



The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing

Volume 48

Issue 1 *The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly
Historical Writing*

Article 6

2019

A Promise of Something New?: Latter-day Saint Teachings to Young Women 1960s-1970s

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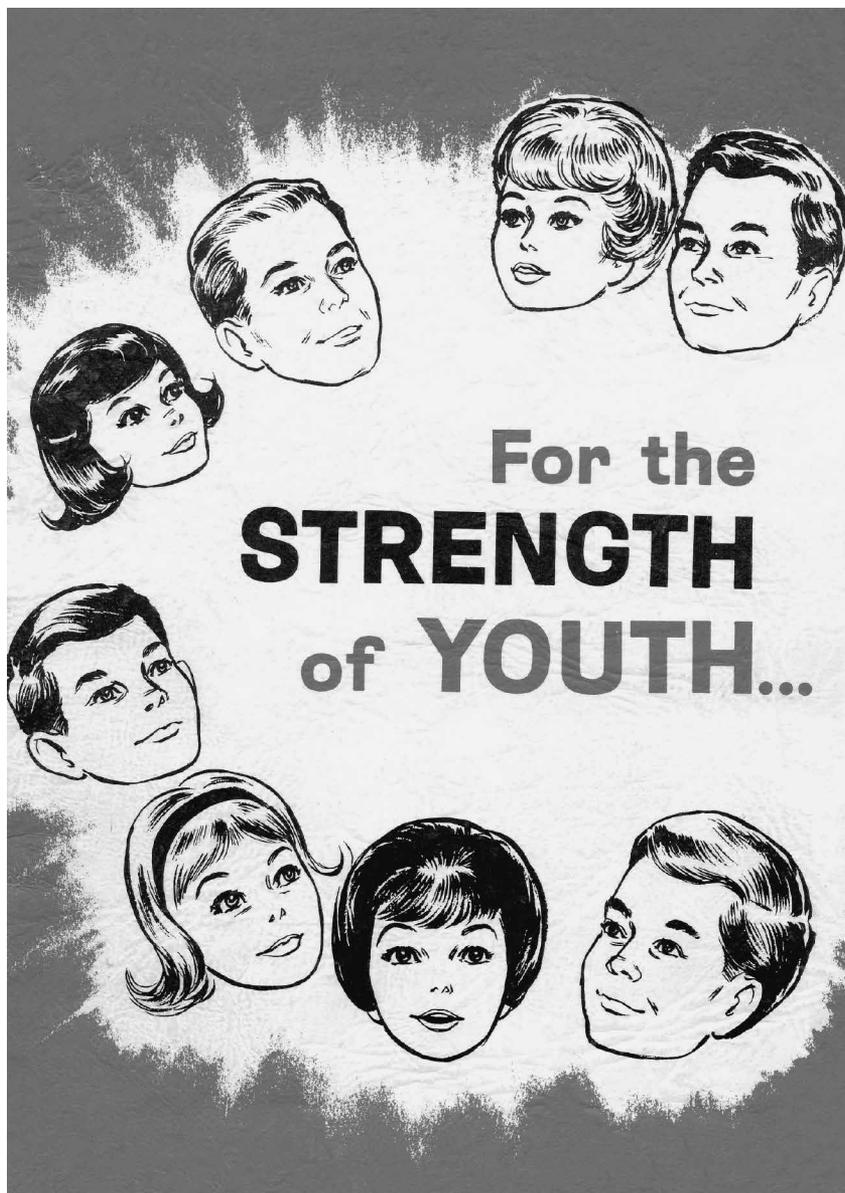
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Recommended Citation

Davidson, Catherine (2019) "A Promise of Something New?: Latter-day Saint Teachings to Young Women 1960s-1970s," *The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing*: Vol. 48 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thetean/vol48/iss1/6>

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For the Strength of Youth pamphlet, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1965

Paper

A Promise of Something New? Latter-day Saint Teachings to Young Women 1960s–1970s

Catherine Davidson

IN JUNE OF 2011, THE *friend*, A CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-day Saints magazine for children, featured a story about four-year-old Hannah, a girl who received a sleeveless dress from her grandmother. The dress, however, brought her sadness and anxiety rather than joy; she felt like she could not wear it since it exposed her shoulders. When the girl's mother gently suggested that she could simply wear a t-shirt underneath the dress to more fully cover her body, Hannah, her shoulders now covered, was "ready" for her day.¹ In 2013, the *Friend* published a similar story about young Stacey who experienced discomfort on a shopping trip when her friend suggested she try on a spaghetti-strap shirt. Stacey picked up the shirt, about to try it on, but knew that it was not right; she felt the Holy Ghost warn her not to try it on.² Although the article gave this slightly older girl the ability to solve her own dilemma, both girls strongly believed that showing their shoulders was disrespectful to their body. Both stories suggested that wearing immodest clothing sent a message that a girl is using her body for "attention and approval."³

In some ways these stories were unsurprising. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known for its emphasis on modesty and chastity before

1. Tamra S. Arthur, "Hannah's New Dress," *The Friend*, June 2011.

2. Annie Beer, "The Orange Shirt," *The Friend*, May 2013.

3. Beer, "The Orange Shirt."

marriage, regularly stresses those themes in material for youth. Yet, these stories met widespread disapproval—including from Latter-day Saint women. While many readers were used to (and may have supported) the Church's instruction for female members to pay careful attention to their dress and to not display too much of their bodies, the stories raised alarm. Was the Church really telling girls as young as four that they needed to think about their bodies as sexual objects? Should young girls feel ashamed of themselves for wearing a sundress or tank top? Could a child's clothing even be considered immodest?

