ritual experiences. Their perspectives on temple rituals challenge positivist approaches to knowledge production that view bodies, especially women's bodies, as barriers to knowing (Shildrick and Price 1999). Their perspectives highlighted the central importance of physical touch, vision, hearing, and corporeal sensations to the construction of meaningful self-knowledges. The ongoing production of identities laden with priestess qualities was engendered through the body. Conversely, positivist styles of knowledge production have relied upon a fantasy in which teachers and learners bodies are severed from processes of knowledge construction via the focus on rationality and objectivity. LDS women's perspectives on rituals offer suggestions for the development of pedagogies that seek to facilitate more meaningful learning situations. Involving and engaging students in knowledge production may heighten their sensitivity toward understanding, implementing, and integrating classroom knowledge.

Second, understanding symbolism as integral to LDS women's alternative ways of knowing offers insights into constructing pedagogical frameworks that are inclusive and that foster student-centered, creative discovery. LDS women's perspectives on temple rituals challenge the idea that knowledge can or should be always neatly bounded and one-sidedly presented. Alternatively, women's perspectives on symbolism demonstrate that self and social knowledge may be more deeply understood through the process of discovery than through receiving

knowledge in final forms. The process of knowledge is imperative to understanding its content. Women's perspectives on symbolism as a way of knowing suggest possibilities for creative pedagogies that speak to students regardless of their starting point for knowing and the prerequisites that they have acquired before entering. It also suggests the importance of utilizing multiple and shifting strategies in classrooms. This is particularly important for diverse classrooms that merge individuals working from a variety of disciplines and who enter classrooms at vastly different skill levels.

Third, understanding reenactments and the situated imagination as important to LDS women's alternative ways of knowing highlights the importance of empathy and hope for critical pedagogies and transformative knowledges. Reenacting the experiences of others and imagining oneself as another person made possible ways of learning about the "other" that generated greater empathy and social responsibility. Maria Lugones (2003) calls this "world-traveling," the process of developing empathy for others by going to their worlds. Many women also talked about how traveling through the veil instilled feelings of hope and renewal to continue on their pilgrimage toward the promises offered by their faith tradition. LDS women's imaginings and reenactments forced a process through which the women in this study could feel connected to strangers and people different from themselves.

LDS women's narratives of hope, imagination, and community connect to Emile Durkheim's discussion of ritual in his foundational text, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2001[1912]). Durkheim argues that ritual and ritual symbols involve modes of action that connect individuals to one another, creating a sense of

shared belonging, and stimulating shared states of mind (11). Durkheim highlighted the innovation, hope and imagination inaugurated through collective rituals.⁴⁵ In sum, LDS women's alternative ways of knowing seem to connect to broader sociological debates. Future research might explore the utility of these ways of knowing for pedagogies that aim for social justice.

Conclusion

In 1987, feminist historian Carol Cornwall Madsen wrote about the significance of the LDS temple for Mormon women experiencing priesthood correlation restrictions.

Whatever the changes a new century has made in Mormon women's dependence on spiritual power for healing, on spiritual bonds for sisterhood, or on spiritual truths for direction, the meaning of the temple is undiminished. Its power, its purpose, and its promises for women are unchanged "Madsen 1987:104).

This study exemplifies the ways in which many of the LDS women in this study continue to utilize ritual to experience those spiritual powers and promises. It also illuminates the ways in which the Church seeks to suppress and manage the interpretations and experiences of LDS women who ritualize. At the time Madsen wrote, the changes made to the initiatory had not yet unfolded. Nevertheless, while recent modifications made to ritual aim to diminish the power of ritual, the women in this study drew from ritual to reach beyond what is immediately available to them

⁴⁵ Durkheim's analysis was based on a study of totemism among the Australian Aborigines. While I argued in chapter two that Durkheim's definition of religious and religious ritual was incompatible with this study, his findings regarding the social uses of ritual align with LDS women's temple narratives in important ways.

through other avenues of their tradition. Their ritual practices and the imaginings they generate translate into new ways of thinking about the self and the social world.

It is fitting to conclude this study with an excerpt from Lydia's narrative, a woman who recognized that her religion fosters her ability to imagine, yet also constrains those same imaginings.

