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AN ANALYSIS OF HEGEMONY IN LDS DISCOURSE ON MOTHERHOOD

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts

in

American Studies-Folklore

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Introduction

Like many Mormon women in America, I was told from the time I was a young girl I would get married, have children, be a perfect homemaker, and live happily ever after. At least that was the story presented to me at church and at home. From the time Mormon children are in Primary (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [or LDS church] children's organization for children ages 18 months to 11 years old) they are taught the importance of family and the different roles of mothers and fathers through songs and lessons. In Young Women's (the LDS church's youth organization for young women ages 12-18) teenage girls are taught how to build themselves spiritually, but everything from the young women theme, weekly activities, and Sunday lessons reinforce the importance of their future role as a wife and mother. These teachings are then solidified in Relief Society (the LDS church's women's organization) as women are taught about their nurturing role in the family and participate in activities that teach homemaking skills and childcare. Throughout their lives, Mormon women are taught that "by divine design. . . . Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children" and are consistently prepared for their role as wives and mothers ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 1995, 1).

In Mormonism, motherhood is directly connected to womanhood and is a divine role with lasting influence and importance. According to Mormon scripture and doctrine, the first woman, Eve (also referred to as the mother of all living), ate the forbidden fruit not because she gave into temptation from Satan but because she knew that she could not obey God's commandment to multiply and replenish the earth while living in the Garden

of Eden (Campbell 2003). Mormons believe that Eve consciously chose to eat the fruit in order to take on the title of mother, and all women are blessed with the gift to nurture children and follow Eve's example. This doctrine about the importance of families and motherhood provides a framework in Mormonism that places "motherhood...near to divinity" (Clark 1965, 178). Motherhood is compared to godliness in might, importance, and power, and Mormon mothers are seen as being in partnership with God (Holland 2014). Current LDS prophet Thomas S. Monson emphasized this point, "One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one" (Monson 1998). As a result, motherhood is at the center of any discussion about women in Mormonism and is revered as "the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind" (Clark 1965, 178).

The emphasis placed on motherhood isn't surprising considering the strong focus on families in the LDS church. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (1995), an official proclamation of the LDS prophet and apostles, states that the "family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (1). However, the acceptable type of family within the LDS church follows "traditional" American gender roles, meaning that mothers stay at home to care for children and fathers provide for the family. This "tradition" follows a white, heterosexual, married, middle-class, and American ideal and has been criticized as a hegemonic view of family life that excludes the lived experiences of anyone outside those confines (Kawash 2011). A hegemonic view refers to the dominant perspective or representation in a given social or political context that

benefits the rulers or the elite, and the problem with hegemonic views is that they relate the predominant view as the ideal or only acceptable way of being (Clayton 2006, Beasley 2008). So, although motherhood is experienced in many different ways, the acceptable hegemonic type of motherhood in Mormonism is for women to be homemakers; any other alternative is seen as less than desirable and acceptable only if necessary.

For this study I interviewed four Mormon women to explore how they engage with the hegemonic structure of Mormon motherhood. Most studies of hegemony explore moments of resistance, where women subvert or challenge accepted gender norms (Radner 1993, Mihelich and Storrs 2003). However, in this case the women I interviewed offered little resistance to hegemonic structures, instead accommodating their lives to hegemonic Mormon motherhood. This thesis explores not only how the hegemonic structure disempowers these LDS women, but also looks at the explanatory models they use to justify their lives. Hegemonic power often goes unquestioned and individuals living within hegemonic structures do not fully perceive the ways hegemonic power operates in their lives (Clayton 2006). The Mormon women I interviewed do not explicitly acknowledge the hegemonic structure they live in. Rather, per the above explained definition of hegemony, they use hegemonic Mormon motherhood to explain and make sense of their lives.

Deconstructing the explanatory models these women use to justify their lives reveals six ways hegemonic power operates in Mormon motherhood. 1) Mormon essentialist views regarding gender situate women as more competent caregivers,

providing a hegemonic discourse for the role of a mother. 2) Structurally men and women are perceived as inherently different, justifying a sexual division of labor, authority, and power within Mormonism. 3) The discourse of choice frames women's adherence to hegemonic Mormon motherhood as a choice, when in fact their agency is limited through lack of structural support. 4) The discourse of motherhood as moral force asserts that women's power is derived from their moral influence for good within the home, but does not give them any authority to determine how their power is used. 5) Church teachings and doctrine consistently revere and honor women for their work as mothers, but most of these teachings come from men because women do not have structural authority. 6) Individual spirituality gives women some claim to power over their lives, but the ways in which this spirituality is structured remains within the confines of the LDS church. Although the women I interviewed may not see themselves as disempowered or accommodating their lives to hegemonic structures, the six ways hegemonic power operates in these women's lives are ultimately disempowering.

Literature Review

This study is informed by several academic perspectives, primarily that of folklore and women's studies. As with most of academia, the discipline of folklore has long been overrun by a patriarchal worldview that failed to fully recognize women's voices (Fox 1987, Saltzman 1987). Women's folklore in the private sphere historically was not studied as extensively as men's folklore in the public sphere (Farrer 1975). Also, men's folklore and artistic forms were generally considered the norm or seen as legitimate, whereas "female expressive forms either fit the male mold or they are

relegated to a non-legitimate, less-than-expressive category. For instance, we have ‘tall tales,’ a male genre of storytelling; the female corollary is exaggeration. Men have ‘stories’ or ‘yarns’; women ‘gossip’ or ‘clothesline.’” (Farrer 1975, xiv). Many women’s folklorists mentioned the need for folklore scholarship to give voice to women by exploring women’s participation in their own communities (Farrer 1975, Kodish 1987, Saltzman 1987, Donovan 1993, Mitchell 1993). However, initially including women’s voices and experiences within folklore studies tokenized women’s folklore as reflective of universal women’s culture (Kousaleos 1999). Over time the focus shifted from the text, or the stuff of women’s folklore, to the surrounding culture and context. Currently, feminist folklore studies focuses on how the individual interacts with tradition and how that negotiation constructs gender, power, and authority (Lawless 1993, Thomas 1997, Kousaleos 1999, Bronner 2005, Weems 2008, Gilman 2009). This thesis follows current feminist folklore studies and, drawing on the explanations of women themselves, explores how hegemonic power actually operates in Mormon women’s lives.

Tradition, authority, and the individual also arise in folklore scholarship that does not explicitly focus on gender. According to one perspective, as represented in the book *The Individual and Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives* (Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2011), tradition is not static, but is both process and resource, dependent on both the raw materials passed down and creativity to “derive the future from the past” (3). Just as tradition is both stable and flexible the individual does not exist in isolation from outside influences. Another approach is that of Bakhtin (1981), who elaborates on the relationship between tradition and the individual in reference to the monologic heavy-

handed voice of tradition and the multi-vocal dialogism that provides flexibility within tradition. He focuses specifically on tradition in language and observes that “our speech is filled to overflowing with other people’s words,” but those words change meaning based on individual performance (Bakhtin 1981, 337). Some institutions and authoritative voices are more monologic or dialogic in nature, but ultimately tradition only exists within an individual’s performance of it. Bauman (2004) further explores the relationship between mediation, tradition, and authority through replication. He argues that tradition is replicated for efficacy and authority, but there is room for individual interpretation. Aligning with tradition or authority gives the performer power, but the text must change to factor in the needs and expectations of a new audience and presentation (Bauman 2004). Tradition and the individual are strenuously bound together as the needs of both are negotiated to create meaning.