Strong messages about modesty and the female body are not new to the twenty-first century Church. Latter-day Saint youth manuals and talks by Church leaders from the 1960s and 1970s reveal the subtle—and sometimes not-so-subtle—messages that girls needed to be careful to cover and control their bodies. Such instructions were a central part of Latter-day Saint teachings for girls. At the same time that Church materials emphasized appropriate dress and modesty, they also stressed girls' future roles as wives and mothers, and their need to remain close to the Church and support its leaders. This emphasis on traditional gender roles and conservative values was not incidental; Church leadership used these instructions as pushback to the changing social norms incurred by second-wave feminism, the Sexual Revolution, and the youth counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Scholars have only recently begun to examine young people in Church history. Rebecca de Schweinitz's work, "Holding on to the 'Chosen Generation': The Mormon Battle for Youth in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s," examines the Church's efforts to hold onto youth membership during the late twentieth century, a time when youth in America were becoming more secular. It also recognizes the gendered ways that the Church thought about young people, but includes little research directly about girls. Her work on the *Young Women's Journal* (YWJ) likewise explores youth in Church history, as she analyzes girls' experiences in the Church during late nineteenth century through the fictional stories in the YWJ. These stories explored themes of "women's health, education, clothing, suffrage, and marriage,"⁴ and presented characters that were ambitious and who longed for freedom, but eventually "relinquished their independent lives . . . for marriage and motherhood."⁵ De Schweinitz's work,

4. Rebecca De Schweinitz, "Preaching the Gospel of Church and Sex: Mormon Women's Fiction in *The Young Women's Journal*, 1889–1910," in *Dimensions of Faith: A Mormon Studies Reader*, ed. Stephen C. Taysom (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 391.

5. Schweinitz, "Preaching the Gospel of Church and Sex," 416.

however, pays little attention to the girls to whom the YWJ was directed to and instead spends more time on the women authors who wrote its content.

Latter-day Saint women's history is a vibrant and growing field. Although most Latter-day Saint women's history scholarship centers on the nineteenth century, Neil J. Young's *Fascinating and Happy: Mormon Women, the LDS Church, and the Politics of Social Conservatism* focuses on Latter-day Saint women's experiences in twentieth century. He considers the relationship between the Church and women's bodies, as women were encouraged to "defend God's plan for human sexuality and the traditional family against the threats of women's liberation."⁶ Young also explores how Latter-day Saint women became politically active in opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) during the 1960s and 1970s, and how these political views stemmed from Church doctrine and culture. Young writes that, "church leaders frequently implored LDS women . . . to conform to strict gender roles, [and] avoid all unchaste behavior outside of wedlock."⁷ Young argues that Latter-day Saint women's conservatism came from their belief that, as wives, they were morally superior because of their adherence to said gender roles and chaste behavior, and the ERA would threaten the pedestal upon which they sat.⁸

Scholarly explorations of Latter-day Saint women's experiences take on new meaning when examined through the lens of race. Amanda Hendrix-Komoto's "Mahana, You Naked!: Modesty, Sexuality, and Race in the Mormon Pacific" addresses ideas about race and female sexuality. She shows that during the late twentieth century Church members believed there was an overt sexuality about Pacific Islanders, and this belief caused great concern over interracial marriage within the Church. Members' beliefs about the sexuality of Pacific Islanders came in part from their exposure to the Church College of Hawaii's Polynesian Cultural Center (PCC); student workers at the PCC were asked to "uncover parts of their bodies . . . so they better embodied Polynesian culture."⁹ The discrepancies between modesty standards for Polynesian and white students

6. Neil J. Young, "Fascinating and Happy: Mormon Women, the LDS Church, and the Politics of Sexual Conservatism," in *Devotion and Desires: Histories of Sexuality and Religion in the Twentieth-Century United States*, ed. Gillian Frank, Bethany Moreton, and Heather R. White (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 195.

7. Young, "Fascinating and Happy," 197.

8. Young, "Fascinating and Happy," 207.

9. Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, "Mahana, You Naked!: Modesty, Sexuality, and Race in the Mormon Pacific," in *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism Since 1945*, ed. Patrick Q. Mason and John G. Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 194.

caused community members to question “how Polynesian bodies were valued.”¹⁰ Hendrix-Komoto also argues that it was the presence of white students at the Church College of Hawaii that raised concerns about interracial marriage and protecting white purity. She also points out that while the Church was concerned about protecting white women’s sexuality, it had no problem displaying the bodies of Polynesian students.

Outside of Church history, other scholars have looked more broadly at young people growing up in America. Jon Savage’s work *Teenage: the Creation of Youth Culture* explores this very theme. By studying the work of social scientists from the mid-twentieth century, he argues that the category of teenager emerged primarily as a marketing group, and he draws the conclusion that many societies tried to define but also control adolescence.¹¹ Like Savage, Grace Palladino argues that teenagers were valued most as consumers, therefore it mattered a great deal what they wore. Consequently, marketers tried to influence youth and set the standard for how they should appear. She also argues that as teenagers spent more time in peer groups they gained greater autonomy. This autonomy led to experimentation not just with fashion, but with their private lives and their sexuality.

