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Alyssa Snow Larson
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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Alyssa Snow Larson

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

Date       Date       Date
19 Nov. 2001 14 Nov. 2001 14 Nov. 2001
Brandie Siegfried, Chair

14 Nov. 2001
Jacqueline Thursby, Reader

14 Nov. 2001
Susan Howe, Reader

14 Nov. 2001
Edward Cutler, Graduate Advisor

15 November 2001
Jesse Crisler, Area Chair

16 Nov. 2001
Stephen L. Tanner, Graduate Coordinator
As chair of the candidate’s graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Alyssa Snow Larson in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements, (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

Date
Brandie Siegfried
Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department

Stephen L. Tanner
Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College

Van C. Gessel
Dean, College of Humanities
ABSTRACT

ADDRESSING FEMALE COMMUNITIES IN MORMONISM:
WORKING TOWARDS A WOMAN'S CAPACITY

Alyssa Snow Larson
Department of English
Master of Arts

This thesis project explores the discourse in Mormon culture addressing Mormon female communities. The discussion is sociological rather than theological and examines the functional characteristics of discourse found in the tradition regarding women. It sets out to review a paradox in the discourse addressing Mormon women that has been documented over time. I examine how this paradox in Mormon discourse establishes and limits women’s roles; to do so, I use personal examples and the experience provided by thirteen women whom I interviewed.

The thesis is divided into three main discussions: Community, Discursive Action and Cooperation. My methodology involves a theoretical discussion of discourse and community and observes how discourse helps to create and shape identities with respect to that community. I then use the theoretical discussion to
illuminate poignant moments of social texture through collected interviews. My method of ethnography involved tape-recorded interviews with thirteen women. The thesis reviews the women’s discourse as representative samples that demonstrate how the paradox has created resistance and sometimes confusion in their own lives. I then make suggestions for addressing particular discursive practices with an eye toward fostering respect and appreciation for and among Mormon women.

My main goal in approaching discourse addressing the female community was to explore the different ways women were being influenced to play certain roles. Evidence exists to support two differing discursive strands: one privileges the traditional role of wife and mother, and the other privileges a woman’s potential, talent and abilities. Because agency is a fundamental part of daily life both religiously and socially, I examine the question of how easily Mormon women are able to implement their choices according to their capacities.

The women who participated in this study provided, through their narratives, examples of the problems and issues the discursive paradox creates for Mormon women. Current leaders in the LDS community acknowledge that every woman has different abilities, talents and potentials. Therefore, it is important that women who have developed abilities and capacities in addition to those required by traditional homemaking roles also feel valued in the Mormon community for services they provide to society, to their families and to themselves.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My education in the English Department at BYU began nine years ago as an undergraduate. I may have never imagined myself at this point back then if it weren’t for Professor Brandie Siegfried. I would like to acknowledge Brandie for her inspiring role model, perceptive teaching, rigorous mentoring and careful scholarship in faith and awareness. I am grateful to her for the time, effort and grace it has taken to shape my thesis into something worthy of my education as a graduate student. I would also like to express my gratitude to Susan Howe and Jackie Thursby, who provided encouragement, structure and insight for this project. It has been delightful to work with such an amazing committee; they are women with an incredible capacity for achievement and compassion.

I would also like to express gratitude to the women who participated in this study. It was delightful to spend time with each of them in their homes as they shared with me their thoughts, feelings and experiences on being a member of the Mormon community. Without their stories, I would not have been given the means to crystallize poignant moments of social texture. In an effort to be sensitive to them and their families all names have been changed.

Another group of women I am equally indebted to are those who stepped into our lives to help support us during this time. I could not have pursued my master’s degree without their watchful care. These “angels” of support are: my mother Bobbi, my grandmothers Barbara and Naomi, my sisters: Sara, Mary and Emily, my cousin and close friend Christina, my friends: Stacy D. Stacy U., Carol, Merikaye, Marilee, Leslie, Biff, Emily M. and Emily J. Thank you all for making this opportunity possible for me and for teaching me about capacities.

I want to thank my parents and siblings for their continual encouragement and support. Often times their inquiries on the topic of my thesis provided me with the needed opportunity to try and articulate the thesis of my thesis. They have offered much love and care to us at this time; I am also grateful for the courier services to and from Provo—thank you Sara and Greg.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank my husband, Bud. As my closest friend and strongest support, he provided me with the safety, security and freedom to grow and develop academically. I could not have done this without his physical care, emotional motivation, and his endless patience. It is a wonderful surprise to discover that the person I married is teaching me the most about my humanity. I also want to thank our daughters, Jessica and Addie, for their love and encouragement. I will always remember Jessica’s inquisition as she would ask me, “So Mom—how is your thesis?” I am grateful to have two patient spirits in my life who inspired me everyday to write on this topic.

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my two daughters, and to all of the women in my life, both included here in this paper and personally. It is really through all of them that I have been made more aware of issues surrounding women’s roles. Their examples are humbling in many ways and have taught me much about a woman’s capacity for achievement and potential. It is my hope that I can pass the value of their knowledge and wisdom on to my own daughters.
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In the small circle of the home the woman has never quite forgotten the particular uniqueness of each member of the family; The spontaneity of now; the vividness of here. This is the basic substance of life. These are the individual elements that form the bigger entities like mass, future, world. We may neglect these elements, but we cannot dispense with them.

They are the drops that make up the stream. They are the essence of life itself. It may be our special function to emphasize again these neglected realities, not as a retreat from greater responsibilities but as a first real step toward a deeper understanding and solution of them.

When we are the center of ourselves, we discover something worthwhile extending toward the periphery of the circle. We find again some of the joy in the now, some of the peace in the here, some of the love in me and thee which go to make up the kingdom of heaven on earth.

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Gift From the Sea
Introduction

From Talk to Text: A Reality of Discourse

Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter of cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves.

—Adrienne Rich

I became particularly interested in how Mormon women were being addressed and were addressing each other as a result of a delightful and yet dreadful experience I had at the age of twenty-one. I had recently finished an internship in Washington, D.C., with a marketing research firm owned by Robbin Perry, a participant in this study, and had returned home to Salt Lake City. At the time I was considering an engagement, and found myself thinking more about serving a mission than getting married, an option which previously I had never taken seriously. But my experience in Washington, D.C., helped me develop a sense of confidence that women could do a lot of good in communities before taking on additional responsibilities of marriage and child rearing. To be very honest, it was one of those moments in life when it seemed as if an angel (or perhaps even God) guided me to a particular path—and then gave me a good push.

After several months of deliberation, weight loss from stress, and a broken engagement, I finally took a step forward and was called to serve a mission in Paris, France. That experience resulted from both personal development and spiritual direction. It was a delight to take on the kind of responsibility that helped me grow in a variety of ways while serving others.
Paradoxically, for a few reasons it was also dreadful. First, it was hard to hurt someone I had at the time hoped to marry; second, it was difficult to realize that the “truth of all things” was about as clear as mud to me. I was mainly confused by the notion (that came from both men and women) that a woman could not be inspired to do anything other than find a spouse. For a woman, it seemed that praying for direction only applied insofar as it would yield a confirmation as to whether she had found the right person to marry. There was rarely any discussion about what happened if a woman was in fact inspired to do something else (like serve a mission). It seemed unheard of in my local religious community. Meanwhile, just thirty miles south at BYU, many women were deciding to serve missions, which suggests evidence of a paradox in social discourses about women’s roles. The discourse of women at BYU was much more supportive of such a decision than in Salt Lake where I lived.

The discourse in Salt Lake suggested that marriage was a higher priority to women both socially and spiritually. When I talked with some church leaders who were friends of our family, they would quote President Spencer W. Kimball saying, “Marriage is a higher calling than serving a mission.” Or, “Any two people in good standing in the church can make a marriage work.” In my mind these comments implied that because I was dating a worthy priesthood holder and I was living righteously, marriage was the right (and perhaps only) decision to make because for a woman it was considered a higher calling than serving a mission. Evidently, my decision to serve a mission implied to the community that
I was running away from responsibilities. In other words, my being inspired through prayer to go on a mission was misinterpreted as escapism.

As I attempted to turn to Mormon women for help, support, and identification, I found an interesting paradox instead. I didn’t know any women personally who had served missions or who had experienced a choice like mine. Certainly there were plenty who had had this experience in the church—I just didn’t happen to know any of them. The result was frustrating. Most of the women I knew were wary of my decision, and though their reservations were not often spoken, they were felt. In retrospect I have realized this was partly due to the central discourse regarding women’s roles in Mormonism. The emphasis of being a wife and a mother had been continually stressed in the community. Not many women of my acquaintance changed course; as a result, I had no role model for my particular situation. I knew I had a conviction to serve a mission, and, as Kathleen Barnes expressed in her speech at Women’s Conference last year, “no one can argue with personal conviction. Our conviction does not always bring that same conviction in others, but it generally brings respect from those who know us” (4). She was right. Today, when my mother or my grandmother introduce me, the first thing they like to say is that I served a mission, and the second is that I teach at BYU (my grandmother especially likes to say this).

However, ten years ago, most women I knew didn’t know how to respond. I knew on the one hand that many principles found in the gospel of Jesus Christ validated my experience. I had prayed and received an answer. I knew in my heart it was the best decision for me and found my experience consistent with doctrines
of Jesus Christ in the scriptures. On the other hand, I was young, and it was the first time I was required to apply those principles in a life-altering decision. My local community or culture expected one outcome because it was the norm. However, this experience helped me recognize a very real and complex paradox in the discourse addressing women's roles and potential within Mormon culture.

Since the role of the family is so central to the LDS Church's plan of salvation, women have continually been encouraged to fulfill their role as the primary nurturer in the home and at times have been encouraged to make marriage and family a priority over pursuing educational goals. And yet, women have also been encouraged to develop their talents, continue their learning, rise to their potential, and increase knowledge through a variety of mediums. But what happens when "developing a talent" requires educational training, as is the case with many women? Women are supported and encouraged in many ways; even so, there are times when the roles women are expected to play seem to conflict with their potential for achievement, creating a paradox. This can and does encourage congregations to privilege one over the other. My paper sets out to examine this paradox and others similar to it in discourse addressing Mormon women; furthermore, it observes some specific ways in which women can be reconciled to the apparent contradictions.

This discussion is sociological rather than theological: it examines the functional characteristics of discourse found in Mormon tradition regarding women and sets out to review the paradox by way of personal experiences and response. This thesis will examine how discourse in certain areas of the Mormon
community establishes and limits women's roles as a result of such paradox. I will use representative samples that demonstrate this paradox in women's lives. I will then make suggestions for addressing particular discursive practices with an eye toward fostering respect and appreciation for and among Mormon women.

Typically, in the study of English we find ourselves swamped in theory and good literature. Some like to think that theory is good literature, and I am not going to argue either way on that point. However, I will argue that the concept of discourse community is a useful key for those interested in language and literature. Communities create Texts by means of discourse: its talk, if you will. Mikko Lehtonen writes in his book, The Cultural Analysis of Texts, that "language," which seems to refer to some static entity or condition, is different from "discourse," which conveys an idea of activity. The word "discourse" comes from the French word discours, meaning a speech, conversation, presentation, or simply chat (43). The French term comes from the Latin discursus, meaning running about. Therefore, "discourse" as a dualistic term refers to both the interactive process in which meanings are produced and the outcome of that process (43). Paul Bove adds, "Discourse provides a privileged entry into the poststructuralist mode of analysis precisely because it is the organized and regulated, as well as the regulating and constituting, functions of language that it studies" (CT 54). In this way discourse helps illuminate the surface connections between power, knowledge, privileged ideologies, and controlling concepts in communities that "intersect in the functions of systems of thought" (55). In
essence, focusing on discourse allows us to understand how material discursive realities are received by and reflected in the social texture of a community.

Since the poststructuralist movement—involving Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes, among others—the notion that the author is "dead," that language alone speaks, has often confused and frustrated some traditionalists. Bove explains how the contemporary use of "discourse" turns literary critics away from questions of meaning, and from questions of "method" to the description of function (62). This becomes a strategy for understanding how language shapes a community and its perception of reality. He says:

One must try to clear up some of the confusion by recalling Foucault's assertion that no one is interested in denying the existence of the writer as a cause in the production of literature or any other form of written discourse.... [However,] the Foucauldian notion of discourse requires that we skeptically ask the question How did the category of 'the author' become so central to critical thinking about literature? This means "central" not only in theory but in practice: in the way single-figure studies dominate criticism.

(63)

Here, Bove helps to point out that a new set of questions should replace the interpretive ones that have come to constitute criticism and the normal practice of teachers and scholars in producing meaning (62). He argues that it is both the author's intent and the communal or individual responses that create the reality of "meaning" in a text. Essentially we have to ask, as Bove and Foucault encourage,
What shape or profile does discourse give the LDS female community? How in particular does discourse help to maintain relationships of power and privilege? Instead of focusing exclusively on authorial intent of meaning, we need to consider how the language—the discourse and the message being produced—is being received.

Such an analysis is important because discourse becomes the evidence of influence, of action or contraction. We call this process of interaction—of response to or reaction from—textuality. This textuality can be defined as a “weave of meanings [created by author’s intent and reader’s response], an entanglement of diverse ingredients” (Lehtonen 11). Discourse, then, is the evidential text we use in order to examine more closely how the discourse is functioning to shape a community.

Roland Barthes explains in his article “From Work to Text” that “the text is a process of demonstration, speaks according to certain rules (or against certain rules); the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse—the Text is experienced only in an activity of production” (1471). Discourse is a site of textual production. However, Lehtonen notes that “texts are not stuck on top of the rest of the world, as messages detachable from it, but participate in a central way in the making of the reality as well as forming our image of it” (CA 105). In this way, discourse is a textual function in which members of its community make reality as well form their image of it. Lehtonen explains:
When studied in respect to their meanings, texts are not objects in the same way as chairs or tables are, but are just a sphere of potentiality, the raw material for meanings. ‘Textuality’ does not refer to something already existing but to potentiality, something that is always on its way and that is not a final state but in continuous production. As such, the principle of textuality makes indistinct the borders between the internal and external, symbolic and real. The notion of textuality underlines the point that texts as such are always incomplete and on the move, and that in order for them to obtain meanings they must be read. (105)

Subsequently, discourse becomes a critical and even fascinating “text” to read, revealing a variety of assumptions and implications upon which “power relationships” exist in a community. However, Lehtonen notes that this becomes an essential task precisely because “when textual interaction is at its best, it signifies not only the expansion of the pleasure of writers and readers, but also their ability to act” (161). Agency is constitutive of one’s ability to act and becomes an empowering responsibility in making meaning.

Using language to communicate is a powerful act. Lehtonen reminds us that according to his definition “language and its meaning are seizing reality, people’s practical consciousness, dynamic and articulated presence in the world” (161). The simply act of telling a story to illustrate a point in everyday conversation functions in this way: it helps to underscore the particular meaning being made by the illustrated point. Language also becomes a central part of the
symbolic creativity of every day. In turn, symbolic work and creativity also produce new meanings and identities, and therefore have important empowering potentials (161). Such reasoning validates responses to discursive patterns addressing communities and legitimizes evaluation of that discourse. This helps us to better understand how individuals lose citizenship in some communities due to controlling concepts privileged by discourse. It is for this reason—losing citizenship because of community discourse—I was motivated to examine discursive patterns and practices addressing and affecting women in the LDS community as a topic for my thesis.

In doing so, my research involves juxtaposing discourse addressing Mormon women with how they receive it. This helps to “seize the realities” of the discursive language and its receptive meanings. By interviewing a sample of women, I examine the actual meanings produced by the discourse in the community. I ask them to share with me their thoughts, feelings, and experiences on topics directly related to how they were being addressed by others in the Mormon community. In response they talk about important decisions, difficult transitions, unexpected challenges and trials that caused them to negotiate new and/or different roles as a result of those experiences. In other words, they share with me stories about their lives, stories that also function as narratives. Hence, it is in their narratives that we find the textuality, the evidence of response to discourse and the reality of its meaning.

Because telling stories about one’s life is also a method of reflecting identity (discussed more fully in chapter 2), such language can be seen as the
symbolic creativity of every day. Stories can produce new meanings and identities and thus have important empowering potentials. Essentially, these stories or narratives function as responses to language addressing the community; put together they become the discourse of that community. Stories as symbolic work can also function in a practical way to subvert and transform the dominant ideologies or controlling concepts in the community.

Since it would be beyond the scope of this project to examine all of the discursive patterns that exist among Mormon women, I have limited my research to include interviews of twelve women who share similar characteristics. They represent a certain portion of Mormon women (those characteristics will be further defined and discussed later in the introduction). The women chosen for this study are women whose lives have served to influence my own life in various ways. They are women whose lives span half a century and whose experiences have molded and shaped my own. Mary Catherine Bateson explains in her book *Composing a Life* that “we need to look at multiple lives to test and shape our own” and believes in the need for multiple examples to create new insights and possibilities in our own lives (16). Of narratives, she notes:

> Women today read and write biographies to gain perspective on their own lives. Each reading provokes a dialogue of comparison and recognition, a process of memory and articulation that makes one’s own experience available as a lens of empathy. We gain even more from comparing notes and trying to understand the choices of our friends. (5)
Her insight concerning the nature of present biographies illuminates a point Carolyn G. Heilbrun makes in her book, *Writing a Woman’s Life*. She suggests personal stories from biographies and autobiographies “have always been conceived of as individual, eccentric lives” and that perhaps female narratives would be found where women exchange stories or where they read and talk collectively of ambitions, possibilities, and accomplishments (46). Sharing stories and narratives, then, also helps women to give shape to their communities and facilitates greater understanding of it.

I am grateful to the women who have agreed to participate in this research and recognize that without their contribution, this study would not exist. All of the women included in the study are women whom I have admired for years through friendships, family, and even books. The women will be formally introduced in the next few pages. The interviews explore aspects of both individual and collective identities, giving space to self-expression and examples of critical interaction found in their own discourse and in the communities of which they are a part.

To determine more closely the effects of discourse on collective and individual identity, this discussion is divided into three main chapters. Chapter 1, “Community,” asks how the central Mormon discourse both sets and enforces the parameters of identification for individuals within a community and examines what the possible consequences are of that discourse. Chapter 2, “Discursive Action,” discusses how particular discursive practices in the community affect individual identity and how personal desire for narrative reflection can figure into
the narratable self. Finally, chapter 3, "Cooperation," serves as a conclusion and reviews what possibilities exist for resetting the parameters of discursive practices, especially to include and empower more members in the community.

My purpose in examining discourse among Mormon women is twofold: Primarily, I would like to evaluate more specifically how the rhetoric of discourse addressing Mormon women has encouraged or discouraged them from fulfilling certain roles. Secondarily, I would like to make more accessible the narratives, stories, and experiences of women who have lived lives that have not necessarily been full of "traditional" success and achievement as found or portrayed in many biographies about women today. Mary Catherine Bateson suggests in her book *Composing a Life* that such a study provides "a way of making these lives available to others in a form that differs both from the extended narratives of heroic biography or case history on the one hand and the lost individuality of the survey on the other" (16). Furthermore their lives are significant because they have made necessary changes, daily, to meet the demands of unstable and changing environments—and have done so successfully. As such, their narratives aid in understanding how women succeed in negotiating their roles and identities.

A brief characterization of my own rhetorical stance as a scholar is also in order: obviously, my view will give added shape to the critical analysis that follows. Martha Nussbaum, who associates the value of good literature with one's responsibility in the community in her book *Cultivating Humanity*, has significantly influenced my worldview. Her purpose is to promote the reading of good literature to individuals in a community. Doing so, she claims, will help
influence and encourage individuals to consider how they in their respective professions (i.e., law, economics, social work, and government) fit into the larger picture of society. In turn, she hopes that through finding moral values in literature, others will become more responsive world citizens, having an increased capability to be compassionate and understanding of cultures different from their own. Her view has encouraged me to stress the importance of having an increased capability to be compassionate and understanding of the roles which women find are different from their own. She explains that “to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge; we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us” (85). It is my belief that if we are willing to push for this exposure in rigid areas such as the traditional roles women play within the Mormon culture, the quality of life can be improved through serving a softer, more empathetic and inclusive view of the other.

My own position in the community certainly affects my worldview and as such will inevitably include my own personal biases toward the topic. I was born and raised in the LDS faith in Salt Lake City, Utah. My family has been members for five generations. I served an LDS mission in Paris, France, received my BA in English from BYU, and am currently seeking an MA in English at BYU. My husband and I have been married for six years, and we have two young daughters. Currently I serve as an active member in the LDS Church and have experienced a
variety of insights into my own faith and beliefs as a result of pushing myself to better understand literary theory and philosophy in my education. My personal sympathies, though obvious in some places, should also be addressed. My experience as a Mormon woman, coupled with the experiences of my friends and neighbors, have made me sensitive to possible conflicts that confront LDS women. I am aware, however, that my affiliation and familiarity with Mormonism may also foster "blind spots." Nevertheless, part of my concern lies with women who have followed the convictions of their heart and made responsible decisions, yet still find themselves criticized for those decisions because they are different from what other Mormon women have chosen to do with their lives. Another equally important concern lies with the recognition that women deserve for the many valuable roles they do play and the services they do provide to society outside of their roles as wives and mothers.

Inevitably my position will affect my examination. However, Lehtonen suggests that because "researchers too are positioned in the fields of research, they are part of the process of the formation of meanings. Hence, a central part of the research and its claims is the position of researchers" (159). The study of objects does not gain meaning by being located outside the research field. Rather, to better understand multidimensional objects, various approaches from the research field are required. Subsequently, a subject located in the field of study can also better see how her own "locatedness affects how the objects studied appear" (159). David Morley writes, "The world of everyday life is not one which can be satisfactorily viewed through a single pair of spectacles, or from a single
position. It requires varieties of distance, magnification and position” (quoted in Lehtonen, 159). Therefore, the research does not become an issue of one, final perspective, “but of a moving, feeling researcher” who can discover more angles of the object than can one who simply considers it from one perspective. In short Lehtonen argues that a researcher is a participant in the reality s/he studies (160).

I find particular insight in Lehtonen’s view of research precisely because it reflects nicely the method of research I used in interviewing a variety of subjects who, as “cultural products subjected to research[,] are agents, active subjects, which at all times influence, for example, who the researchers are themselves” (160). In this way, my research explores several approaches to the topic and notes that this type of research is always “constructing and reconstructing reality from some position and point of view” (160). As a member of both the religious and female communities of the Mormon church, I have experienced firsthand many of the tensions women express regarding their roles as defined by and addressed in Mormon discourse directed towards the female community.

If my ideal is to become more responsible by using literature to increase my ability for compassion, I will need to question how well any text facilitates this process. Among other things, this paper is intended to provide its readers with the tools “to cast new kinds of amazed gazes at the world of meanings” through a study of discourse (161). The central dimension of expression is to offer the tools for altering meaning through language, for re-articulation. Peter Hoeg says it this way: “As soon as we lay eyes on the world it starts to change. And we with it.

Viewing reality doesn’t mean making sense of a setup. It means surrendering
oneself and triggering an unfathomable transformation” (qtd. in Lehtonen 161). This critical examination will serve as a resource for those interested in women’s studies, discourse, rhetoric, female discursive practices, narratives among Mormon women, and to that end, folklore.

Methodology

As a way of analyzing representative discursive practices addressing Mormon women, I have collected stories, narratives, responses, and discussions from thirteen women in the form of personal interviews. They will be discussed throughout chapters 2 and 3 and included in appendices for further reference. I also draw from representative discourse addressing Mormon women in larger LDS congregations during conferences. I want to reiterate that this particular grouping of women is not meant to be representative of all Mormon women. I interviewed sixteen women in total; however, it was necessary to eliminate a few of the interviews due to the scope of this project. Before conducting the interviews I mailed a brief explanation of this project to them (found in the appendix), which asked the women to think about transitional moments in their lives (taking on a new role) and to consider conversations, speeches, or literature which seemed particularly influential in their decisions to take on new roles. I had my research approved by the Institutional Research Board for research involving human participants at BYU (IRB). The board’s approval letter and a list of the questions used in each interview can also be found in the appendices. The questions were the same for all interviews, though slight assimilation occurred near the end as a result of experience and narrowing the topic.
I focus more theoretically on twelve of the interviews because the women in that particular grouping shared common characteristics, enabling me to draw some conclusions about background and demographics. I will refer to a thirteenth interviewee, Elaine Satin, whose background and experience are unique and add a nice dimension in chapter 3 on the possibilities of cooperation.

To the extent these women have common characteristics, they will serve to be representative of others who share them. Those characteristics include being female members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormons as I will refer to them here). All are Caucasian and are American citizens who have lived in Utah for an extended time (ten years or more). The education levels vary a bit, though all have received undergraduate degrees. Half have pursued graduate degrees; one is pursing a Ph.D. They are all part of the middle socioeconomic class and range in age from twenty-four to seventy-five. As Mormons they can trace their respective religious affiliation back five generations, and all still have immediate family who reside in Utah. Ten of the twelve are active in the Mormon religious community and expressed sincere devotion to their theological beliefs as Mormons. Two of the twelve do not actively associate with the LDS Church except through occasional family functions, though both were baptized and considered themselves active members during adolescent years. Thus, a brief way to describe them as a group is to say they are white, middle class, well-educated Mormon women with a strong Mormon heritage in Utah.
Women Interviewed

I pause here to introduce the women who have been interviewed, whose stories and experiences are included in the paper. I will start out by giving some brief information about each of them to provide the reader with some knowledge of their position and background. As mentioned before, though I focus more theoretically on twelve interviews, thirteen women participated in this project. I use the thirteenth voice as a means of perspective on issues that set her aside from this norm. Accordingly, to protect their privacy and the privacy of their families all names have been changed.

Robin Perry lives in Washington, D.C., with her three children. I served as an intern for Robin's business in marketing research over ten years ago. Robin has since founded a charity, Kidsave, a nonprofit organization for orphans in third world countries. She is currently trying to balance her profession with her passion. She herself has adopted three children from the countries where she has set up her orphan adoption program. Robin was born into a Mormon family and was raised in Utah. She left for D.C. when she was in college and has not been active in Mormonism for twenty-three years. Robin’s experience and perspective demonstrate a greater need for cooperation and inclusion of women who don’t follow the status quo for female roles in Mormonism.

Elizabeth Johnson lives in Canada. She is a close friend to my husband’s family, and I got to know her when we lived in Canada. Her two children have lived in Utah for the last twenty years. Elizabeth and her husband own a residence in Utah, where they live for a few months every year. She is sixty-seven and
manages a family business with her husband. She received her master's in speech therapy in the 70s and has worked on and off with public schools in various positions. Elizabeth has held many callings for the LDS Church in both the Relief Society and Young Women organization. Elizabeth has always followed her heart despite socioreligious norms; she continues to revise herself in the community—being central and different.

Bonnie Miller also lives in Canada and is my sister-in-law. She has two daughters, who are now teenagers. Bonnie is forty-one years old and works as a part-time actress and full-time nurse. She received her education at BYU and worked in Utah while her husband received his Ph.D. from BYU in psychology. After moving back home to Canada, she and her first husband divorced. She remarried one year later and no longer associates with the LDS Church except through family functions. Bonnie was unable to reconcile feminism and Mormon faith, so she chose feminism and continues to redefine what that means for her in relation to other women and religion. The female community in the Mormon faith was not meeting Bonnie's needs, so she sought support elsewhere.

Adrienne Smoot lives in Salt Lake City with her husband and three children. She is in her midlife and spends her time quilting, cooking, and writing. While her skills are domestic, she is considered a professional in each. Her quilts have been on display in museums, she ran her own professional French catering business for ten years, and she has published an essay in a book put together by Terry Tempest Williams. In her most recent endeavor, she submitted a proposal to the International Olympic Committee for producing a program presenting Utah's
heritage in the opening ceremonies for the 2002 Winter Olympics; she was the second runner up. She is active in the church and is able to articulate some frustration with being addressed as a married woman in Mormonism.