Women’s studies takes an activist stance and seeks to omit and critique cultural norms that pressure women to behave or live a certain way (Lay and Daley 2007, Tong 2014). There are multiple theories within feminism and each one views the sources of female oppression and how women should react differently. One view comes from both liberal and radical feminism, both of which specifically strive for women’s complete autonomy and androgyny so women can freely make their own decisions and achieve full personhood (Tong 2014). Another view comes from third-wave feminism, which turns away from the focus on autonomy and highlights the various ways women engage with “the complexities, contingencies, and challenges of power and the diverse means and goals of agency” (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006, 21). Third-wave feminism (also known

as choice or difference feminism), acknowledges the differences between women's lived experiences, how various power structures operate in their lives, and how women negotiate differently within those power structures (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006, Snyder-Hall 2010). Drawing on third wave feminism's approach to power, authority, and the individual, this thesis explores how four Mormon women explain their lives within hegemonic Mormon motherhood.

Within feminist studies religion is often treated with reservation for its patriarchal influences and strong focus on obedience. In a religion where the only adaptations to hegemonic motherhood are allowed in cases of "disability, death, or other circumstances," Mormon women accommodate to hegemonic structures, even when they are disempowering, in order to maintain some measure of authority ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World" 1995, 1).

Methods

The interviews included in this thesis were gathered from four Mormon women as part of this research on hegemonic Mormon motherhood. For the interviews I drew on women I knew from my LDS ward who were interested in my project. All of the women I interviewed currently live in Logan, Utah and have multiple children of grade school age or younger. I chose to interview women with more than one child because they have the benefit of looking at their overall experiences with motherhood and could offer more knowledgeable commentary on their experiences negotiating with religious voices of authority. The women I interviewed were all in their early thirties, Mormon, heterosexually married, and stay-at-home mothers.

I set up an initial hour-long interview with each woman individually where I asked them questions about their experiences with motherhood and the church's teachings regarding motherhood. Before each interview I gave the women a release form and a brief description of the project with the questions we would discuss during the interview. I did this so they had an opportunity to change any questions, think about their answers before being put on the spot, and voice any concerns before the interview began. Then, if needed, I scheduled a second follow-up interview to further discuss themes from the first interview. Each interview was conducted in a location of the woman's choice, and ranged between meeting in their home, my home, or a local outdoor park. The women's children were present for the interviews conducted in participant's homes, which contributed challenges to the interview due to multiple interruptions. I recorded all of the interviews on my phone and made a transcription log for reference. Afterward, I went through the interviews and transcribed portions of the interviews verbatim (with the exception of verbal tics and false starts) that were relevant to my research. After transcribing the interviews I read through them, taking notes on important themes, and identified patterns regarding how hegemony operated in their lives.

As an LDS researcher I already had an understanding of the hegemonic structure of Mormon motherhood. With an understanding of my participants' "socio-cultural knowledge" I could more easily interpret certain terms, phrases, and nuances that a non-Mormon researcher may not have grasped (Briggs 1986, 95). However, in spite of the benefits of being an insider, it is highly likely that my role as a Mormon researcher influenced participants' responses. In any interview setting participants are aware that

they are being researched and this “enhanced self-consciousness can lead to a shaping of one’s behavior in accordance with the image one wishes to project” (Briggs 1986: 100). While the women I interviewed may resist the hegemonic structure in some way, their responses in these interviews focused on how their practice of motherhood falls within the hegemonic structure of Mormon motherhood. There are many familial, religious, and personal risks to these women if they openly resist or reject hegemonic Mormon motherhood and it is highly likely that to maintain pious appearances with a fellow church member their responses centered on how their lives fit within the structure.

Similarly, analyzing the structural problems surrounding Mormon motherhood poses great risk to myself as a Mormon researcher. Although my intent as a researcher and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not to condemn or belittle Mormon beliefs regarding motherhood, I was afraid that my findings would be misunderstood. In many ways hegemonic motherhood encompasses Mormon beliefs regarding femininity and family and to critique the structure can be construed as faithlessness, possibly resulting in being ostracized from the religious community or being released from church service positions. These risks paralyzed me as the patterns of hegemonic power emerged through coding and analyzing the interviews. As a result, the initial drafts of this thesis were apologetic, focusing solely on how participants felt empowered through the hegemonic structure, and did not fully acknowledge the complex ways hegemonic power operated in my participants’ lives. I did not want to offend participants by writing what emerged from the data because motherhood is a sensitive topic and they truly feel empowered within hegemonic Mormon motherhood. My role as

an insider researcher affected my ability to analyze my findings in much the same way my role affected participants' responses. The patience and guidance of my thesis committee chair helped me overcome the fear to share my findings in this thesis regarding the various ways hegemonic power operates in these women's lives.

Hegemony, Essentialism, and Gender

The first component of hegemonic Mormon motherhood is essentialism and gender. The structuring of motherhood as essentialist practice is deeply embedded within Mormonism. Essentialism is a belief that things have certain inherent characteristics that are essential to their identity (Schor and Weed 1994). In relation to gender, essentialism posits that men and women have inherent natural and unique characteristics that make them different from each other, and this idea has been used to justify gender-based discrimination. Mormon essentialist teachings surrounding motherhood and families are rooted in a belief of existence before, during, and after life on this earth. Latter-day saints believe that they have the potential to become like their Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother and this earthly life is a time to prepare, learn and grow for that potential. Lorenzo Snow, the fifth president of the church taught, "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be" (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011). One of the central tenants to this belief is that the role of a parent is necessary in order to become like God. Bonnie Oscarson, current president of the LDS general Young Women's organization said, "There is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father" (Oscarson 2015). Not only is the role of a father or mother the most important role, but church leaders have taught, "It is

significant that of all the titles of respect and honor and admiration that are given to Deity, He has asked us to address Him as Father” (Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, 2002). In this way, the church compares the role of father and mother to godliness and parenthood is seen as an important way for men and women to become like God.

In addition to the importance of becoming a parent, Latter-day Saints also believe that fathers and mothers fulfill different roles and responsibilities within the family. Mormons see gender as an eternal “essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” 1995, 1). Men and women are seen as fundamentally “different, distinctive, and complementary” and this viewpoint results in a sexual division of labor within the home (Bednar 2006). Traditionally, women are expected to be the homemaker and men are assigned the role of breadwinner. These roles are reinforced in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which states, “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” (1995, 1). This sexual division of labor is reinforced through talks, books, lessons, songs, and activities within the church.

The women I interviewed expressed essentialist views that men and women are inherently different and used those differences to justify sexual divisions of labor within the family and society. Ashley,¹ a 32 year-old woman living in Logan, Utah whom I interviewed, shared her thoughts on the differences between men and women by explaining how she and her husband approach bedtime.