Some historians have explored, in particular, the history of girls. Kelly Schrum’s study of teenage girls’ diaries, yearbooks, advertisements, and magazines shows that teenagers were consumers and trendsetters, and parents and marketers were often at odds, as both tried to influence young women and the decisions they made about their bodies. More often than not, girls absorbed the message that proper appearance contributed to success in life. This message led teenage girls to comply with what they deemed popular and acceptable fashion and makeup trends, despite parents’ objections. Joan Jacobs Brumberg expands the scholarship about teenage girls by focusing on their bodies, namely menstruation and sexuality, and explores “what it means to grow up in a female body.”¹² She argues that by the end of the twentieth century, “the body [was] regarded as something to be managed and maintained, usually through

10. Hendrix-Komoto, “Mahana, You Naked,” 194.

11. Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Prehistory of Youth Culture, 1875–1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007).

12. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Random House, 1997), xxv.

expenditures on clothes and personal grooming items.”¹³ Brumberg also links girls’ feelings of identity and individualism to feelings about their bodies. Like Schrum, she contends that marketers and advertisers became the new educators and standard-setters for teenage girls.

To understand the history of the Church and its young female membership, it is important to take a broader approach. Scholars have only recently differentiated women and girls, and many of those historians have addressed the broader topic of youth history and how the idea of adolescence came to exist. Other scholars have studied youth history but through the lens of teenage fashion and appearance. While existing scholarship has explored girls’ history and Latter-day Saint women’s history, historians have yet to fully examine the experiences of Latter-day Saint girls specifically. This study will combine these fields and focus on female youth in the Church and how the Church instructed girls on proper clothing and appearance, family roles, and religious commitment. There are several under-utilized sources that illustrate the type of messages the LDS Church directed to girls; these sources include youth lesson manuals, dress and grooming guides, and talks given by Church authorities, all of which will be used throughout this study. These sources also give a glimpse into how the Church responded to youth counterculture, the Sexual Revolution, and second-wave feminism, as they attempted to instruct girls about proper behavior for their teenage years and their adult lives.

Body, Dress, and Modesty

In 1965 the Church introduced a new pamphlet, *For the Strength of Youth*, that outlined the behavioral standards for youth. With sections on good grooming, hair fashions, dating, and clean living, the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet was intended to teach youth how to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost and how to keep their focus on being worthy to enter the temple. The pamphlet also aimed to provide theological frameworks for thinking about these topics. Suggesting that young people’s choices reflected spiritual principles, it linked specific scriptural references to the Church’s guidelines. The Dress and Appearance section, for instance, began with a verse from 1 Corinthians: “Know ye

13. Brumberg, *The Body Project*, xxi.

not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? . . . The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” Likening young people’s bodies to a holy temple, the inclusion of this scripture gave the instructions in *For the Strength of Youth* spiritual weight. Both young men and young women learned that their bodies were sacred and worthy of the utmost care, yet sources repeatedly suggest that Church authorities were especially concerned about girls’ bodies and choices.

For the Strength of Youth was not the first time the Church gave instructions to girls about their bodies. In the 1962–1963 edition of *The Beekeeper’s Handbook* (a manual for the religious leaders of girls age twelve to thirteen) is found the following excerpt: “God our Father, who made our bodies, knows what is good for them, has told us about it in most simple words and terms, and has given us some glorious promises if we will follow his instructions in taking the proper things into our bodies.”¹⁴ Instructions for girls about how to present and handle their bodies is significant because of this belief that God created their bodies, and He alone knows the best way to treat a physical body. Manuals for girls aged twelve to eighteen contained a myriad of instructions for girls about their bodies with the underlying assumption that these instructions came from heavenly direction. Like the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, youth manuals incorporated scripture and quotes from general Church authorities to establish a theological foundation and spiritual authority for the instructions within.

Many of the instructions for maintaining the body directed at girls revolved around the ideal of beauty. A Beehive (girls age twelve to thirteen) manual from 1971 contains a lesson entitled “The Paradox of Beauty,” which outlines the expectation that girls should be actively trying to make themselves more attractive. From this lesson, girls in the Church were directed to make attractiveness a priority, and that others around them would be more responsive to an attractive face.¹⁵ In the same manual is another lesson entitled, “How Girls Can Be Happier If They Keep Their Bodies Fit.” At the outset, the title of this lesson suggests a healthier relationship for girls and their bodies, but instead the lesson contains tips on how to ward off the effects of aging and how proper appearances makes girls happy. The very first entry in the list of reasons why

14. “Understand Beauty,” *Beekeeper’s Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1960), 115.

15. “The Paradox of Beauty,” *A Promise of Something New* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1971), 53–56.

girls should keep their bodies fit is because it makes them prettier: “A physically fit body is more likely to be slim and shapely. . . . A fit person even has smoother, clearer skin and prettier hair and eyes than her sluggish counterpart, and her posture and carriage will be better.”¹⁶ These lessons suggest that bodies were designed to be physically appealing, and that it was a girl’s responsibility to keep her body attractive.

The beauty ideal for girls to remain attractive throughout their lives was prominent in Church publications. A 1963 Beehive manual included a letter from the Young Women Mutual Improvement Association General President in which is found the following quote: “Like a bubbling brook a very special beauty is yours too! . . . The Beehive Program is a way of life to guide you through the years ahead in making wise choices and developing into the beautiful woman our Father in Heaven intended you to be.”¹⁷ Church leaders taught girls that their path in life was to become a beautiful woman; this pathway emphasized improving their physical bodies.

One medium through which girls were encouraged to improve their bodies was through their clothing. Church manuals recommended that girls buy items for their wardrobes that were comfortable and could withstand passing trends, with an emphasis on buying feminine and modest clothing; “Choose feminine styles, but styles that are not too fussy, too tight, too bare, or too loud. Clothing that is comfortable and in good taste can be worn again and again with a feeling of assurance and ease.”¹⁸ Clothes were seen as an outward sign of a young woman’s morality. Girls were told to demonstrate “the supreme importance of modesty, purity, and chastity”¹⁹ through their clothing.