Molly Hansen is a currently a graduate student at Columbia completing a master’s degree in medieval studies. Molly is twenty-six years old and was raised in Utah; she has served an LDS mission in Paris, France. Molly tells a story about being a Mormon woman, and in doing so reveals that her grandfather is President Gordon B. Hinckley, the current prophet and President of the LDS Church. Though her own name is changed, she prefers to allow her connection to her grandfather to stand as it helped her to gain specific insight.

Macy Givens is a friend whom I met in the M.A. English program at BYU. She is twenty-nine years old and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in rhetoric at the University of Arizona. Macy was raised in Utah and worked in Boston before starting her M.A. program in Provo. She served an LDS mission in Canada and is currently the Relief Society president in her LDS ward in Arizona. Macy has presented papers at a variety of conferences and begins work on her dissertation next semester. Being single at the age of twenty-nine has been a particular challenge for Macy; she describes the problems of feeling a part of the Mormon community as a result of her position.

Natalie Hill is also another friend who attended the M.A. English program at BYU. Natalie is thirty-three years old. She and her husband have two young daughters, ages five and two. Natalie received her M.A. a few years ago and is currently teaching at Westminster College. She is also a part-time waitress,
Natalie is currently the Young Women president of her LDS ward, which requires a large part of her time. This new calling has presented her with unique opportunities to help refocus Mormon women on their capacities to achieve and to include those who are different.

Sara Smith has four children, three boys and one girl. She and her husband live in American Fork. Sara is a very close friend of mine from college; we attended the University of Utah together. Her children’s ages range between three and ten years. Sara has many talents and interests: she is a great tennis player, very bright, loves horses, and is a dedicated wife and mother. Two years ago, her son, who was three years old at the time, was diagnosed with lymphoma. Her insights on being a mother help to locate motherhood in useful ways in the community.

Emma Clyde lives in Manhattan, New York, with her husband and two children. Emma was born in Utah and is currently an active member of the LDS Church in her community. She is a CPA and worked for a large accounting firm for five years before having children. Emma and I traveled together to Israel and were exposed for the first time in our lives to real poverty. Emma’s insights on balancing work with children add to the discussion on identity and illustrate how those we live with reflect our different identities.

Kristin Olsen lives in my neighborhood in Salt Lake with her husband and three children. Kristin and I became acquainted during our internships in Washington, D.C. She is a very bright and talented woman who graduated from college at age nineteen. After her husband earned his law degree, Kristin applied
for law school and then deferred for a year while she had her third child. She is currently a second-year law student at the University of Utah. Both her parents are judges and Kristin’s experience growing up in Utah and seeking her own professional goals demonstrate a need for awareness.

Marianne Hunt lives in Salt Lake with her husband. She taught high school English for three years. Presently she is completing her master’s in education at the University of Utah. Marianne has experienced some health problems, which have hindered the fertility process, though she is well now. She has toyed with the idea of seeking a Ph.D., but is hoping to start a family before further consideration. Marianne comes from a strong Mormon background and is very active herself. Her family is an interesting combination of conservative democratic ideals and traditional Mormonism.

Claire Johns also lives in Salt Lake with her three children and husband. She is an attorney at law. She has practiced law in my father’s law firm for fifteen years on a part time schedule. She is an active member of her local ward and a devoted mother. Recently her youngest child was diagnosed with autism, which has increased Claire’s perception on how Mormon women support each other. Claire is also fundamentally concerned with the concept of choice and agency as something she wants to pass on to her daughter.

Elaine Satin, the thirteenth voice, also happens to be the eldest voice in the paper. Elaine was raised overseas and did not join the church until she was in college. She taught in elementary school for over twenty years, received her master’s in public administration, and became a principal. She is retired now at
seventy-five years old; she lives in Salt Lake and works from home writing books and speaking in religious engagements as a representative of the LDS Church. Elaine’s exposure to the LDS Church is unique; she sees the need to encourage and foster agency for women and finds it critical to support other’s decisions. Her interview was fascinating.

Let me again emphasize that I will use the terms “language” and “discourse” throughout the paper in their poststructuralist sense, which sees meaning as mutable and moving. The advantage of language and meaning in motion is just that: it is always changing, shaping, and re-shaping—re-vising. It is a major corollary of such a philosophy that individuals and communities are able to progress precisely through the ability to re-vise, through discursive acts, their image of themselves. Each narrative included here as an interview represents attitudes individuals express at one moment and is not to be interpreted as fixed.

Mormons have always envisioned the peace, order, and respect that could exist in the ideal Zion community. As a way of realizing such potential, analyzing problems displayed in discourse helps identify the specific things in need of change and points a way toward strategies for doing so. Therefore, some narratives serve to illustrate that a few current practices are evidence of problems that exist now but which may be corrected. Stuart Hall describes how discourse functions in this way:

It may be true that the self is always, in a sense, a fiction, just as the kinds of ‘closures’ which are required to create communities of identification—nation, ethnic group, families, sexualities, etc.—are
arbitrary closures.... I believe it is an immensely important gain when one recognizes that all identity is constructed across difference and begins to live with the politics of difference. But doesn’t the acceptance of the fictional or narrative status of identity in relation to the world also require as a necessity, its opposite—the moment of arbitrary closure? ... Potentially, discourse is endless: the infinite semiosis of meaning. But to say anything at all in particular, you do have to stop talking. Of course, every full stop is provisional. The next sentence will take nearly all of it back. So what is this ‘ending’? It’s a kind of a stake, a kind of wager. It says, ‘I need to say something, something, just now.’ It is not forever, not universally true. It is not underpinned by any infinite guarantees. But just now, this is what I mean; this is who I am.

(Qtd. in Lehtonen 159)

The interviews function as “stops” where women reflect on their decisions, their influences and accomplishments. Doing so enables them to realize what kind of control they have in their own lives and how they can improve its quality. The value of this discussion then, as Hall notes, is that “all identity is constructed across difference” (159). Hence, it is important to heed these women’s voices and stories in order to locate the reality of their experiences. Indeed, we can see that meaning has changed over time, views have changed, and women’s roles have changed. Yet, further positive change is needed. I offer these narratives as illumination on the path to such change.
Chapter 1

Community: Towards a Purpose and Place

Women will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves.
—Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar

In approaching the female discursive communities among Mormon women, this chapter will discuss two questions. First, how does discourse set and enforce the parameters of identification for individuals within a community? Second, what are the possible consequences of that discourse? Carefully answering these questions will allow us to see how discourse shapes a community and whether discursive practices function to privilege some members over others. Such an analysis enables men and women to understand how discourse affects the needs of all members in a community; it also provides material for use in assessing the need for change, if change is necessary.

To better understand how communities are created and function some background information is needed; therefore, I will briefly review a summary of current ideas in the field, and then discuss how women’s institutional roles have shifted over time within Mormonism. After that I will consider what issues such a shift raises for the LDS female community, and what issues result from the paradox in discourse addressing Mormon women. Subsequently, in chapter 2 “Discursive Action,” those issues will be demonstrated by means personal examples found in the interviews.
On Community

Kenneth Burke outlines a useful process for understanding the parameters of a community, and how groups of people become communities, through defining and locating collective identities by those things individuals hold in common with each other. Burke explains that his theory for a "new rhetoric" is "identification," whereas the old rhetoric was "persuasion." The process of "identification" relocates our focus on the moment prior to persuasion, which he argues is really the "preparation necessary for persuasion." Identification is the process of making deliberate connections with other people, such as "when the politician seeks to identify himself with his audience" ("Rhetoric—Old and New" 203).

Burke's process of identification, which occurs the moment "interests are joined," leads a person from an individual identity into a collective identity. He points out that A "may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so" (20). He illustrates that such preparation can be successful in persuading a person to unite himself or herself with the collective. Collective identities are groups of people who share a common symbol, ideology, myth, or perception (in other words—commonalities, points of identification, or recognition). Burke calls this "consubstantiality," explaining that "in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (RM, 21).
A symbol that illustrates identification well is the flag as a symbol for patriotism. A country rallies around its flag to show support of the ideals of that country and often the government. Such symbols can also represent “what” people are and do—as in the roles they play, titles they hold, or jobs they perform—and their performances induce further symbols and, to that end, social cooperation as respective collective identities—communities. Symbols then inspire acts of unification, which is another way to describe what Burke refers to as the process of identification. In this way “what” a person is can bear on the importance of constructing collective identities.

To further expand on these aspects of community, I extend Burke’s definition by calling upon Benedict Anderson, and later Krista Ratcliffe. Benedict Anderson’s article, “Imagined Communities,” talks fundamentally about national identity and communities; however, some key insights help illuminate Burke’s sense of the collective identity. For example, Anderson’s definition of national communities extends Burke’s process of identification. Anderson posits that communities are created as they are “imagined” by community members (15).

In speaking of the national community he explains, “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them” (15). Consequently, its members have to imagine a common symbol that unites them with the collective (such as a flag); therefore, “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Communion is understood to mean unification, which binds communities. In this way the “image of their communion” becomes closely
associated with Burke's process of identification; it becomes essentially a way to identify with others without the physical presence of others. Therefore, "imagined communities" can pertain to any group that creates a collective identity through the process of identification. Coming together for a common purpose enables the process of inventing the group members' communion to take place. Anderson claims in fact that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (15). Therefore the process of "imagining" a community clarifies how people across borders create communities based on certain ideologies or beliefs they hold in common, such as in a religion.

Burke uses the process of identification to illustrate how commonalities symbolize unification and to that end enable individuals to transcend differences by focusing on their symbol of unification. Both Burke and Anderson help to establish how communities exist by transcending the differences of community members, whether physically together or not, in exchange for an imagined communion. Inasmuch as communities have been defined as groups of people who come together through the process of identifying with each other, I will later call on Krista Ratcliffe to discuss possibilities of coming together through more than what is held in common.

**Institutional Roles of Mormon Women**

To gain a better understanding of how females in Mormonism function as a community, it is necessary to give some background on how their roles have shifted. Such review is also helpful to understand how the parameters of identification are set and enforced in the Mormon female community.
The institutional role of women within Mormonism changed significantly during the 1960s. At that time the Church began to experience rapid growth, and as a result significant re-organization was implemented to accommodate demanding needs. Marie Cornwall points out in her essay “The Institutional Role of Mormon Women,” that the priesthood line of authority stressed “the hierarchy of the church more than it ever had in the past. Priesthood came to mean an ecclesiastical line of authority connecting family, ward, stake and regional levels with the central quorums of the priesthood” (CM 256).

Only men in the Mormon Church are ordained to the priesthood and to its offices in quorums. Consequently women were affected as the auxiliaries with female leadership (Relief Society, Primary, Young Women) experienced “fewer responsibilities, loss of autonomy, restricted organizational power, and little contact with auxiliary leaders at the local level” (257). The shift in control also resulted in losing responsibility over areas such as welfare services, leadership training, publishing, and policy setting with respect to women’s organizations (258). Cornwall explains how the presidencies of each of the women’s organizations (Relief Society, Young Women, Primary) became less visible: “Women of the church no longer heard from their women leaders through auxiliary conferences, newsletters, or conference visits. The tradition of women leading women became lost in an emphasis on priesthood line and priesthood authority” (258). Because women were not ordained members of the priesthood, their institutional role was to “support the priesthood,” which now meant that “the formal structure of the church emphasized institutional and familial roles of the
priesthood but only the familial role of women” (258). At a time when women were generally pressing for more influence in social institutions, Mormon women found themselves outside their religious hierarchy, with little opportunity for input on governing councils (258).

Cornwall is careful to note, however, that the women remained an important part of the religious community, but since more emphasis had been given to organizing and administering the rapidly growing units of Mormonism, their roles and responsibilities changed (259). Because the change reduced women’s duties in the institution, the focus became more centered on their role in the home. Cornwall notes here how the shift impacted the situation:

> Despite the significance of women’s contribution to the functioning of local church activities and programs, official church statements about the role of women focused on their family responsibilities. After all, their major contribution was as officers in the smallest unit of church—the family. In the institutionalized modern version of Mormonism the title Mother in Israel came to mean giving birth to and raising children and lost its broader meaning of contributing to building the Kingdom of God and establishing Zion. (258)

The shift in the institutional role of women from more responsibility to less and the increased emphasis of their roles in the family help to demonstrate how discourse regarding women’s roles as mothers became more central in the Mormon tradition. Hence, it is easier to understand how women who are also
mothers began to feel more comfortable about their roles in the female community and in their personal lives. By the very nature of their situations as wives and mothers, they have accomplished most of what has been asked of them by the institution.

Though women who served in local congregations were important, their responsibilities for organizations on a church wide level had been redirected to the authority of appropriate priesthood quorums. Fulfilling the role of wife and mother in the family had now not only become a personal choice for women, it too had become institutionalized in a sense. The church, in shifting women from the public to private roles and emphasizing her familial position as her main responsibility in the institution, gave much more credence both religiously and socially to fulfilling roles as wives and mothers; it gave being a mother ecclesiastical validation as other responsibilities in the institution became less available. In turn, the men’s obligation to the church was emphasized.

As priesthood bearers, men became a scarce resource—more men were needed to fulfill institutional and familial priesthood roles. Cornwall explains that as a scarce resource “men became more valued than women, and the attention of the hierarchy focused on somehow restoring the balance by increasing the number of Melchizedek priesthood holders” (259). Subsequently today, those who don’t have a priesthood liaison in the home as head-of-household may sense the growing problem in the church that Cornwall notes: “An unintended consequence was that women, particularly single or divorced women or women married to nonmember husbands, are now more likely to be viewed as a liability than as a
resource in the face of the institutionally defined demands of the rapidly growing Mormon church”(259).

Cornwall’s assessment of such consequences helps to better clarify how some women within the female community who are not organized in the “family unit” in the ecclesiastical sense can feel a bit outside of center both in the larger religious community and in the Relief Society, the female community. Many working mothers or women without children may also sense a similar dis-position due to the central discourse which privileges women who are fulfilling their institutional responsibility in their familial role as mother.

**A Female Community in Mormonism**

Relief Society is the largest female community within the Mormon tradition and is a place where women gather together for one hour each Sunday to instruct one another on principles of the gospel as found in manuals prepared by committees made up of men and women. As such, the Relief Society provides the main forum for discussion of women conducted by women within the larger institution of Mormonism. It is a community of women who share similarities of gender, religious beliefs, and their institutional responsibilities in the church.

The Relief Society was founded in 1842 and is presently the largest private women’s organization in the world. When the society was originally organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “This Society is to get instruction thro’ the order which God has established” (qtd in *Women of Covenant* 1). They were commissioned to “save souls and look to the poor and needy. Relief Society women were set apart and empowered to fill that ministry” (qtd. in *WC* 1).
Following the Latter-day Saints’ organization in 1830, Joseph Smith had “gradually established the priesthood quorums and offices” that were necessary for establishing further the kingdom of God on earth. In 1842, “he organized the Relief Society, an elect body of women, to serve as counterpart and companion to the men’s priesthood quorums” (1). Cornwall also notes this equation concerning the Relief Society in her article on institutional roles of women:

The creation of the Relief Society introduced an institutional role for women that has remained the primary means by which adult women define their contribution to Mormonism. Folk tradition and the current LDS Church meeting schedule equates a woman’s Relief Society membership with a man’s membership in the priesthood quorums of the church. (Contemporary 245)

Like many female benevolent societies of the time it was founded, the Relief Society shared and shares with other women’s organizations “a concern for charitable work, community work, education, women and children’s health, and opportunities for sisterhood” (2). At times, the Relief Society has joined with other groups in unitedly advancing common purposes. However, even with these important connections, “Relief Society has maintained a sense of separate identity, uniqueness and a sacred mission to be understood only within the context of the restoration of all things,” namely to serve Christ and to forward the final gospel dispensation. The founding of the Relief Society marked the “expansion rather than the commencement of this covenant” (2).
Richard and Joan Ostling present an outside perspective of the Relief Society and women in the church in their book, *Mormon America*. Here they review a significant transition period for women in the organization, which resulted in a further loss of autonomy that they had previously enjoyed in the formal church. They remark:

In 1970 the First Presidency issued a directive that ended the financial independence of Relief Society, the denominational women's auxiliary. Too much energy was going into fund-raising projects, so the male priesthood would henceforth take over all money matters 'leaving the sisters free to perform their specially assigned tasks.' The Relief Society was to remain a useful vehicle for humanitarian service, training, and wholesome fellowship...and [women] no longer decided to join the organization; ...all LDS women were enrolled automatically. (365)

Originally when the Relief Society was formed, women joined the organization only if they wanted to; at the time dues were paid to help raise money for charitable service. If money was a concern, services were offered to help offset the price of membership dues. The Ostlings note the critical shift for women in the 1970s, and how that shift in priesthood leadership (discussed previously) affected the women's institutional role in the Relief Society.

Today, the organization bears the official name, "The Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." The Society currently describes its nature, purpose, and goals in these general terms:
We are beloved spirit daughters of God, and our lives have meaning, purpose, and direction. As a worldwide sisterhood, we are united in our devotion to Jesus Christ, our Savior and Exemplar. We are women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity who: Increase our testimonies of Jesus Christ through prayer and scripture study. Seek spiritual strength by following the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Dedicate ourselves to strengthening marriages, families, and homes. Find nobility in motherhood, and joy in womanhood. Delight in service and good works. Love life and learning. Stand for truth and righteousness. Sustain the priesthood as the authority of God on earth. Rejoice in the blessings of the temple, understand our divine destiny, and strive for exaltation. (Smoot 1)

The Relief Society definition was patterned after the Young Women Values definition and was put together in 1999 by the General Relief Society President, Sister Mary Ellen Smoot. She reported that “people of the world are curious about Relief Society, ...and in an effort to respond to the inquiries from outside the Church, and to remind ourselves of the grand blessings of womanhood” it was put together as a joint effort with the presiding Brethren’s approval (Ensign, Nov. 1999).

The women in Relief Society recite the definition on special occasions as directed by local Relief Society leaders to remind them of their purpose as individuals in the community. The definition is rich with meaning and symbolism,
enabling many women to *identify* themselves as part of the female community. However, women who are single or without children may feel that certain parts of the definition do not yet apply to them (marriages, families, and motherhood), causing them to question perhaps the reality and value of their present contribution.

From the brief history of Relief Society that we have reviewed, it becomes evident that this imagined community was established upon the commonalities of authority, priesthood, faith, and gender. The Relief Society can be seen in the Burkean sense as providing a symbolic function that correlates sisterhood, womanhood, and motherhood into a shared identity. Because this becomes a space where both individual and collective identities get constructed and defined, it is important to further delineate a definition of community that is inclusive of all women. For example, though all women can identify with womanhood, some may not share in the sisterhood if both terms in Mormonism have come to symbolize through discourse *full-time motherhood*.

In her book *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*, Krista Ratcliffe notes a few problems with Burke's process of identification. In short she argues that collective identities are formed through erasure of differences, which exist between individuals. Ratcliffe says Burke’s desire is for “rhetoric to erase such differences through consubstantiality” (11). She opposes the process of identification on the merits that a community which bases itself solely on what is held in common is not an ethical or healthy *community* because it continues to marginalize those who are different, in addition
to erasing differences among individuals altogether. "Much is rendered invisible when identification becomes the main rhetorical pursuit," she explains (11).

However, I am not suggesting that communities could exist without the process of identification—indeed communities have always had a practical reason for the purpose of their communion. Burke explains "totem, race, godhead, nationality, class, lodge, guild" are all "myths" or symbols that "have made various ranges and kinds of social cooperation possible. They are not 'illusions,' since they perform a very real and necessary social function in the organizing of the mind" (The Legacy of Kenneth Burke 268). But further, Burke has explained that "myths may be wrong or they may be used to bad ends—but they cannot be dispensed with. In the last analysis, they are our basic psychological tools for working together" (267). Even so, Ratcliffe makes a valid point, arguing that such a process gives priority to a central symbol, which can by its very nature exclude those who are different or it may simply erase the differences altogether.

While Burke's model is useful in describing how shared identity is maintained, Ratcliffe helps us evaluate the ethical parameters of a collective identity. Indeed, any community whose process of socialization may risk marginalizing some of its members stands in need of evaluation. Ratcliffe calls upon Roland Barthes' conception of multiplicity and Julia Kristeva's third term of feminism to continue her revision of rhetoric, saying, "I imagine a rhetorical function that offers possibilities of difference, not just identification and that assumes multiple interpretive possibilities" (12). Ratcliffe offers possibilities of resetting the parameters of identification in realizing our ability and our
responsibility to come together also on the basis of difference and not only by what is held in common, but by making difference at least part of the process for identification.

**On Symbols, Images, and Identification**

Through the process of identification, LDS women tend to make being full-time homemakers the “image” of their communion. The unintentional effect is that certain members of the community may feel estranged because they differ from that “image.” For example, if women focus exclusively on their central roles in the family as wives and mothers during a lesson in Relief Society, it is possible that those who don’t share in that role begin to feel less valued as members of that particular discussion and community by extension. These become the issues of difference. However, by implementing R. Atcliff’s call to imagine communities on the basis of difference as well as sameness, we increase our capability to meet the needs of more members in the community rather than just of those who are privileged by the central discourse. Such membership in a community requires a type of advanced citizenship. It requires a more involved method of awareness to reset discursive parameters.

For example, a more mature citizen in a democracy realizes that if a flag symbolizes freedom, it also has to symbolize the rights of the person who is burning that flag. Similarly, the discursive symbol of a community has to include the differences in the community as a part of its unifying principle. In a recent discussion, one woman asked a useful question considering this concept: “What are the symbols that include all members of a community?” Some suggestions of
symbols for Mormon women included women of covenant, women who pray, pioneer women, and women who work (in and out of the home). Embedded in the symbol of a pioneer woman is the concept of work and capacity. These concepts are useful because they embody concepts of agency and ability. However, "capacity" gets more closely at the concept of agency than does "work," since "capacity" symbolizes a range of abilities, limitations, and possibilities. In this way, capacity symbolizes choice. Advanced awareness in the LDS female community recognizes agency as a fundamental concept for the inclusion of difference in discursive practice.

As early as 1989, President Hinckley began to address women specifically in terms of their capacity. He extended a formal invitation to women to embrace their individual potential and capacity (Hinckley 1995). The invitation has been included in several of his own subsequent addresses as well as that of many others who have quoted him in their own speeches. Deseret Book created a bookmark in 1998 titled "An Invitation to Women" that had this invitation printed on it and was given out for free during various book promotions. Two of the women I interviewed were familiar with the quote; one gave me the bookmark. As a result of their new awareness, they had begun to alter the way they addressed other Mormon women in their community, which is more fully discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Capacity became for them an inspiring symbol, and they have grasped it as their symbol to include all Mormon women. Focusing on capacity as a symbol fits the profile of a unifying principle that includes possibilities of difference because
it focuses men and women on a woman's ability to achieve as well as her right to make decisions about that ability.

Recently, President Hinckley addressed the young women of the church in a talk titled "How can I become the woman of whom I dream?" The woman he portrayed as a symbol for younger generations to conceive of was a woman who had chosen to educate herself in a field that allowed her to work as much or as little as she desired. She was also a mother of three children. When discourse focuses on a woman's ability to play a few roles, the emphasis is on her capacity to do so, as opposed to discourse that only recognizes she play one role, as in motherhood. President Hinckley consistently fosters this concept of capacity in the examples he uses when addressing Mormon women. As a result some women have created a symbol from the concept. I recognize capacity as a strong concept and find it possible to also extend it as a working symbol that includes all Mormon women. Such discourse has the possibility to overcome "consubstantiality" by accommodating those who are different and enabling a more inclusive membership in the community.

Issues of Paradox in Discourse

According to The New Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a paradox is "a statement that seems contrary to common sense and yet is perhaps true" (529). As mentioned before, Mormon women face a paradox: on the one hand, they are encouraged to rise to their potential, develop their talents, and improve their knowledge and abilities. On the other hand, the central purpose of the plan of salvation in the LDS Church is the creation of a family unit; women have
therefore been strongly encouraged to embrace marriage and motherhood, even to the exclusion of education. Yet if developing a talent or rising to one's potential requires educational training, it would appear then that women who seek familial roles are presented with a contradiction, a paradox.

The paradox continues when women are told that gaining a marketable skill through education is only to be a safety measure in the event that something should happen to her husband or she should never marry. Such discourse assumes women are not capable of performing both roles simultaneously, as in being a mother with a marketable skill, or even a married woman with a marketable skill. The discourse encourages a polarization of roles and doesn't see them as working together, when in reality many Mormon wives and mothers can and do put them together in a variety of ways, as is demonstrated in the interviews I conducted.

This discursive strand also assumes that if a woman does choose to develop a marketable skill as a wife or a mother, those decisions are selfish and not in the best interest of her family, when in fact the opposite may be the case. Overall such discourse is inconsistent with the admonition for women to develop talents and increase in wisdom and learning when perhaps a marketable skill could also perform those functions. Hence, one discursive strand tends to encourage women to exclusively fulfill their institutional and personal roles as wives and mothers, while the other discursive strand encourages women to develop their potential and talents.

This paradox is not unlike the one Eve faced in the Garden of Eden. The commandment to multiply and replenish the earth could not be fulfilled unless she
ate from the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—apparently essential to knowing how to fulfill the commandment of procreation. Part of the fulfillment of one commandment required that Eve disregard another.

However, women have found ways around this paradox, which suggests that it is possible for the two strands to be reconciled. Some women focus more intently on implementing LDS principles of personal prayer and patriarchal blessings as means of obtaining personal direction in their lives (more fully discussed later in the chapter) when conflicting counsel confronts a personal decision. The principle of agency is another important concept that helps to give women the means to make decisions they feel are right for themselves regardless of what may be right for others. In a statement released by the Presidency of the Church in 1995, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” they explain, “Fathers are ... responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.... Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation” (LDS Church 1995). Here, a provision is made to bridge the paradox by noting that individual circumstances may require adaptation. Hence, these are a few ways in which the paradox has been reconciled for some women.

While such a paradox does exist, it is important to note that some evidence exists in the interviews I conducted to suggest that both strands of discourse (roles and potential) get privileged in different locations. The interviews suggest clearly that the central discourse in Utah is discourse that emphasizes domestic roles in the home. Yet those who have lived in Eastern cities such as New York, Boston,
or Washington, D.C., suggest the central discourse in those communities emphasizes a woman’s potential and capacity to embrace a variety of possibilities while still accommodating for her priority in the home. The following illustration embodies this discussion of paradox, giving a historical development of both discursive strands.

Cornwall makes an interesting observation about paradox in a specific instance where President Joseph F. Smith seems to endorse competing roles for women. On the one hand Cornwall points out that President Smith hoped the work of the church would be done by the priesthood quorums, not by the auxiliaries. She quotes him:

> We expect to see the day, if we live long enough, when every council of the priesthood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will understand its duty; will assume its responsibility, will magnify its callings, and the intelligence and ability possessed by it. When that day shall come there will not be so much necessity for work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular quorums of the priesthood. The Lord designed and comprehended it from the beginning, and he has made provision in the church whereby every need may be met and satisfied through the regular organization of the priesthood. (Qtd. in Cornwall, 253)

Cornwall suggests that if taken literally, the example here could mean that women should not have an institutional role. President Smith seems to say the priesthood
quorums should carry out the work of the church. Since women do not have membership in quorums, they really could not “participate in the ideal church organization” (254). And yet, in the same address, Joseph F. Smith gives this direction to the Relief Society:

I would like to say that it is expected of the Relief Society, especially the general authorities of that great organization, that they will have a watch-care over all the organizations among the women of Zion…. Why should this be? In order that the women of Zion may be united, that their interests may be in common, and not conflicting or segregated, and that the purpose of this organization may be realized and the organization itself be effective for good in every part of the church throughout the world, wherever the Gospel is preached. (254)

President Smith’s example provides apparent evidence of the paradox facing women in discursive practice addressing women’s roles in the institution. Further examination demonstrates that this paradox also extends to women’s familial roles.