I don't want to downplay the father's role at all. It's such an important role and it's essential, I strongly believe in that and it compliments and supports the mother's role, but as a mother in the gospel we kind of hold everything together. I think women have a multitasking ability that men don't have. So, when daddy hears bedtime it's kind of the thought of okay everybody run into bed. But as a mom it's, okay bedtime now we have a routine we have structure, we have scripture story which we need to do every single day, that's important for our family so we can become stronger spiritually and grow closer together and grow closer to God, and we have family prayer, and we need to make sure that we stop before prayer and we think about it. Moms are able to prioritize and have all of these detail specific things that we know need to happen, whereas dad just knows that bedtime needs to happen. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

Ashley's beliefs about the differences between men and women reflect the LDS teachings that a woman's role is to nurture children through teaching righteous principles.

Women's perceived essentialist role as mothers is not just about completing a task and checking it off, but also includes teaching principles and incorporating learning opportunities into every day.

McKell,² a 30 year-old mother I interviewed in Logan, Utah, also expressed her beliefs in the innate differences between men and women by comparing the differences between how she and her husband react to daily dealings.

Christian [her husband] doesn't have a high temper, he's super mellow. If I were to describe it I'd probably describe him as more nurturing than me. But having said that there is a difference as to what he can handle when it comes to our children and our family and what I can handle. There are probably men that can do it, well obviously there are men that can do it...[but] I think that girls are different than boys and I think that's a real thing. Coming from someone who never would have been like, "I'm going to nail this mommy deal"...there's some stuff I can handle that Christian can't and he's pretty mellow. If we're going to have two fired up people I'm going to be (claps) way before him and as far as patience I'm not the most patient, but it's just interesting to realize dude, you've been home for ten minutes, I've been here all day long. (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015)

Although McKell doesn't consider herself to be the most patient woman in the world, she frames herself as able to handle a lot more of the nurturing and teaching than her husband. When pressed to identify the specific differences between men and women she said, "I'm trying to put words to it other than just seeing and I don't know...because putting words to it is kind of hard for some reason, but seeing it in the day to day is obvious" (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015). It was difficult for the women I interviewed to explicitly state exactly what the differences were between men and women, but they felt they were able to notice those differences in their day-to-day dealings. The LDS hegemonic discourse of gender essentialism positions women as more competent and capable to nurture children than men and this discourse determines how these women understand their lives.

The women I interviewed expressed that although there are innate differences between men and women, mothers and fathers are supposed to work together as a whole. This is also reflected in doctrine. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states that, "In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners" (1995, 1). Although Anya,³ a 32 year-old stay-at-home mom in Logan, Utah whom I interviewed, believes that she and her husband fulfill different needs in their family, she also believes they are meant to work together.

I think of priesthood holders [fathers] they nurture the family and they are kind of the forefront but at the same time in a marriage it's together. Which makes the balance where the mother is the bearer of children, the nurturer of the children, the teacher of the children, and so I wouldn't say that there's a strict wall between them, I would say that with each of their responsibilities they work together to, for lack of a better word, coexist and to make that family function with God as the center of their focus. (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, July 9, 2015)

McKell summarized the main idea of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” by saying, “there’s only a couple lines where it says generally speaking this is a man’s duties, care for, preside. The woman, generally speaking, her duties involve nurture of children...and then right after it’s, but in all these things you help and support one another” (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015). While many Latter-day saints believe men and women have differing roles and responsibilities, these roles are portrayed as complimentary and equal. Linda K. Burton, the current LDS Relief Society general president, explains, “For example, our two hands are similar to each other but not exactly the same. In fact, they are exact opposites, but they complement each other and are suited to each other. Working together, they are stronger” (Burton 2015). Although many Mormons believe men and women are essentially different, they also believe that those differences allow men and women to work together in complementary roles.

Hegemony and Structure

The second component of hegemonic motherhood in the LDS system is the structural division of authority. Mormon essentialist views regarding gender are also used to explain the division of authority and power within the LDS institution. Mormon women are structurally voiceless within the religion. They do not hold the priesthood, which is the power from God to administer certain ordinances, such as the sacrament or baptism, and to hold institutional positions within the church governing body (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2010). Women may hold callings as teachers or leaders over other women, but they cannot be called as a bishop (a local leader of a congregation of Mormons) and do not hold callings over men (Robison 2013). Women are

institutionally relegated to supporting roles; they work as auxiliary leaders in Young Women's, Relief Society, Primary, or Sunday School to help the bishop, who has ultimate deciding power within the ward.

The lack of women's institutional voice and authority is justified within the church structure through reference to women's role and perceived power as a mother. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., a former member of the First Presidency of the church, declared, women "are not bearers of the Priesthood" but as mothers they possess "the complement of the Priesthood powers and...a function as divinely called, as eternally important in its place as the Priesthood itself" (Clark 1946, 801). Motherhood is seen as complementary in power and authority to the male institutional priesthood (Dew 2013). A common response to the question of why Mormon women don't hold the priesthood is that men have the priesthood while women have motherhood (Peterson 1987, Farnsworth 1992). The power of motherhood, unlike the male institutional priesthood, is seen as innate and is expressed indirectly through women's moral force for good in society (Christofferson 2013).

Distinguishing between the different institutional and familial roles of men and women has led to the lay Mormon saying that men and women are "separate but equal" or "different but equal," meaning they have separate roles that are equally important ("What Are Mormon Women Like?" 2015). However, the phrase "separate but equal" has a shady past when it comes to providing equality. Jim Crow laws in the United States used the phrase "separate but equal" to justify racial segregation throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries (Ficker 1999). While the appearance of

equality justified these laws, the separation kept African-Americans institutionally unequal. In the LDS context, the phrase “separate but equal” enforces a division according to gender, instead of race. It allows Mormons to rationalize the contradictory messages regarding Mormon essentialist views of male and female family and institutional roles and the belief that men and women are meant to work in perfect harmony with one another. Nevertheless, while Mormon women are consistently told their work in the home is the most important work and is nearest to godliness, they are still left structurally powerless in comparison to the male priesthood.

Hegemony and the Rhetoric of Choice

The third component of hegemonic Mormon motherhood is the rhetoric of choice. One of the prominent arguments used to justify the disempowering structures women work within is that “It was her choice” (Crittenden [2001] 2010). Often the discourse of choice is “primarily used to justify or explain the way things are, rather than to defend the way things ought to be” (Tucker, 2010, 297). Lisa Gilman, for example, illustrates how political dancing in Malawi marginalizes women and provides minuscule indirect political power. These oppressive practices are justified because women are free to choose which politician to support and whether or not they will dance (Gilman 2009). However, the discourse of choice diverts responsibility from the limiting structures women participate in and focuses instead on women’s decisions (Snyder-Hall 2010). Similarly, Mormon women operate within a hegemonic structure that does not allow them to make choices easily outside of narrowly defined “traditional” gender roles, since doing so would mean losing all institutional power, no matter how small. As Rosalind

Petchesky notes, “[T]he critical issue...is not so much the content of women’s choices, or even the ‘right to choose,’ as it is the social and material conditions under which choices are made. The ‘right to choose’ means little when women are powerless” (Petchesky 2008, 108).