It is important to note, however, that these instructions on dressing and taking care of bodies came during a time of changing social norms for American girls. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of youth experimentation; teenagers were

16. “The Shape of Things to Come,” *A Promise of Something New* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1971), 47.

17. *Beehive Girls; Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Woman’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1963), 2.

18. “Add-A-Pearl for Beauty,” *Laurel Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1964), 219.

19. “Standards,” *Executive Manual For Officers of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Associations* (Salt Lake City: The General Boards of the Mutual Improvement Associations, 1951), 45.

reshaping the fashion world, as well as exploring their sexuality.²⁰ Second-wave feminists were also reclaiming female sexuality, as the sexual revolution and free love movement were gaining popularity. Supporters of these movements rejected the traditional, Puritanical belief that women were void of sexual appetites, and that girls were expected to remain chaste while boys were encouraged to try on different sexual partners.

The Church's concern about shifting social norms and increased sexual activity among youth was evident in its vast instruction to young girls about remaining chaste and virtuous. These instructions from youth manuals about proper appearance and clothing were not simply encouragement for girls to look their best, but they were also pushback against loosening sexual standards for young people. Church leaders linked their messages about dressing modestly and protecting virtue with the message that girls needed to cover up their bodies and avoid any sort of sexual experimentation.

Instructions about remaining chaste came not only from official Church publications, but also from larger Church culture. In 1969, Helen Andelin—a Church member—published *The Fascinating Girl*, with the goal of instructing girls about how they could prepare for their future marriages. Andelin's books taught girls that they needed to look a certain way in order to attract and please a man; it encouraged women to develop a “feminine dependency” on men, and that that quality was essential for a successful marriage. *The Fascinating Girl* also contains an entire section dedicated to the importance of chastity. Like young women lesson manuals, Andelin stated that chastity was an integral part of preparing for a happy marriage.²¹ Moreover, she denounced the free love movement as contrary to the law of God:

“There has come into existence a ‘new morality’ which teaches an opposite doctrine. This new code teaches our youth that chastity is no longer important, that they can engage in ‘free love’ with anyone, and that marriage is no longer required. It is strange that they think they can take a god-given law . . . and toss it out, without ill effects. One need only to look around to see the results of the ‘new morality.’ Are those who engage in it people of worth? Are they the builders of nation and the strength of society? . . . No, they are the ‘free loaders’ who are drifting downstream.”²²

20. Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

21. Helen Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl* (Santa Barbara: Pacific Press, 1969), 100.

22. Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl*, 100.

Andelin boldly proclaimed that those who supported the free love movement and engaged in sexual relationships before marriage were not people of worth who could contribute to society. She expanded this message and directed it to young Latter-day Saint girls; Andelin admonished them to “listen to those who know the answers,”²³ and suggested that those with the answers were Church leaders who similarly taught that chastity before marriage was necessary for one’s own happiness and for showing proper deference to God’s law.

While the Church manuals for young women contained an abundance of instructions on how girls should handle their bodies, these manuals also contained warnings about what could befall a girl should she choose to ignore those instructions. In a Laurel (girls age sixteen to seventeen) manual from 1973 is a quote from the past prophet David O. McKay; it says, “There is a beauty every girl has—a gift from God, as pure as the sunlight, and as sacred as life. It is a beauty all men love, a virtue that wins all men’s souls. That beauty is chastity. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul; skin beauty without chastity can kindle only the eye.”²⁴ Here, the former prophet suggested that if girls focused solely on outward beauty and embraced the worldly trends of beauty and fashion, then they would lose their inner virtue. Virtue was one of the most desirable qualities and should be a shining guidepost for young women in the Mormon Church. Hence, McKay’s warning that young women could lose their virtue was a dreadful warning indeed.

The 1962 *Beekeeper’s Handbook* contained an entire lesson on virtue and the consequences of living an unvirtuous life. The lesson outlined the importance of sexual purity, as these mortal bodies were gifts from a Heavenly Father and should be treated as such, and if a girl desired to return to live with her Father in Heaven then she must remain pure her whole life; “You only have one body for this world and for the world to come. Do not soil it, for if you do you will feel worse than Lady Macbeth who could never get free of the spot of sin she tried so hard to erase.”²⁵ Despite the Church’s doctrine on repentance and forgiveness, these sources suggested that being sexually impure was so terrible that the damage could be irreversible. In a 1971 Beehive manual, a lesson about

23. Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl*, 101.

24. *Horizons: Laurel Teaching Aids Kit* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1973), 5.

25. “Virtue—Its Price Above Rubies,” *Beekeeper’s Handbook* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1962), 125.

relationships between boys and girls ended with several suggested object lessons: “A rose is passed around the class. It is fresh and delicately perfect until it is handled by the girls. Its wilted, brown-edged petals might symbolize the damaged virtue of a girl who has been ‘passed around.’ . . . A piece of candy passed around from hand to hand and then given to a girl to eat. The sticky, handled sweet loses much of its appeal.”²⁶ These object lessons reiterated the earlier point that a girl who lost her purity might never restore it and could live the rest of her life as unclean and undesirable. Consequently, leaders taught the young women about proper dress in an attempt to keep them chaste.