Through the ‘60s and ‘70s, data implies that even though the Mormon Church’s initial response to changing women’s roles was “negative and reactive, by the 1980s it began to accommodate to changed roles for women” (260). Cornwall observes that several policy changes were made during the ‘80s and “fewer conference talks discourage women’s participation in the labor force, and some acknowledge that women make important contributions to society other
than their wifely and motherly duties” (260). These examples are further proof of the competing strands in discursive practices about women’s roles. It also suggests an evolution of gender ideology that began to take place in the attitudes of both leaders and members of the Church, as demonstrated in the following studies.

Iannacoone and Miles point out in their article, “Dealing with Social Change,” that through their statistical analysis of church responses on women and position that “women’s issues rose throughout the 1970s, peaked in 1980, and now appear to be dropping” (272). However, when noting the overall results for the church’s position on women’s roles versus the articles addressing the matter they say:

The series does trend upward, but the trend is overlaid by tremendous year-to-year variation. Variation around the long-run trend is fourteen times greater than the trend itself. This pattern contrasts sharply with the steady growth in “Roles,” our measure of women’s roles in society. It suggests either that the church has not changed its position on women very much (so observed variation is just random noise) or that the church’s statements about women have been diverse and inconsistent. (272)

Because the institutional role for women has been ambiguous in the past as noted by Cornwall (261), it is no surprise then that such ambiguity exists about women’s personal and familial role. With a lack of female representation in the formal church, women turn locally to their congregation and female community
for direction, identification and unity. Cornwall concludes that “understanding the familial and institutional roles of Mormon priesthood provides us with the tools for identifying how women are present in the religious community but silent in the tradition” (261). Perhaps if more women had the opportunity to speak about their experiences in the church, there might be more understanding or cohesion.

Iannaccone and Miles observed how the paradox continued in the 80s, saying that “statements by James Faust, one of the highest ranking leaders of the church, and Ezra Taft Benson, the church’s president, exemplify the widely divergent attitudes now found in the church” (278). They observe that Elder Faust’s writing in the church’s magazine, *The Ensign*, encourages young women. He counsels them: “You should work very hard to prepare for your future by gaining marketable skills.... The struggle to improve the place of women in society has been a noble cause and I sincerely hope the day will come when women with equal skills will be fully equal with men in the marketplace” (Faust, 1986). Six months later, in a satellite broadcast address, President Benson expressed a different view: “Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the marketplace.... It was never intended by the Lord that married women should compete with men in employment.... Wives, come home from the typewriters, the laundry, the nursing; come home from the factory, the café” (Benson, 1987; qtd. in *Dealing*, 279).

The study from which I quote is more focused on the sociological aspects of change in the church rather than theological and simply uses such examples to demonstrate what the authors have found to be competing attitudes prevalent in
discourse with respect to women. In conclusion they find, “The church’s statements about women have evolved in such a way that the traditional ideal is reaffirmed even as new roles and behaviors are accommodated” (281). Their explanation confirms the presence of a paradox in discursive practices; it has become, if you will, the way the church has responded to social change in roles for women. Their result overall found eventual accommodation, but within its own parameters. A brief review of such discursive strands will help us better understand where and why one is privileged over the other.

Many times in the past, leaders have demonstrated their desire for women to gain an education, magnify their talents, develop, and reach for their potential. Brigham Young, one of the biggest advocates for women in his day, said in the Journal of Discourses, “Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science belongs to the Saints.” He continues, saying that women “should be diligent and persevering scholar[s]” (JD, v.10, 252). He also sent women off to various professional schools for medicine, law, nursing, and business. In 1875, Ellis Shipp went East at his request to study and learn anatomy and medicine. She wrote of her learning, which “[caused] everything in nature to be fraught with greater interest.” The knowledge she received “opened to [her] view depths and heights of which [she] had never dreamed.... How much more beautiful is life when we understand its laws” (Shipp, 219). Her expressions help women to recognize the value she found in learning and gaining serviceable skills, while also noting that such a practice was at this time encouraged by church leaders.
In 1975, Elder Howard W. Hunter, expressing his feelings on the matter of women gaining an education and seeking for gainful employments, suggests:

There are impelling reasons for our sisters to plan employment....

We want them to obtain all the education and vocational training possible before marriage. If they become widowed or divorced and need to work, we want them to have dignified and rewarding employment. If a sister does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts. *(Ensign, Nov. 1975)*

As church leaders do indeed encourage women to magnify talents and gifts, what can be inferred is that women do have talents and gifts worth magnifying and that leaders recognize that employment can offer such development for women. Elder Hunter qualifies his statement by including many women in the female community who are not full-time homemakers. Such discourse for those women is encouraging and allows them to find a space in the community where they are valued for their service.

In 1981, the *Ensign* magazine interviewed Barbara Smith, who had been general president of the Relief Society for five years, about her perceptions of progress made by women and the Relief Society. When Sister Smith was asked, “How have your perceptions of the Relief Society changed?” she responded that she felt the Relief Society was a gift from the Lord and through implementing the principles of the gospel it would become “an influence for good in the lives of women all over the world” *(Tambuli 6)*. Her perception of women and their
choices is especially helpful in gaining a better sense of purpose for women in the female community:

I believe that when the Prophet Joseph Smith told those early women he was "turning the key" in their behalf and that knowledge and intelligence would flow down to them, he was preparing women for a time of choices. We have more education than ever before; we have the possibility of economic independence if we need it; we have the right to vote. These advantages give us the responsibility of choice in a way that has never been possible for women before. They increase our opportunities and our challenges. As women take advantage of these blessings, they should give thoughtful and prayer consideration to the circumstances of their lives and exercise their free agency accordingly and then accept responsibility for their decisions. (Tambuli 6)

Sister Smith capitalizes on the opportunities of choice, recognizing that education and increased opportunities have made the choices of women more abundant yet also more accountable. Such discourse is evidence of the effort made to include women whose circumstances are different from the majority.

In a speech Elder Neal A. Maxwell gave in October 2000, he used an analogy to demonstrate his point:

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? (Maxwell 2000)

The implications are fair and based on good intent. And while it is no secret that the church does prefer women in domestic space as opposed to workspace, the problem with analogies is that they sometimes send unintended signals. Such examples risk having women who are not by cradles and in kitchens feel undervalued in the community. This example is evidence of the discursive strand that tends to privilege women in their domestic space over women in the workplace.

In reality, the analogy polarizes the positions rather than seeing them as cooperating together. The woman who may be by the cradle and in the kitchen could have the same impact as a woman who is in congress—both positions shape society and our experience—but by polarizing them in discourse we set up the assumption that one is greater than the other, when in reality both are essential for social cooperation. Thus, the polarization of such roles creates opposition where perhaps none need exist. The potential problem with a paradox in discursive practice is the lack of cohesion and collaboration—a lack of unity, really.

Women who are at home full-time, however, have felt a similar frustration from this same type of polarization regarding women's roles. Jan Pinborough's article "Working Double-Time: The Working Mother's Dilemma" in the Ensign explains how this can be seen from another view. She notes when women are
asked, "Do you work, or are you a full-time mother?" the implication is that the woman who is home full-time doesn't necessarily work. She explains, "Any woman who has children recognizes the irony in this question. All mothers work, full time. And motherhood can never be a part-time job. But the messages behind this question can undermine women's peace of mind and polarize them" (1986). Such polarization causes these women also to feel undervalued because "accordingly, modern society does not credit them with doing valuable work" (1986). From this perspective, Pinborough suggests that although these women may know that "raising children is eternally important, they receive many subtle cues from the world that they really ought to be doing something more with their lives" (1986).

These examples have helped locate the tension facing women in the Mormon community today. Pinborough makes an important observation that as discourse continues to polarize positions, "with guilt and apprehension on both sides of the issue, women sometimes become defensive about their choices, perhaps also questioning the wisdom of other's choices" (1986). As a result, women on both sides feel undervalued or marginalized by others in their community—making social cooperation more difficult.

The following chapter focuses on the women interviewed whose expressions demonstrate these issues that have been raised as a result of the paradox in discursive practice addressing women. I will discuss how individual identities have been affected by the community with hopes that it will encourage readers to be compassionate towards others and increase social cooperation.
Chapter 2

Discursive Action: A Desire for Individual Identities

What is more is that identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self.
—Stuart Hall

My Grandma Moench was an adopted child. She tells us this story all the time. It is interesting to me that the story is always tied to her strong sense of self and identity. The story's continual re-play in my life has been a reminder of who I am and where I come from in both a physical and emotional sense. As the story goes, one day my grandmother was walking home from school with some cousins. They were giggling and asking my grandmother if she knew what “adopted” was? She told them at the young age of five years old that she didn’t know what it meant. Her cousins then said to her, “Our mother told us you were adopted.” When my grandma got home that day she knew she couldn’t ask her mother, who was very proper, and decided she would instead ask the closest person to her, Dede. Dede was the Swiss nanny who had cared for and nurtured my grandmother and her sister from birth. Dede, who always had the right answer, told my five-year-old grandmother: “Oh my, that just means that your mother had big beautiful blue eyes and got herself into some trouble.”

“Well—” my grandmother says when she tells the story, “I just thought to myself, what in the heck? So I didn’t ask again.” She knew it had something to do with her parents and being a part of the family, but didn’t quite understand. The next day when she was walking home from school thinking about what “adopted” could mean, she says she “suddenly felt an immediate peace, a very strong feeling
of peace and love in my heart.” It conveyed to her that it didn’t matter if she was “adopted” because she had a Father in Heaven who loved her, and all that was important was to love the gospel and pray to God. I love this story of my grandmother; it is one that marks her journey to know herself. Her story has been told over and over and is passed around from cousins to aunts, daughters to granddaughters. The sense of this story reminds me and my family that Grandmother’s experience was an important way to understand and control her own life. In doing so her faith in God was strengthened, which in turn has influenced her family. Her life has been a continual testimony and re-vision of her experience as a five-year-old girl. She understood that her identity was not compromised in being “adopted” and that she could choose how to respond and how to know herself.

I see my grandmother’s story as a discursive action towards identity. Because she is my grandmother, her strong sense of self in this story has affected my own. In some way, I have identified myself with her story, and the part of this story I am aware of identifying with is the feeling of being straight with God, being honest about how I originally identify myself. Found in her story is this sense of honesty, as described by Jackie Thursby, “Honesty is having the courage to stay straight with God and ignore what the crowd follows” (11 Oct 2001). This story is one way I will always remember my grandmother and is a part of the power in her identity I hope to carry with me.

Carolyn Heilbrun explains in her book Writing a Woman’s Life that “true representation of power is not of a big man beating a smaller man or a woman,”
rather “power is the ability to take one’s place in whatever discourse is essential
to action and the right to have one’s part matter. This is true in the Pentagon, in
marriage, in friendship, and in politics” (18). It is true in religion as well; indeed
the ability to define oneself is directly tied to one’s access of control in the
community. Relief Society as a community provides women the opportunity to
teach one another the gospel of Jesus Christ as found in Mormon scripture and the
Bible. A common practice during such lessons is to give personal experiences and
stories as they represent the gospel topic of the discussion. It is a space where
women have the opportunity to control their identities through discourse in their
religion; in a sense, it is the reality of their discursive space as members of the
institution. And yet this space demonstrates how identities are reflected by the
discourse.

The forum becomes a weekly ritual (for those who attend church) in the
process of identification—if you will. As stories are told, the discursive action
engages those present to negotiate between commonalities and differences.
Inasmuch as the process of identification privileges similarities over uniqueness, I
will call on Adriana Cavarero’s work on identity to further expand and address
Krista Ratcliffe’s revision of the process of identification. Cavarero offers
possibilities of implementing Ratcliffe’s desire for the inclusion of difference.
Cavarero explains that stories and narratives demonstrate individual and unique
identities. Since each response in discourse is inimitable, it is therefore different.
However, she clarifies that differences are not necessarily divisions, but actually
make it possible to be individuals in a community. A brief review of identity as it pertains to this paper is now in order.

**On Identity**

Identity has been broadly debated and discussed by many if not most philosophers and is certainly a matter of concern for those involved in literary theory. In consideration of the text to be examined I will consider what relation individual identity has with the communal identity. Kenneth Burke's process of identification, which has already been discussed, can be seen as a process that is constitutive of both individual and collective identities. A person first "identifies" with a communal symbol or practice that prompts him or her to become part of the larger collective—moving from individual to collective. In this way people gain identity through ideas they hold in common with others.

Erik Erikson's definition of identity has an interactive quality with both the individual and collective. He defines identity as "a relationship, not a possession. It is a whole set of relationships between individual people and their surroundings in which they come to know themselves and to be known by others as individuals with particular responses." His idea fits well with Cavarero's notion of desire (later defined); he explains that while "the impulse toward identity formation is internally generated, the creation of competent identity is an achievement both individual and communal" (*Hoover* 7).

Paul Ricoeur describes his problems of identity as also diseases of memory in his article "Memory and Forgetting." He says they are essentially the same because "whether personal or collective, [identity] is always only presumed,
claimed, reclaimed; and because the question behind the problematics of identity is ‘who am I?’ We tend to provide responses in terms of what we are. We try, that is, to saturate, or to exhaust, the questions beginning with ‘who’ by answers in the register of ‘what’ (QE 8). He claims that these problems occur because it is difficult to preserve identity and memory over time due to the inevitability of change over time.

Essentially there are three problems that occur with identity and memory according to Ricoeur; they are time, the other, and violence. Preserving identity in the face of each of these poses certain threats to personal and collective identities. Each of these also poses threats to memory and forgetting. Therefore, it is through narratives “that a certain education of memory [and identity] has to start” (9). Ricoeur explains “we cannot tell a story without eliminating or dropping some important event according to the kind of plot we intend to build” (9). Narratives, then, he says, are “the occasion for manipulation… but also a place where certain healing of memory may begin” (9). In this way narratives perform an ethical function towards memory and remembering important parts of history, of collective identities, and of personal identities. Because many founding events are the ground of a collective memory, Ricoeur points out that “it is very important to remember that what is considered a founding event in our collective memory may be a wound in the memory of the other” (9). For these reasons, an exercise in memory is also an exercise in “telling otherwise,” or allowing others to tell their own history. Doing so enables us to better understand both personal and collective identity.
Ricoeur is committed to working towards an ethics of memory and an ethics of identity. But in order to do so, one has to deal with humiliating memories to get at the most correct identity of a group, in the collective sense as well as the personal. There are different ways of dealing with these types of memories: "either we repeat them in Freud's sense or, as Todorov suggests, we may try to extract the "exemplarity" of the event rather than the factuality (for exemplarity is directed towards the future: it is a lesson to be told to following generations)" (9). In this way, telling stories takes on new responsibilities both to memory and identity. Ricoeur suggests more ethical memories and identities are found by way of "drawing out the exemplary significance of past events" and allowing them to speak for themselves (9). It also becomes a way to be just and to be reconciled towards new institutions and new identities. If we focus on a more ideal future we are better able to avoid mistakes of the past. Our duty to new communities and new identities is founded on our commitment to an ethics of memory and narratives from the past.

In response to this concern I will refer to Adriana Cavarero to address the matter of who and what, finding that her solution is helpful through the unique life-story found in narration. Her ideas on the narratable self help to validate Ricoeur's exemplary dimension of personal and collective identities—it focuses identity towards new possibilities through narrative while also allowing it to stand reconciled to the past.

Adriana Cavarero explains in her book Relating Narratives that a life-story reveals not only the uniqueness of an individual but also the unity of the life
from which that story results. She claims that this unity is desired by the narratable self, "a unity that only the talk of his/her life-story can provide" (xxii). However, to say that the self has a "unity" is not to say that at its center is a "compact and coherent identity" (xxii). Cavarero argues that "philosophy sets out to define or determine Man by establishing 'what' Man is, by enumerating qualities that he could possibly share with other living beings" and therefore is unable to assert in words the individual uniqueness of a human being (vii). In other words, "who" someone is "retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression" (vii). It is this uniqueness, this oneness, that philosophy fails to express.

"Who" a person is can be revealed and made known through that person's actions and speech—words and deeds that "form the unique life-story of that person" (viii). "Who" someone is, therefore, remains inexpressible within the language of philosophy: "Rather, 'who' someone is can be 'known' (although this is not epistemological knowledge) through the narration of the life-story of which that person is the protagonist" (viii).

Essentially, Cavarero argues that philosophy is not the only discourse with which we know how to engage: "it does not devour all of our language(s)" (viii). Narratives particularly do not belong to philosophical discourse. She describes the problem of identity between narration and philosophy as follows:

We could define it as the confrontation between two discursive registers, which manifest opposite characteristics. One, that of philosophy, has the form of definitory knowledge that regards the
universality of Man. The other, that of narration, has the form of a biographical knowledge, that regards the unrepeatable identity of someone. The questions which sustain the two discursive styles are equally diverse. The first asks ‘what is Man?’ The second asks instead of someone ‘who he or she is.’ (13)

Cavarero maintains that it is the unique narrative that more closely defines “who” a person is. Therefore, I will extend Cavarero’s definition of identity in this paper to the women’s narratives in order to examine aspects of individual identity. Each woman’s self-expression will create and reflect parts of her personal identity through her unique life-story. When Cavarero explains that narrating and being narrated are equally important in constructing identity, she gives credence to the narrative register of discourse or narrative discourse in the formation of identity as opposed to relying solely on philosophical discourse to do the work. She explains of this type of register that:

What is important, therefore, is not a knowledge of the story, or a knowledge of its contents or details. What the life-story says is not, finally at issue. The ‘intelligibility’ of the person that we meet is, likewise, not at stake—for even in the absence of such intelligibility we know that the other is a unique person, with a unique story. We know this, moreover, without regard to whatever category or social place that person may occupy. Even the amnesiac, has the sense that he or she has a unique life-story—even without being able to recall it. It is this sense of being
narratable—and that accompanying sense that others are also narratable selves with unique stories, which is essential to the self, and which makes it possible to speak of a unique being that is not simply a subject. (xvi)

Individual identity in the female community is also evident in the ways Cavarero suggests. Women who often share personal experiences of their own and of others, in essence, narrate each other. In doing so, the narration becomes a type of identification process. According to Cavarero we desire this narration, this type of identification, in order to see ourselves reflected through the eyes of others as a way of re-seeing ourselves in different ways and taking part in our own identity process. Narration then becomes a discursive act in forming identity and is, according to Cavarero, one way of understanding identities.

This kind of language Lehtonen calls the symbolic work and creativity of everyday (CA 161). As such, discursive acts in narration produce new meanings and identities and therefore have important empowering potentials for resetting discursive parameters. Since narration is constitutive of identity, it becomes increasingly important to pay attention to what women are saying in narrative responses or discursive acts, because as a community we should care about how that individual identity is being constructed and is constructing itself in response to the discourse of the community, as well as how such discourse is functioning to locate individuals in the community.
On Implementing Narrative Possibilities

Cavarero’s theory on identity being reflected and desired through narrative has possibilities of nicely performing Ratcliffe’s rhetorical function of multiple interpretative possibilities. Ratcliffe’s metaphor explains how this can work:

This resulting rhetorical function resembles the particle/wave theory of light in quantum physics: that is, a person’s stance, like an electron’s position, can be noted, or the continual play of the signifier, like an electron’s motion, can be noted; however, like position and motion, stance and play cannot be observed simultaneously (12).

In other words, typically when trying to evaluate how a text is persuasive, traditional rhetoric has focused on the “stance,” the “moment,” and has capitalized on looking at something as only one dimensional or simply in terms of sameness, when perhaps a more responsible way to examine a text would be to note its multidimensional function, its “motion” as in the other possibilities and differences that exist for that text. Once you have identified the position of the electron, it has lost part of its value since it has to be moving to have value. It has limited capacity and potential as only a particle being identified. But in motion the electron gives off energy in light and heat, moving in multiple directions, having unlimited potential in energy.

Therefore, Ratcliffe’s analogy can be applied to any discourse addressing Mormon women about the roles they play. The example helps to illuminate how privileging a discursive strand that polarizes women’s roles doesn’t get at the full
meaning of a woman’s identity. It will only get at “what” she is in a particular role—such as a mother, professional, widow, married, single, or divorced—and limits her overall value in the community. By contrast, giving priority to her potential, her motion, her energy, and her resources gets more effectively at “who” she is, as Cavarero would say, and allows for women to be more whole.

Cavarero’s desire for narration in the formation of identity naturally implements Ratcliffe’s rhetorical function of multiple interpretative possibilities enabling difference in a community. However, these discursive acts in narration also become the empowering persuasive potential a community can use to reset the discursive parameters. In following Carolyn Heilbrun’s suggestion for women to exchange and share their stories and experiences, we begin to have a sympathetic understanding of those who are different from ourselves. She says, “I do not believe that new stories will find their way into texts if they do not begin in oral exchanges among women in groups hearing and talking to one another” (46).

Stories create and recreate individual identities and yet also provide for inclusion of difference in a community.

**On Narration: Increasing Capacity for Compassion**

Following are representative examples of the women’s stories and experiences who were interviewed. They serve as a type of social texture often resulting from the paradox in discourse addressing Mormon women. These narrative discursive acts as stories can increase our capacity for understanding. Nussbaum claims that such exposure “is urgently important for the world citizen,
Some women have felt that the central discourse in the LDS female collective community locates them on the fringe of that community. And being on the fringe of the community is both a reflection and a construction of their personal identity. In other words, it both creates how they see themselves individually as well as how they feel the community perceives them. Such perceptions create a reality for the individual. Both their membership in the community and how they see themselves as individuals are realities. Though such observations may not be universally true, accurate or obvious to others, they are at the very least real to the individual. For this reason I find it useful to consider the voices of these Mormon women to see how the paradox in discourse has been received into the social texture. Their narratives offer a practical approach to moments of reality—they are essentially glimpses of humanity.

**On Working Mothers**

Since the institutional role for women in the historic Church was vague for many years, many women often turned to personal prayer and their patriarchal blessings for direction. Marie Cornwall explains:

> While the Relief Society was Joseph Smith’s effort to ‘organize the women of the church,’ it did not clearly define women’s institutional role. The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo existed for only two years; \ldots it was organized again in the West but not officially for twenty-five years. In the interim, Mormon women
looked to temple rites and to their patriarchal blessings for definitions of their place in Mormonism. (247)

Ironically, this practice is still prevalent today among women who are seeking direction in their personal lives regarding their place both in Mormonism and in general. Claire Johns, an attorney at law and mother of three children, shared her experience when I asked about the surprising decisions in her life that led her to new and unexpected roles:

I was about to graduate from BYU in English, and had applied and been accepted to law school but was unsure about whether to proceed with more school (as I was feeling burned out), or to take a year off to work. I then abruptly decided that I should go on a mission. I arranged to defer my law school admission for a year, but still felt very undecided about whether I wanted to attend law school upon my return home. Just before I entered the mission field, I received my patriarchal blessing, which was general in many respects but very specific in directing me not to abandon my educational plans. So I went ahead with my mission, and then returned to go to law school at BYU. Those decisions, to serve a mission and to go to law school, led me into some new and interesting roles that I had not previously thought of as roles I wanted to play. (Johns, #12)

Claire has since used her education in law to work part time, and she provides a valuable service to the community. However, President Benson’s talks
given in the late '80s frustrated Claire. She explained, “No one I knew was working to buy unnecessary luxuries, and the father’s role was not discussed. But I remember that different people, both men and women, used that talk to raise the issue of women’s roles with me. . . . [It] validated criticism of working mothers” (Johns # 12). Such criticism was unfounded in Claire’s mind. However, since most women in her local religious community weren’t working in the same capacity, it became (as Pinborough mentioned before) easier for them to question Claire’s decision. A larger concern for Claire, nonetheless, was that she felt President Benson’s talk essentially validated that questioning.

Another woman who had a similar experience seeking guidance and direction from her patriarchal blessing was Kristen Olsen. Kristen had always wanted to go to law school. Her father is a state supreme court judge, and her mother is a juvenile court district judge. She graduated from college and was married at 19 years old, after which she started to have children. After eight years she and her husband had two children, and Kristen began to think more seriously about law school. Her application was accepted, but she chose to defer because she was pregnant with their third child. After a year, she started law school at the University of Utah. She discussed how she has reconciled being in a nontraditional role for Mormon women in an area that clearly privileges motherhood. Yet, she is able to reconcile these differences while still locating herself in the center of discourse regarding individual choice.

In this example Kristen describes how she was to teach a lesson to the young women in her ward, but the lesson had some quotes on education that
privileged women's role in the home over opportunities for education. She remembered the quote as, "A woman should only get an education before marriage and only use it if her husband dies or is incapacitated in some way." And yet she was married, a mother with three children, attending law school, and now teaching a lesson to the young women of her ward about education. It was through her patriarchal blessing that she found the validation and direction she needed to continue on the course she felt was right for her. To be reconciled with the community, she sought out some recent information on education and used discourse of the more potential and educational oriented strand to teach the lesson.

These are critical situations that need attention in the Church; Kristen is not the only woman who has found herself in this predicament. Her example only illustrates that such circumstances are becoming more common. She alludes to this by referring to her own mother's experience and then relating it to her own:

There is a beautiful thing called personal revelation. You can pray about it and it, may be for me and maybe not. And that's what saved my mother was [the notion] that it's up to you, it's not up to what everybody else decides. But for me the only way I got around this lesson was my patriarchal blessing, which is very, very specific about education. It's very long and a quarter of it talks about education. I got my blessing when I was older—it was the week before I graduated from college, two weeks before I was married to Mark. So it wasn't my undergraduate education being
referred to, since I was [about to graduate]. The patriarch knew me very well, he’d known my family for years—so to have gotten it at that point, I remember just thinking whew [as in a bit surprised and excited that I would have more education in the future]. And I read it now and I think, “Yeah, I am fine, I am not listening to you folks” [reference to quotes given in the manual for the lesson]; if it’s in here, it’s me, it’s specific, I can ignore this and that’s hard [sometimes]. (Olsen, #10)

Different mediums of communication with Deity are encouraged in the Mormon Church, such as personal prayer to gain direction and guidance in one’s life, as well as reading in scripture to gain useful insight, and blessings given by priesthood holders to those seeking comfort or healing. A patriarchal blessing serves as a type of guide and direction given to young men and young women who are encouraged to read it over and over throughout their life to remember the promises made to them if they remain faithful to the commandments of God. Patriarchal blessings are good examples of personal revelation meant for a specific person. Through this medium of communication women have often sought for and received guidance with respect to their personal lives and endeavors. Both Claire and Kristen’s example lay out for them a specific “mission” and path for them to follow, which also served to be the “way around” one strand of discourse.

Cornwall explains in her article “in a blessing given Emma Smith, [the Prophet Joseph Smith, her husband] revealed that she would ‘be ordained under
his hand to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church' and that she would receive ‘a crown of righteousness’” (D&C 25). These roles in the modern church are generally accepted as masculine. She mentions that in a review of patriarchal blessings, the historian Carol C. Madsen recognized the frequent mention “that women would have the power and wisdom to teach friends and other women” (249). The example she gave was of a girl with whom I actually served an LDS mission. Her name as given in the book is Elizabeth Barlow Thompson. Her patriarchal blessing mentions, “many shall come to thee for counsel and advice and they shall go away happy and contented and thou shalt have great influence with thy sex for good, also shall the young and rising generation come to thee for advice and instructions and thou shalt bless them and they shall bless thee and thou shalt go forth and do much good” (quoted in Cornwall, 247). Currently Elizabeth Barlow Thompson practices as a marriage and family therapist, having received her master’s in marriage and family counseling at Brigham Young University. She is married with two children.