The lack of structural support, disguised as a rhetoric of choice, negatively affects Mormon women’s potential for development and self-fulfillment outside traditionally prescribed roles. Ashley, for example, felt she was losing part of her identity as a mom:

You know as a mom your number one priority is being a mom and because of that you have this thing that happens everyday. Everyday is the same thing, everyday the same kids are tugging on your leg and as much as I love being a mom you get to a point where I don’t feel fulfilled as a person anymore. You have this identity of mother, but where is Ashley? You know this Ashley that, I love to paint or draw or you know make a recipe of soap or where is Ashley? As a person? I know where Ashley as a mom is, she’s right here with these kids all day long every single day. So you get to a point where I’m going to lose my mind if I can’t do something a little bit different for a little bit of time during the day...I needed something different, something more that will help make me feel like Ashley again and not get lost in this identity of mom. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

She decided that she wanted to do something for herself while providing some extra income in the home. She prayed and prayed about what to do and felt that starting her own doTerra business (selling essential oils) was the right thing for her. It would allow her to learn more about her passion for natural remedies, make friends, and expand her limited social interactions.

So I approached Josh [her husband] with it and you know, as a wife you’re always thinking about an angle that would, I don’t want that to sound bad, but a different angle to where your husband might understand something a little bit better because if I just shoot from the hip he’s going to be like, “Uh, I don’t know about that.” So I have to figure out how to make it where he can understand my point of view for a minute and why I want to do it. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

In other words, Ashley had to be careful about how she approached her husband with her idea because, within patriarchal structures where men hold decision-making authority, women must present their ideas in a way that resonates with men (Kline 2013). Although her husband was initially skeptical and reiterated that it was his role to provide for their family, he said that if it was what she felt she needed to do then they could give it a try and he'd support her in it. He also, however, reminded her of her calling and role as a wife and mother. Ashley recounted his reminder, "The season of life you're in is being a mom, so just remember that and keep that in mind" (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015).

After a few weeks of trying to build her doTerra business, Ashley quit because she fell behind helping her husband with the accounting for his business. She also felt like she wasn't spending enough time with her children.

As I was doing things and starting things up a couple of weeks passed and he [her husband] kept asking me about a couple of things on some of the business accounts for his business and I'm like, "I didn't do that yet," or "Oh, I didn't get to that" or "Oh, I meant to do that before I did the doTerra thing." So, I noticed that those things were starting to fall through the cracks and then I noticed that with my kids I was just putting them to do certain things all day long and I wasn't interacting with them as much.... I was feeling completely unfulfilled as a mother then and I was even less happy and had this other thing that was taking up all of my time. So as a mom I was falling super short and my kids were unhappy and they were sick and I was tired and it was just this never ending thing. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

The pressure of doing everything and taking care of everyone else was too much; Ashley could not support her new doTerra business. Ashley chose to follow her prescribed role as wife and mother, and to operate as the supporter who holds everything in the house together. However, while Ashley made the choice she thought was best for her family,

there was little support for her to follow her desires. For example, although Ashley actively supported her husband's entrepreneurial business by managing the books (so he didn't have to pay someone else to do it) and staying at home with the kids, there was no mention in her experience of him actively supporting her when she started her DoTerra business (although he was away from home the entire week working he didn't help reduce her workload the same way she helped him). She did not have the support to make the choice to start her own business in the same way that her husband had the support in his choice to start his own business. Although her husband said he'd support Ashley in her new venture, when she decided to quit, instead of looking for ways to help her succeed Ashley told me he said, "I didn't want to be the one to tell you and to crush that dream for you because I knew that it was important to you, but I also could see things just on this steady slope down" (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015). The premise of hegemonic Mormon motherhood Ashley operates under gave her permission to choose not to work, but did not provide her the structure needed to help her choose an alternative path.

Ultimately, these women were unable to make choices within the authoritative structure of Mormon motherhood that could benefit them and their families through increased income, abilities, and self-fulfillment. Claudia,⁴ a 31 year-old mother I interviewed, also shared her struggle to make changes in her home that expanded beyond a gendered division of labor while she was getting her Master's degree.

I don't know of anybody who has that one figured out, who's working and who's cleaning the house, and I don't know if anybody's figured that one out. I remember when I went back to school and when I went to do my student teaching he [her husband] was going to wash the dishes, and he was going to take over the

house. He couldn't do it, "It was really hard," he said. And so I was coming home and washing the dishes and feeding the children and doing the homework and I'm like this is going to really stink when I, because I want to go to work part-time, go work and come home and do homework and clean the house too. Because he just, he just goes to work, no offense, so what about when I go to work are we going to split that up? (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015)

Although Claudia has the education and desire to work outside the home, the thought of doing all the work is daunting to her. One of the major problems with a sexual division of labor is that when women move into the workplace, men do not necessarily move home to provide the support needed for women to be successful. This lack of structural support plays a huge role in why women leave the workforce in such shattering numbers after having children (Stone 2007).

As a result of this lack of support, the Mormon hegemonic model of motherhood becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Institutionally, the LDS church frames women as being best suited to stay at home. When women try to step outside those bounds, they often fail not because of their lack of ability, but because they lack the familial and structural support to help them succeed. This failure and subsequent return to the home is then framed as "choice," which in turn reinforces the status quo and strengthens the church's authoritative voice encouraging women to stay in the home.

Hegemony and Moral Discourse

The fourth component of hegemony in LDS motherhood is motherhood as a moral force. Women's perceived power in Mormonism is based around their moral force as mothers. The focus on women's moral force as a source of power reflects "republican motherhood," a concept established during the American Revolution. Republican

motherhood emphasizes women's indirect contribution to the Republic through their influence on the moral integrity of men and children and affirms that women's most important contribution to society is through their work as mothers in the sacred space of the home (Zagarri 1992). McKell's comments below illustrate that the ideals of republican motherhood are still powerful influences in Mormonism as she reflects on the influence for good women can have within the home.

The church has stressed that women's role is at home and to be a mom and to nurture and all that. In doing so they provide some kind of an example of every good quality you can think of...I get that women can influence in a lot of different ways, but I think the strongest influence a woman can have is on her children. (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015)

According to this viewpoint, not only is a woman's power derived from the moral good she provides society, but that "influence is nowhere more powerfully felt or more beneficially employed than in the home" (Christofferson 2013).