I often think that some of the theological difficulties that I have are only possible because I was able to think in a big way because of my tradition and I hope that my child will have that ability to think big questions, and have big hopes for God because of the big vision of our tradition, and I think the temple is a place where we can do that. I think [the temple] is a place that I'm reminded of the gems of promise in my religious tradition. I think that we have embedded in our tradition principles of eternal growth, eternal learning, creative learning, creative acting, shared equality of men and women and powerful equality of men and women. So, the temple is the place where we're reminded of those-- it's also the place where we're reminded of the challenges of actually making it happen in our culture.

Lydia represents many faithful LDS women who draw upon ritual to reimagine and redefine their religious identities and experiences.

APPENDIX 1

RECRUITMENT FLYER

LDS Women Needed for Research Study
Project Title: LDS Women and Temples
Description of Research: I am currently conducting a research project that examines the ways in which LDS Women's participation in temple worship impacts their everyday lives. As part of my research, I am conducting interviews with endowed LDS women. Interview sessions explore how/why women's experiences in LDS temples are important on a daily basis and last approximately 45 minutes.
Who Can Participate: LDS women (ages 18+) who have received their Temple Endowment (current temple recommend not necessary).
About the Researcher: My name is Nazneen Kane and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Maryland. I received a B.S. in Psychology and an M.S. in Sociology, both from Brigham Young University.
Researcher Contact Information: If you are willing to participate in this voluntary study, or if you have any further questions about this study, please contact me via email or phone: nkane@soey.umd.edu or 703-622-0252 .
Confidentiality: Identity of participants is held confidential.

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	Gender Identity, Women and LDS Temples
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by Nazneen Kane at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an endowed member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who is at least 18 years of age. The purpose of this research project is to broadly explore the ways in which women in religions exercise agency through their religious practices. Specifically, this research explores the meanings that women ascribe to their temple experiences and how those meanings have influenced women's definitions of gender and womanhood.
What will I be asked to do?	The procedures involve a 1-2 hour interview in your home or otherwise specified location. In this interview, you will be asked basic questions about yourself (how you identify yourself) and your background in the LDS Church. Then, you will be asked more specific questions about your temple participation (how often you attend the temple) and how your initial endowment experience impacted your life. Finally, a third set of interview questions will ask you about how your temple experiences have impacted/changed/reinforced your concept or definition of womanhood. This third set of questions asks about how your temple experiences intersect with your gender identity.
What about confidentiality?	<p>This research project involves making audiotapes of your voice. The purpose of recording this interview is to allow the researcher to transcribe the interview into a document for analytic purposes. Your confidentiality will be maintained through the following procedures:</p> <p>1) the interview recordings and transcripts will not, at any time, be distributed or shared with others, 2) all audiotapes will be stored in a locked storage area and will be destroyed at the completion of the dissertation, 3) audiotapes will be transcribed by the researcher onto the personal computer of the researcher, 4) hard copies of transcripts will also be stored in a locked area, 5) and through the process of transcription, your real name will be assigned a code name in order to keep your identity confidential. In the dissertation paper and any additional reports or articles about this research project, your identity will remain confidential.</p> <p>___ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study. ___ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.</p> <p>Note: Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if</p>

	you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
Project Title	Gender Identity, Women, and LDS Temples
Are there any risks to participating in this study?	There may be some risks associated with your participation in this research study. Discussing one's personal experiences in/with the temple can potentially trigger intense emotions and/or discomfort, depending upon the nature of your experiences in/with the LDS Church. At any time, you may exert your right to terminate the interview and to skip any particular interview question.
Are there any benefits to participating in this study?	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the ways that Mormon women exercise agency and construct their gender identities through their temple practices. I hope that scholars working on women in all religious contexts will benefit from this study by gaining a greater understanding of the many possible ways that women understand their religious practices. I also hope that this research can be formulated into a book for and about Mormon women that illustrates the value of the temple endowment in Mormon women's lives.
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.
What if I have questions?	<p>This research is being conducted by Nazneen Kane at the University of Maryland, College Park under the advisement of a principal investigator, Patricia Hill Collins. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact one of us:</p> <p>Dr. Patricia Hill Collins (Principal Investigator) 4105 Art-Sociology Building College Park, MD 20742 Phone: 301-405-6392</p> <p>Nazneen Kane (Graduate Student Investigator) 3108 ASY College Park, MD 20742 nkane@socy.umd.edu Phone: 703-622-0252</p>