Another layer in this curious paradox is found in that the church encourages all members to adhere to principles of the gospel such as praying for guidance and direction, agency and personal revelation like that found in patriarchal blessings. Yet, at the same time, women in the church are strongly encouraged by the prevalent discursive strand privileging eternal marriage and motherhood to be wives and mothers, even to the exclusion of education and careers. What happens when a woman is inspired by way of either prayer or personal revelation to be something else in addition to being a wife and a mother?
What is she supposed to make of that? And what is the community to make of that? Are they simply exceptions to the rule or is there more room to understand such principles? The paradox exists in such an example where like Claire and Kristen, a woman feels inspired and compelled to foster certain talents through education and through a profession which can and does look like a contradiction in terms considering the number of talks addressing motherhood as the most appropriate role for women.

Women who are single, divorced, widowed, single mothers, working mothers or women unable to bear children are members of the community who have felt on the fringe at times. The evidence is in their discourse, which demonstrates, as Stuart Hall noted, a particular position within which they have felt marginalized if even for a moment. However, such evidence is not meant to negate fundamental goals or principles among the Mormon Church meant to encourage female roles to embrace domestic responsibilities. Rather, it is important to note that other positions exist and they exist, as a direct result of personal revelation and guidance, not out and out rebellion. Neither do such positions need be polarized, which implies exclusion and negation of responsibilities a woman has to her husband or her children. Fusing the positions together helps to expand possibilities of inclusion in the community. However, Toni Morrison does make an interesting observation about white women on this topic:

It seems to me there's an enormous difference in the writing of black and white women. Aggression is not as new to black women
as it is to white women. Black women seem able to combine the
nest and the adventure. They don’t see conflicts in certain areas as
do white women. They are both safe harbor and ship; they are both
inn and trail. We, black women, do both. We don’t find these
places, these roles, mutually exclusive. That’s one of the
differences. White women often find if they leave their husbands
and go out into the world, it’s an extraordinary event. If they’ve
settled for the benefits of housewifery that preclude a career, then
it’s marriage or a career for them, not both, not and. (122)

Her distinction is important to consider when focusing on possible ways white
women perceive themselves in their roles. The observation certainly rings true for
the group of women I interviewed, who expressed that the LDS community
tended to polarize the roles rather than see them “together.” Yet most voiced they
are working in that direction.

**On Motherhood**

As mentioned before, the goals to become a wife and a mother are good
and worthy goals. Embracing marriage and motherhood provides ample
opportunity to serve others and should be recognized as both noble and desirable.
Sara Smith, a close college friend and mother of four children, describes how her
son’s cancer affected the way she valued her role as a mother.

But there is a lot of stress as a mother right now for me, because I
have to take care of him physically and take care of him
emotionally, and I have three other children to take care of. When
we first came home from the hospital I felt like I wanted everything to just keep going as normal. [I thought] I am not going to let this take over our lives; we’re going to act just like everything is fine and keep going about our business. And I was in the Primary Presidency, and I stayed in that calling.... I think about two months ago we had a long hospital stay and you know Jack (emotionally), and my boys’ emotional needs were piling up and I just felt like ... we can’t act like everything is normal because it’s not. I think that a lot of women think they have to do everything, and I just had this little breakdown and thought, “I just can’t! I have got to take care of him.” And there are fifty women that can do this calling and Jack has one mom and Kent has one mom and Cole has one mom and Sage has one mom, and I have got to be their mom. That was one of the hardest decisions, a very hard decision, because that was still something for me, something that I felt could kept me busy other than cancer. (Smith, #8)

Sara observes that deciding to give up some responsibilities was difficult because it reminded her that her circumstances were no longer normal. Her role as a mother had taken on a new dimension, demanding that she let go of other roles that helped to make her whole, and that in some good ways gave her a break from cancer. However she realized that for the present her role as a mother is consuming her energy, and for the present she needs to stand in that position more fully. She implies that doing so brings her into another dimension of motherhood,
one she hasn’t yet known perhaps—that doing so will change her forever and will inevitably add to every role she plays.

Emma Clyde, who lives in New York, had a similar experience in her role as a woman trying to accommodate the differing roles of work and mother. She shares in the similar desire with Sara to be able to negotiate both, but finds a need to make necessary adjustments, reaching for a balance, a capacity she can handle.

My husband [Dave] always encouraged me to work. And it almost got to a point where I felt like I had to keep working because I wanted to be everything in his eyes. Then I realized that I could be everything in his eyes and be as unhappy as this person buried in the cemetery. I felt like I was so unhappy. So then I realized I had to sort of tie things up—because with the second baby it was just going to be too hard; as much as it was important to me, it was more important to me to be happy. And I think if I am happy I am going to be a better mother and a better wife. And Dave was like, “That’s great,” you know it wasn’t...an issue, and it was interesting because I was all prepared for it to be, and so even though I feel like we know each other so well, each year something happens or something changes and we rediscover each other. I just think, why would I think that he would think less of me because I wasn’t going to work? That was so dumb, but that was a concern, and so I feel like each year we are still evolving, and that was an issue a couple years ago. (Clyde #9)
Here Emma’s perception of herself had been significantly influenced by her husband, whom she thought would be disappointed in her choice to quit working. In this very real space she was conflicted between her own desire to be happy and his perception of her identity. However, she says it best: “We rediscover each other…and are still evolving.” Such an example demonstrates how identity can evolve in a community.

**On Marriage**

Marianne Hunt is a close friend who is married and pursuing her master’s of education at the University of Utah. She and her husband have wanted to have children for a while but have experienced some setbacks with Marianne’s health. When we were discussing possibilities for a Ph.D. in her future she said:

I think my Mom feels better about [my master’s] now that I have shared a lot of information with my sisters and their kids about how [kids] are learning. She says, “That will be so great when you are a mom.” I think she is getting the whole idea of [my degree] now. But her answers to all of our problems are, “Oh, if you could just have a baby, and stay home and get out of this mess.” She thinks of our lives as a mess. And I say “Mom!” But she has been supportive, just in different ways than I thought. My Dad was [very] excited [about the Ph.D. opportunity]. It’s funny, when this professor approached me about getting a Ph.D. and asked me to work with her (I mean, I have idolized her for years, she is so well known in the reading field)…. I was really flattered that she would
ask me. I came home and said to John [my husband], “You won’t believe it! I could work with her and do comprehensive research.” And he said “What!” (not as in, why would you do that, but as in magnitude of excitement and importance of the opportunity). And so honestly, I wanted tell my Dad, I knew he would appreciate it, but I didn’t tell my Mom or my sisters. (Hunt, #11)

Here Marianne describes an interesting pattern in her family. She implies that her mother and sisters, though supportive in some ways, would not be supportive of her decision to pursue a Ph.D. They imply that being home full time with children would solve her problems—would get her out of the “mess.” Therefore, were she unable to have children and pursue a Ph.D. (even though she is married), her mother’s comment implies that those circumstances are not favorable and locate her on the margins of the female community. Such comments also risk sending Marianne the unintended signal of disappointment and failure in her mother’s eyes. In this way the discourse privileging mothers in the home full time is, in fact, her mother’s worldview. However, when talking with Marianne about whether she would consider working when she became a mother, she says:

I know my Mom would not be happy if I worked as a mom. She would be very sad and so would my Dad. They would be sad, they would think that I had made a poor decision.... I mean it would have to be very minimal if I worked and if it was at all my kid’s expense, I know that my parents would have a really hard time with it. And my Mom would tell me that. She is very forthright
about women’s roles; she speaks about it all over and she says people always get mad at her [but] she doesn’t care. She feels very strongly about it.... I actually feel pretty similar.... I just think when I have kids, I want to do other things, but I don’t know. I will have to see. Because I don’t want to do anything that would take me away from them, except maybe like what you do, teach one class.... I just feel like the greatest work you can do is with your own kids. I just do. I have seen in the schools, and nobody can replace what parents can do, nobody; teachers cannot do it. (Hunt, #11)

Marianne was the youngest of the women I interviewed, but she nonetheless had been married for five years. Here she continually refers to whether her parents would approve of her choices in a manner that seemed to suggest that she had no intention of disappointing them. Marianne provides solid evidence that choosing to work as a mother would clearly be a “poor” decision in her parents’ eyes and her own eyes by extension. Such a view is evidence of the discursive strand suggesting that mothers who do work are understandably located on the fringe in the Mormon community since those decisions are considered “poor.” Though I have to take into account that Marianne may have been trying to soften her own discourse knowing that I am a working mother, making her parents more or less the reason she would or wouldn’t do certain things may have been a tactful way of circumventing a confrontation of issues. However, Marianne comes from a strong LDS family. Her father is a General Authority and her
mother speaks often in women’s conference and other events, which Marianne actually noted. Since her parents are valued and of high profile in the LDS community, her efforts to refer to her parents as a standard of judgment imply that she and others value their opinion. This strand of discursive strategy is consistent with those who privilege women in the mother role.

Adrienne Smoot is my aunt. She is bright and talented. As a young girl I began to work with Adrienne in her French catering business, which later turned into a business opportunity to work for the Sundance Film Festival, where she worked for seven years. All the while, she struggled to balance her husband’s expectations of her in the home, her children, and her work. In addition to being a gourmet cook, she is a professional quilter and an excellent writer, as mentioned in the introduction. I identify with my Aunt Adrienne on a few levels. She is a woman who has always spoken her mind and yet she is private. She embodies a paradox: she submits to her duty as wife and mother, though she is a fiercely independent thinker. Adrienne quit work to benefit her marriage. She was happy to quit work because she realized it was best for her family—though she says that because her husband pushed the issue it caused a great deal of resistance on her part. Now she finds herself in midlife, her only daughter has married and moved away, and she is left with one son in high school. I speak more about Adrienne because her life is one that I have personally watched ebb and flow, seeking balance and sometimes off kilter. She is very open about her spirited marriage, and claims that though lively, it is a healthy one. Here she shares such an experience:
One day this year I had gone to the gas station and there were these cement blocks that I didn’t see—and I just plowed into one, ripping to shreds the right side of my car. And it was really a dumb thing to have happened, because I had always gone to that gas station. I was so ticked. But then I got home, and Tom [my husband] was mad. We went to the opening of the Huntsman Cancer Institute—we got out of the car and were walking along, and I could tell he was just resisting saying something rude to me. But finally he said to me, “How are you going to pay for it?” And it didn’t take me more than ten seconds to turn around, stop dead in my tracks, and say, “By divorcing you.” Oh, I boiled for the rest of the evening, and he walked around on eggshells. (Smoot #4)

She tells the story in hysterics, laughing but proud of herself at the same time.

Still when I think of this story, I think of it as such a poignant moment for Adrienne. Telling the story is her effort to reflect and reconstruct her identity; to be narrated by herself is a way to regain control of her life. She is an independent woman, being home full-time as a mother in recent years has resulted in Adrienne’s financial dependency on her husband’s income (which, as we can see from this example, seems clearly to be his income). However, Adrienne is quick to subvert his “authority” in the matter, reminding him in one short phrase that according to the state of Utah, she owns at least half of what they have together. This becomes an interesting and frustrating way in which married women as full-time mothers are addressed in the community, as almost powerless and penniless.
On Being Single

Since becoming a wife and mother are not traditionally decisions a woman in Mormon culture entirely controls, the tension between discourse privileging such roles and those who are single is poignant. Macy Givens expresses this very concern with respect to her situation as being single, 29, and pursuing a Ph.D., which has taken her to Arizona and frustrates her because she feels her options are limited.

I'm so out of control here. By trying to keep various options open in my life I feel like I've closed in the option of getting married. By being serious about a career—mind you, a career that I chose because it would allow me to stay home with my kids during the summers and to work from home a large part of the time—I have left the dating mecca of Utah and I feel that I have also made quite a statement that I don't care about marriage. I also feel like the good Mormons get married when they are 23-25, and only the losers can't find a spouse beyond that time period. I don't know if these are the ways that I identity myself or the experiences that I have. I feel that I have a love/hate relationship with Utah and the church sometimes. It gives me so much that I need and provides a real connection with God, etc. But at the same time I feel totally estranged by it. I think I feel this way because I'm not married, because I want to be married at some point (I want something that I can't get--this seems to imply that I'm not worthy), and because
I've pursued a career that takes me outside of Utah and all the places where the young singles like to be. (Givens #6)

Part of Macy's desire to be married is directly tied to her desire to also be located more in the center of the religious community. But she also recognizes that it is the community that makes her feel abnormal about not being married, that somehow she is not "worthy." Being a single woman in the Mormon community is frustrating since the social norm is for the men to court women, and leaves women feeling less in control of their circumstances—just as Macy noted.

She continued to expresses her concern with this issue as it relates to her identity when I asked her what she wanted to pass on to her daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival.

I don't think I want daughters. I never really have and I have never been able to articulate why, but it sucks to be a girl sometimes. I feel that I was raised quite genderless. We really didn't do anything different than the boys in my family, and my mom and my dad did a good job of not fulfilling traditional roles. It just seemed like people did things more according to age than gender. I always thought that the sacrament was passed only by boys because there were just not any girls in the ward at that particular age. My sister was the oldest girl I knew, and I was excited for her to start passing the sacrament. Anyway, I used to practice—my mom had a relish dish that had a handle, so I would break bread and pass it to dolls and what not. All this to say that I had a rude awakening when I
clued in that gender does matter. I think this was a gradual thing and I think I fought it. But as much as I’ve tried to reconcile issues in my personal life, the church, graduate school, etc., I’ve always felt a bit outside the norm, one step beyond being understood by anybody. I think this is because the mark of normalcy in our church seems to be getting married, so regardless of what I do I am not normal yet. So what would I like to pass on, something that I haven’t quite figured out yet? How to completely not care about the church but how to also make it the center of your life. I don't want my kids to grow up in Utah, for sure. (Macy # 6)

Macy has a strong reaction to being female in the Mormon community because in many ways she has associated it with feeling “outside the norm and one step beyond being understood.” Her reason for responding this way is directly associated with marriage. She finds it particularly frustrating as a single person who has not found a husband yet. The consequences naturally tend to alienate and locate those who are not married on the fringe, and marginalized. Macy explains why:

I want my kids to feel like they have a place in the gospel, and I don’t feel like I have always felt that way here in Utah. I think age has a lot to do with it also, because outside of Utah it is fine for someone like me to not be married. So age has a lot to do with it. But one thing that surprised me, when I took this narrative class, there were so many girls who had married later and were single.
There is a lack of support for each other in the church; it is sad to see women become their own worst enemy. (Macy, #6)

Macy is an active member of the church; she served a mission and recently served in her ward in Arizona as the Relief Society President. Her narration of herself shows her desire to fulfill roles that would make her more central in the community. She also notes a disturbing trend in the way she perceives support from Mormon women who seem to be their “own worst enemy.” Wendy C. Top in her book *Getting Past the Labels* makes a very similar observation about how women in the Mormon Church support each other:

"Unfortunately, as women, sometimes we are each other’s worst enemies instead of the supportive network of daughters of God that we ought to be. The more I talked with these women, the more I realized how unsure we were of ourselves and how each of us wanted her role validated, perhaps even somewhat at the expense of other roles. A light went on in my head: Women not only want to be of equal worth with men, they want to be of equal worth with each other! (4)"

Top identifies key problems women struggle with in the female community, namely to have their roles validated and to feel equally valued by other female members in the community. She speaks directly to Macy’s concern about the real lack of support women feel from each other. Thus, educating a community about changes needed at the level of language helps to re-direct discourse towards inclusion of single women who feel like Macy. Her experience being a “single”
Mormon demonstrates a common frustration many who are single feel, especially in Utah.

However, not all women who are single perceive their position as marginalized. Of course many perceptions exist; Molly Hansen expressed a more unique perception. Molly is twenty-seven years old and is pursuing her master’s at Columbia in medieval studies. Molly does not describe being frustrated by her single status; rather, she sees it as a unique opportunity to locate her in the center of her “imagined” community:

I think that if you are not listening spiritually you are becoming complacent in your role. I think it’s an easy thing to slip into though. Even with myself, at the beginning of my master’s program and moving to New York—I sort of had this image of myself doing this nice little master’s program and wrapping it up and...being a mother. And I quickly realized that it wasn’t good enough—not that it wasn’t good enough for me, it wasn’t good enough for the Lord. There was something more that was expected of me and not necessarily educationally or professionally as much as personally. I needed to know my potential and I needed to be on top of it and be active in my pursuit of the Lord’s will for me, whatever that may be. And it didn’t necessarily have to be more schooling or different schooling or some huge important position or career or research. But to say, “Oh, I just want to retreat now into this nice little idyllic life of marriage and motherhood,”
whether or not that was an option wasn’t good enough for the Lord; that wasn’t recognizing my worth as a daughter of God, and it wasn’t recognizing my divine mothering nature. But it is so easy to slip into, because if women aren’t talking about how they feel..., about their roles and about their lives, we see these nice wonderful pictures and it looks like something we want. And so I think part of that is really being in tune spiritually and stretching beyond what you think you can. And so to say, “Oh gosh, I can’t really see myself in a career or really doing anything else outside of my mothering” [isn’t good enough], it’s just recognition of what it is you are actually doing. (Hansen, #5)

Molly takes the time to redefine her position as a single Mormon female and reconsiders what that means to her in her life right now. In a sense she takes the attitude in honesty as described before as someone who seeks to be “straight with God, despite what the crowd may say.” She looks beyond what the traditional Mormon culture perpetuates as the “ideal” role for a woman. In this way she exercises efforts to control her life, to re-see herself in a new light and in the center of it.

**On Location**

Location became a factor that developed throughout the interviews as women would remark on the differences among more liberal communities back East for example, versus Utah as more conservative, privileging the familial role for women. Robin Perry shares an experience with the Utah Mormon community.
When I asked her about her career and what kind of response she received from other Mormon women as well as men, Robin shared a brief experience about living in Utah:

Yes, I have a career. When I grew up my Mom told me I could be a nurse or a teacher so I would have something to fall back on. My Dad told me I could do anything. This was the '60s. In the '70s my Dad said I could do anything; my mother began to see that I could do other things. I met other Mormon women who had careers outside Utah—a thrilling experience! The Mormon influence was stifling, parochial. No role models in Utah per se. I didn't realize until 1998 how restrictive it was—I moved back to Utah after living in Washington, D.C., for 23 years. I realized then how restrictive it was. My home teacher in Salt Lake told me he couldn't have business lunches with women because he was afraid of what others might think. I then realized it was time to leave [Utah]. (Perry, #1)

Here Robin sees herself outside of the collective identity even though she is Mormon herself and shares in the Mormon heritage strongly held and found in Utah. However, she describes the difficulty for a woman to be both Mormon and a businesswoman in Utah. The implication is that the two cannot co-exist in the same collective identity, which is why Robin left Utah. The home teacher represents how the community seeks to maintain its identity on the one hand, but on the other hand does so at the expense of some of its members and therefore
problematizes efforts to seek for identification based on sameness rather than difference in such a community. Here the discourse clearly only validated her role as a mother, ignoring her role as a professional. In a sense she had to leave Utah because she wasn’t allowed to participate in business practices necessary for her livelihood.

Carolyn Heilbrun points out in *Writing a Woman’s Life* that “ironically, women who acquire power are more likely to be criticized for it than are the men who have always had it” (16). Certainly Robin expresses this well when she points to a lack of professional female role models as well as the inability to do business with men based on their own processes of identification in the Utah Mormon community.

I continued my discussion with Macy on issues of living in Utah and asked her why she didn’t want to raise her children in Utah. She said:

Geography and history of the state has a lot to offer, and I like it for those reasons. But what if I had a kid that doesn’t happen to conform? It just seems like the collective identity of the church is so strong here that you really feel it if you are outside of it.... I guess that I want my kids to have unlimited options. And I definitely don’t feel that. If I stay in Utah I feel like the main reason is to find a husband; many other girls in my position do that. When I live away, I don’t think about marriage nearly as much as I do when I am here. This hasn’t been a choice to do this, this is plan B. But I have tried to pursue something very
productive, a Ph.D., [career,] easy for kids, but that hasn’t worked out yet, the kids part. (Givens, #6)

The way she describes the “getting” of a husband implies very strongly that the female collective identity relies heavily on marriage as a process of identification and the central symbol in the “image” of their communion. Because there are more Mormons in Utah, Macy is presented with an interesting paradox. She desires to find someone to marry but feels it requires living in Utah to do so, a place where single women aren’t as supported.

Molly Hansen points describes how living in New York is demonstrative of the other discursive strand privileging women’s potential and agency over fixed roles. This makes it easier actually to be single since the focus for the female community changes:

I surround myself with those women; part of it is that in New York [it] is just more accepted. We had a homemaking night about women and careers, which I don’t think would happen in Provo. But I mean here was the bishop’s wife, a business analyst and probably pulls in a million dollars a year, I mean she is just [great]. And she has a child, and she is the bishop’s wife, and that is just how it is and that is just what people do. (Hansen #5)

She enjoys living in New York and pursuing academics, and doesn’t feel it necessary to live in Utah to find a spouse. She is confident that marriage will come naturally wherever she is living. Her ability to feel comfortable in the community is best illustrated here when she points out that she surrounds herself
in New York with LDS women who make her feel comfortable. However, the location is to her advantage, providing more diversity within Mormonism than what Macy finds in Arizona among the Mormon community.

**On Being Friends**

Claire has lived in her neighborhood for close to twelve years, raising her children, working part time as an attorney, and trying to blend in with the background. When discussing how she felt supported by the other Mormon women she said:

> I have found that the stay-at-home mothers in my neighborhood have been supportive in the sense of allowing me to choose the carpool days that work best for my work schedule, and other small accommodations. However, I am definitely not part of the social group. And I have observed with interest that some of the women who are most openly critical of “feminism” do not necessarily spend more time at home than I do.... I got into an interesting (friendly) discussion one day with a stay-at-home neighbor who is an avid quilter and very dedicated Church member about whether it makes any difference to your children what you are doing when you are away from home. Is away for a career different from away for a hobby or church work, or is it all just “away?” And what about community service? (Johns #12)

Claire fosters a discussion with her neighbor and asks some key questions which help both women rethink the traditional parameters of women’s roles within the
community. Her effort is a good example of how one can use discursive actions to reset the parameters of marginalized groups to become more centered *doing so* through the simple and practical means of discourse. However, Claire notes that though most of the women in her neighborhood (who make up much of her Mormon female community in Utah) were supportive of her working, they did not include her in their social group; in other words, they were not her close friends.

Natalie and I discussed how difficult it can be at times when women tend to compare and contrast each other’s lives, looks, and accomplishments, often giving rise to competition and other unnecessary factors which complicate a community. She expresses well our need for compassion:

I think we as women—we just need to just give each other the benefit of the doubt. We are our own worst enemies, we are. We are our own worst enemies; you know if we could just build one another up and... that’s a pipe dream—we’re not all going to do that. But you find those two or three touchstones, and you lean on them and you watch them and you call them, whether it’s your mom, or your grandmother, or the friends that you run with, or a childhood friend. Those are the women that I come back to, and when they can see my life through a perspective and I feel comfortable with them, I know I can discard anything on them. And that’s when I know I am okay and I’m safe. One of my best friends has a quote up in her kitchen and it says, “Your name will always be safe in my house.” And I think there are very few
women, there are just a certain few that I hold that quote to, that
my name is safe with them, and I know that I can pretty much tell
them anything. (Hill #8)

Friendship is a powerful tool in binding a community. Both Claire and Natalie
comment on the quality of their friendships and how it affects their position in the
community. Claire saw those relationships directly affected by her choice as a
part-time working mother. Natalie recognizes the need to seek out friends who
will support her regardless of the roles she decides to play. In this way Natalie
makes an effort to gain a sense of control in her life by choosing friends who are
fundamentally concerned about her well-being. However, in addition to seeking
support proactively, extending oneself to those who are different is equally
important as a fundamental effort to include all members of the community, and
actually makes the community stronger.

**On Desire for Narration: Reflecting Identity**

Going a step farther, I would like to call on Cavarero’s notion of desire in
narratability, as mentioned previously. She claims that this “sense of self that
results from ‘knowing’ oneself to be narratable is accompanied by a desire for this
narration.” What a person desires in the tale of his/her story “is not simply the
information which the narration tells, for the contents alone do not confer
identity” (xxii). But everyone asserts Cavarero is born both unique and one. Yet
she notes that regarding this unity, at the moment of birth something is lost with
the passage of time. Such a loss feeds the desire for unity “in the form of the tale
of the life-story.” Since the unity at birth is what is desired then,
the tale must logically include the story of birth and early childhood—which, of course, cannot be told autobiographically. Therefore, this unity, which is what the tale of one's life-story confers, can only come from the mouth of another. The desire for this narration, therefore, implies that each of us is exposed to, and narratable by another. And it implies that each of us entrusts his or her 'unity' and identity to another's tale. (RN, xxii)

Therefore, according to Cavarero, people seek for narration by others as a way of reflecting their own identity in that moment. It becomes a method of revising identity. In this way, narration through discursive acts is an effort to gain further control over one's life. The story of my grandmother is a good example of how she sought to revise her identity over time through the telling of her story, which in turn invoked my own process of identification. Now I seek to be told stories of myself which remind me of my grandmother. The narration goes both ways and fits well with Erikson's notion of identity being constructed by the individual and communal. It simultaneously implements Ratcliffe's rhetorical function by enabling multiple perspectives of my individual identity and also affects where I perceive myself inside a community.

Elder Russell M. Ballard gave a talk titled “Here Am I, Send Me” at the Women's Conference, May 2001. In his talk he read a letter written to the leaders of the Church by a young mother, who expresses concern over her worth in the eyes of the Church and of God. She says:
I have a wonderful husband and children, whom I love deeply. I love the Lord and His Church more than I can say. I know the Church is true! I realize I shouldn’t feel discouraged about who I am. Yet I have been going through an identity crisis most of my life. I have never dared utter these feelings out loud but have hidden them behind the huge, confident smile I wear to Church every week. For years I have doubted if I had any value beyond my roles as a wife and mother. I have feared that men are that they might have joy, but women are that they might be overlooked. I long to feel that I as a woman matter to the Lord.

In essence, she desires to be narrated and hopes her desires will be validated—but in ways that are different, specifically from the discourse that has always defined her as wife and mother. She is asking to be narrated by the community, to reflect for her an identity that confers multiple roles that contribute more unity than she feels in that moment. Such a request is imperative to note in the Mormon community. Women want to see themselves reflected through many roles, being whole in many ways.

The example is representative of a portion of women in the Mormon community who feel similarly, and as such should be given careful consideration by all who address Mormon women. Her request encompasses Erikson’s, Ratcliffe’s, and Cavarero’s theories on identity: she concedes that her identity is constructed in part by the community (the Church), she seeks for multiple interpretative possibilities of “who” she is (as a woman), and finally she asks for a
constitution and reflection of identity by way of narration from those who address the female community (Church leader). This solicitation for multiplicity in identification requires that discourse addressing Mormon women symbolize more than the roles of wife and mother; it requires reflecting possibilities of differences as well.

Asking to be narrated by another creates the possibility of constructing individual identities and resetting parameters of discourse. Narration is a discursive act that occurs in our daily lives and thus gives individuals in the community important persuasive positions from which limitations can be revised through the simple and practical act of telling a story—giving an example that illustrates the kind of identity desired.

In the next chapter, I will discuss and examine the possibilities of cooperation by giving priority to discourse that bridges present paradoxes addressing Mormon women today. Such discourse implements multiple interpretive meanings of women’s roles and calls on all members of the community to be responsible for addressing each other and for resetting discursive parameters in the community, while also suggesting practical means to meet that end.
Chapter 3

Cooperation: Working Toward Capacity and Cohesion

Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar (Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks).
—Gloria Anzaldua, foreword to This Bridge Called My Back

When Gloria Anzaldua suggests “there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks,” I am reminded of the community’s responsibility to create the means of communication that will help them to meet their goals, and of a needed commitment for cooperation. While the example is merely a metaphor, it demonstrates the point well—that along with the power lies the responsibility for individuals to take whatever action is necessary to improve control and quality in their own lives. Such action encourages cooperation in a community between all members, instead of relying on one person to address and solve all of the problems.Uniting a community requires the participation of all members and creates cooperation and cohesion. It also helps members to feel valued for the services they are providing. In this chapter I intend to suggest possibilities of a discourse meant to bridge present paradoxes in discourse addressing Mormon women.