A central notion to women's moral power in republican motherhood is teaching upright and moral principles within the family. Women's education is justified in republican motherhood because it is assumed that if women are educated they are better equipped to influence and teach their families to be respectable citizens (Zagarri 1992). While Mormon women are encouraged to receive a college education for their and their families' benefit,⁵ the women I interviewed focused their responses toward spiritual education and teaching. McKell shared her thoughts regarding the importance of a mother's spiritual teachings:

I hesitate to say there's not anything else I could do that would be more important than raising righteous children...but I think that the church teaches that a righteous woman who understands those gospel principles can in turn teach those righteous principles to her children and they will do the same and so that will

effect generations of people forever.... So I think that is huge for me, teaching the righteous things and helping them understand those principles and ordinances of the gospel. That's huge for me. (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, May 28, 2015)

For many Mormon mothers, teaching righteous principles to their children is of the utmost importance. Righteous principles or actions are defined as “characterized by justice or uprightness; morally right or justifiable” (*OED Online*, s.v. “Righteous,” <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/165873> [accessed November 07, 2015]). Within Mormonism, righteous principles are those things that lead to Christ, such as following the commandments and living worthily to participate in ordinances such as baptism and within the temple (Perry 2011). It has been taught that a righteous LDS mother’s “first and most important role is to remember the teaching of the gospel in the family” so her children will also be righteous (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2000). Ashley reiterated this position:

In everything I do with my kids I try to make sure that I include the gospel in some way or another. That's the only way they are going to live, LIVE, Christ centered lives, not just be members of the church and think about the Savior during the sacrament on Sundays, but in everything that they do. If you don't instill that now in everything that they're doing now it's not going to happen later, they're not going to know how to do it. They're not going to know how to incorporate the Savior in a fight they'll have with their brother or they're not going to be able to incorporate the Savior into discovering a new bug outside and this creation or how to respect somebody when they're talking to somebody else. All these little things that I can see daddy might not do because he doesn't think about all those little things. That's just not the way he was programmed as a man, that's not the way he was created, that's the way I was created. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

The LDS church views the special insight and influence of a mother who nurtures righteous living in her children as the most powerful influence for good within her home and her society.

While Mormon women are revered for their moral work in the home, feminist economist Nancy Folbre observed that, “The moral elevation of the home was accompanied by the economic devaluation of the work performed there” (qtd. in Crittenden [2001] 2010, 47). In republican motherhood, by choosing to forego monetary compensation and instead work within the home, mothers take the moral high ground to work in a “labor of love” for their families (Crittenden [2001] 2010, 138). The women I interviewed perceive their role as mothers as powerful and essential, but also sense how motherhood is devalued economically and is seen as less powerful. Claudia expressed her concern that her role as a mother, while important, is not valued in today’s society and is not considered powerful.

I consider myself as pretty driven, looking for a career, had a career, I was going to college, I was working, I had a mortgage, I was you know doing it and then today being a mom is like, “Oooh a mom, you poor thing,” and it’s not valued. I haven’t worked since 2008 because I’ve been a mom. You know that sounds horrible. I’m like I’ve been a mom to my kids, I’ve been homeschooling, I’ve been doing therapy, I’ve been busy, but I don’t have any W-2s to prove it or show anything for it. So there’s no value in it as far as everything else....The church puts a lot of value on being a mother and I really love that, because from day to day you feel like, did I do anything today? I have all this stuff to do and nothing got done, but then my kids are happy and they learned a new skill today and I’m like we’re okay. (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015)

While Claudia is aware of how motherhood is devalued, she finds power and value as a mother by teaching her children and raising them well. Claudia shared how she finds power in her moral force as a mother with her son Luke,⁶ who has autism. When he was very young Luke was diagnosed with non-verbal autism and was by all definitions non-functioning. Claudia describes the hours upon hours of therapy and training necessary to help her son with the most basic tasks:

I was bombarded with therapists on my monthly calendar. Every other week was someone else and sometimes twice a week coming to my house and he was only two. Can you imagine? I wanted to just lose it. And if this is not a trial of being a momma I don't know what is, because this kid needed so much help, I mean we're talking three or four hours of crying to put pants on. Pants! And I'm like really, because he was so sensitive to touch we were working on him putting his legs in. He would put his leg in, and at that point we were doing a don't touch him kind of a thing, so you never forced him to do it, it was just like "put your pants on, put your pants on." You'd present it over and over for like three hours and then you'd write down it took three hours and then, "alright time for your shirt," and my husband's cooking dinner and I'm like, "yeah, still working on it." (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015)

According to Claudia, Luke's therapists constantly critiqued her parenting skills, and she spent most of her own time to help Luke. However, in her eyes it was all worth it. "Yeah we did that [intensive therapy], and then he went to Kindergarten mainstream. So he graduated out of special ed right before kinder, they no longer saw a need in the classroom for a person to follow him or to have an IEP, he got a 100% on everything" (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015). In Claudia's eyes the years she spent with her son are paying off and with her help Luke can do more than he could previously.⁷ She finds power in helping Luke: "There is power in that because it brings you back to the moment, he's just having a bad day for a little bit, he does love me, he's just working out whatever kinks he's got going on. It's pretty powerful this thing called motherhood" (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015).

McKell also shared her perspective regarding how she sees motherhood's moral influence as historically devaluated and disregarded:

I think that the world and the way that we interpret history now wants us to say that only kings had power, only the men priests had power. Only, they've decided because of this itty bit of history that we have written down that we maybe don't even know all of it, and I think historians have admitted that. But I feel like we've decided what was powerful, what was important, what was valued and we've

made all these judgments....Who are we to say that King Henry's mother or his wife didn't have any sway or any influence just because it's not written in the itty bit that we have?...Who are we to say that women didn't have power because they aren't what we read in history? I think it all depends on what you, or what society values, and if you value being seen and noticed and remembered then yeah, they probably didn't, but if that's not necessarily what you're seeking then maybe they did. (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015)

McKell questions society's interpretation of power as dominance and suggests that motherhood should be considered powerful. Although McKell views motherhood as socially devalued, she still believes that her role as a mother is the most important and influential job.

The most good that can happen in the world and the most real good and the most change and all that is not going to come from government down or activist down. I think that the most good that can happen is going to happen in the home.... These five humans that I help mold and create and hopefully help them be good people, and for me that includes having strong testimonies and I get that that's not that way for everyone, for me it's vital. But what I do at home will make a huge difference and because that makes a huge difference then those five people will go on to do the exact same thing to whomever they touch. So, I think that as they get older and as I think about my role and my job it matters, it makes a big difference. And if everybody thinks it matters that's a big deal. That's a big deal. That's a lot of people that can make some change. (McKell Redd, unpublished interview, May 28, 2015)

According to McKell, the job of molding the lives of her children is the most important task she can undertake. Her comments reflect the teachings of Neil A. Maxwell, a former apostle of the LDS church, regarding a mother's influence:

When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses? When the surf of the centuries has made the great pyramids so much sand, the everlasting family will still be standing, because it is a celestial institution, formed outside telestial time. The women of God know this. (Maxwell 1978)

According to church doctrine, the moral force and influence of mothers is the most important job to not only raise good children and bring a positive influence to the world, but also because it is a role that transcends time.