	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678 This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
--	--

Project Title	Gender Identity, Women, and LDS Temples	
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	Your signature indicates that: you are at least 18 years of age,; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questionnaire

1. Why did you initially decide to receive your temple endowment?
2. Can you describe the context and factors surrounding your first temple experience, when you received your endowment for yourself? (I.e. marriage, mission, etc).
3. What kinds of preparation did you make in anticipation of receiving your endowment?
4. What were your initial feelings about the initiatory and endowment experience?
5. Can you discuss the parts of the temple ceremonies that were particularly meaningful to you?
6. What are your thoughts about the garments? (Were/are they a difficult adjustment, are they meaningful to you, etc.?)
7. Do you feel like your life is different because you have been endowed?
8. Since that initial experience, do you continue to attend the temple?
9. What motivates you to go to the temple?
10. Are there specific ordinances that you are more likely to participate in?
11. Has the temple changed at all the way in which you think about the eternal promises for women?
12. What are your thoughts about the way in which Eve is shown in the endowment video?
13. Do you feel that your temple endowment has impacted your relationship with significant others? Your family/husband/other LDS women/friends/coworkers?
14. Have you ever performed temple work for an ancestor? Can you talk about that experience?
15. Have you ever performed a live endowment? How was that experience different?
16. What kinds of things do you think women can learn about themselves through their participation in temple ceremonies?

REFERENCES

- Adams, Jimi. 2007. "Stained Glass Makes the Ceiling Invisible: Organizational Opposition to Women in Congregational Leadership." *Gender & Society* 21:80-105.
- Ahmed, Durre S. 2002. *Gendering the Spirit: Women, Religion, and the Post-Colonial Response*. USA: Zed Books.
- Ammerman, Nancy. 2007. *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ammerman, Nancy. 2006. "Religious Identities in Contemporary American Life: Lessons From the NJPS." *Sociology of Religion* 67:359-364.
- Ammerman, Nancy. 2003. "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions." Pp. 207-224 in Michele Dillon (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, CA: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.
- Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ballard, Russell M. 2007. "Faith, Family, Facts, and Fruits." *Ensign* 37(10).
- Barber, Ian. 1992. "Mormon Women as 'Natural' Seers: An Enduring Legacy." Pp. 167-184 in Hanks, Maxine (Ed.), *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Batson, C., P.A. Schoenrade, and W.L. Ventis. 1993. *The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Beaman, Lori G. 2001. "Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious Diversity and the Latter Day Saints Church." *Sociology of Religion* 62:65-86.
- Beck, Julie. 2007. "Mothers Who Know." *Ensign*, November.
- Beecher, Maureen, Janath Cannon and Jill Derr. 1992. *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company.

- Beecher, Maureen Ursenbach and Lavina Fielding Anderson. 1987. *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin and Michael Argyle. 1997. *The Psychology of Religious Behavior, Belief and Experience*. New York: Routledge.
- Bell, Catherine. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, Catherine. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2003. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bradley, Martha Sonntag. 2005. *Pedestals and Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Bringhurst, Newell and Darron T. Smith, eds. 2004. *Black and Mormon*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Brinkerhoff, Merlin and Marlene MacKie. 1985. "Religion and Gender: A Comparison of Canadian and American Student Attitudes." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47:415-429.
- Buerger, David John. 2002. *Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship*, 2nd Edition. Utah: Signature Books.
- Bushman, Richard Lyman. 2005. *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Campbell, Beverly. 2002. *Eve and the Choice Made in Eden*. Utah: Bookcraft.
- Chadwick, Bruce and H. Dean Garrett. 1995. "Women's Religiosity and Employment: The LDS Experience." *Review of Religious Research* 36:277-293.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2000. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods." Pp. 509-535 in Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Chaves, Mark. 1997. *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Chong, Kelley H. 2008. *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chong, Kelly H. 2006. "Negotiating Patriarchy: South Korean Evangelical Women and the Politics of Gender." *Gender & Society* 20:697-724.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2011. "Ordinances." Retrieved online <http://lds.org/study/topics/ordinances?lang=eng>, January 3, 2011.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2011b. "Temples Around the World." Retrieved online <http://lds.org/church/temples?lang=eng>, April 11, 2011.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2008. "Statistical Report, 2007." *Ensign* 38(5):25.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1995. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Retrieved 5 September 2010 (lds.org).
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2004[1986]. "Learning From the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." Pp. 103-126 in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1998. *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 1990. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Cornwall, Marie. 1994. "The Institutional Role of Mormon Women." Pp. 239-64 in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by M. Cornwall, Heaton, and Young. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Davidson, Karen Lynn. 1988. *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company.
- Derr, Jill Mulvay. 1987. "'Strength in Our Union': The Making of Mormon Sisterhood." Pp. 153-207 in Beecher, Maureen and Lavina Anderson (Eds.), *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Dill, Bonnie Thornton. 1988. "Our Mothers' Grief: Racial-Ethnic Women and the Maintenance of Families." *Journal of Family History* 13:415-431.