First, I will establish a theoretical framework by using the writings of Kenneth Burke and Greg Clark to help review the value of recent representations of women in Mormon discourse. Kenneth Burke made similar efforts to unite a community; his example offers a model for bridging concerns of inclusion. I will then compare the effectiveness of a recent talk given by Sheri Dew, “Are We Not All Mothers?” (which makes an attempt to redefine motherhood to include all
women) with an approach President Hinckley has taken in the past focusing more intently on a woman’s capacity for achievement rather than on her roles. Examples from the women’s narratives follow which help to explore and illustrate the implications of President Hinckley’s notion of capacity. The conclusion will then discuss how creative discursive acts can refocus discourse on a woman’s capacity for achievement, privileging her potential over paradox. I will close by suggesting capacity as the symbol to reset discursive parameters and to enable unity and cohesion rather than divisiveness in the community.

**Replacing Symbols**

In 1935, Kenneth Burke addressed the American Writers’ Congress on “Revolutionary Symbolism in America.” Burke’s effort in addressing the group of socialists was to encourage them to replace the proletarian symbol of “the worker” with “the people,” arguing that it “makes more naturally for...propaganda by inclusion” (273). He specifies how it is the propaganda aspect of the symbol he centers on and considers “the symbol particularly as a device for spreading the areas of allegiance” (269). The symbol of “the people” he argues, tends to overleap imaginatively the class divisions of the moment and focus more on modes of thought that could apply to a society free of class divisions: “it seeks to consider the problems of man, not classes of men” (272). Therefore, the symbol of “the people” he claims, which includes connotations of both oppression and unity, creates more possibilities for inclusion and social cooperation. However, the socialists were not persuaded. Though his arguments were sound, his examples clear and fair minded, they rejected his proposal to shift
the symbol from *the proletariat* to *the people*. Certainly, Burke had a more ideal community in mind and perhaps his expectation was too high, though the effort was worth making. Such an example, however, is a useful model in considering ways to reset discursive parameter in a community. First, I will review Burke’s method on discounting to enable difference.

Greg Clark explains in “Transcendence at Yellowstone National Park” that discounting arguments or theories are necessary for disagreements to exist in the same discursive space. Clark explains how “[Burke] proposed that people be trained thoroughly in what he called “the discounting of rhetorical persuasiveness” (qtd. in Clark, 13). Clark draws from *Attitudes Toward History*, saying, “*discounting* involves ‘making allowance for the fact that things are not as they seem’—it involves ‘realizing that a sentence cannot be designed to say everything at once (recalling that a man, writing on the run, as we all do, cannot supply all the modifiers) one can properly discount, and so properly use’” (244). Consequently Clark explains, “discounting recontextualizes a statement in ways that prompt responses to its function rather than its intention” (13). Burke describes that discounting “does not take a doctrine at face value, but gets the meaning by observing how the doctrine behaved when released into the social texture” (245). Discounting, therefore, is a way to respond to “the consequences provocative statements actually prompt” (13). Since it is not always possible to agree, discounting enables disagreeing people to inhabit the same discursive space. In essence, discounting aids in getting at a fuller meaning of a text. When position A brings up a point that position B wants to discount, we gain further
understanding of how one statement can be perceived in plural ways—and therein lies its textuality. The method of discounting allows for opposing or disagreeing views to negotiate between commonalities and difference while acknowledging and resisting plural meanings.

Sheri Dew recently spoke in the general Relief Society meeting. Her talk titled “Are We Not All Mothers?” makes a similar effort to the one Burke made to replace one symbol with another and actually uses the method of discounting to negotiate her way through the many plural meanings of motherhood. Because she recognizes the problems of exclusion created by the more traditional and privileged term motherhood, she attempts to redefine motherhood so that it could apply to all women. Doing so requires some women to transcend their differences (physical circumstances) in order to imagine themselves as mothers. Dew uses the method of discounting to address plural definitions of motherhood by focusing on more spiritual definitions of motherhood, hoping that it will enhance and transform more common definitions to meet her own. Dew describes this redefinition saying: “Motherhood is more than bearing children, though it is certainly that. It is the essence of who we are as women. It defines our very identity, our divine stature and nature, and the unique traits our Father gave us” (Dew, 2001). Her effort to expand the definition is meant to include all women to accept motherhood as part of their identity—even the main part.

Though her effort to focus on motherhood as an overarching symbol for all women is based on good intentions, the symbol functions as a plurality of meanings. In reality, women feel a variety of emotions regarding this role,
precisely because it does mean something different for every one. However, when talking about motherhood, the language itself hails those who are physically tied to the maternal. Dew addresses this point, saying, "while we tend to equate motherhood solely with maternity, in the Lord's language, the word *mother* has layers of meaning. Of all the words they could have chosen to define her role and her essence, both God the Father and Adam called Eve "the mother of all living"—and they did so *before* she ever bore a child. Like Eve, our motherhood began before we were born" (Dew, 2001).

That all women should naturally feel inclined toward motherhood is the same kind of imaginative leap today that Burke took in 1935. It assumes an ideal community and assumes its members are capable of imagining motherhood in the spiritual ways Dew describes. Here, Burke's notion of discounting requires Dew herself to acknowledge the plural meanings of motherhood. She begins by discounting the traditional definition as suitable for all women; rather, for all women to be located under the term *mother*, a new definition or understanding is required. However, her effort is not new; many efforts in the past by leaders in the Mormon Church have stressed motherhood as the divine role of all women. Some of the women discussed in chapter 2 gave evidence of how this particular discursive strand was received once it was “released into the social texture.” As demonstrated some, if not many, have rejected the symbol of motherhood for all; much like the socialists rejected Burke’s ideal of *the people* meant for greater inclusion. Certainly, Sheri Dew had the same ideal in mind; her effort was to redefine motherhood as a more inclusive symbol.
However, the denotation of mother is understood in social practice as both birth mother and physical mother. Part of the connotative problem with the term *mother* is that it is too closely tied to its denotation of maternal—of bearing and nurturing children. Trying to change the connotations of mother may be impossible. Along with the term of *mother* comes an entire wave of connotations in the Mormon Church alone, such as what appropriate roles are for women who become mothers of children. This comes back to a main concern demonstrated in the first place—that discourse addressing the female community tends to privilege women as full-time mothers in the home over discourse that encourages women to develop their potential and gain an education. Therefore, while the proposition that all women have a greater ability to nurture and care for others is encouraging, couching those qualities in the package of motherhood as a universal symbol for all women begs the issues raised in the first place. The young mother whose letter Elder Russell Ballard read raised such an issue in chapter 2: “For years I have doubted if I had any value beyond my roles as a wife and mother” (Ballard, 2001). For merely practical reasons the church subject index includes: young women, single adult women, married, single mothers, and motherhood. Is this just a vicarious way of categorizing the women in the church—or is it indicative of those who are being addressed? They are certainly not all capped under “motherhood,” nor would it be useful to so categorize them. The discourse addressing the female community is obviously complex; perhaps privileging discourse for its practical purposes would be more effective as an effort to
produce inclusion. Brandie Siegfried clarifies my point saying, "either the symbols mean something or they don’t" (6 Sept 2001).

Elizabeth Johnson, who is a close friend of my husband’s family and lives in Canada, reflects on the idea of mothers and mothering. Her interview was the first one I did, over a year and a half ago, long before Sheri Dew gave her talk on the subject. Since her family were converts, and her parents very liberal for their time, Elizabeth enjoyed much support from her family to embrace education and whatever else she felt strongly about—such as motherhood. Of this role she says:

To me, as a young person and as a woman, you have to look at yourself. That is your role [motherhood], and it is God given. And you have been given the gifts for that role and need to develop those. And you have been given all of these other gifts and talents that you need to slide in [so you can] grow and develop. But women start separating motherhood from their career, from learning or contributing in other ways. I think it’s wrong. I think it’s all part of the same thing. Our base core of who we are as a woman is this mother. And I use the term mother; there could be another term because sometimes mother gets convoluted. We are the nurturers of the world, not just divine children of our families. We are the nurturers of the world, and we have the gift to put that energy out into the world. And so if we don’t look at it [this] way, then I think we miss the boat, whether we are a doctor, whether we are a teacher, whether we are a stay-at-home mom, [or] whether
we are a community volunteer worker. I don’t care what role we are in, if we understand who we are as women and we have those gifts...[that are] God given and work ... together. (Johnson #2)

Elizabeth has served in many positions in Relief Society as well as in the church’s Young Women organization. She speaks, as Sheri Dew does, about motherhood being an aspect of womanhood. However, as she continues to define what she means, she begins to revise the term motherhood due to the connotations (or convolutions as she puts it) that come along with what mother means within the Mormon culture. It becomes obvious to her that motherhood may not be the best way (and certainly is not the only way) to describe the characteristics she had in mind. Susan Howe asks a key question I think helps to answer this concern: “What is ‘the sanctity of womanhood’?” The question prompts more effectively the responses of characteristics Elizabeth describes above, and does so in a practical way. Perhaps womanhood is a better term to use in discussing nurturing qualities specific to women.

However, the term is broad and allows for more meaning. I would like to turn to President Gordon B. Hinckley to help clarify concerns of womanhood. As mentioned in the introduction, I interviewed one of President Hinckley’s granddaughters, who uses the alias name of Molly Hansen. She told several stories about her grandfather, and I would like to include one to introduce President’s Hinckley’s attitude towards women.

My sister Maddy just got married, and one of the things my grandfather mentioned ... to her husband John [was] about making
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sure that Maddy has every opportunity to develop her talents and abilities, and every opportunity that she needs and wants. Because those are important, and such a strength to the church, and such a strength to their family.... She and I were talking about that later, and just coming to understand then how much our grandfather loves the women of this church—and how deeply he feels that.... It’s obvious in the way that he supports us. He has always done that for me [supported me]. I mean, I have always felt from him that he wanted me to have every opportunity I needed, and that the Lord desired for me.... He has taught his children obviously that way and our family has always been that way. (Hansen #5)

Molly expressed sincere gratitude for being associated with such strong role models and examples in her personal life who have continually encouraged her to embrace opportunities to learn in a variety of fields and to pursue her potential. Her attitude towards being single in the LDS Church also reflects a unique optimism coming from a woman in her situation. Such an attitude is easier to understand given her familial background and upbringing. Having her talents and abilities constantly nourished has actually motivated her to pursue her potential and has resulted in Molly’s overall general well-being, sense of control, and happiness in her life. Such discourse in her family addressing women uniquely locates her in center of her religious communities. Since her family members have led the Church and because of the way they cultivated and addressed Molly, she noted having been exposed to this discursive strand all her
life. President Hinckley’s positive influence on women’s roles is manifest by women in his family, such as Molly.

In 1989, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave an address to the General Women’s Meeting titled “Rise to the Stature of the Divine within You.” He later adapted this address for a conference on women held at the University of Utah in 1990. The adapted and altered talk is now published in a booklet called *Motherhood: A Heritage of Faith*, which came out in 1995 but is no longer in circulation. The booklet was published for the purpose of Mother’s Day in that year. As such, President Hinckley begins his address by telling a story about the woman who petitioned for Mother’s Day. She was an unmarried woman named Ann Jarvis. She took her matter to Congress, and due to her course of action President Woodrow Wilson implemented the national holiday on May 10, 1913. He continues to use narrative after narrative in this address to demonstrate how such stories have solicited in him a need for compassion and appreciation for the variety of roles women play. In doing so he addresses each specific group of women found in the LDS female community, from infants to older women, including in each group an inspiring story about womanhood: “Is there anything more beautiful than a lovely little girl? ... I see young women, who are bright and study with enthusiasm and diligence.... I see young mothers, who nurture and treasure children, who work in civic and church organizations.... I observe older women, mature from the living of many years” (9). Having addressed all the women in the church he continues with this invitation:
I feel to invite women everywhere to rise to the great potential within you. I do not ask that you reach beyond your capacity. I hope you will not nag yourselves with thoughts of failure. I hope you will not try to set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. I hope you will simply do what you can do in the best way you know. If you do you will witness, miracles come to pass. (Hinckley 2)

In a speech written for mothers, President Hinckley focuses on individual qualities of women in every age group. He focuses on their capacity for achievement for whatever season of life they are in. This invitation to women serves to include all members of the LDS female community.

In this quotation capacity implies difference. It does not seek to identify women with one specific role or function, but to recognize first and foremost that women have different abilities, talents, energies, and resources. Essentially differences enable individuals to perform a variety of functions. If women are categorized in only one role, the very desire to seek individuality will solicit comparison, contention, and in some cases competition. Strategies of this kind do not foster social cooperation; rather, they hinder it. His invitation emphasizes a woman's capacity to achieve what she feels is possible given her situation. He does not focus here on prescribing what that may be; such discourse further demonstrates the paradox, but he does offer possibilities of bridging it. Therefore, I would like to call on President Hinckley's notion of capacity to serve as a symbol to reset discursive parameters regarding the identity of Mormon women
because doing so enables more members to see themselves as part of the community.

President Hinckley's notion of capacity restores and validates trust in a woman's ability to make choices and indicates that church leaders encourage that she do so. The recognition that women have different capacities allows them to perform different roles while still maintaining a comfortable balance in their lives. President Hinckley helps to reset the parameters women may have felt restricted by and creates a space for those in the community to envision themselves as central regardless of their differences. In essence he creates a new symbol, capacity. It is not as privileged in the central discourse as other symbols (i.e., motherhood), but capacity allows for multiple interpretations, a plurality of women's roles, which, as demonstrated by women's voices, is a reality.

**Capacity, Choice, and Creativity**

If we are going to emphasize a woman's capacity as a symbol for possibilities we have to then ask *why* and *how* this symbol will be encouraged and implemented. Asking *why* give capacity priority over other symbols is useful because it helps to get at a fundamental principle in democracy and in Mormon theology, and that is the principle of agency and choice. Giving priority to a woman's capacity in discursive address recognizes where responsibility and accountability for those choices belong, that is, with the individual. Asking *how* capacity as a symbol can be implemented is critical because of the need to bring further awareness to other women so that more members in the community feel valued. Therefore, capacity as a symbol can be implemented through creativity, or
in other words, through the creative symbolic work that Lehtonen spoke of in chapter 1 regarding narrative discourse and its important empowering potential for new meanings and identities. Narratives or stories are the practical ways in which individuals in the community can begin to include in their experiences possibilities of difference. Just as President Hinckley uses narratives to illustrate and solicit sympathetic understanding from his audience, so can we use our stories and narratives to embrace and include possibilities found in a woman’s capacity to achieve. I will use William Wilson to further expand on the persuasive effects of storytelling as a practical means to meet that end. A more indepth discussion on each branch of capacity as a symbol follows and will be illustrated by means of women’s narratives.

**On Capacity**

I offer President Hinckley’s notion of capacity as a symbol for conceptualizing a woman’s ability with choice and creativity as critical aspects of potential. Capacity is transformed from a concept to a symbol when described in context with a woman’s ability to perform a variety of tasks and a variety of roles. A woman’s capacity symbolizes more closely “who” a person is than “what” a person is—it privileges natural abilities and talents over conformity to social roles. Giving priority to capacity allows women to make choices based on their potential to achieve and their ability to create rather than on only what current trends dictate. These are the practical means by which women can identify with each other daily and use to make changes in their own lives.
Natalie Hill, who is a mother of two children, part-time faculty at Westminster College, and currently the Young Woman president in her own ward, expresses how a woman’s capacity symbolizes and facilitates individual identity and social cooperation. Though long, Natalie’s distinctive narrative voice is worth hearing.

I’ve learned not to be so judgmental of everyone’s choices, but to bring awareness to everyone else that we do not all have the same capacities. A lot of women would not be able to get up at five, go running, come home, clean the house, teach two classes, be with [their] daughters, go hiking, and then come home and be with [their] husband at night. That would overwhelm a lot, and it does, and I get that. When I was serving at Five Alls the other night, Kim Raybold said to me, “You are so lucky you have an outlet; you are so lucky to have an outlet.” I said, “You think this is an outlet? I’m sweating! I’ve got ketchup everywhere, I’ve done this for thirteen years, I’m at Five Alls as a waitress,” I said. “This is no outlet; this is a job; it’s money. It allows me to pay for Lizzy to dance, so that I can afford [to give] her the spectrum of opportunities that I would want my Mom to [give me]. It pays for discovery.” So my goal is to allow [my daughter] as many opportunities and choices as possible. For about a month we spent in Young Women, … the subject was motherhood. Like I say, Alyssa, some women would not have the capacity to do what I
am doing … and that’s I think where I wanted to just jump down [the leaders’] throats and say, “Get a clue.” So I had to come at it from another perspective. And they threw the prophet said this, the prophet says that, and so finally I threw [President Hinckley’s invitation on capacity] at them and said, “Look the prophet says this, capacity. What’s your capacity?”

For a month I sat by, and it was so difficult and it was so hard, so discouraging, and I sat by and listened to these lessons that said “women shouldn’t work.” Well, you know, 90 percent of the young women’s mothers were working because they had to. And I was baffled that they were saying you shouldn’t work, and I’m thinking, “Wait a minute, how can you say this when your own in-law’s (down the line) husband passed away, and she had to go back to work.” And again, we make the choices we do based on our experiences. I’ve watched my mom, and just the other day she said to me, “You know—you have been trained to do what you love, why should there be any questions? I don’t question it, do you question it?” And I said, “No, I’m great…. But I … want these girls to know that there are so many great opportunities where they can be mother[s] to other people. I go into my classrooms and if I can give them one ounce of good human value, I know I have done okay for the day, I know I’ve done okay. (Hill, # 6)
Natalie has felt a great responsibility being the president of the Young Women organization in her local ward. She is responsible for nearly forty young adolescent girls who are sensitive to their new growth and looking for role models. Here, Natalie describes very clearly the paradox in discourse addressing Mormon women: on the one hand, the lesson manuals encourage women to fulfill their domestic duties in the home and make being a mother and wife a priority over education and working. Yet on the other hand, Natalie points out a reality of their situation, that both she and most of the young girls present during the discussion had mothers who worked. She readily questions the moral from the lesson and is concerned that such a focus thwarts their perception of reality. Therefore, Natalie makes an active effort to introduce the other leaders and the girls in her Young Women organization to President Hinckley’s invitation for women to embrace their capacities. By recognizing women as individuals with differing capacities in such lessons, the young women are better able to imagine themselves and their mothers as part of the community.

Natalie, a mother herself, holds down two jobs in addition to fulfilling her calling in the Church as the Young Women president. The situation is nothing less than ironic and presents an awkward situation for her when she is directed by lessons in the manual to tell the young women that the best thing they could do with their lives would be to get married and have children even and often to the exclusion of other possible roles. However, she has to worry about the young girl who may never marry, the one who may never be able to bear children, or the one who may be bursting with potential and talent but feels confused by focusing on
only one trajectory goal. Natalie has had to find a way to bridge the paradox in order to appear credible as an educated working mother who is trying to fulfill, of all things, this particular Church position. And she has done so successfully by addressing the other discursive strand (also a current recommendation from the existing Prophet), she enhances the young women’s understanding of a woman’s capacity while also giving priority to a woman’s potential to achieve and to fulfill a variety of roles. Essentially, she adds to President Hinckley’s notion of a woman’s capacity by using it to symbolize potential, goals, talents, differing abilities, and dreams. In this way, she actively seeks to use the symbol of a woman’s capacity to bridge the paradox in discourse addressing LDS women by showing that a woman can be a mother, gain a higher education, and work according to her ability, her needs, or her desires, and still be in good standing in the Church.

Elaine Satin, whose experience and background are rather different from the other women interviewed for this paper, describes her vision of having a capacity for cooperation in this way:

I feel sorry for many of these people who have to work, especially without a husband, that you can’t help. They have to make a living. So, I used to say, instead of criticizing them why don’t you say, “You know what? You need a break. I am coming over to your house and feed your children; you go do whatever you want to do.” And if you bake cookies, just bake another extra dozen for them. You know, we just need to help one another. She is consecrating
and sacrificing her life, so we can consecrate and sacrifice some of our time to give to her instead of being critical. Then maybe they will learn through our affiliation with them that, you know, “I have to become more like them” or “My children will see this,” and they will learn some love and charity which they may not have in their home. (Satin, #13)

She hopes women will develop a greater ability for compassion to further cooperation and cohesion among individuals in the community. Elaine also gave some practical advice on how this goal of cohesion could be better attained through the discourse addressing the Relief Society. She expressed that there needs to be more practical examples in the discourse as opposed to elusive ones—as in those principles of the gospel that are not illustrated by examples.

In a recent talk, President Hinckley gave such examples when he was addressing the general Young Women conference in April 2001. His speech was titled, “How Can I Become the Woman of Whom I Dream?” He encourages women to embrace their capacity and potential saying, “The whole gamut of human endeavor is now open to women. There is not anything that you cannot do if you will set your mind to it. You can include in the dream of the woman you would like to be a picture of one qualified to serve society and make a significant contribution to the world of which she will be a part” (Hinckley 2001). President Hinckley uses practical examples to illustrate gospel principles that give women and men the tangible means of understanding the full integration of gospel principles, which are often elusive without context. The example he gives is of a
woman who has sought her M.A. in nursing, has three children, and a husband. She had been a nurse in the hospital where President Hinckley was being cared for and attended to some of his needs. President Hinckley’s recognition of the valuable services women offer the community is a big step forward for the female community. Because he is presently the Prophet, his statements are given more credence in the Mormon community. His effort to re-view individual identity and community through a woman’s capacity helps women in the community imagine practical ways of symbolizing their differences. Capacity is more easily imagined than the symbol of motherhood. Capacity allows for difference within a community and does not exclude members based on what role they perform, but recognizes that women have different capabilities in distinctly different areas. Regardless of whatever capability women have, the symbol of capacity focuses on the value of one’s function in the community rather than eliciting comparisons between women.

Kristen, currently in law school and mother of three, shared this story with me about a friend and neighbor, which serves as a practical example of how women are incorporating capacity in relation to the needs of other women.

Capacity is defined by what you want it to be and need it to be. When I was in California,... I was a stay-at-home mom and had one kid, Sara. It was just a different deal; I didn’t need to have a capacity to handle and juggle 37 things. I’m sure that I could have handled it then no different than now. I didn’t need to; I mean I could have done more than a lot of people and that was fine. But it
seems kind of odd especially in a culture where as Mormon women we should kind of help each other out, for heavens sake, life’s hard enough as it is. But the perfect person to illustrate that is Elizabeth Burt. She and I teach together, her kids and my kids are exactly the same age. We both have these little babies, [and] she [asked me] what [I had] lined up for day care. And at that point I didn’t have it lined up and I was stressed out about it.

And she said, “Ok, I will watch your kids.”

And I said, “You watch kids?”

And she says, “No, but I’ll watch your kids.”

I said, “NO.”

[Then Elizabeth replies] “No, Kristen! We have to watch out for each other. Women have to stick up for each other.”

I said, “No, I am going to find somebody to come in.”

And she said, “Then I want to be plan B.” And well, my mother-in-law was plan B.

So she said, “Well, I want to be plan C.” And then when she found out yesterday that my sitter hadn’t come she was all over my case. “Why didn’t you call me? You are supposed to call me. Don’t make life harder, please let us help you.” I mean—there are very few of those women, far too few. I mean—maybe, I don’t know that I am good at that; I don’t know that I step in and help people. Maybe I should be better. Yeah, I should. (Olsen #10)
Essentially, she experiences what Elaine Satin hopes will become a more central practice. She begins by defining what she feels is her capacity, but instead of dwelling on those who wouldn’t validate her decisions, she refocuses her attention and tells the story of someone who does. The examples of her friend and neighbor, Elizabeth, models closely the example Elaine Satin used to illustrate how she felt more women should support each other when there was a need. In sharing the story with me, Kristen’s discursive act of telling the story is a practical example of how women can begin to change the ways they are addressed. Focusing on a woman’s capacity symbolizes her ability to achieve as well as her ability to serve others. In the end, Kristen realizes how her own story changes her, causing her to reflect on her own identity and how it influences her to be better. She is essentially resetting her own parameters.

On Choice

In connection with capacity as a key to revising discursive address, I want to extend the symbol to encompass choice as well. In essence, President Hinckley’s invitation already implies choice as fundamental to “rising to the great potential within you.” However, it is significant to specify choice as a central part of a woman’s capacity to achieve. Jan Shipps, a Protestant scholar, writes in the foreword of *Sisters in Spirit* that the essays included by Mormon female scholars raise a serious question:

One far more important than questions about whether women should have been deprived of the right to give blessings to sick children or the right to carry on certain duties now reserved to the
priesthood.... The exceedingly important theological question that these essays cast up is more fundamental; it is the question of the full extent of "free agency" in Mormonism. (xi)

Though "free agency" is unique to Mormon doctrine, the question of agency can also be extended to sociological aspects of a woman's choice with respect to the community. Agency is fundamental to capacity because it allows women the freedom to consider a range of possibilities to develop their potential. By privileging agency over traditional roles for Mormon women, the potential developed is given priority and value in the community.

Because a woman's capacity encompasses and implies choice, it is important to clarify that capacity also includes a woman's opportunity to make decisions that are right for her life. Capacity not only entails a woman's ability, great or small, to play several roles, but also entails having explicit choice in the matter. Of Mormonism Shipps explains:

During Mormonism's pioneer era, many Saints expected...that Eve's curse would be lifted from women when the kingdom was restored and the millennium ushered in. But in this age of preservation, priesthood and motherhood seem forever balanced, leaving the curse of Eve intact. What implications does this have regarding the "agency" of LDS women? (xii)

Maintaining that the only appropriate role for Mormon women or women in general is that of a mother has its consequences. Linda Wagner-Martin, in her book *Telling Women's Lives*, makes an important point that speaks directly to the
ways women were often identified in biographies; one of which was being their father’s daughters. Of this and other concerns she says, “Many women writers who were marked by the daughter stereotype in literary history came from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, although that way of describing women is far from obsolete. A more recent trend, equally insidious, is that of categorizing women in terms of what kind of mothers they were or are” (25). Wagner notes the history and the complexity with which women’s lives are being defined as only mothers, saying that “literary life in the second half of the twentieth century suggests that changing the image of the mother role remains difficult. Some of the harshest criticism of Sylvia Plath’s suicide was couched in the argument that she had willingly abandoned her young children” (26).

Again, of the women I interviewed, many expressed concern over the complexity of such identification processes that come along with being called “mother.” Natalie Hill, who as mentioned before is a mother of two children, describes the issue this way:

Motherhood is a great thing. Every night as I put these two kids to bed, I literally fall to my knees in between their two beds—they, they have made me who I am. You know I carried them; I took the prenatal vitamins and I did everything to feel like I was creating them, but they’ve created me. I wouldn’t be a mom without them, and everyday they create me in ways that I have never been created. And so if we would just shut down all these [expectations about] “the role of a mother,” and really realize what the role of a
mother is and what it can do for you and what these kids can do. That’s the miracle of birth, and we just place these roles and expectations on society and culture, and these words come up and you [have to] say, ...“Remember the miracle, the miracle of birth is creation and we create one another.” That’s what I learned this last little bit, and it was hard for me, it was hard for me to sit by and have someone tell me what a mother should be doing and what I should be doing, because, again, it came back to choice. We’re told to do things, but my mother has always taught me we have a brain, we have a heart, we wouldn’t have been given those things to make choices if we were just told. And we can still make choices; I mean that’s what it all comes down to is being accountable for them. (Hill #7)

In a chapter where we are discussing how we are doing, how are we cultivating compassion and encouraging social cooperation, Natalie’s description of her experience illuminates some ways to rethink motherhood and how differently women may feel towards such a sensitive subject. Her response solicits in me the need to be compassionate to women who are different from myself. It says something very strong about the expectations we have put on women to fulfill certain maternal responsibilities, to be defined and identified as only mother.