However, even with women's perceived moral power, women are still left without direct structural power. Defining power and who has it is complicated because there are two main ways to think of power: "power over," referencing domination of one group over others, and "power to," referencing a capacity to accomplish or influence things (Hearn 2012, 82). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, power defined "as a quality or property" refers to both the "ability to act or affect something strongly; physical or mental strength; might; vigour, energy; effectiveness" and also "control or authority over others; dominion, rule; government, command, sway" (*OED Online*, s.v. "Power, n.1," [http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149167?rskey=vY355H &result=1](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149167?rskey=vY355H&result=1) [accessed November 07, 2015]). While power is defined in these two main ways, in discussions of hegemonic structures power is most often referenced as "power over" rather than "power to" (Hearn 2012).

Although motherhood is not considered "power over," in republican motherhood it can be regarded powerful according to the definition of power as the "ability to act or affect something strongly" (*OED Online*, s.v. "Power, n.1," <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/149167?rskey=vY355H&result=1> [accessed November 07, 2015]). As discussed in the section on hegemonic structure, women do not hold institutional power within the church organization, and this lack of institutional power is justified because women's perceived power comes from their role as a mother. However, the comparison of male

priesthood and female motherhood is a fallacy of equivocation because while men's power in Mormonism refers to "power over" (they have the priesthood to hold institutional offices), women's perceived power is "power to" (they can influence and act within the hegemonic structure). Republican motherhood masks the different definitions of power in veiled equality. In the past, republican motherhood served as the main argument against women gaining the right to vote because it was argued that women already influenced the political sphere through their work in the home. Republican motherhood, and the argument that women's power comes from their moral force for good, "extended a kind of equality to women, but at the same time justified the status quo. It acknowledged the importance of female education, but generally saw its function in terms of women's relationship to men. It recognized the political significance of the family, but did not give women the right to vote" (Zagarri 1992, 210). Mothers are consistently told their work is the most valuable contribution to society, but then are not given any real institutional power for them to broaden or exert that influence (Crittenden [2001] 2010). So, while women have the power to influence with their moral force, they cannot influence any other way because they lack the power to define it.

Women's inability to define what motherhood looks like is doubly problematic because not only is their power limited, but they are also assigned moral responsibility for their power. In his discussion on power and morality, Jonathan Hearn stated, "When we assign moral responsibility, we are also, by implication...asserting that those 'responsible' had the power to do otherwise" (Hearn 2012, 168). Conveniently, women's moral power sets them up to blame if they fail to meet the expectations of motherhood,

even though they have no power over determining those expectations. This catch-22 of moral influence and responsibility has been coined the “new momism” by Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels in their book *The Mommy Myth* (2004). Douglas and Michaels claim that the new momism continually places full and complete responsibility for raising children on women, defines what makes a “good” mother, and tells women that if their version of motherhood does not fit these narrowly prescribed conditions then they are failing (Douglas and Michaels 2004, 3-4). Although on the surface the new momism appears to offer support for women, it ultimately undermines women’s ability to achieve its standards and results in women’s feelings of failure and maternal ambivalence (Douglas and Michaels 2004). In essence, republican motherhood and the new momism operate under the premise that women do not make the rules they have to live by. While the women I interviewed feel empowered through their moral force as mothers, the discourse of motherhood as a moral force masks the fact that women are still operating within a disempowering hegemonic structure.

Hegemony and Scriptural Teachings

The fifth component of hegemony in the LDS system of motherhood is through doctrine and scriptural teachings. With the responsibility of being the moral force for the world, the women I interviewed expressed gratitude for church teachings regarding motherhood that help them find strength in their roles as mothers. One of the greatest sources of strength for these women was through General Conference talks. General Conference is a bi-annual meeting where instead of holding regular local church services, the LDS prophet, apostles, and other general leaders speak to the worldwide membership.

The general leaders of the church often mention the difficulties and weight of motherhood and express sensitivity to these challenges during General Conference.

Claudia shared how she feels strengthened by the talks in General Conference.

I like the talks during General Conference. I like it when they have the talks for mom or family because that's really nice and it feels like they care, which I never got from the Pope. That's terrible. But it's so personal, like the church, holy cow. In a lot of ways you just listen to the talks and it can be personal or be about being a mom or being a wife and it just applies really well and that just tells me that we're doing something right because for the church to reach that many people with these talks and granted there's only a handful of them, it has to be inspired right? (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015)

According to Claudia she not only finds strength while she watches general conference, but she maintains that strength throughout her life with an app that delivers daily church quotes and her unique note taking system.

They have an app where you can get quotes given to you, from the prophets and just a daily quote that pops up and I've found those pretty cool... [Also] from General Conference I wrote all these notes out on those stickies [Post-its] and I always keep these so I can write from any given talk that I like and then I laminated them. They're just different stuff that stood out to me during General Conference... it's just a good reset especially on bad days, and I'll just flip through them really quick. (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, July 8, 2015)

Claudia shared how her notes remind her of the teachings of church leaders and give her strength on a daily basis. Ashley also shared the strength she receives from General Conference.

To have that support through the prophets and apostles constantly talking about mothers and they make it so specific too by not just saying in their talks, "Oh you know mothers are wonderful," they say, "You are a wonderful mother." So when you're sitting there in women's conference you're like, thank you, I'm trying, I'm doing my best, like that support. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

Along with receiving strength specifically from General Conference, Ashley shared how the church's specific beliefs regarding women strengthen her.

I love the reverence they have for mothers, the respect. Like the church knows how hard it is and the incredible weight that mothers have in creating these humans, not just birthing the humans, but really molding and creating and teaching and directing these little people. They recognize how difficult that is and I think we have this belief in the gospel that we know we have a Heavenly Mother and because of the love and respect and reverence our Heavenly Father has for her, we don't talk that much about her, but you can feel the love that the church has for women and that's I think a direct correlation between our knowledge of our Heavenly Mother and the respect our Father has for her it totally is copied into the way the church treats us and loves us and talks about us and reveres us and lifts us up and supports us and there's so many things in the church that support our role as mother, as women in the church which is great. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

The women I interviewed are reassured by the reverence and support given to mothers through talks and church doctrine that their influence is important and worthwhile.

Ashley shared, "I don't know how moms not in the gospel can be good at their job. To me they don't have the support and the resources and the tools and the help spiritually" (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015). The women I interviewed conveyed the message that their job as mothers would be impossible without the church influence in their lives. The expectations of hegemonic Mormon motherhood are set too high for them to reach on their own, and the church doctrine helps them feel strengthened and successful.

However, Mormon women are not part of the church's governing structure to determine doctrine and, although they are revered for their work in the home, they are not considered authorities on motherhood. In an effort to understand how knowledge and authority is conferred, childbirth researchers have studied various cultural scripts

available to women, and found that these scripts are formed through “authoritative knowledge” (Jordan [1978] 1993, Davis-Floyd and Sargent 1997, Miller 2005). Brigitte Jordan, a leading scholar on childbirth and authoritative knowledge, explains, “For any particular domain, several knowledge systems exist, some of which, by consensus, come to carry more weight than others, either because they explain the state of the world better for the purposes at hand, or because they are associated with a stronger power base” (Jordan [1978] 1993, 152). Because women do not have “power over,” they, and others, struggle to consider themselves authorities in regards to motherhood and turn instead to sources of authoritative knowledge (such as the medical field, the media, parenting experts, and spiritual leaders) for strength (Miller 2005, Douglas and Michaels 2004). The women I interviewed only have “power to” act within hegemonic Mormon motherhood and do not have institutional “power over” to determine what motherhood looks like within church doctrine. As a result, male priesthood holders provide an overwhelming majority of Mormon teachings regarding motherhood.