In addition to keeping themselves chaste, girls were encouraged to dress appropriately to safeguard against boys’ advances. That same lesson on relationships between boys and girls contained instructions on how girls should prepare for dating, and part of that preparation involved asking oneself certain questions, such as, “What kinds of parties will she attend? How will she dress?”²⁷ Later on in the lesson was another similar question: “How can they make sure that unpleasant or unchaste things will not happen to them?”²⁸ The questions posed in this lesson placed the onus of responsibility on girls to keep themselves sexually clean, despite external forces. If a girl avoided unsupervised gatherings or parties where morally questionable activities occurred, then she would protect her chastity. If a girl wore modest, appropriate clothing that did not expose her body, then she would protect her chastity. And if girls did attract unwanted attention from their male peers, then it was because of something they did. In sum, girls could choose to be chaste no matter the circumstances, so long as they were clothed correctly and handled their bodies with care.

Lastly, if girls strayed from a chaste life, then they were susceptible to Satan’s influence. A quote from a 1962 Beehive manual illustrated this point; “Satan delights to control your thoughts and actions and lead you into trouble a little at a time.”²⁹ The Church believed that evil forces were at work to lead youth away from the standards they knew were true and good. But this did not come as a surprise to the leaders of the Church. They had been warned by a watchful God “of this evil that we are subjected to . . . trying to get us to defile our

26. “Boys and Girls Together,” *A Promise of Something New* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1971), 79.

27. “Boys and Girls Together,” 75.

28. “Boys and Girls Together,” 76.

29. “Youth and Truth,” *Beekeeper’s Handbook* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1962), 176.

bodies with things that are not good for us.”³⁰ Church manuals suggested that, though seemingly innocuous, immodest dress was one of the ways in which Satan attempted to lead the youth of the Church down a path of immorality, for immodest dress led to immodest action and sexual impurity.

Marriage, Family, and Motherhood

Just as immodest dress was considered an impediment for Latter-day Saint girls' spiritual safety, Church leaders also considered immodesty a distraction from girls' ultimate goal of becoming a wife and mother. Leaders warned girls that “the time is not far distant when you will be taking on the responsibilities of womanhood;”³¹ for girls in the Church, these responsibilities were to marry in the temple and to bear children. In the “Boys and Girls Together” object lesson in which a rose and a piece of candy were passed around and then lose their desirability, the authors emphasized this point about protecting virtue and modesty in the context of marriage and motherhood. The Church required chastity before marriage for those seeking to marry in the temple. Thus, this lesson suggested that if a girl compromised her sexual purity, then she also compromised her potential to get married in the temple.

These messages surrounding temple marriage become significant when considering the importance that Latter-day Saints placed on marriage. A 1962 Beehive manual offered these words about temple marriage: “You will have the privilege of finding a choice companion in due time and [marriage] will be the happiest experience of your life if you obey the commandments of the Lord and keep yourself clean and appealing for this joyous future day. . . . Qualifying for this reward [temple marriage] is worth every thought and act upon the earth.”³² Church leaders continually reinforced such messages. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie claimed that temple marriage was an integral part of salvation and eternal progression; “Celestial marriage is a holy and an eternal ordinance. . . . Its

30. “Youth and Truth,” 176.

31. “Prepare for Motherhood,” *Beekeeper's Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, 1960), 136.

32. *Beekeeper's Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, 1962).

importance in the plan of salvation and exaltation cannot be over estimated.”³³ General conference talks and Church manuals suggested that members of the Church should start planning and preparing during their youth for temple marriage, for it was an irreplaceable step in their journey for spiritual progression. Consequently, girls received messages about the importance of and the need to prepare for temple marriage from General Church Authorities, local leaders, manuals, and magazines.

More than just proclaiming its importance, Church leaders exhorted youth to stay morally upright in their personal lives so that they could one day qualify to marry in the temple. As earlier sources in this paper suggest, sexual purity was of the utmost importance for Latter-day Saint girls. Entire sections of manuals for youth leaders were dedicated to teaching girls how to protect their chastity at all costs. In one such youth manual, Apostle Mark E. Peterson was quoted, saying, “Your virtue is more important to you than your life—protect it above your life. If the time ever comes when you must choose between the two then sacrifice your life but under no circumstances ever sacrifice your virtue.”³⁴ Church teachings on chastity reflected theological beliefs about the importance of temple marriage. For members of the Church, temple marriage was the key that unlocked the door of eternal progression, so naturally Church leaders urged youth to keep themselves morally clean by any means necessary. Similarly, messages to girls about their clothing and modesty fit with the importance of chastity before—and *for*—temple marriage.

Despite this emphasis on marriage, it was not enough for Latter-day Saint girls to simply find a spouse. In the first book of the Bible is the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. While this commandment was originally extended to Adam and Eve, this responsibility to bear children was also placed upon the Church’s youth. The November 1969 edition of the *Improvement Era*, a magazine for youth, featured an article by Truman G. Madsen about his observations on marriage. He wrote, “Vibrant love is inseparable from marriage, that happy marriage is inseparable from Christ, and that the most divine form of married love is inseparable from children.”³⁵ To be married was good; to be married and produce children was best. Madsen—and other Church leaders at

33. *Horizons: Laurel Teaching Aids Kit* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1973), 7.

34. *Beekeeper’s Handbook*.

35. Truman G. Madsen, “Blowing On the Coals Within,” *Improvement Era*, November 1969, 13.

the time—proposed that a true celestial marriage could only reach its highest potential when husband and wife were joined with children, for celestial love shared between spouses would ultimately lead to children.