Bonnie Miller is a sister-in-law to me on my husband’s side. Bonnie no longer considers herself active in her childhood religion, Mormonism, but attends occasional family functions. She lives in Canada as mentioned before with her
second husband and her two daughters. Bonnie spoke of her divorce, pointing out specifics that enabled her to make that choice:

Specifically, things like—I have a brain and God gave me the brain, I should be using it. I guess I grew up believing that everybody knew better than I did. I never actually asked myself, what did I think? I actually didn’t give that any weight, at all. … I had to realize at a very gut level that I have the ability to receive personal revelation. You know they would talk about that, but I didn’t really know what that meant. I thought personal revelation meant agreeing with everything else [about] things that were supposed to happen. But, you know, intuition is a very real and powerful thing. I had to learn to recognize it for what it was. [It was important] also to know that I was strong enough. If I never ever had another relationship in my life, I [needed to know I] was strong enough … and had the skills to support myself and my children, [because] anything was better than what I already knew.

(Miller #3)

Bonnie goes back through her childhood to locate the texture tied to her confidence in making personal choices, in doing so she notes a personal paradox—that she was raised believing in personal revelation but didn’t know what that meant. Her experience suggests in some ways that Mormonism doesn’t always make clear to women how their choices matter or are valued. This also illustrates the case in point Elaine Satin makes about “elusive” examples that
accompany gospel principles, specifically when addressing Mormon women. Perhaps a more practical example would have aided Bonnie’s understanding of what “personal revelation” meant for a Mormon woman. Nevertheless, for Bonnie, divorcing her husband and leaving the religion of her childhood were genuinely empowering decisions. Those decisions aided her in that moment to gain an element of control in her life and confidence in her choices. This is not always the case; however, Bonnie’s experience does profile problems of paradox.

Claire Johns, mother and attorney-at-law, has a son who is autistic. He was diagnosed just over a year ago, when he was four years old. Claire describes the difficult choice she had about work and how other women in the community responded. She began our interview by defining herself, saying:

I define myself as a mother and wife who works part-time as a lawyer. I view myself as being on the fringes of Mormon culture both because I have chosen to work and because I have chosen to work in a field that is not viewed as very feminine. Still, I am comfortable with my choices as being suitable for me.... The most difficult decision I have ever made would probably be whether to keep working after Dylan was diagnosed with autism. At the time, I really agonized over whether I could most help my son by being with him more, or by working so that we had enough money for any evaluations or therapy that he needed. I wanted to do the right thing for him as his need was so great, but was very unsure as to what that was. The roles I was playing ultimately did not change
dramatically as it became apparent that the best therapy for Dylan could not be done by me and would require a lot of money. I have undertaken the new role of “autism specialist” as I have managed his interventions. Several women asked me if I was planning to quit my job, as if it were a given, which I found interesting since my being home full-time did not seem so obviously the best choice for Dylan.... My twin sister was extremely supportive, and I talked through different issues with her (our mother had passed away earlier). At the time I was in the Relief Society presidency in my ward, and it was becoming apparent that I would need to be with Dylan full-time at church, so that it would be impossible for me to attend Relief Society. The Relief Society president said to me, “You know what you need to do better than anyone, and just let me know how I can help,” which I have since thought about as being a good example of how Mormon women should support each other. (Johns, #12)

Here Claire’s experience demonstrates how some women still privilege the social norm over individual choice. However, in the same community, leaders of that community also gave priority to Claire’s capacity to make the decisions she felt best met both her needs as well as those of her family. She recognizes how the support was a good example of how Mormon women needed to support each other today.
This seemed to be consistent with how she felt Mormon women were being addressed by the twenty-first century. She says:

[Today,] it [does] seem ... that the main influence on roles has ... been what is in fact occurring in Mormon women's lives—as opposed to rhetoric from the pulpit. More women now have multiple roles and there is more talk about unity of purpose and less talk about specific dos and don’ts. I thought it interesting that the latest BYU law school alumni dinner featured a husband and wife duo speaking about balancing professional and family commitments. (Johns, #12)

Claire points out a gradual shift in discourse from the past to present. Seeing more possibilities for a woman’s capacity to be developed encourages Claire because it more closely aligns the reality of women’s lives. Her recognition is encouraging and provides some evidence that the paradox in discourse addressing Mormon women is slowly being bridged. She also notes how more traditional parameters were being reset at the last BYU law school alumni dinner when both a wife and a husband spoke about balancing their professions with family life. In using these examples, Claire makes it easy to understand how change can occur, and what efforts can be made for future generations.

When I asked her what she would like to pass on to her daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival, she said:

I think that women should make choices that are individually right for themselves and their families, and that other women should be
nonjudgmental and supportive. Not every woman wants to juggle multiple roles, just like not every woman wants to be home every minute. I have been very interested to observe how my law school women friends' lives have progressed. Some whom I thought would always be working have quit, and vice versa. I hope that my daughter and granddaughters are able to choose what they feel is best for them and are able to feel comfortable with those choices. One of the main reasons I hung in there with work when it got tough with kids and family was that I felt I needed to keep working for my daughter, Courtney, so that she would see she had more choices. (Johns #12)

Claire echoes a concern that most women included in their interviews, which was the possibility of choice for themselves and for their daughters. However, before a range of possibilities are made available to women now and for future generations, making space for discourse that privileges a woman's capacity is needed so that choices are valued. Here, Claire points out that she felt she needed to keep working so that her daughter would see that she had choices.

Her statement suggests that perhaps discourse addressing Mormon women is not providing her daughter with those opportunities in choice, nor are the women in her community. Therefore she feels she needs to provide that option for her daughter. Basically, Claire is offering her own life to her daughter as a narrative example of choice.
Natalie expresses similar wishes for her daughters, hoping they will have the possibilities of choices and experiences just as she felt she had:

You know I would hope they would experience as much as possible, [and] take dance, soccer, and skiing. That's the one thing, if I could offer my children a childhood like my parents did me, even though I grew up with four brothers I was still able to have a spectrum of experiences. Even my patriarchal blessing says, "Be very, very careful what you choose to do because you have so many abilities, and be very careful with what you choose as the final thing." And that's why I come back to I don't think there's one final state of this is what I am, this is what I've become. It comes back to that Madeline l'Engle. It's my favorite.... I drill it into my Young Women. I have it plastered through my book, "I do not believe that I will ever reach a state of existence where I will say this is what I believe, finished. What I believe is alive and open to new growth." And that's how I believe, that's kind of my creed—my motto, everything is alive and open to new growth.

(Hill #8)

Her vision of choice is refreshing and emergent; it is also a practical and responsible approach to having an array of possibilities. By keeping the door open for new meanings and new choices, Natalie is easily led to developing her potential and passing it on to family. In essence, she notes wisely that the key to developing a capacity is the need to have choices and have new experiences. By
not choosing one final thing, Natalie makes herself available to the kind of potential and growth that could lead and has led her to new talents and abilities. Natalie’s perspective on choices is key to understanding how vital choice is for a woman’s capacity to be tested and enhanced, and for parameters to be reset. Without choices, new possibilities are not possible and new bridges are unable to be built. Natalie gets at the very heart of the matter, recognizing that perhaps it is just “capacity” that keeps evolving, and that women would do better to realize that it is their capacity to perform certain roles that needs focus, rather than just the roles themselves. Since it is most likely that capacities will change over time, the options of choice become imperative if new capacities are to be embraced and for women to continue to progress.

On Creativity

In addition to choice, the final extension I think capacity symbolizes is creativity. President Hinckley’s distinction of a woman’s capacity also needs creativity. Creativity is an important part of our daily lives, but more important is recognizing where that creativity is in our daily lives. It exists within our capacity to share our stories with one another, and in the opportunity to give a woman’s capacity priority in the telling of our stories and our experiences. The symbolic creative work of language and meaning has persuasive potential and real possibilities for resetting the parameters in discourse.

William A. Wilson, an internationally renowned folklorist, has expanded on the importance of narration and storytelling in our everyday lives in his article “In Praise of Ourselves: Stories to Tell.” Here he discusses the ability men and
women have to create and celebrate the practical and real parts of their lives.

Wilson hopes that in broadening our concept of the humanities and of literature that we would turn not only to those canonized masterworks taught in literature, "but to works of our own invention and to our own capacity to create and appreciate beauty. I would suggest, that is, that we seek courage to face the future by learning to celebrate ourselves" (101). He explains that the one group of people we have continued to neglect in literature is ourselves: "Most of us have neglected the swirl of stories that has surrounded us since we were born—stories we listen to or tell about the events of everyday life and about the world we occupy" (101). He points out that it is a somewhat disconcerting fact that most of our efforts have focused on written rather than on oral narratives since writing is a relatively recent invention and storytelling has been around long before our ability to record them on paper. Here, he recognizes that "indeed, the capacity to tell and enjoy stories may be one of our few cultural universals" (101). Therefore, like Cavarero, Wilson points out the need for the life-story as critical to understanding ourselves—reflecting identity and creativity. Wilson quotes Neil Postman on stories, who says:

Human beings require stories to give meaning to the facts of their existence. I am not talking here about those specialized stories that we call novels, plays and epic poems. I am talking about the more profound stories that people, nations, religions, and discipline unfold in order to make sense out of the world.... A story provides a structure for our perceptions; only through stories do facts
assume any meaning whatsoever. This is why children everywhere ask, as soon as they have command of language to do so, “Where did I come from?” and “What will happen when I die?” They require a story to give meaning to their existence. Without air, our cells die. Without a story, our selves die. (Qtd. in Wilson 101)

Telling our stories and listening to those of others are acts of creativity and of art. These are ways to understand the construction of identities and communities. The sanctity of a story reflects culture and can also produce key information about dominating ideologies and subversive tactics. Hence, it functions as a method to gain control of one’s life and to re-structure power in relationships. Stories literally have the ability to create and re-create. For this reason, stories have empowering potential to create new meanings.

Part of why I have chosen to use the women’s own voices from their interviews is precisely for these reasons: it allows them the space to tell their own stories, to create themselves and demonstrate how they have been created. Some have shared the stories of those who have supported them, essentially doing what Carolyn Heilbrun has asked—hearing and talking to one another—and doing so gives them the capacity in creative power to position themselves and others as central in the community. It is my hope that women will choose to tell more stories of courage, of reality, of compassion—of character and of choice. Doing so will help provide the practical examples needed to reset discursive parameters and to refocus LDS women on their abilities rather than their roles.
William Wilson points out that the value of stories in our daily lives has added knowledge to various fields. Even so, he criticizes the scholarly use of oral narratives, claiming we often lose a critical aspect of telling stories:

Literary scholars have examined oral narratives to discover how literary texts are constituted, sociologists to catalog customs and lifestyles, organizational behaviorists to record the corporate myths that lend cohesiveness to organizations, historians to take the pulse of a particular era, anthropologists to elucidate larger cultural patterns. But in all this the individual—the creator and teller of stories—gets lost. His or her narratives become means to ends rather than ends themselves. (102)

Because stories told in daily life have the potential to create, such persuasion can be used to good ends. In some cases it does not require that all new stories be created and told, but simply that we pay attention to the ones that are there. Wilson encourages communities to let the stories do their work. By recognizing this creative ability to influence a community, stories can foster compassion and become a practical way to incorporate a woman's capacity in stories told to and by Mormon women. Such stories function symbolically for Mormon women to focus on and embrace their potential.

Natalie Hill is a very good writer and an even better storyteller. Here, she takes an opportunity to incorporate her creativity. She tells the story of a woman who had been seen as a type of outcast because she didn't fit the social parameters
for LDS women. Natalie invites the woman to share her story, allowing the narrative itself to do the work in the community. She explains:

I sat in a few PEC meetings and ward council meetings, and there’s a girl in our ward. I first met here when she was out running with her two dogs on a really snowy day at about seven in the morning, and I thought there is a girl after my own heart. She has a little boy, and Dave [Natalie’s husband] grew up with her and she had waitressed [so] there was a kinship. We had a couple things that we shared. Her name came up in ward council, and the Relief Society president said we need to “fellowship” her and I thought, you know, “This girl is rock solid. Dave knew her, and I thought this girl is rock solid, she has a testimony. She’s there, but she’s made a choice and her choice is that she is going to work full time.” So I asked her [to speak during a lesson I gave in a joint Relief Society meeting with the Young Women]. It was a lesson dealing with this quote [on capacity]. I handed it out to each woman in the audience because I felt like there was this barrier of women that were a little bit too judgmental of one another. And so I thought, ... I am going to use this Relief Society lesson as a platform for my agenda, and I am going to get this taken care of right now so that there are no more questions. Because I was trying [gracefully] to handle it. My mom said, “Handle this with grace.” Handle this with grace, and I was tired of “grace.” I was flat out
tired because I don’t have grace in me when it comes to certain things like this, and I think that runs through the blood with my mom. So I had this sweet girl stand up, and she started with tears in her eyes and said, “I am a daughter of God who loves me and I love him. I am a lawyer. You know, I might not be the woman to bring you dinner every night, but I will tell you this—that the majority of my clients are Mormon women and I am helping them in ways that no one could, and I am able to help them.” And so the girls hear this, and she told the girls [and the women], (a group of 200): “I have received a lot of flack for my choice, but I made it with God and I was taught if you made a choice with God you knew it was a righteous choice.” And that’s what I was trying to give them, this image of a woman, a righteous woman who had made a choice…. She had made it with God and, yeah, she has received a lot of flack for it, but wow she’s comfortable, and you know I love her because I just love to know she is doing the balancing act too. And when we see each other and we say, “How’s work?” it’s an instant connection because we know we are asking each other a question that is deeper than “How’s work?” It’s “How are you? How is everything that’s stirring in you?” And I see her out walking with her little boy and I think, *hmm, she’s got it....* You see women out walking with their kids, but when you see a woman who has an hour—that’s it for her. I mean she’s soaking
it all in; it’s not “Let’s get out of the house and go for a walk.” So she taught me a lot, and that was the one comment that came from 90 percent of the women, “Wow, she was amazing!” But yet that was the woman that needed fellowshipping? I don’t think so, and again, once again it comes back to the point—we are not looking at each others’ capacities, we’re looking at each others’ choices and outward kind of shell and just saying wow, and it’s hard, it’s hard. And you would hope that people wouldn’t be judgmental, and again it comes back to that choice—you have to be comfortable with the choices that you make, and if you aren’t you will be washed out and you will wonder who you are.... It rolls back onto identity—Who am I? (Hill #8)

I genuinely enjoy listening to Natalie’s narrative voice. Here, she implements creativity to accomplish her goal of refocusing an entire group of Mormon women on a woman’s capacity. She makes a sincere effort to persuade them that this woman was providing a valuable service in the community and as such deserved to be considered at the core in the community—not because she was a mother, a working mother, or single for that matter, but because she was a daughter of God and a woman with a great capacity. Natalie also notes how others in the Mormon community were addressing this woman as less active, a type of assumption made on their part due to her roles that seemed to indicate she wasn’t a strong member. Such implications and assumptions locate women on the margins and reinforce limiting parameters in discourse addressing Mormon women.
Natalie creates an important opportunity to reset discursive parameters by inviting her friend to share her story. Her narrative had a persuasive effect on the community. It allowed them to imagine how her differences were not divisions but were based on a similar desire to make choices with God. Natalie recognizes that agency is a fundamental principle guiding her friend’s life. The story illustrates well that though decisions may be different, they only signify different capacities and not divisions of ideology or theology.

In the following, Sara shared this story with me about how her sister’s story helped her get through a very difficult time. These stories become nice creative ways to support each other on a daily basis.

While we were still in the hospital, my older sister came [to visit us] and Jack was [still] on morphine. He had stopped breathing at one point one night...[while] I was at my mom’s.... Matt called and said that he had coded and had stopped breathing.... They pushed all the alarms ... and came in [to get] him back breathing again; it was just horrible. That was Sunday, and then we got the diagnosis on Monday. I mean, we knew it was bad, but we just didn’t know what it was. I remember my sister coming up to the hospital while Jack was still in so much pain; he was on morphine and they couldn’t get him comfortable, and I was trying to rub his back, and she said something to the effect, “You are my hero” or something like that because I was sitting there dealing with this child who was beside himself.
I said, "I just can't, I feel like I just want to get off," and she said that she had been talking to her mother-in-law, whose husband has lung cancer and is really just struggling. They don't have much time left, and Cass was talking to her about all these heartbreaks her kids have been going through.

She said, "Caitlin has had this happen, and Maddy's been disappointed by this, and you know, I feel like I just want the world to stop. I just want the ride to stop, [and] I just want to get off."

[But] Jean, her mother-in-law, said, "Ah honey, you just have to ride harder." And [so] when Jack got sick and this happened, Cass brought me this that says "Ride Harder," with this little lasso. There are a thousand times that I think I can't do this; I gotta quit; I can't do this; it is too hard. But you just have to ride harder, and you just hold on tight and have to get through it.

(Smith, #8)

It was precisely the telling of a story that helped Sara to move through such a difficult moment in her life. Her example illustrates well the need for creative discursive acts to focus women on their capacities to achieve and in this case her capacity to survive. Sharing this story is a way of encouraging women to reach beyond what they may feel is their capacity, during times when choice is not really an option. It doesn't take writing the best novel, or holding public office to
make a difference. It simply takes small steps, locating the places where we actually have control and using them to expand the parameters of the community.

Stories become a useful discursive practice to illuminate the reality in women’s lives, the choices they face, and how they have come to be where they are. Such stories foster compassion and can help all members feel valued by providing the community with the means to better understand the choices and situations of people who are different from themselves. Wilson concludes by expressing how stories add value to our lives:

However much the narratives may help us understand the larger societies of which they are constituent parts (and efforts to reach such understanding have also been a principal aim of folklore study), from a humanistic perspective the stories need no further justification for being than their own existence. It is as individual stories of individual, breathing human beings—not as dots on a chart of social norms—that they speak to us of our humanity. (102)

Martha Nussbaum echoes Wilson’s concern, saying that it is precisely through narratives and stories that people will begin to have sympathetic imagination. This type of imagination increases capacity for compassion as people try to understand those who are different from themselves. This request also echoes Carolyn Heilbrun’s call for women to begin sharing and telling their stories.
Conclusion

Discourse, as defined in the introduction, is an interactive address or presentation. It is the combination of both the author’s intent and the communal or individual response. Analyzing the Mormon female community enables women to better understand their collective and individual identity. It also brings to light the central paradox in discourse addressing Mormon women; that women are encouraged to explore and develop their diverse abilities, yet are encouraged to forgo such possibilities in pursuit of the role of mother. Such a paradox explains why some women in Relief Society and in the Church in general may not feel valued.

Communities are formed on the basis of a unifying principle, which creates, according to Kenneth Burke, the “process of identification.” Since this process focuses members of the community on only those things held in common, the process risks that some members who do not hold certain things in common will feel marginalized. Hence, according to Ratcliffe, it is necessary to re-think how a unifying principle could include all members of the community. I propose that those who address Mormon women allow President Hinckley’s concept of a woman’s capacity to guide their creative efforts to symbolize stories of choice, ability, potential, talent, and eventually even hopes and dreams. I believe that a woman’s capacity will pass from being a mere concept to become a rallying point, a symbol. It has done so for some women, and has the potential to do so for many.

Discursive acts through narration and storytelling have a powerful effect on identities, both personal and collective. Because stories and narratives are
ways in which entire histories of peoples have been passed on and told, it is an important responsibility of all who tell stories to focus on their function. Doing so also helps to get at the reality of such a paradox, a reality that suggests more and more that Mormon women are single, working mothers, and married professionals, who provide valuable services to society and are wise in their old age. Ricoeur, Wilson, Heilbrun, Nussbaum, and Cavarero find narration a critical function in creating identity. To that end, a focused awareness of narrative is an ethical responsibility. Since stories help to create and re-create, they have important persuasive potential, and as such are key to helping reset discursive parameters that may be limiting. By re-focusing Mormon women on the capacity to achieve, the discursive paradox may be resolved.

President Hinckley’s notion of capacity and the reality of his message are an encouraging format to model. A few of the women I interviewed were aware of his invitation for women to embrace their capacities. Both of those women had allowed the concept of a woman’s capacity to pass into a symbol for stories they told about themselves and about other women. And one of those women campaigns for others to recognize a woman’s capacity in their efforts to describe women’s roles.

Telling a story is a practical way to illustrate a gospel principle that may otherwise be elusive and vague. President Hinckley gives practical examples by way of stories. This also leaves less open for criticism because a point is more easily made clear by a story or experience and gives a practical and real texture to the moral or the message. Such examples are welcome changes for LDS women
who understandably view themselves clearly defined in certain roles. President Hinckley’s appeal to a woman’s capacity symbolizes potential, abilities, talents, and gives women priority to decide. His example and others from authority figures encourage further understanding of principles such as individual worth, choice, and accountability and remind the Mormon community that responsibility lies with the individual.

A woman’s capacity is an effective symbol coming from President Hinckley because he is both the head of the church and is a person who demonstrates good will and good character. He is someone his audience trusts, making his appeal more potent. Though accepting this symbol for cooperation in some ways reinforces the power structure in the community, it is not my aim to suggest changing the organizational structure from outside, but rather to identify possibilities for change from within.

The study of discursive acts allows me to look at how language addressing the Mormon female community is actually functioning to create personal and collective identities. By interviewing a sample of women, I was better able to get at that discourse to determine from their experience what kind of effect the discourse was creating. Doing so enabled the observations of a few paradoxical discursive strands. Looking at community created the possibilities of resetting discursive parameters in a community through stories, which provides a practical way to re-create a unifying principle to include all women—that unifying principle is a woman’s capacity.
By re-focusing those who address Mormon women on the unifying principle of a woman’s capacity, women are made aware of what happens at the level of language and at the level of discourse. But also embedded in that awareness is the knowledge that change is more easily imagined precisely because language is a simple and easy place to start—by telling stories women can actually reset parameters. Focusing on stories of a woman’s capacity enables women to better focus on agency instead of conformity to traditional roles. Giving priority to choice through creative acts of daily discourse refocuses attention on a woman’s capacity to accomplish and achieve.

These narratives included from the interviews demonstrate a need in discourse addressing Mormon women to reset the parameters to include many who feel on the fringe in Mormon culture and in Utah. The interviews have illustrated what some have already done to help enable this, and how some envision it. Through the creative act of discourse or storytelling, we can privilege a woman’s capacity by illustrating and emphasizing a woman’s agency in the matter. Focusing on agency gives credence to recognizing the differing capacities and capabilities among women. Recognizing choice as a fundamental principle of Mormon theology and sociology gives women reason to use their creative abilities to reset the parameters in the community through their discursive acts.

Though most women will make mistakes along the way by extending and under-extending themselves in their capacities, it is through those choices that a woman’s capacity is determined. Therefore, women need to feel the freedom to explore their capacity by having the agency to do so. A woman’s capacity could
never be known without enabling her to make choices that allow her to determine her potential for growth. Because the female communities in the Mormon Church have such a strong persuasive effect on the personal roles women play, it becomes the responsibility of both women themselves and those who address them to examine more closely how the parts of their persuasive abilities are being received in the community.

I want to urge the Mormon community to embrace President Hinckley’s notion of capacity as a symbol that can allow discourse to bridge paradox in discursive practices. Doing so encourages cohesion and unity in the community while accommodating for difference. In short, recognizing that women have various capacities allows us to value the variety of services they provide to the community and furthers social cooperation. A woman’s capacity is enhanced through specifying how choice and creativity are critical to developing potential. It is my hope that more women will feel at liberty to see themselves as central in the community, and perhaps more important, that all members in the community and especially members who address the community pay closer attention to how discursive practices affect the communities and identities of Mormon women.
Works Cited and Works Consulted


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Cornwall, and Tim B. Heaton and Lawrence A. Young. Chicago:


Item #1 Robin Perry*

Name: Robin Perry
Date Interviewed: October 10, 2001
City of Residence: Washington D.C.
Age: 54
Occupation: Mother, Marketing Research Specialist, Founder of Kidsave
Relationship to Interviewer: Previous Employer, friend and mentor
*Names have been changed

How do you define yourself?
As a mom and a businessperson who is also trying to make a charity work.

What were the surprising decisions in your life that lead you to new and unexpected roles?
I thought about these decisions before I made them so they weren’t a surprise. They are only surprising in what I think about them. I decided to help some kids out by staying in my home and adopted one. I went to an orphanage to adopt a child and ended up starting an organization advocating for orphans. I moved to Utah as a grown up. This must have been in part due to my Mormon roots. I was influenced by loss of two close relatives and felt my children needed to be connected to their relatives.

Did you pursue a career? If so, what kind of response did you experience from other Mormon women or men? (Include the decade if you can, ‘60’s, 70’s, 80’s etc.)
Yes I have a career. When I grew up my mom told me I could be a nurse or a teacher so I would have something to fall back on. My Dad told me I could do anything. 60s. 70’s My Dad said I could do anything; my mother began to see I could do other things. 70s I met other Mormon women who had careers outside Utah. A thrilling experience. The Mormon influence was stifling, parochial. No role models in Utah per se. I didn’t realize until 1998 how restrictive it was – I moved back to Utah after living in Washington D.C. for 23 years. I realized then how restrictive it was. My home teacher in Salt Lake told me he couldn’t have business lunches with women because he was afraid of what others might think. Time to leave.

What was the most difficult decision you have ever made? Why was it difficult? How did it change the role you were playing?
1. To get a divorce. It was difficult because it hurt somebody. It made me a single person rather than a married person, a single mother. It gave me more work and more freedom.
2. I have struggled for several years with the decision to do 100% Kidsave (my nonprofit) or do my business and Kidsave, or do my business. I can’t give up Kidsave because it is my passion, is intellectually stimulating, is making a
difference and is growing. I can’t give up business because I need a certain level of income and I cannot live with the issues around taking that much money from Kidsave. It’s a cross between being a helper and being a profit seeker. I’m all for free enterprise, and will work hard to make money. If I could make a decision to do just one I wouldn’t be schizophrenic, my role would be simpler, my persona more defined.

How did the other Mormon women (mothers, in laws, sisters, grandma, friends) respond to this difficult experiences/decisions? Do you remember anything in particular that they said to you?
My mother was very supportive of my decision to divorce, because she didn’t like my husband. She said she’d do whatever she could to help me. That she loved me. Other Mormon women were supportive, not pushing me one way or another. They aren’t really too involved in this latest decision, except I guess my mother thought I worked too hard so she would have voted for simplification.

Are there others roles you took on during your life that you did not necessarily feel prepared for? (Loss of a parent, orphaned at any age? Being married, being single? Being a professional?)
I don’t feel prepared to be moving well into middle age. I can take the role on, there is no choice, but if feels weird.

Who supported you? Who gave you the most resistance or the least support and why?
My parents gave me the most support. I learned a lot from Bill Novelli. I have had lots of good friends who, just by being my friends, have given me much support. My exercise friends from the late 80s and early 90’s helped me define what I stood for.