Mormon women’s lack of institutional voice and authority regarding motherhood and families is illustrated in an interview with Chieko N. Okazaki, a former member of the LDS general Relief Society Presidency. In the interview she mentions her frustration that the female leaders of the church were not consulted in writing “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (1995), an official LDS statement regarding the structure of the family. When her and other female leaders were asked whether the proclamation should be read in the general Priesthood or Relief Society meetings, she stated, “It didn’t matter to me where it was presented. What I wanted to know was, ‘How come we

weren't consulted?' ... As I read it I thought that we could have made a few changes in it. Sometimes I think they [the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles] get so busy that they forget that we are there" (Okazaki 2012, 136). Although Mormon women are consistently revered and honored for the work they do within their families, because they lack structural power and visibility their experience, knowledge, and perspective regarding motherhood is not considered authoritative and is thereby largely ignored.

Hegemony and Individual Spirituality

The sixth component of hegemonic Mormon motherhood is individual spirituality. The women I interviewed also described how their personal relationships with God and Jesus Christ have helped them find strength in their daily interactions as mothers. Ashley obtains strength from her patriarchal blessing, which is a special blessing given by a Patriarch – a male priesthood holder who is called to give patriarchal blessings – where members receive specific counsel from God regarding their life. Men perform all blessings within the church because they hold the priesthood authority to speak for God. In this way, women's relationship to counsel from God is mediated by men. However, while men give patriarchal blessings, this doesn't undermine Mormons' belief that patriarchal blessings come from God. A patriarchal blessing is regarded as a source of strength, comfort, and guidance and often reveals specific traits or gifts of an individual. Ashley shared:

Well my patriarchal blessing talks about being a mom...[and] says that I'll be an exceptional mother. I think about that every single day as I'm losing it and it helps me to remember okay, the way I'm acting right now is not the mom that I'm supposed to be and it helps me get up to a higher level, it helps me remember to try a little bit harder and to forgive a little bit quicker and so that's something that the Lord helps to support us in by giving us those blessings that help us remember

who we are. That's the way we're supported by him in those little tender mercies where we think we're awful and then I remember, no, I'm an exceptional mother. My patriarchal blessing says explicitly that I'm an exceptional mother....Even if I'm not an exceptional mother right now I am an exceptional mother because the Lord told me I am and that makes all the difference in the world. (Ashley Hermann, unpublished interview, May 29, 2015)

The reminder that she was an exceptional mother from her patriarchal blessing provided needed strength in the moments when she felt she was failing to do what she needed as a mother.

Anya also expressed how the strength she receives from the Lord increases her faith and allows her to accomplish things she didn't think possible.

When we got married we had that gospel foundation, we decided are we going to wait to have kids, are we not going to wait you know, start right away and finish school. Growing up it was never a worldly perspective of can we afford it, do we have this, do we have that. It was more like well, the plan of salvation is to bring the spirits down and if we decide that just because we can't afford it, I don't know. So I said, "You know, if I'm ready to get married then that's one of the steps we'll take." ... So in a spiritual sense I said, "You know if the Lord gives us a child we will raise it and we can do it." So, I think it was good that the foundation of our marriage was the gospel and so that any trial that we came across we could both lean on the Lord instead of one. (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, June 2, 2015)

Exhibiting faith in the decision of when to have kids allowed Anya to practice putting her trust in God and has helped her find strength in her tasks as a mother.

On those days where you feel frustrated I think leaning on Him at times builds your testimony....So when I hit those points in my life where I'm just frustrated I'm like, "Now I need your help, I don't know what to do." You know He's always there to help. It helps with motherhood. (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, June 2, 2015)

The women I interviewed also find strength by comparing their work as mothers and Christ's work as the Savior. In Mormonism, motherhood is often compared to godliness and is seen as the ultimate sacrifice of one's desires. Recently one of the LDS

apostles, Jeffrey R. Holland, compared mothers to Christ in General Conference saying, “No love in mortality comes closer to approximating the pure love of Jesus Christ than the selfless love a devoted mother has for her child” (Holland 2015). Claudia shared a specific experience where she felt strength and support from this godly comparison. Her daughter was sick one evening and Claudia stayed up all night long taking care of her. In the early morning hours, she was restless and tired from a long night and frustrated by the circumstances. Then she realized, “All of a sudden you’re second to your children and you don’t think twice about it. I think a lot of ways it makes me think of Christ, you know he would’ve done this for me in a heartbeat – that pain I feel in my back, my neck, He went through that, He knows” (Claudia McKay, unpublished interview, June 1, 2015). Claudia sees her work as a mother as similar to her Savior, and that comparison brings her comfort and strength during the long process of raising children. It assures her that someone understands her feelings and can help her be the best mom she can be.

In addition to leaning on the Lord for strength in motherhood, Anya explained how she is strengthened through her belief that church teachings regarding family life and structure are up for interpretation and that she can receive personal revelation for how those teachings operate within her home. Within Mormonism, revelation is defined as “communication from God to His children” and personal revelation refers to revelation given to individuals who have asked for help with “specific personal needs, responsibilities, and questions and to help...strengthen [their] testimony” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2015). Anya explained, “Women’s roles in the church, I don’t see it as a burden or as a, I don’t know, I guess like a slap on the hand, this is what

you have to do. I just see it as a starting point. The mustard seed” (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, June 2, 2015). Anya’s mustard seed analogy references the New Testament scripture, “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs” (Matthew 13:31-32 [King James Version]). It is commonly used in Mormonism to refer to taking something small (like a testimony or in this case women’s role) and cultivating it, through prayer, scripture reading, and following the commandments, to become larger and stronger. Anya finds strength in making individual decisions regarding her role and the needs of her family through personal revelation.

[The church] says you know to do FHE once a week and it says to have family council and all this stuff, but it’s not an interview when you have to go get your temple recommend, it’s not a required thing. They give you the family home evening manual that you can use as a tool, but you don’t have to follow this like how they do it for Sunday School. It’s more you cater to your family and how your children are and I think it also helps to be inspired to build your testimony to put your relationship with Christ...I think for us we have the foundation as the gospel and the things that they provide for families, but we’re still building. We’ve got a frame, but we don’t fully have a roof up yet you know because it’s still trial and error and depends on where we are and situations that come up and what rules are we going to set for our children...[We] take that foundation and try to build upon that foundation and we use our inspiration to build upon that foundation. (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, July 9, 2015)

Although Anya acknowledges the rigid structure of Mormon family life and motherhood, she sees it more as a framework for her family and she has the privilege of filling in all the other spaces.