- Dillon, Michele. 2010. "Can Post-Secular Society Tolerate Religious Differences?" *Sociology of Religion* 71:139-156.
- Dillon, Michele and Paul Wink. 2007. *In the Course of a Lifetime: Tracing Religious Belief, Practice, and Change*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. 2001[1912]. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ecklund, Elaine Howard. 2005. "Different Identity Accounts for Catholic Women." *Review of Religious Research* 47:135-149.
- Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner. 2000. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." Pp. 733-768 in Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Embry, Jessie. 1994. *Black Saints in a White Church: Contemporary African American Mormons*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Evans, Vella Neil. 1992. "Empowerment and Mormon Women's Publications." Pp. 49-68 in Hanks, Maxine (Ed.), *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Felty, K. and M. Poloma. 1991. "From Sex Differences to Gender Role Beliefs: Exploring Effects on Six Dimensions of Religiosity." *Sex Roles* 23:181-93.
- Ferraro, Kenneth F. and Jessica Kelley-Moore. 2000. "Religious Consolation Among Men and Women: Do Health Problems Spur Seeing?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39:220-34.
- Fetterman, David M. 1998. *Ethnography: Step By Step, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Finlay, Barbara. 2003. *Facing the Stained Glass Ceiling: Gender in a Protestant Seminary*. New York: University Press of America.
- Freese, Jeremy. 2004. "Risk Preferences and Gender Differences in Religiousness: Evidence From the World Values Survey." *Review of Religious Research* 46:88-91.
- Freire, Paulo. 1989. *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*. New York: Continuum.

- Freire, Paulo. 1981. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gallagher, Sally. 2004. "Where are the Antifeminist Evangelicals? Evangelical Identity, Subcultural Location, and Attitudes toward Feminism." *Gender and Society* 18:451-472.
- George, Sheba. 2005. *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration*. Berkeley and LA: University of California Press.
- Goodman, Kristen, Tim Heaton, and Thomas Holman. 1994. "In Search of a Peculiar People: Are Mormon Families Really Different?" In Cornwall, Heaton and Young (Eds.), *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Gordon, Avery. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gottlieb, Robert and Peter Wiley. 1984. *America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power*. New York: Putnam.
- Hales, Brook D. 2011. "Statistical Report, 2010." *Ensign*: May 2011.
- Hanks, Maxine (Ed.). 1992. *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Haraway, Donna. 2004[1991]. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." Pp. 7-45 in *The Haraway Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, John R. and Thomas B. Holman. 1996. "The Teaching of Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence and Members' Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors: The Case of Latter-day Saints." *Review of Religious Research* 38:51-60.
- Harding, Sandra. 2004. "Introduction: Standpoint Theory as a Site of Political, Philosophic, and Scientific Debate." Pp. 1-15 in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding. New York: Routledge.
- Heaton, Tim, Marie Cornwall, and Lawrence Young (Eds.). 2001. *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Heeren, J., D.B. Lindsey, and M. Mason. 1984. "The Mormon Concept of Mother in Heaven: A Sociological Account of Its Origins and Development." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 23(4):396-411.