If you could think back to the 70s, 80s, 90s what do you remember being the main influence on Mormon women¿s roles? (This could be a talk in Conference, women’s Conference, or simply a relief society lesson or even a conversation you remember that reminds you of this) What was your response to it?
I didn’t go to Mormon Church in the 70’s. Influence on Mormon women’s roles – probably greater access to birth control. Remarks I heard in Conference always angered me. They always tried to make women be only one thing. Not realistic. I couldn’t understand the box. The one thing they tried to make women was participating in the church, being married and having a family, believing Mormons are the only ones who are right, everyone else is wrong.
When I moved back to Utah with my daughters in 1998 I experienced an unspoken, but discriminatory attitude, mostly from my family (mother and cousins). My cousin had been a dear friend, then became religious. It is really hard to articulate, because I am not one of the "hate the Mormons" kind of people. But there was a discernable feeling that we didn’t participate and weren’t included. My kids went to a local public school (kindergarten) and pre school. No one ever invited them over for a play
date. Some people said play dates didn't start that early in Utah, but here we did them in preschool. We invited several people who did come but no one ever invited my kids anywhere (except our cousins). We were only there 8 months so maybe they were warming up to it. It's really hard to verbalize without sounding like sour grapes, which I don't really intend. It's just something you can feel in Utah that doesn't exist here. If you are "in" you don't notice it. It has clearly impacted my life because I find diversity so much more interesting and really believe that mankind is connected. Not just the people who are Mormons. In part its a presumption.

My cousin is a General Authority and he spoke at my mother's funeral -- he was to give a prayer but because of his church assignment he gave his version of redemption. I guess at this point beliefs are personal -- to each his own. If you treat others well and raise your children to understand what hurts others, you'll do okay in the afterlife. And if there is no afterlife, it's useful to think of how to have more fun now and just do it without harming anyone. Unfortunately I don't think the business of the church is listening to people like me. But I have to say that I am very impressed that the church does humanitarian missions and those missionaries don't proselytize. 80s and 90s— I don't know really.

What about books published or talks given about women but authored by Mormons in general, is there one you liked, disliked or that affected you in some way?

I can't identify with them. I prefer New Age type literature, Buddhism. The Mormon writings usually don't ring true to me.

What about the ward you live in? Do you generally feel accepted by the women? Why or why not?

I've only been there a few times. I know about three women there who know me and like me. I think generally Mormon women are accepting. My mother's friends seemed accepting of me.

What do you want to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival?

Self-identity – You need to do what is important for you. Listen to your inner voice and it will help you know what is right for you. Be proud of who you are and of your family. Be proud of your accomplishments. Don't compare yourself with others. There will always be greater and weaker, and comparing only hurts your self-esteem.

Survival – Education will help you survive. Kindness and empathy will always come back to you somehow (what goes around comes around). As long as you have your family and those around you that you love you can survive. Money isn't everything.
Item #2 Elizabeth Johnson*

Name: Elizabeth Johnson  
Date Interviewed: July 2, 2000  
City of Residence: Lethbridge, Alberta  
Age: 63  
Occupation: Grandmother, Mother, Business Manager, Speech Therapist, Teacher,  
Relationship to Interviewer: Close friend to my husband's family and myself.  
*Name has been changed

How have you become involved with helping people throughout your life?  
What has motivated you in your life to do that?

Part of it is recognizing your own personal mission, and partly in my  
patriarchal blessing there are links to that. And I am doing that and I can see that and  
then recognizing that what I am down here to do, that that is a major part. The other  
things I have learned is that I just need to be open to what the lord wants me to do or  
say or help in person and sometimes it's very long term, and close relationship thing  
and sometimes it's like yours and mine relationship, in that aspect for a summer. We  
are still friends we are not in that kind of an intimate role, that affects us. There is  
something else going on in the relationship. It brings you closer and brings a spirit to  
spirit relationship that is different than meeting someone along the way. And so I  
have had some experiences where it has happened on a one shot basis.  
I can remember one time walking down a mall and seeing a woman I knew (I had  
taught her in school) and being told go talk to her and at that moment. What I could  
do for her was obvious and what she needed to talk about I could be the instrument  
to help her work through where she was at that moment. Never again have we had  
that kind of a conversation, I have seen her many times and she is doing well, but I  
don't know at all if anything I said helped her I did follow the inspiration at that  
moment. So it has been one individual conversation to probably life-time  
relationships that continue where we work together and help each other. And to me  
it is part of why I am here.

How early on would you say recognized this? Was it your married life or your  
single life?

When I felt it was a mission or the Lords plan for me was partially during, 20  
years ago. I was doing that kind of thing and then I realized that at the time I had  
cancer about twelve years ago. I started learning about a lot of critical things in my  
life, and I understood and then I understood often I did it when I was not instructed  
by the Lord, I did it because it was just kind of there. I have learned through this  
experience that he is the one will let me know when I need to say something and  
then I become his true instrument. Up to that point, I did a lot of that kind of thing  
and helped a lot of people but to the detriment of my own being and who I was  
because I gave myself away to the point that I got cancer I wore my body out, I gave  
too much. So then I had to learn how to give in a way that I remained who I was,  
but was able to give and then it became the right way, then I was following the Lords  
way and not my way. That's the difference, before it was me and now it's the Lord.
How old were you when you were diagnosed?

52. I burned myself out—it was breast cancer. It was like someone was hitting me over the head with a second chance to really learn why I am here and who is my real guide.

What specifically did you do though to come to that awareness?

Probably the first thing that happened and I felt very strongly before those years and now, that people are put in your path and your journey of life for very specific reasons. Sometimes they come in and out very quickly and sometimes they are there for long term. And I have learned to recognize these people now very clearly when they are put in the path on my journey. When I was in the hospital, I was there was a gal next to me who was in a chronic abuse situation. There was a door that joined our rooms and during that period of time we became acquainted and started talking and she had learned the mind, body, spirit connection, and she turned me onto Bernie Seagul. That was the first book I had really read, and the first conversation that I had to start opening up and really understand the gospel from another perspective. She introduced me into this and it was an evolvement and then I had to match up this with everything that I had already learned.

When you were going through this process? What happened?

The tumor I had is not a traditional breast cancer tumor it could have appeared anywhere in my body, but because I had female issues I had to find out who I was it came in a female part I had a lot of things I had to learn, I sure know a lot more now than I knew than. But I learned that what goes on in our life, goes on in our body and that our body manifests our life and our spirit. And it fits all together, and that’s why eastern philosophy went so beautiful with actually the gospel, there is so much knowledge as you read the scriptures you can fit it all together. It’s wonderful. The Lord has permitted a lot of people to come to this earth who are not LDS who have mountains of knowledge and they have to be in all kinds of situations and we know through the Holy Ghost what is truth. We read and study truth. We can know what is and isn’t truth, something might be truth for someone else, but that doesn’t make it truth for me. And usually I am able to match these things in my scriptures. And so you have to constantly be in the scriptures so that you can find all kinds of truth in the scripture that are parts of these other’s bodies of knowledge.

One day I was reading in a book a Tibetan and written back in 925, very closed culture doctrine on who the savior was, and when I said to my friend I am going to read you something and then he said wow that sounds a lot like Bruce R. Mckonkie and I said no, this was a Tibetan monk describing something much like what the savior was, the lord has put the church and his structure and his authority not to close us, but to give us the steps and the concrete things we have to do and we have the scriptures to keep us whole and centered. And there is so much out there to broaden this center core and that is what I have learned. And you have to be very careful who you say that too because there are a lot of people think we have everything just within the church gospel and I think that is very cultural and Satan’s way of holding us down when we have so much, we have so much knowledge when you open up and to understand how angels talk to us and guide us on a daily basis and how the holy ghost manifests the truth to us on a daily basis if we want. You
know I hear people say I haven't had many spiritual experiences, and I think you
know you can have that daily. And that is what you need to seek for and the
scriptures tell us.

It's really to me viewing each other as brothers and sisters, and knowing that
each of us are at different levels in our body, minds and spirits. And it's everybody's
single journey and how they go through that journey is their choice and responsibility
not yours. And that is how change affects other people. If you just see people at
different levels instead of saying they are just this or just that. And it's their choices,
it's their level and the Lord will give them opportunities to grow and we cannot
judge whether or not a person takes that opportunity. Being told to become perfect
is a great process that will not be completed until the hereafter and it's finished up.
And then our journey will continue forever anyway. We need to just look at each
other as brother and sister, and forget all the rest of it and not judge, just accept. It's
just difficult in our society, in or of Mormon culture.

As we are finding ourselves, we can go ahead get better. Chieko Okazaki
came here talked about *Lighten up*. And she talked about looking forward and not
focusing on the past. Don't dwell in the past if you can just break away from all that
and become who you are as a daughter of God. That is your value that is your worth
and then build and learn what you are to do, what you are to accomplish. Don't
worry about mopping the floor and changing the diapers and all that kind of stuff,
because all those things and events are important events in your life to do and pursue
and to grow from and to find out who you are from, and not get wound up in it in
the wrong kind of way and getting burden.

Women are very burdened, they feel like oh I can't do this or I have got to all
of this and I have got to do genealogy, go to the temple this week and I have got
raise wonderful kids and they have got to be married in the temple and on the list
goes. They are living outside of who they are and so they aren't as effective in
achieving any of those things because they aren't finding out who they are in the
process. Because the authorities and everybody tell us, meditate, draw within yourself
and until you can do that you are not going to do it. That to me has been one of the
biggest eye openers, if I go a week and I haven't had (I usually get my scriptures read,
I usually get a quick morning prayer) but if I don't have that meditation time, it
doesn't go as well, because I don't draw back into who I am and listen to what I have
asked for in my prayers, in my meditation to be guided through the scriptures, or
through just my head and my heart and to what I need to do. My sister tells me this;
she'll shut her door and stay there until she is finished in the bathroom. I do this
every day— my meditating and my prayers and my scriptures. If I don't than I get off
of track really easily, so that is one of my things, it helps to keep me organized and it
helps me not to feel burdened by what's going on. Know what your priorities are,
and that is a big one, is to know that your relationship with the Savior is number one.
Then you start down the list of your priorities, your family and your church job and
anything else, but the number one priority has got to be your relationship with the
Savior or none of the other priorities will work.

How would you articulate the difference between meditation and prayer?

Through meditation I listen, and through prayer I ask. Meditation for me is
listening to my angels and to what I need to do, sometimes I just need to be quiet
and ponder.
What would you say to some one like me, who is trying to cultivate herself within the Mormon culture as a mother and a woman in this world pursuing? What would you say to that person to help center their life maybe on a daily basis?

Mine isn’t necessarily the physical demands, your very involved in physical ways. I wish I had felt this way more as a mother, because I felt very strongly about my children that they were very special and all these kinds of things. But now as I look at children and if I were a young mother (I would love to be able to go back, but I don’t have any regrets either) I would learn through my children because those spirits are so new, and so fresh and even the business of those spirits is the business of learning those earthly things. And to watch for the things they are doing that are so neat, to over look the clutter and I had at times up to four children in my home at very different stages. And to look at those different stages and that your children go through and learn from them and do it that way.

Then I think young mothers need to choose one thing that they have a passion about something and do it. Whether it’s reading or jogging, whether it’s teaching a class or working one day a week, whatever it is something that they have a passion about that they don’t let die in their in this child raising period. I have learned now in my sixties, no period of your life is what you think it’s going to be in your life, you’d think oh when I get to be middle aged I will have so much time let me tell you it doesn’t happen. But still at every phase of your life there are different demands when you are a young mother, your children are your demand, and you work on that, you gets kids into university and college, it’s a different emotional, it’s not a physical demand then, it’s a time demand that you need to be there spiritually and emotionally, not physically because they can take care of themselves. But they need that other and that takes a long period of time to get through that phase, and then they get married and you still have that relationship and the family thing. But you do have different kind of time at home, but often you have church responsibilities or work or whatever you do, your time is still no more.

It’s how you look at what you are doing when you are doing it that makes a difference in what you can learn from that period of time. I wish I had learned that, and not let any period overwhelm you. And I think that a lot of women buy into “I have to a lot of children because that’s what I am told to do” without any thought, well maybe you are not a woman that can have a lot of children and manage it, maybe you are a woman that can just have joy and happiness in doing it, that’s great. I think you have to get to know yourself, and that’s a journey for you and the savior. It’s knowing how you need to govern your life so that you can give the best you can and you perfect the best you can.

Having a lot of children doesn’t mean you have a lot of children and the lord will provide. And President Hinckley gave a wonderful talk to the BYU kids one time because they were having too many divorces down there. They were figuring out if they had a baby every year the lord would provide. NO way. And the thing he said was “the decision to have children is no one’s but you, your husband and the Lord.” No one has to take part in that decision, if you feel as a couple and with the Lord that two children right now is enough, that’s enough! If you today had ten children was enough, it’s enough. The three of you making that decision it’s enough. It’s all the Lord wants us to do. Each one of us are different and that is our challenge
down here is to figure out what are our abilities and capabilities, yes we can stretch, but when you stretch, when you bring extra children say into your family or something that has to be done with the Lord and no one else— no one else should be part of that. If you are influenced by guilt or what other people think, than you are not making decisions with the Lord and under inspiration and guidance, you are making decisions because of culture and other friends and lots of garbage like that. And we as women are just awful that way, living the way other people think we should live instead of saying “ok this is my life, I am in charge, my guide is the Savior and if I am married than I have a partner I need to consult with.” It’s hard to see the other women in our lives who let the culture hold them back instead of exploring what would make them happy.

Because you are baptized you are in the celestial kingdom, that is the first thing you have got to remember not it’s not if you do all these things. If I try my best and be obedient, you are in the celestial kingdom. How many people get up and say “oh I will never make it to the celestial kingdom.” When you got baptized and you take on that covenant and you start to do your best in everything that you have been commanded, you’re in the celestial kingdom, you are not exalted yet, but you are in the celestial kingdom. The next step towards exaltation is if you take on the marriage covenant that eternal covenant gives you the right to be exalted as God and Goddess, if you strive and work on your marriage and try to live the way the gospel, scriptures and doctrines teach, not the culture. And keep enduring to the end you will get exaltation, not that you’ve earned it totally here, you may have to work on it still. But you are there and that alone sometimes if you can get that in your head and in your soul that that’s where you want to be and you are striving for it, and not saying oh I am not good enough I am not good enough”, the Savior will make you good enough after all you have done. And too many of us try to do it all ourselves, and to me that is sin. When we try to do it ourselves and leave the Savior out it’s not going to happen, it’s Satan’s pulling us away from the Savior.

How do you think women understand the atonement?

The most wonderful gift we have been given, we stomp it under our feet. Because we think we have to do it alone and all we have to do is keep trying keep striving, keep stretching a little bit. I had this conversation with a social worker from LDS social services when I was relief society president and when I walked in he was just shaking his head saying one of the most saintly women I know just left my office saying that she just won’t ever make it. We went into this conversation about the fact that so many people don’t understand the atonement. Steven Christensen’s book “Believing Christ” is just so explicit, if you just accept it, believe Christ, he did this for us. We are not perfect, we will become perfect because of him, not because of us, but because of him.

We just have to keep our sights again, our priorities, I want to be in the celestial kingdom. I mean I don’t want to be any place else, I don’t need the most beautiful music, the most beautiful art, the most beautiful literature, the most beautiful people, I don’t need any place else, I plain and simple don’t want to be any place else. I don’t care what anybody else wants to do, including my husband; I don’t care where he wants to be. I know where I want to be, I would love to have him with me, and here again it’s my choice and what I have decided to do. And not to understand that we have taken steps, the lord has provided the steps and we have
taken them and then not believed them, it boggles my mind now that I understand. But we do get hurt, and we do have emotions, this is the telestial kingdom and we have rights to be angry, it's okay to be upset, it's what we do with it that makes the difference.

What are the different roles that you have played in your life?

When I was young I was an oldest child, and I was a textbook oldest child full of responsibility and all of this and my mother became ill when I was ten, and had two brothers and younger sister. So I became a mother of younger brothers and a sister. And my mother had a wonderful influence on my life because through her illness, they didn't know what was the matter with her, until for ten more years and she had lupus. And we didn't know it for years, and there were times when she was very well, but there were times when she was very ill. And so as a teenager I could cook a meal as well as my mother and entertain and things because I became her at times, and she and I were very close in a lot of ways, but I took on a lot of the responsibility and I remember when I was about 16, actually we took a sister missionary in and she said to me I can't believe you are the age you are, and I never had friends or close friends that were my age because I wasn't the age I was biologically. I had grown up, I dated older and I never hung around anyone my age. I was kind of like a parent when I was young taking on the world. And I during my mother’s illness I learned from her, probably at the beginning was spiritually was that she craved spirituality, crave to talk to listen to read spiritual things. That was probably the beginning of my spiritual part of my life and the other thing was that she was always very positive. People would come and see her and say wow I came here to cheer her up and she has cheered me up. So I saw those things, so there were some wonderful reasons and things that came from taking over her role a lot in those years. And then I graduated from the university; I got my bachelors degree in speech therapy. I worked when we were first married and I had a baby right away, some situation and I became a mother and I felt very strongly about motherhood I felt like it was important, I always wanted to be a very good mother I tried to be the best mother I could I felt like I had been mothering for a long time and then I didn't get pregnant and we tried to adopt and stuff and that was a very hard emotional time for me because I had all this mothering and it was my kind of thing, and financially we could have done that. I don't know emotionally, although I know now that with Lisa’s problems, but during that time we started taking on other children. We have had seven children in our home, for up to ten years. And we had time for each of them and part of that was to fulfill the mothering thing that I felt like I wasn’t doing out of my body, I was doing it for other children. And I was trying, here is my mission coming out that probably wasn’t all the Lords doing, a lot my doing because I wasn’t in tune with him enough during those years and I took things that I probably shouldn’t have but I did learn from them and I can’t say that is wasn’t good it could have maybe been different had I known then what I know now. And so I did a lot of that mothering thing.

Did you work in between?

Yes I always worked once I had children in my home, I had a private practice in my home and we had communication things at the door and I had an office in my basement. I did a little bit of work out of the home, but not that much. And then as
my children were in school, I then began to work more and all of it was part time, but you know how part time goes, it usually becomes more than that I worked in the central office actually when Lisa was two in a half. I had moved back and started a graduate program that was in the sixties, and I didn't go back until the seventies to finish my master's degree and I took my two children for three or four summers and I did a course at the U of U and then for three summers I went to the university of Oregon and lived with my parents to get my masters in special education and learning disabilities.

During the sixties and seventies, a very interesting time, how were you received by other women in your family and other women in the church?

It wasn't a problem family wise, church wise I knew that I always considered a little bit weird a little bit different. Liberal? I don't know? You know because I don't get into what people think about me, and so I didn't pay attention enough to care really what they thought, I was going to do what I was going to do. And Frank was supportive enough when I took off in the summer for several weeks with the kids to do that. And I know it was not a usual thing, back then, I know there was a lot of people who thought "what are you doing, you should be home with your husband and kids?" Here again, this was something that my mother and my father felt very passionately about education, high school was not the end of education in our home and this was back in the forties and fifties you know a girl, ah get married maybe do a little college or a little something in university, NOT IN MY HOME.

Something my parents influenced me a great deal in was the fact that education was so wonderful, my mother wanted a degree so badly and she would have had one if had she not been ill, she took courses and had quite a bit of university but never got that degree. I hope that he Lord will let her get that degree. And so education was something that I just assumed was part of my being and my right to have as a woman, and my dad in those times as I look back was very very liberal as far as his thinking about religion and women, he felt it was just as important for me to have an education and my sister, we both have master's degrees, as my brothers. One has his bachelors and one has his PhD. All of us, it wasn't just for a boy. I realize that more and more how unique my parent's attitude was and I was so grateful because getting an education was one of my passions during that time.

I always worked part time, and then I did teach school after I finished my masters. I also went to the U of L to get my teaching certificate. So I taught in the classroom full time, but that was after Scott. I taught first grade when he was in second grade in the same school, and so all the time he was in that school I was teaching in that school but I never worked full time because my priority was my family. But I also had a great passion to do other things. I worked with doing different things, I had started a literary program for disabled children, and did some things like that but because I had a passion for my professional things too. Lisa was having her problems in the seventies and I quite teaching, stopped for a while too. And tried to deal with her and what was going on. She started drinking when she was fifteen; both my uncles are alcoholics so we have the gene that goes haywire. And in 1980 Frank wanted to get into the computer thing and asked me to come in and work on the business and work with him at that point. And so I quit subbing and I had a minor in business, I had started out in business management, so
it felt natural. But I went back to the college to take a refresher accounting course or two. I started to volunteer and things, and learning the business and Frank needed somebody, one of us who could be there all the time. And I still do all of that, so I have been speech therapist, a teacher, a mother, a wife, a daughter, had a lot of executive positions in the church. I've been Young Women's president several times, Stake Young Women's president for six years, Relief Society president (stake and ward) and taught a fair amount. So all throughout those years I also had the church callings and I still do now all of our computer work and stuff.

And now I am a grandma, I always felt and still do, as a young woman and as a woman knowing what I know about the gospel and the eternal plan is that understanding your role as a woman and a mother whether you actually had children or don't have children you are always a mother because a woman gifts are to nurture and that deeper spirituality that men are not given. We are just given it if we develop that because we are mothers and even not having children we nurture other children. Like Lisa mothers her nephews and niece and has them other and she is doing the mothering role even though she hasn't been able to have her own children. And so to me as a young person and as a woman, you have to look at yourself that that is your role and it is God given and you have been given the gifts for that role and you need to develop those and then you have been given all of these other gifts and talents that you need to kind of slide them in to grow and develop. But women start separating motherhood from their career, from learning or contributing in other ways I think it's wrong, I think it's all part of the same thing our base core of who we are as a woman is this mother, and I use the term mother, there could be another term because sometimes mother gets other connotations. We are the nurturers of the world, not just divine children of our families, we are the nurturers of the world and we have the gift to put that energy out into the world. And so if we don't look at it that way, then I think we miss the boat whether we are a doctor, whether we are a teacher, whether we are a stay at home mom, whether we are a community volunteer worker I don't care what role we are in if we understand who we are as women and we have those gifts and God given and work it all in together.

Why do you think women in the church tend to separate their roles, mother and working mother?

They do and it's very difficult for women in the church to battle. But the first thing they have to recognize is really who they are and what their first role is and then integrate all of the rest of it around that and they forget that. I think this is Satan's way of destroying us, if he can destroy women he can destroy the world, because we are the mothers and without us men would not be who they are. And I think both roles are just as important. We are very powerful; the men are there to support who we are. We have got to let them do it in the right kind of way, not dominate us, take over, not tell us what to do and all of this gets very cultural too and is misunderstood in the priesthood line. But it starts right here with just a few women understanding who she was in the very beginning and what her role was and who we are as daughters of God and then we can do it. But if we don't and try to separate all these things, it can destroy the family and destroy the world. It is so conflicting when you talk about it and say it, but inside of us it's not. It is very complicated, because women are so bombarded, but here again negative influences out there and we say I have to do this and I have to do that, all of this pulls us away from who we are at our core.
Is there a lack of tolerance for each other?

Here again, I know to see it for what it is. It's Satan trying to destroy the very core of the existence of this world, if he can do it. But I mean that's conflicting too, women are dealing with the reality of how they feel and what they are doing out here. So I think the more individual women understand who they are as core women and that their major role is motherhood and that doesn't mean bearing 10 children or changing diapers on ten bums, it means that you are a nurturer with a spiritual base that men do not have, that you need to tap into and you need to give that out. IF you have children than you first give it to them so that they can continue that, if you are not a mother of children you give it through your work, you give it through your extended family, it's giving those god given gifts to the world, whatever way you find yourself at the moment. Whether you are teaching school, whether you are a physician, whether you are running a corporation, whether you are home with three children, it does not matter.

Sometimes you know if women find herself in a role where she feels like she is being pulled away, we can support that person and help her with her children a little extra until she comes to a point when she can regulate her life a little better. I mean we can help each other instead of fighting each other, we are always critical of each other, and so we are tearing each other down. I mean you know "hey bring your kids over, I know you are busy and trying to finish a paper, let me help." Or do what ever, because we never always make all the best decisions at the telesstial level we are living in and it's never going to any different. We are going to have challenges and we are going to be out of balance in how we manage our time and our resources and whatever, we are just trying to achieve more balance all the time. And I think this is why the Lord gives us each other is to help each other to achieve this balance that we all are trying to achieve. But we can't do it alone we have each other, that is what womanhood is, what sisterhood is, the Relief Society talks about this, Chieko and that presidency talked about this very thing is to help each other to achieve this balance. They said it in different ways perhaps, but that's basically what we need to do with sisterhood is that is pull together instead of pointing these fingers out— doing their own thing.

What made your life transitions particularly hard? Who supported you? Who gave you the most resistance?

Probably within my marriage, that's been a hard one, because Frank doesn't see me for who I am. In a way he sees me for who he wants me to be in his life. And if I play that role then it works fine. He supported me with the educational thing. The spiritual levels are very different between he and I, and that part, my transition there has been very separate and just on my own, and I share less with him than probably with most and that shifts as I have shifted to know who I was. I have had people come almost one shot type thing, that I have talked to people that have given me the impetus to keep going. My mother died about my age so she hasn't been here for a lot of years, but I have felt her spirit you know that kind of strength. Elizabeth has actually been very encouraging in making some shifts and broadening my thinking, and that has been helpful. I think I had to over look a lot of cultural Mormon things you know in order to do what I have done, there is a rock in this room that I use, things that are in nature that provide energy. Each step of the way there have been people who we find we are teaching each other. Whether we are the
teacher or the learner, we are being edified. I have tried to ignore a lot of the cultural Mormon things, and not let them bother me because some women do. My sister in law once said to me, “you are a very private person” and I am, I don’t share a lot. I don’t get into the phoning and talking to my friends a whole lot, I am not a small talker, I like to get down and let’s talk about something that really matters, and I am the last person to know anything about what is going on. I will learn about things as I go along, but I am really not in that stream at all, I have some friends and we do things, but I am not in this visity world. I am quite happy with just myself to be honest and a very few close relations. So as I have moved through my life it has been a private journey with very few people at any length. There have been people who have influenced me greatly at those moments, and probably Elizabeth would be the one person who has been consistent for the last three years. And I have had to just decide to be who I am, and Frank has had to deal with that and so I have had to balance where I am and where I am going against who he is and where he is going.

Which philosophies helped you move on?

It’s not always easy, it’s a balancing act a lot of times. I have tried to do different things, and pulled Frank along with me in what I am feeling, thinking and doing. But it’s not, so I learned in this last little while to just leave him right where he is and let him be and so I don’t short myself. I do what I want to do and carry on and still have fun together and do our thing together. And again I think it’s a lesson for men and women in marriages that you accept the person for who they are and where they are and enjoy what you can enjoy together and move on. You know we have a lot of history together, and a lot of our family and fun and things and you can do that. But if a man or a woman completely denies their partner of the will to do that then I would be thinking to myself, hmm. If they allow you to do and to grow, then you can make it work. But if they totally try to control you and stuff and all that is a whole other issue. I have met a lot of men along this route who are very spiritual and moving in that direction, which has been very interesting and I love to have conversations with them because it is just refreshing. Women, because of our gift, are doing the biggest shift in moving spiritually. I dare say you don’t find too many couples that are really spiritually yoked and in alignment and in oneness. I think that might be the one thing that might have to happen once we get to the celestial kingdom and because of their role it pulls them away from the spiritual—the hunter, gatherer, take care of, protector, provider role takes them away from that. So it takes a great deal for them to shift to this other, and it takes us a great deal to shift to having to do the other when we are on our own, but we do. I think women do have an easier time of this shift, I think as we get through and develop a nice relationship and enjoy children and enjoy the things that we can together there will be a time (because of the priesthood that they have held and that they are given) that’s there tool to learn spirituality. If they will let that work in their lives they will move closer to it, now some do it mechanically, and others actually let it build them spiritually. And that’s why my stake president would talk about this, why we don’t have the priesthood, we have it we just don’t practice and exercise it and do these things. We have all that power within us, but if we did it, the men would never develop anything because we would be so over powering or if they had all our spirituality it might be the other way, there has to be a balance. And the priesthood is their god given gift to develop that.
Item #3 Bonnie Miller*

Name: Bonnie Miller
Date Interviewed: December 26, 2000
City of Residence: Raymond, Alberta
Age: 40
Occupation: Nurse, Mother, Actress
Relationship to Interviewer: Sister-in-law and friend
*Name has been changed

How do you define yourself?
I define myself in terms; lately it’s been of where I fit in the world, in the universe. So I’m defining myself as a spiritual being who is reaching out and trying to connect with people—the flow of life. I have lots of jobs, but there what I do and what gives me joy but there not necessarily all that I am. I mean I am a mother, I am a wife and I find a great deal of joy in those roles, but I am also just one little connection in a whole connection of souls and I am trying to find my connection to all those other souls.