I think people get too stressed sometimes about following [church teachings] to the T or getting frustrated that it’s too strict you know, but for me it’s okay here it is, now how can I nurture that and help it grow. You know so if it tells me that my responsibility is to teach my children, it doesn’t mean that my husband cannot

teach my children, you know, but it means that I need to take head front in making sure that my children learn these things and so I need to take that principle and take it and see how do I make it grow. And so I get a calling, I need to take that calling, how can I expand it, how can I do the best I can do, or even beyond and to do that I would pray about it, seek inspiration for it, and that's where my agency would come and that's where my connecting with Heavenly Father would come is to find that inspiration. (Anya Hill, unpublished interview, June 2, 2015)

Anya views her power as a mother as closely linked to receiving power from God through personal revelation. In patriarchal religions, such as Mormonism, where women are excluded from ecclesiastical authority, personal revelation provides a place of power for women where they can exert some authority over their choices and lifestyle (Brady 1987, Mould 2011). By praying and receiving guidance regarding family choices, Anya uses personal revelation as a source of personal power and a way to control (at least to some degree) her own life.

However, the church institution ultimately mediates these personal spiritual relationships and experiences. While individual spiritual experiences and revelation are encouraged within the church, they “are interpreted, constructed, and narrated within [a] web of social and cultural norms. Meaning is shaped dialogically: experience informs expectation, expectation informs experience” (Mould 2011: 382). Based on LDS cultural norms and expectations regarding motherhood, personal revelation and experiences are believed and accepted by other members if they fit within the hegemonic structure. For Ashley, her blessing stating she would be an exceptional mother fits within the hegemonic structure of motherhood and is therefore a reliable source of strength. In the same way, although Anya finds power in receiving personal revelation for her family, her revelation must roughly fit within the institutional expectations or it will be deemed as

misguided. Margaret Brady observed that personal revelation replaces personal choice “with a kind of personal and social power derived from bringing one’s own value choices into alignment with the spiritual values of the community” (Brady 1987, 467). Although individual spirituality provides a place for Mormon women to express some form of individual authority over their lives, it ultimately reinforces hegemonic Mormon motherhood.

Conclusion

This thesis explored six ways hegemonic power operates in Mormon women’s lives: 1) through essentialism and gender roles; 2) structurally/institutionally; 3) through the discourse of choice; 4) through the discourse of motherhood as moral force; 5) through church teachings and doctrine; 6) and through individual spirituality. The women I interviewed do not perceive Mormon motherhood as hegemonic or disempowering, but they accommodate their lives to the hegemonic structure in these six ways. Exploring the various ways hegemonic power operates in these women’s lives unveils the disempowering structure of Mormon motherhood and the hegemonic explanatory models they use to justify their lives.

As Lisa Gilman observed, there are “many different ways that people experience and respond to power that may not fit under the rubric of resistance” (Gilman 2009, 168). The women I interviewed do not expressly resist the cultural norms for Mormon motherhood; rather, they acquiesce to authority by accepting their structurally appointed roles. In doing, they are restricted from making choices outside the structure, but they also gain some control over their place in the home through following their religious

tradition. Sherry B. Ortner explicates, “In a relationship of power, the dominant often has something to offer, and sometimes a great deal (though always of course at the price of continuing in power). The subordinate thus has many grounds for ambivalence about resisting the relationship” (qtd. in Gilman 2009, 171). Although hegemonic Mormon motherhood is disempowering, explicitly resisting the structure of Mormon motherhood entails risk to women’s relationship to themselves, their family, and their religion. These risks include: being invalidated because motherhood is a woman’s only source of power within the structure, being a perceived threat to the accepted family structure by questioning the role of motherhood, and being perceived as faithless because motherhood is the divinely appointed role for all women. Acquiescing to hegemonic Mormon motherhood, however, allows these women to secure their status within Mormonism as righteous, faithful, and important mothers, which is of upmost value to them.

While restrictive, the essentialist views about gender in Mormonism are the only basis upon which women obtain some modicum of visibility within the institution. In hegemonic Mormon motherhood, women are given influence within the home and “mother’s special competence in raising kids provides them with a position of honor within the household” (Hays 1996, 107). It is therefore not surprising that women are not overly eager to give up their domestic status through direct resistance, as it is their only source of status and influence. I argue that by accepting the tradition of hegemonic Mormon motherhood, the women I interviewed act as mothers in the only way they can maintain at least limited status and visibility within a patriarchal and disempowering structure. In *Handmaidens of the Lord* (1988) Lawless illustrates that although

Pentecostal female preachers resist tradition by taking to the pulpit, they maintain influence and status within their religious community because they acquiesce to certain feminine expectations. This is also illustrated in *The Dance of Politics* (Gilman 2009) where Malawi women establish some economic independence and hold minor political power by dancing at political rallies. In these examples, these women continue to operate within disempowering structures because resisting them is too risky. For Mormon mothers, maintaining the status quo provides more status and opportunity within Mormonism than they would have if they resisted the hegemonic structure. Ultimately, these women accommodate their lives to hegemonic Mormon motherhood based on what they deem is best for themselves and their families.

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¹ Ashley is a stay-at-home mother to four children ages 6, 4, 2, and 8 months. She grew up in Colorado and was raised LDS. Her family recently moved to Logan, UT from Missouri for her husband to begin school at Utah State University. She has a love of the arts and is currently looking to pursue her schooling by taking classes at USU part-time with her husband. I interviewed her for this research on May 29, 2015.

² McKell is a stay-at-home mother to five boys ages 9, 8, 6, 5, and 3. She grew up LDS in Tremonton, UT, which is twenty minutes away from Logan. She is currently going to school part-time and working toward a Bachelor's degree in History Teaching. I interviewed her for this research on May 29, 2015 and July 8, 2015.

³ Anya (name has been changed) is a stay-at-home mother to four children ages 8, 5, 3, and a newborn. She grew up in Hilo, Hawaii and was raised LDS. She is currently working toward her Master's degree in Construction Management online through the University of Alabama Birmingham. I interviewed her for this research on June 2, 2015 and July 9, 2015.

⁴ Claudia (name has been changed) is a stay-at-home mother to four kids (two step-sons, ages 14 and 16, and two children living at home, ages 4 and 6) in Logan, UT. Her family is from Mexico and she grew up in San Elizario, TX (a little town outside El Paso). She grew up Catholic and converted to Mormonism when she was 19 years old. In May 2015 she received her Master's of Education in special education.

⁵ See Thomas S. Monson, "Three Goals to Guide You," *Ensign*, November 2007. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2007/11/three-goals-to-guide-you?lang=eng> [accessed November 10, 2015]. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Perpetual Education Fund," *Ensign*, May 2001. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2001/05/the-perpetual-education-fund?lang=eng> [accessed November 10, 2015]. Mary N. Cook, "Seek Learning: You Have a Work to Do," *Ensign*, May 2012. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2012/05/seek-learning-you-have-a-work-to-do?lang=eng> [accessed November 10, 2015].

⁶ Name has been changed

⁷ Claudia's discussion of her role in helping her son with his disability points to a larger discussion regarding parenting and disability. One of the major debates in disability discourse surrounds whether or not stay-at-home parents can "fix" their children's disabilities.