As youth leaders taught girls that their ultimate potential could only be unlocked through motherhood, these same leaders tried to prepare these girls for that future role. A 1963 Beehive manual introduced girls to the concept of true womanhood in a Latter-day Saint context. The lesson “Honor Womanhood” contained myriad suggestions for how girls could start planning and preparing for their role as mother in their future families. For the present, girls were advised to be good daughters; the recommended activities for the lesson suggested that being a good daughter—and, consequently, good future wife—were restricted to proper child care and homemaking. The activities included were as follows: “Give your mother a full day off by doing the cooking, serving the meals, cleaning and performing other necessary duties;” “Assist in the care and training of your own small brothers and sisters for one week. Help them dress and undress, eat, brush their teeth, etc.,” and “Assist a new mother . . . in caring for small children, assisting with meals, washing, folding clothes, mending, keeping the house tidy, or whatever will help keep the home running smoothly.”³⁶ According to this lesson, true womanhood revolved around domestic labor, and honoring that womanhood meant making said labor a woman’s highest priority.

The Church also sent its young female membership the message that a woman’s work existed only in the home. A lesson entitled “My Work and My Glory” from a 1970 Beehive manual made this point very clear: “For every girl, this role [homemaker] should be a beautiful, future goal, an essential ingredient in successful wifehood and motherhood.”³⁷ Girls were taught that being a homemaker was not a pleasant possibility or something to daydream about, but it was a serious and integral part of being a wife and mother. This lesson emphasized this point further with the following quote: “Ever since Adam and Eve were placed outside the Garden of Eden, women have kept the world’s homes. We know that homemaking is not only a woman’s most important work, but also her glory.”³⁸ The lesson title, “My Work and My Glory,” is a reference to a

36. “Honor Womanhood,” *Beehive Girls: Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1963), 60.

37. “My Work and My Glory,” *A Girl’s World of Discovery* (Salt Lake City: The Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association, 1970), 168.

38. “My Work and My Glory,” 170–71.

concept found in scripture that God's greatest work is to bring about salvation and exaltation for all His children. This title implied that there was no greater work for a woman than to commit herself to homemaking.

This emphasis on fulfilling proper family roles was an intentional strategy used by the Church, as feminists started to reject traditional gender roles. During the 1960s, second-wave feminism was gaining traction on the national stage. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy ordered the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, a commission that exposed the systemic sexism in America's workforce, education and legal systems. Just a short while later in 1963, Betty Friedan published her seminal work *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan addressed the "problem that has no name," meaning the widespread unhappiness and unfulfillment that American housewives experienced at the time. Her solution was that housewives needed to find fulfillment outside the home, for women had lost their identities in their domestic work.

Church leaders' anxiety about women rejecting their traditional (and what they deemed proper) familial roles translated into greater emphasis on marriage and family toward youth. Girls were told that marriage was their ultimate goal and that nothing should distract from that. The Church taught them to embrace their responsibilities as future mothers, and encouraged them to practice motherly responsibilities within their own homes as devoted daughters. Youth leaders taught entire lessons dedicated to the importance of homemaking; they taught girls to see domesticity as valuable work worthy of their time and attention.

It was not just official Church publications that espoused these messages of marriage and family. In 1963, Helen Andelin published her book *Fascinating Womanhood*—the precursor to *The Fascinating Girl*—with the goal of providing a solution to American housewives who had become disillusioned with their marriages and their lives. While contemporary feminists were posing their own progressive solutions to this problem, Andelin claimed that women needed only embrace their femininity and wifely duties in order to find satisfaction in their marriage.³⁹ Her message echoed what Church leaders taught their young women: true joy came from focusing all efforts towards raising children and maintaining a home. The evidence can be seen in lessons from Church manuals entitled "Joy in Homemaking" that proclaimed, "Joy must come from

39. Andelin, *Fascinating Womanhood*.

perfecting a task, from noting results, from enthusiasm, and from loving those you work for.”⁴⁰ It can be seen in the hope for every girl that “she will be able to participate in the most joyful experiences—having a baby of her own with a husband whom she loves.”⁴¹ Messages from official Church publications and from typical Church members were alike in that both urged girls to make home and family their focus during a time when women in America were starting to long for something outside the domestic sphere.

Andelin not only gave instructions to American housewives, but also to young girls on how to prepare for their domestic role. She devoted an entire chapter instructing girls on how they could become “domestic goddess[es]” and, consequently, a good wives. She urged girls to take seriously their responsibilities as homemakers, for young men found girls more attractive if they had domestic skills and were seen as “good wife material.”⁴² A good wife not only embraced but enjoyed her domestic work. Andelin shared brief details about women who were happy when completing homemaking tasks; she wrote, “They enjoyed their domestic life, just as they enjoyed being women.”⁴³ Domesticity came as naturally to women as did simply being a woman, and it was something innate in every girl.

Domestic work was also described as just that: work. Andelin wrote, “Nothing worthwhile in life is easy and it certainly is not easy to be a good homemaker. You can expect it to be work.”⁴⁴ She proclaimed that homemaking required concentration, organization, and rigid schedules, and it was not a pastime or something to be done halfheartedly. Andelin’s messages about homemaking reaffirmed the Church’s instructions to girls. Homemaking was valued work and was something worth the time and attention of each Latter-day Saint girl. Andelin also supported Church youth manual messages in that she felt it necessary for women’s work to remain in the home. While she acknowledged that there were legitimate reasons that may require a woman to work outside the home, this work should only be viewed as “temporary assistance.”⁴⁵ A good

40. “Joy in Homemaking,” *Mia Maid 1967–1968: Discovery* (Salt Lake City: General Board of the YWMIA, 1967), 258.

41. “Boys and Girls Together,” 76.