- hooks, bell. 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- Hunter, Howard W. 1995. "The Message: Your Temple Recommend." *New Era* April: 6.
- Iannaccone, Laurence. 1990. "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29:297-314.
- Iannaccone, Laurence and Carrie Miles. 1990. "Dealing with Social Change: The Mormon Church's Response to Change in Women's Roles." *Social Forces* 68:1231-1250.
- Iversen, Joan. 1997. *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880-1925*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Jacobson, Cardell (Ed.). 2004. *All God's Children: Racial and Ethnic Voices in the LDS Church*. Springville, Utah: Bonneville Books.
- Kelley, Lori R. and Susan A. Mann. 1997. "Standing at the Crossroads of Modernist Thought: Collins, Smith, and the New Feminist Epistemologies." *Gender and Society* 11:391-408.
- Konieczny, Mary Ellen and Mark Chaves. 2000. "Resources, Race, and Female-Headed Congregations in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39:261-271.
- LDSEndowment.org. 2010. Retrieved online 18 November 2010.
- Lee, Rachel. 2002. "Notes from the (Non)Field: Teaching and Theorizing Women of Color." Pp. 82-105 in Robyn Wiegman (Ed.) *Women's Studies On Its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Lindsay, Betina. 1992. "Women as Healers in the Modern Church." Pp. 439-460 in Hanks, Maxine (Ed.), *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Lugones, Maria. 2003. *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

- Madsen, Carol Cornwall. 2006. *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells 1870-1920*. Provo, Utah and Salt Lake City, Utah: Brigham Young University Press and Deseret Book.
- Madsen, Carol Cornwall, ed. 1987. "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding." Pp. 80-110 in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by L. Anderson and M. Beecher. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Mauss, Armand. 1996. "Identity and Boundary Maintenance: International Prospects for Mormonism at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century." Pp. 9-19 in *Mormon Identities in Transition*, edited by D. Davies. New York: Cassell.
- Mauss, Armand. 1994. *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- McConkie, Bruce R. 1997. *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc.
- McGuire, Meredith. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mihelich, John and Debbie Storrs. 2003. "Higher Education and the Negotiated Process of Hegemony: Embedded Resistance Among Mormon Women." *Gender and Society* 17: 404-422.
- Miller, Alan and John P. Hoffmann. 1995. "Risk and Religion: An Explanation of Gender Differences in Religiosity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34:63-75.
- Miller, Alan and Rodney Stark. 2002. "Gender and Religiousness: Can Socialization Explanations Be Saved?" *American Journal of Sociology* 107:1399-1423.
- Mohanty, Chandra. 2003. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Moon, Dawne. 2004. *God, Sex and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.
- Morgan, Mary. 1987. "The Impact of Religion on Gender-Role Attitudes." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 11:301-310.
- Naples, Nancy. 2003. *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. New York: Routledge.

- Narayan, Anjana and Bandana Purkayastha, eds. 2009. *Living Our Religions: Hindu and Muslim South Asian American Women Narrate their Experiences*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- Nesbitt, Paula D. 1997. *Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nesbitt, Paula D. 1993. "Dual Ordination Tracks: Differential Benefits and Costs for Men and Women Clergy." *Sociology of Religion* 54:13-30.
- Neuenschwander, Dennis B. 2010[2001]. "Ordinances and Covenants." Retrieved 25 February 2008 (<http://lds.org/temples/purpose/0,11298,1897-1,00.html>).
- Newell, Linda. 1992. "The Historical Relationship of Mormon Women and Priesthood." Pp. 23-48 in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by M. Hanks. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Newell, Linda. 1987. "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share." Pp. 111-150 in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by L. Anderson and M. Beecher. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Nibley, Hugh. 1994. "On the Sacred and the Symbolic." Pp. 535-621 in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company.
- Olson, Camille Fronk. 2009. *Women of the Old Testament*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book.
- Ozorak, Elizabeth. 1996. "The Power, But Not the Glory: How Women Empower Themselves Through Religion." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 35:17-29.
- Packer, Boyd K. 1980. *The Holy Temple*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc.
- Parry, Donald W. (Ed.) 1994. *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company.
- Pew Research Center. 2009. "A Portrait of Mormons in the U.S." Available on the web at <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Mormon/A-Portrait-of-Mormons-in-the-US.aspx>. Retrieved January 5, 2011.
- Phillips, Rick. 2005. *Conservative Christian Identity and Same-Sex Orientation*. New York: Peter Lang.