42. “Boys and Girls Together,” 122.

43. “Boys and Girls Together,” 126.

44. “Boys and Girls Together,” 127–128.

45. Helen B. Andelin and Aubrey P. Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl* (Santa Barbara: Pacific Press, 1969), 82.

wife knew that her talents and skills were best suited for domestic labor, and that it was in this labor that she would find fulfillment.

Andelin also emphasized motherhood as a critical component of domestic work. She stated that women may be tempted to make some notable contribution to the world, but there is no contribution to society greater than being a wonderful mother. Conversely, there was no greater mistake for a woman than “deserting [her] post as a mother, and as a result causing a whole family to fail to reach their potential.”⁴⁶ Women were created specifically for the role of mother, thus childrearing was a responsibility delegated entirely to women; it was up to them to raise the “precious souls that God has given [them] and to do the finest job of mothering that [they] possibly can.”⁴⁷ Andelin was quick to point out the sacred, spiritual responsibility of motherhood. Though her audience was too young to have children of their own, Andelin’s message to Latter-day Saint girls was clear: “[it is] our sacred responsibility to rear children, and . . . not only *be* a mother, but to have an overabundant willingness to do so and to be the most wonderful mother possible.”⁴⁸ Contrary to what feminists at the time were suggesting—that women could have fulfilling lives beyond childrearing and homemaking—Andelin and Church leaders firmly proclaimed that women would only find real satisfaction and fulfillment once they embraced their proper wifely and motherly role as homemaker and childbearer.

Girls’ Relationship to the Church

As scholars show, youth in the 1960s and 1970s pushed back against traditional values. During this period, many religious groups started to lose the younger members of their congregations; as a response, these religious groups loosened some of their moral standards with the hope that that would encourage their youth to keep their religious traditions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had the opposite approach. Rather than become lax with its expectations, the Church emphasized its moral standards, called on its youth to ignore the trends of the world, and instructed them to be a light and an example

46. Andelin and Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl*, 132.

47. Andelin and Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl*, 132.

48. Andelin and Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl*, 133.

of virtue in an increasingly secular environment.⁴⁹ Existing scholarship suggests that the Church worried more about young men rejecting these values than they did young women.⁵⁰ Church publications, however, reveal the Church's efforts to retain its youth membership included messages directed specifically to girls about how they needed to remain close to the Church.

In the November 1969 edition of the *Improvement Era*, David O. McKay counseled youth to keep their good names unsullied, for if they protected their own reputations then they were also protecting the reputation of the Church.⁵¹ For girls, protecting their reputation essentially meant protecting their chastity. Girls were inundated with the message that it was their responsibility to not only protect their chastity, but also to ward off unwanted advances. The Beehive manual lesson "Boys and Girls Together" provides a clear example of this type of messaging; in the lesson, the girls are posed with the question, "How can they make sure that unpleasant or unchaste things will not happen to them?"⁵² The answer? Being modest in dress, action, and speech. Being mindful about what parties they might attend. Avoiding indulging in any physical desires, namely petting.⁵³

Proper dress was especially important for girls as they sought to uphold the Church's reputation. A 1971 Beehive lesson "When You Know, Share!" instructed young girls about the importance of sharing the gospel and being a representative of the Church in all things. From this lesson, youth leaders taught girls that "all of us present an image to others, and our image influences people's attitudes toward the Church just because we are Mormons."⁵⁴ It was just as important for girls to live their standards as it was for them to appear that they lived their standards through proper dress. Their image, they were taught, could either be a force for good or evil. While modest dress was used as a means to keep girls sexually pure, it was also a tactic to keep girls close to the Church.

49. Rebecca De Schweinitz, "Holding on to the 'Chosen Generation': The Mormon Battle for Youth in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s," in *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism Since 1945*, ed. Patrick Q. Mason and John G. Turner (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

50. De Schweinitz, "Holding on to the 'Chosen Generation.'"

51. David O. McKay, "Oh Youth, Keep That Which Is Committed To Thy Trust," *Improvement Era* 72 no. 11 (November 1969): 2-3.

52. "Boys and Girls Together," 76.

53. "Boys and Girls Together," 75-77.

54. "When You Know, Share!," *A Promise of Something New* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, 1971), 158.

As girls were taught that they acted as representatives of the Church, their dress became a physical symbol of their commitment to their religious institution.

While the Church taught each girl to be a figurative representative of the Church, sister missionaries were representatives of the Church in a more literal sense. They were taught that their dress played a significant role in their service, and though this does not show up in official missionary guidelines, mission presidents gave sister missionaries specific instructions about their bodies. One woman who served as a missionary in 1978–1979 recounted how her mission president encouraged her and the other sister missionaries to lose weight. He would offer this encouragement during personal interviews, which typically happened every six weeks, and he “would mention it in every interview.”⁵⁵ This sister “had this pressure . . . to lose weight at the back of [her] mind [her] whole mission.”⁵⁶ The pressure led her to experiment with different types of diets in an attempt to lose weight before her next interview with the mission president. She tried “lemon juice mixed with oats, tomato juice for most of the day, and then a diet without any white sugar or white flour,”⁵⁷ which proved difficult, as sister missionaries often ate at Church members’ homes. This same mission president also instructed the sister missionaries to cut their long hair; his reasoning was that the sisters would look “sharper and more mature . . . but there was a rumor that he did it so [sister missionaries] would not be as attractive to the elders [male missionaries].”⁵⁸ According to this mission president, sister missionaries’ physical appearance was more important than their spirituality was toward their success as missionaries.