- Pierce, Martha. 1992. "Personal Discourse on God the Mother." Pp. 247-256 in Hanks, Maxine (Ed.), *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Purvis, Sally B. 1995. *The Stained Glass Ceiling: Churches and their Women Pastors*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Quinn, D. Michael. 2001. *Same Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Quinn, D. Michael. 1998. *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Quinn, D. Michael. 1992. "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843." Pp. 365-410 in *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by M. Hanks. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Read, Jen'nan Ghazal. 2003. "The Sources of Gender Role Attitudes Among Christian and Muslim Arab-American Women." *Sociology of Religion* 64:207-222.
- Read, Jen'Nan Ghazal and John P. Bartkowski. 2000. "To Veil or Not to Veil? A Case Study of Identity Negotiation Among Muslim Women in Austin, Texas." *Gender & Society* 14:395-417.
- Ricks, Stephen D. and John J. Sroka. 1994. "King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History." Pp. 236-271 in Parry, Donald (Ed.), *Temples of the Ancient World*. Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah: Deseret Book Company and foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.
- Roof, Wade and William McKinney. 1987. *American Mainline Religions*. London: Rutgers University Press.
- Roth, Louise Marie and Jeffrey Kroll. 2007. "Risky Business: Assessing Risk Preference Explanations for Gender Differences in Religiosity." *American Sociological Review* 72:205-220.
- Rouse, Carolyn Moxley. 2004. *Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Shildrick, Margrit and Janet Price (Eds.). 1999. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1992. "Sociology From Women's Experience: A Reaffirmation." *Sociological Theory* 10:88-98.

- Smith, Dorothy E. 1990. *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, Joseph. 1991[1839-1856]. *History of the Church*, Volume 1. Utah: Shadow Mountain.
- Smith, Joseph. 1976[1842]. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith). Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company.
- Spickard, James. 2005. "Ritual, Symbol, and Experience: Understanding Catholic Worker House Masses." *Sociology of Religion* 66:337-357.
- Stark, Rodney. 2002. "Physiology and Faith: Addressing the 'Universal' Gender Difference in Religious Commitment." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41:495-507.
- Stark, Rodney. 1994. "Modernization and Mormon Growth: The Secularization Thesis Revisited." Pp. 13-23 in Cornwall, Heaton, and Young (Eds.), *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Stark, Rodney. and W. S. Bainbridge. 1985. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stoetzler, Marcel and Nira Yuval-Davis. 2002. "Standpoint Theory, Situated Knowledge, and the Situated Imagination." *Feminist Theory* 3:315-333.
- Sullins, Paul. 2000. "The Stained Glass Ceiling: Career Attainment for Clergy Women." *Sociology of Religion* 61:243-66.
- Talmage, James. 2007[1912]. *The House of the Lord*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Covenant Communications.
- Tedlock, Barbara. 2000. "Ethnography and Ethnographic Representation." Pp. 455-486 in Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Thompson, Edward H. and Kathryn R. Remmes. 2002. "Does Masculinity Thwart Being Religious? An Examination of Older Men's Religiousness." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41:521-532.
- Thompson, Edward H. 1991. "Beneath the Status Characteristic: Gender Variations in Religiousness." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30:381-394.

- Toney, Michael, Banu Golesorkhi, and William F. Stinner. 1985. "Residence Exposure and Fertility Expectations of Young Mormon and Non-Mormon Women in Utah." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47:459-465.
- Vance, Laura. 2007. "Recent Studies of Mormon Women." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10(4):113-127.
- Vance, Laura. 2002. "Evolution of Ideals for Women in Mormon Periodicals, 1897-1999." *Sociology of Religion* 63:91-112.
- Walter, Tony and Grace Davie. 1998. "The Religiosity of Women in the Modern West." *British Journal of Sociology* 49:640-60.
- Wiegman, Robyn. 2002. *Women's Studies On Its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Wilcox, Linda. 1992. "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven." Pp. 3-22 in Hanks, Maxine (Ed.), *Women and Authority: Re-Emerging Mormon Feminism*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Young, Brigham. 1971. *Discourses of Brigham Young* (compiled by John A. Widtsoe). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company.
- Yukich, Grace. 2010. "Boundary Work in Inclusive Religious Groups: Constructing Identity at the New York Catholic Worker." *Sociology of Religion* 71:172-196.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2006. "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13:193-209.