Just as missionary guidelines taught the sisters to defer to the authority of their mission president, Latter-day Saint leaders taught girls deference to priesthood authority in an attempt to retain girls’ commitment to the Church. Deference to priesthood authority was another means through which Church leaders attempted to hold onto their youth membership, especially female youth. In the Church, priesthood authority is a concept based on the belief that authority from God to operate His church can only be held by worthy men who are already members of the Church. In other words, female members were excluded from the ordained leadership; they were, however, still encouraged to

55. Rhonda Davis, “Experience as a missionary,” email correspondence, 2018.

56. Davis, “Experience as a missionary.”

57. Davis, “Experience as a missionary.”

58. Davis, “Experience as a missionary.”

support priesthood leadership. A manual for the youth Mutual Improvement Association contained the following instruction: "Honor the priesthood. Sustain each and every leader of our Church by word and action."⁵⁹ Girls could not hold the priesthood themselves, but they could sustain their leaders by following their God-given counsel.

Much of this God-given counsel revolved around remaining close to the Church through appropriate dress and behavior, and avoiding behavior that typified American youth during this period. As the post-war era came to a close, sociologists, economists, and parents alike began to realize the power of peer groups.⁶⁰ Evidence suggests that the leaders of the Church also started to recognize the influence of peer groups. Lesson manuals, magazines, and talks from General Authorities instructed youth about associating with the right people, and not letting the desire for popularity cloud their judgment or compromise their standards. Leaders specifically instructed girls about not associating with the "wrong crowd," for fear of being misjudged and "falling into habits of conduct that give you a bad reputation."⁶¹

The youth counterculture was also typified by a certain look. Girls during this period experimented with fashion and even dabbled in men's clothing, adopting them to create new styles and trends. Consequently, the instructions for girls to look "clean," "polished," "well-groomed," and "appropriate"⁶² took on additional meaning. The emphasis for girls to keep up proper appearances distinguished them from the youth counterculture, and it distanced Latter-day Saint girls from their peers. The Church recognized the power of peer groups and thus wanted their young female membership to prioritize their identity as Latter-day Saints before their identity as teenagers. To maintain this priority, Church leaders taught girls to carefully represent the Church through dress and behavior, and to be obedient to priesthood authority.

59. "Standards," *Executive Manual For Officers of the Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations* (Salt Lake City: The General Boards of the Mutual Improvement Associations, 1951), 45.

60. Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

61. "Dating Data and the Man in Romance," *Mia Maid Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, 1957), 303.

62. "The Habit of Beauty," *A Promise of Something New* (Salt Lake City: The General Board of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association, 1971), 57–66.

Conclusion

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught girls from a young age that appearances mattered, that how they presented and handled their bodies mattered. They learned from lesson manuals and Church leadership that proper appearance and hygiene was a way to show respect and reverence for their bodies. Church leaders also taught girls that chastity was a necessary step toward temple marriage, something that every girl should strive for and put all her efforts toward. Though it was required for eternal progression, marriage was not the ultimate goal for girls; their ultimate goal was to become a mother and homemaker. While second-wave feminists were pushing back against the traditional idea that women's work was restricted to the home, the Church was teaching girls that childrearing and homemaking were sacred responsibilities that were valuable and worthy of their attention. Ultimately, the Church believed young women were impressionable and easily swayed by peer groups and social trends, and as such were in need of direction about how to handle their bodies, their identities, and their commitment to the Church.

Though this study is focused on the 1960s and 1970s, the legacy of the Church's relationship with its young female membership extends into the modern day. In July of 2018, a story hit local Utah news outlets that left some members of the Church speechless: a bishop refused a woman of his congregation her temple recommend because he felt she was immodest, as she had breastfed her child in church.⁶³ Latter-day Saint women recognized that this woman was being punished not for immodesty, but for using her body as it was meant to be used. This story, however, fits with Church history; for decades, Church leadership taught its young membership that the female body needed to be managed, and this rhetoric continues as young girls grow into adult women. As evidenced by this news story, Latter-day Saint women are shamed for not only displaying their bodies, but also for using their bodies to fulfill their motherly role.

Latter-day Saint women have been taught their whole lives that motherhood is the ultimate goal, yet when a woman uses her body in an effort to satisfy her child's needs, she is deemed immodest and unworthy of spiritual blessings.

The stories from the *Friend* magazine also fit with this Church history. Young Hannah and Stacey felt uncomfortable even at the thought of wearing

63. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Mormon Feminists Urge LDS Authorities to Remind Local Leaders that Breastfeeding isn't Sexual," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 July 2018.

clothes that would expose their shoulders. Out of context, it is alarming that girls as young as four are told to cover their bodies for the sake of modesty, with the implication that their bodies are innately sexual. When considering the Church's past messages to girls about bodies and modesty, however, these stories are unsurprising. Church manuals from the 1960s and 1970s suggest that Mormon leaders have a long history of anxiety about the female body, hence their constant instructions about how girls should dress and handle their bodies.

In the past, Church publications have suggested there may be new ways to consider what it means to embrace femininity when in fact they simply reinforced traditional values and gender roles. Church leaders and lesson manuals pushed back against social change and instead promoted archaic feminine ideals. "A Promise of Something New" did not actually promise any new options for Latter-day Saint girls. Such youth manuals only promoted the same message that the Church had been promoting all throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which was for girls to remain beautiful and chaste so that they could marry in the temple, become mothers, and stay close to the Church and support its leadership through obedience and respect to priesthood authority. For Latter-day Saint girls in the past and still today, there is only one way to be female.

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