What would you say has been one of the most difficult decisions you ever made?
Well based on the length of time it took to actually come to the decision make I guess I would say divorcing my first husband, ending that first marriage was one of the most difficult.

Why was it difficult?
It was difficult because it involved a great deal of soul searching. It involved, paradigm shift after paradigm shift after paradigm shift. It took there was a lot of pain and growth to get the point of knowing it was bad for me, bad for my children even bad for my husband, once I know something like that than I can act, it just took me along time to come to the decisions that needed to be acted upon, there is a lot of second guessing until there was a moment that I no longer doubted what needed to be done. So that was about a seven-year thing, we were married for ten years, and it took seven to come to that.

When you talked about paradigm shift to paradigm shift, what did you mean specifically?
Specifically things like, I have a brain and God gave me the brain, I should be using it. I guess I grew up believing that everybody knew better than I did. I never actually asked myself, what did I think I actually didn’t give that any weight, at all. If I had I had to realize at a very gut level that I have the ability to receive personal revelation. You know they would talk about that, but I didn’t really know what that meant I thought person revelation meant agreeing with everything else, things that were supposed to happen. But you know intuition is a very real and powerful thing I had to learn to recognize it for what it was. But also to know that I was And to know that I was strong enough if I never ever had another relationship in my life I would was strong enough to go and that I had the skills to support myself and my children and that anything was better than what I already knew so I can do it.
Did that signified a moment of departure from only your marriage? Or from other things as well?

Yeah a lot of things coincided, not only ended my marriage, but ended my relationship with the church as an active member. I now felt that my experience with spirituality was as important as an outside definition of spirituality and my experience and the experience that my soul had was other than what the church was offering. It wasn’t what I needed and it didn’t have any meaning for me that lasted. I ended a lot of things at that same time. One of the people who held some gems of wisdom for me, was a Mormon woman, I can’t remember her name. A MSW, she had nine kids, couple pairs of twins, one had died recently, practicing out of Utah valley. Marion! My husband was doing his PhD in clinical psychology. I was extremely depressed and had been most of my life. But because he was involved in the mental health area, so the possibility of therapy was more real because that was his job and people don’t give credence to that or they are afraid of that. But because that was going to be his livelihood than it was more valid for me to go get therapy. He was getting therapy as part of his professional training; we had kids at the time. By the time I started to get therapy and Bonnie was about 2. And Kelty was 4.

I was working 4 days a week at the surgical center. Working for some extra cash. So I was having a lot of anxiety. So the name of this woman, so I went to see her. It was near the time we were going to be moving back to Canada and so we were starting to process a termination, and one other thing she said to me was “when you move back to Canada you are going to find a community of women where you will be an active and full participant in that community of women that that is what you need and you can find and they are there they are there for you, find them and let yourself get involved with women. So I actually got involved in that women’s film festival, and just as a volunteer and watched the films women were making and lot of them were documentaries and docudramas and a lot of that spoke to me and so I wanted to find out more about my experience with womanhood. But it’s not like I had ever done this before, it was always pathological what women go through, I don’t know about the dreary and the dull, or problematic the unpleasant cramps, or having your period or seen the world different than men do the male perspective had been valued but the female perspective never had and this was addressing all that stuff. So I took women’s studies and it was in addressing women. People need to feel a bigger part of something they can aspire to and that is the job of religion, which is to offer that glimpse of eternity and glory to people. And if a religion is not offering that to a person than the person goes and looks until they find that, if the religion is not doing it’s job and you go to find something that does that for you which was a whole other thing altogether. It was just a real shock to me to find out that my own experience was valuable and valid.

So it was not the intention of to send me in that direction, but I did take that to heart and I did hold that candle before me and say “you know she sounds so positive about being with women and that this is a positive thing and it sounds like a thing I really really want” it sounds like... now mind you that women’s movement in Edmonton was full of mostly lesbians which meant it was their agenda and I didn’t fit in there because I wasn’t a lesbian and hadn’t been beaten by a man and I wasn’t a victim and I wasn’t a victim mentality. I didn’t fit in there and I had to go into a different direction, you know I don’t think I fit in anywhere but I am more comfortable in my own skin now so it has becomes less of an issue.
When Marion (counselor) was talking to you about a community of women, what did she mean? And was she LDS? Did she mean Relief Society?

No, I didn’t get that impression. Yes, she was LDS and she is the one that got me on Prozac. A lot of the issues that we were working out dealt with the fact that the women in my life, my family and church weren’t giving me that support. And that when women of various experience and educational background, when they got together there was validity in their value ness and you can come to know the femaleness and individuality of a group. I didn’t feel and I don’t feel when I remember back on it that she was limiting it exclusively to Relief Society.

Going back to the decision you made in your life to divorce Scott, How did your mother respond to that?

She was furious, she told me I was an idiot, but in all fairness nobody in my family knew what my marriage was like. We never had our assumptions that if we had problems we would work it out and we weren’t going to go to our families, because we didn’t want the other side to have a bias against us. We didn’t want to back stab. So we never sought support in that way, at least I didn’t seek it in that way, I don’t know if he did...

My sisters tell me too, that they knew I wasn’t the type of person who would say “oh I am through with this, its been ten years I am tired of this and ready to move on I am going to find somebody else” they knew I wasn’t like that. So they didn’t know what the deal was but there must have been a deal so they just waited. Others just said fine, it was inappropriate and mum well she really liked Scott, she trusted him because he made her feel stupid, he’s must be smart— you know. No, she was very much not supportive.

Was there a larger philosophy to that?

Yes, she had peer pressure, imagined peer pressure to be the perfect wife and mother and the fact that she did not want to have this endless progeny issuing forth from her womb was a thing of guilt for her. She was a very intelligent woman, and it was her best friend Joyce who said, “you know it should have been mum who was off on student exchanges going to Ottawa becoming the prime ministers assistant.” That should have been mum and mum knew it. Because she was intelligent she was beautiful she was fun I mean she had it all. But she didn’t know it, I mean she knew that she was smart, but it was smelling the cigarette smoke, but not being able to smoke. You know she would just always live vicariously because she didn’t know she could do otherwise, she knew should be able to but she was just always living vicariously because she didn’t know she could do otherwise, she knew should be able to but she, but that wasn’t an expectation she had of herself that she could do that.

What kind of role do you think that Mormonism had in all of that?

You know I used to think it was everything, and since then I have gotten away from it and I think about it a lot because I try to separate where the boundaries are, where I am and where the church began and where my family is. It’s a lot of family dysfunction and the church is not necessarily the gospel itself, but the structure the way the program delivery and just the strong dependence on male authority contributed a great deal to all this other dysfunction. It was set up so that the dysfunction had something to hang its hat on, but it wasn’t the whole thing.
There is still that pressure, peer pressure. You can read about it in the Ensign, women who felt pressure to perform to be able bake the bread, sew the clothes and decorate the house and hot meal ready for the husband and keep the house clean and to do their visiting teaching and teach a fabulous Sunday school class and get their kids to soccer. There is that pressure and the church institutionalizes that a bit, but it's everywhere as well. I mean we all feel the pressure to be superwomen. I think the only thing the church did in that generation, that the world today adds, is the pressure to work and be a successful career woman on top of all of that. Now the church discouraged that end of it, but you know that brings in a whole other thing because the reality of life is that women have to have that income so now you've got the guilt that you have to work (which my mom did) and she did have the additional guilt that she didn't want to work but had to.

**How did she respond to your need for your personal happiness at the time?**

She invalidated it I guess, yeah. Part of her living vicariously was needing us not to become what she could have become, because that would invalidate her even further. You know what I mean, if we actually did it, that means she could have done it and she didn't so she is a failure, these are things that came up through therapy. She would come in when I was practicing the piano, when I was seventeen, she would be drying the dishes, she would do the dishes for me if I would practice the piano. So I would practice and she would dry the dishes and she would sigh and say "Hmmmnnn, you know I always thought that I would be sitting in Carnegie Hall watching you on stage at the piano" and she would walk right out of the room. So, I'd think "what does she mean? Does she mean she thinks I'm good enough to play at Carnegie Hall? And I'm just not living up to my potential? Or that I'm such a failure and I'll never get to Carnegie Hall and so she's just given up on the whole idea? What is that suppose to mean? The double messages like this all my life, and my shrink when I told him this he said you know if she ever saw herself sitting in Carnegie Hall watching you play the piano she would probably go home and kill herself. And I thought yeah— she didn't really want me to succeed, things like that. So because I think the reason she freaked, not because I was putting my eternal salvation in jeopardy, I was putting herself esteem in jeopardy. However, she has given me very good advice.

**In what way did she influence or shape your role as a woman the most?**

As a negative role model, I would say I am never going to do that, I am never going to have a relationship like that, I am never going to treat my children like that or I am not ever going to put myself in that position and if I do I am going to get out.

**Why?**

Well then I started to think when you give birth to children, they come into the world with needs and your duty as a parent because you've brought them into the world is to meet those needs that's your job. So what you do as a parent is to find out what the child needs, and then meet those needs. If she needs attention give her attention cause she needs it, right? It's not necessarily what they want or what they demand, but if you assess that that is what they need, you give it to them. You don't use them as your parent or as your shoulder to cry on because they are children, you
allow them to be children, they need to be children. So fortunately I learned that very early on in Kelty’s life and then too in Bonnie’s life. And that was something that was missing in my life, the unconditional love, I mean I know she loved me I know she did. There’s no question that she loved me but that didn’t translate into meeting my needs. So that was just the part that I wanted to play with my children, that she wasn’t able to for whatever reason to play with me. I don’t like to say that or thinking that a negative role model, she sang to me and rocked with me and I felt loved and wanted at those times so I have carried on with that there are good things that she did, but I think the thing that influenced me the most and what I am passing onto others is what not to do.

How did divorce change the role you were playing?

I guess I was perceived in the role of being a scarlet woman, because Scott was perfect. Why would I divorce him unless I was evil, I think that was the way my family and his family and friends were thinking. I lost a lot of relationships that were very very valuable to me his siblings, I no longer have access to them and they were great friendships. I became more myself even though I was no longer a wife) but to me that was a good thing. The mother role became more important and more of a priority and going back to work and becoming a workingwoman was a necessity. And I didn’t enjoy my job, I hated it, I hated the whole profession I was in, but that was where I had my skills and it paid fairly well and was better than flipping burgers at Mcdonalds. And so I made myself available for full time work. I haven’t really worked full time per se, except for a six-week period when Scott and I moved back from Utah. That isn’t to say that I didn’t get full time hours, I would get 32 hours at hospital and other shifts. But I didn’t have benefits because Scott had them, and I was still covered for a certain period and the girls were definitely covered and I had met Bernie right away.

When it came to your education, why did you choose what you chose and how did you decide to continue with it?

I went into pharmacy first, that was because I actually really liked the sciences, I wanted to be an actor but of course realistically that was nothing wasn’t a reality for me and I didn’t ever considerate a reality. It was Mum who suggested, you are going to have a husband who you will have to put through school one day so you will need a job where you can work, something that is in demand, put him through school and then he’ll work and you’ll stay home.

Pharmacy, I liked that, my Bishop was a pharmacist, Kent Wood, and I applied for pharmacy and got in, I wasn’t that smart a student. I couldn’t hack being with all the premeds who were working their brains out and I was already accepted into my faculty so nursing seemed to be the other option for me. That would offer the cleveite that I would need, we were in the state somewhere and I would be able to work. Which is exactly what happened. My take on it, I really wanted to be an actor, if I ever ever decide to be an actor, if I have this nursing skill I won’t have to starve I won’t be an struggling artist and I won’t have to wait tables. This was in the back of my mind that was the thing that justified it for me, (yes mum’s right yes this is a practical thing yes if I follow the path that I think the church intends for me) but my reason is I want to have a skill that can put myself into an acting career.
Interestingly enough that is exactly what is happening which is so cool and I am old now looking back on my life on these choices I am making are now merging its like all these little rivulets merging into a stream, very cool I’m liking it.

So you are a registered nurse?

Yes, I have a diploma not a degree. They are phasing out the diploma program. That was never going to be my career, which was only going to be my job. So we had the option after we graduated with our diplomas to go on and get a degree and a lot of them chose to do that because it was only another 18 months to get a B.L.C.N. But I had no interest in that. I always said that if I go back to University I am going to do something that has nothing whatsoever to do with nursing, I don’t like it, I meant to do— it’s just a means to an end.

And right now you would say that your education/job choice is leading you to pursue your real interest acting? Could you talk about your education in acting?

Well, the church really provided just so many opportunities to do that and I loved it right away. The public speaking thing I took to it like a fish in water. But I always assumed that everyone loved to do that so that wasn’t real to me, everyone did that. A friend of mine was going to an audition for a community theatre and said to me come with me and I said ok that would be fun. This was a big church community theatre and she was a big theatre person, so we went and I got a part and she didn’t? That was my first non-church play and that was when I realized I wanted to pursue this, I want to learn more, take an acting class. I just had not really legitimate acting education, I’d gone to the citadel theatre school but that’s not a credit. In Utah I took a couple classes that were private and not at the university and I have gone to some workshops where the government provides. I have done a lot of unofficial kinds of things. The BFA, the people who are taken seriously and they are really well trained and I learn a lot by doing and getting cast in things with other professionals, people who are better than me, so you know that is how my education has been, that is where it is. You know for better or worse that is where it is, I probably still could audition for the BFA program at the U of A, and I probably could get in but you know fourteen hour days, and I have children who have needs still, sure they are different from when they were littler. But I still need to be there and maybe when we are all in university all working fourteen-hour days maybe I will but by that time I am at the point now where it’s kind of silly. I am already a professional I belong to the stage union, I belong to the screen union.

Mum taught me how to use big words; it was funny because I was always rejected in high school because of my vocabulary. I didn’t really no why I didn’t have any friends but then somebody told me at university “hey we never liked you because we never knew what you were talking about” and now at university everybody talks like that and I thought ok. Yeah that was mum she would put the word of that day in my lunch on a napkin and the definition. And she would write up my assignments for me she would say “I will type this up for you so that you can take it to school all nice and typed in the morning.” I had written it all and done the research and when I would get it in the morning I would read it over and it resembled nothing at all like I had written it was better, much much better. And using vocabulary that wasn’t mine at the time, so I had to quickly look these things up because I knew the teacher was
going to ask me “what does redundant mean?” I would have to say well it’s an extra word that isn’t needed that does the same thing as the word before. That was a big part of my education, just trying to cover my ass because my mum had rewritten things.

What is it that you are trying to cultivate in your daughters in terms of education what are you trying to teach them, or trying to pass on to them?

I want to pass on to them that it is important to further your education whatever level your chose, whatever your career is you need to be trained. But just like learning stuff and to be interested in something which is so far not evident, I was hoping that something would catch fire with them like it never did with me well it did but it was always repressed I guess. But that they would find something to be passionate about. Oh Bonnie’s passionate about going to Australia, she wants to live in Australia. But that don’t sell yourself short, find something that you like to do and follow it through and see where it goes and don’t just do nothing. What I wanted them to get about education, this is a do as I say not as I do thing because I always struggled with, accept yourself where you are, and just be where you are and go somewhere from there and you don’t have to rise fully formed from the head of Zeus okay you just go into the chaos and see what is there and just follow your instincts and take a step. Like Kelty doesn’t know what she wants to do, she is thinking about taking one year off well financially that might be necessary, but I am saying Kelty you don’t have to know what you want to do just go just do something you will find something, it might diverge many times just do something just go somewhere just start.

What do you want to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about survival and self-identity?

I want them to know that self identity is their own definition not mine or anybody else’s, it’s a process of discovery and that it’s up to them to say what it is. And that it’s legitimate, if they say it its real, it’s legitimate and if they feel a certain way about something it’s legitimate.

Survival?

Just that you can and being strong is not a bad thing, that was a really big part of my decision in my first marriage. We were staying together because of our kids, we really hated each other, we were in counseling. I have it on audiotape, our fights that was part of our therapy was to tape it and listen to ourselves. I’ve still got it; we said horrible things to each other. We couldn’t be in the same room, without just. We just couldn’t be in the same room. I had a microphone on me and a microphone on him, we were staying together because of the kids and “oh this would hurt them they don’t want us to split up,” but then I thought what am I saying to my daughters about women and their place and their value and how they should be treated and what they should be prepared to put up with. Maybe that was just justification for doing what I really wanted to do, but it I don’t want them to be intimidated and manipulated and hurt and devalued and that if they are like that, there is a way out. Go, you can handle it—go and the world won’t fall apart and you will be fine and there people who love you and who will look after you and you can look after yourself. And interestingly enough Bonnie who had wet her bed every
night of her life, the minute we separated she stopped, she didn't wet the bed once after, that was a big validation for me which I am so grateful because otherwise I might be second guessing myself at this stage. But I know for a fact, it was the right thing to do, if she didn't wet the bed after that.

**How do you view success as a mother?**

I feel successful as a mother. Overall I don't have overachieving children. You know they aren't involved in a lot of extra curricular activities, which is overachieving for me. I don't know, on awards night they have managed almost every year to be on the honor roll. This year I don't think it's going to happen. You go to these awards nights and everybody is getting this scholarship and this humanitarian award and this citizenship award I mean my kids don't get involved in a lot of stuff so I didn't raise children like that. But I raised kind well-adjusted people who are appreciated by others, who I enjoy their company a great deal. You know I really really like them. And you know and that's when I would use my mother as a negative role model and say I don't want to do this or do that, that was my goal because I want my kids to know that I love them and that they are valuable and loved just because of who they are, that they are enough. I don't know if I have achieved that entirely but I think more so than with myself and that's really what I wanted to do and everything else is gravy. They're nice, they are my gift to the world, and the world is a better place because of them.

**What made transitions in your life particularly hard? Who gave you the most resistance?**

Mormon women and my family. Other Mormon women that I had known in my life were critical, I mean obviously if it involves leaving the church how could they be supportive about that because that's not just a thing that is good.

**How would you say they perceived your role, as it should be?**

That I should be unhappy, I should be struggling in my role as an ex-member of the church. I think they should see me feeling that that's the worst mistake of my life and I should be still calling on the priesthood for blessings and repentance. When I started taking women's studies, I was still an active member of the church I was cautioned against taking women's studies by other women... They would always just laugh at me and say you can't be a Mormon and a feminist; well you'd be the first one they'd say. To my chagrin, that is the case, I just couldn't stay in the church and still feel like I was seeing my self reflected in the deity that I was supposed to become like, I couldn't it just wasn't there. That's what I needed, I needed to see myself in God and I didn't, so a male and the thing with heavenly mother well we don't talk about her because we don't want to hurt her. Give me a break, she's a goddess for pet's sake, think she can take a little bit of people making fun of her name, I mean COME ON. That's so lame. But you know I was really feeling a spiritual connection, and I wanted to physically make that flesh and I wanted to do the rituals that was the language that my mind and my spirit wanted to speak and that's why I left the church and more power to you who can stay in and get spiritual connection, and comfort and joy and meaning and still find value in women and in
women's life and in women's points of view, and can hold on and justify the
discrepancy that I found and to keep the two ends like this, it was just too irritating.

Are there conversations you have had in the past with Mormon women that
were frustrating or as helpful?

I had a conversation with Pat Wood who was my beehive advisor, when I
was very anti having kids because I was the oldest of six and a lot of them were
declared as not really welcome by mum. She was struggling with that and the role of
a mother. But she was just enthused, she was a very young mum would say “I’ve got
these daughters to play with all summer, I really excited to have be having this baby
at the beginning of the summer, I’m going to dress her up and go walk through the
homes and going to go to the prom and dress her up” and I thought yeah, you know
that might be fun, motherhood could be fun too, it’s not all drudgery. It’s not all
yucky, some people really like it. She was a very positive role model in the church, I
appreciated these women when they role models of womanhood, not role models of
sainthood. This is just something every woman goes through regardless of their
religion, and they were just women, they weren’t Mormon women, they weren’t
white women, they were just female and talking to me as a mother, a woman or a
budding woman talking about woman like things and I felt really human and really
visible when we did that.

Could you name a book or an article, anything that was authored by a
Mormon woman?

The lyrics to “O My Father” by Eliza R. Snow. That’s been the thing that’s
been nagging at me that it’s been very significant, if there is a female aspect to deity
where is it? And if this is, I know that it’s a poem and it’s never been church official
although by association if it’s included in the hymnbook, it’s sort of official doctrine.
But I mean nobody ever really had any sort of revelation that there is in fact a
heavenly mother I didn’t think. I think people have confirmed that but there are
people who say no, no there’s nothing in the scriptures or there’s nothing.
Name: Adrienne Smoot  
Date Interviewed: May 20, 2001  
City of Residence: Salt Lake City, Utah  
Age: 48  
Occupation: Mother, Gourmet Cook, Quilter, Writer  
Relationship to Interviewer: Relative and friend  
*Name has been changed

How do you define yourself?  
I should define myself by age, mother of three children and 48. When I first got your information I did not think that I was menopausal but now I am. I was raised in a family of seven girls and two boys Salt Lake City Monument Park state. Caucasian. I had an upper middle-class upbringing and went to high school in Salt Lake and in college I was an English major. I think I pretty much graduated, not officially. I had one class less in Russian and then they dissolved departments. I think I define myself first off as a wife and then a mother. And then whatever I’ve done in terms of career choices I have done for the person Adrienne and for the family. There have been plenty of compromises for the family. I am very creative, I live a creative life. I wouldn’t function well without being able to do creative things. I’m a big reader, and I own my own catering business. I started it myself, ran it, you know and did the whole works. I worked for Sundance for seven years. Most recently in terms of work I worked on a bid for the opening and closing ceremonies for the Olympic committee. And since then I am just primarily a stay at home mom.

So, how are you adjusting to that right now?  
I like a lot of what I have read, because it is very liberating to read about being this age when women really don’t care who is defining them. They get to the point where they just let go, and feel comfortable defining themselves. So we have had some conversations around here at about boundaries and things that maybe I have done my whole life that maybe I don’t want to keep doing, like the wash. I mean my boys are grown. There a lot of things that I have been thinking about, and you know since Adrian got married, it just seemed a lot like slave labor around here. I don’t mind doing it for Tom, who works all day long. But when the boys have a little leisure time, you know I figured they could do it. It’s interesting to read about how in your late 40s early ‘50s, it is a very liberating time in terms of defining through you our and having the mobility to do so. And getting rid of some of the tides you don’t really need.

What would you like to be doing in the next five years? What roles do you see yourself moving into?  
A lot less intensity in terms of the way I live. Tom and I are both really type A and driven to the point of ridiculousness. If nothing more I guess I figure I can just give myself a break, if I just want to sit around and read for the rest of my life, buy things I can do that. We have just really pushed it so far and I think I am
just really to the point that I have questioned what for? But now you know I’ve thought about going back to school and I may want to write, and I loved quilts, I love to garden. I don’t know in terms of being 48 I know I’m over half way probably so. I just don’t feel the need to be something like I used to, outside of my family.

Would you consider catering again?

Never, never again I mean it’s ridiculous in this marketplace. If I had a manager who is more reasonable, but you know this marketplace everybody wants something for nothing. You know they want their wedding cake for $250, and you know you find the latest greatest bakery where cost you next nothing and you can always compromise quality for price. And I was trained in a French cooking school and northern Italian cooking and it will never be cheap. I mean I can cook cheap food along with everybody else but it’s interesting, my family is used to very good food. You know it can be expensive for your kids to have expensive taste when they like food. But no, I don’t want to be in any kind of service industry, I would rather be in the self-position. It was fun, I love the party aspect, the working and coming home with your car pool of dirty dishes. I have a good friend who has done it ever since I did and I just love to run into her because she is just an amazing woman she has created this great business, which I could have gotten if I wanted to. She put her kids through school with it and I think she’s amazing. She has catered all these years and pay for her kids school.

Now why did you stop?

I was at Sundance and we had a basic crisis in our marriage. I was at Sundance full-time. I had a few different titles, I was in the development department and we fund raised for the artistic department, the film Festival the children’s theater. I started out I catered opening night’s in the next year, I chaired the opening night of the party and still ran my catering business for three years and then they had opening in development and they asked me if I would work there. So I worked there for four years and I still had opening night but I didn’t cook. You know all the big special events, I was special events production, we did “A River Runs Through It” in Salt Lake and in New York and we did “Playboy” which was an Irish film in New York. This premiere in New York Tom’s company had a condo that we could stay in and so we all when stay for free and it was really great. But it just basically came down to the sanity of our family. We had three kids the time, and Patrick was just starting his teenage years. I think the writing was on the wall, I think we just kind of figured that being a teenager, he would be vulnerable. I think Tom came to a crisis basically. You know they were great to me at Sundance in my deal was that I came home every day at 2:00. The fact is it was a nonprofit organization you’re always under funded and it just wasn’t fair for me to have these really great hours while everybody else was killing themselves. Tom felt like it had to be one way or the other, and he said either I quit working or you quit working. But he was willing to quit. So I could work full-time at Sundance, I don’t know if I would have quits
so easily if he hadn’t been willing to quit. It was really hard, we went to therapy, the whole works.

What would you say has been the most difficult decision you have ever made?

Well one of them was to quit work at Sundance. And really the reason it was so difficult was because of the convergence of everything, my marriage, my family life, and my career. Another one I think for everybody is who you marry. Tom and I had a really hard time deciding. I don’t know if you knew we were engaged and unengaged three times. So it was pretty funny. We have a pretty feisty relationship. Oh it’s just so funny, I remember walking out of his apartment taking a painting that was mine and then giving it back to him. I think people in a family get into this and I think one of them in the family is rock because she said to me know when I got this ring from anniversary where was my original ring? He chose it, we didn’t pick it out together. And because we got in this fight I mean three times, one time he asked me for it back and another time I threw it him—so that ring I was never really that sentimental about. And I’m happy, I mean I don’t miss it. So we took one diamond from it and included in this one and then he managed with two others. I feel like I have earned you know living through the one diamond. So I can say it that way.

I don’t know if you heard this, I guess Wendy called Lorin and told him this. One day this year I had gone to gas station, and there were these cement blocks that I didn’t see and I just plowed into one. I just ripped to shreds the right side of my car. And it was just a really dumb thing to have happened, because I had always gone to that gas station I was so ticked. But then I got home and Tom was mad. We went to the opening of the Huntsman Cancer Institute—we get out of the car and were walking along and I could tell he was resisting saying something rude to me. But finally he said to me, “how are you going to pay for it?” And it didn’t take me more than ten seconds to turn around and stop dead in my tracks and say, “By divorcing you.” Oh I boiled for the rest of the evening and he was walking around on eggshells. So Wendy called Lorin and I guess he laughed so hard he about fell off his chair because it was so inappropriate for him to have said that to me so I just had to slam him hard.

What influence to you think you’ve had in your daughters life?

I hope that the main thing that I had given her is that she can do anything she wants she can be anyone she wants. I feel like she is mastering her graphic design. I am kind of surprised at how negative she is about herself and her own ability. And maybe this is just a lousy excuse for me but I feel like its cultural rather than the way she was brought up. Meaning these things that you get by osmosis in the Mormon Church, I’ve had some discussions with bishops about you know they’ve asked if I’ve wanted the priesthood. I kept saying, “No, no, what I want is that I want to see it work equally, when I look at the stand I don’t want to have to see a stand full of men, I mean where does my daughter see a role model? It was just recently in my ward that they allowed women to give prayers, I mean they were faster with other people other wards in the stake.
What about the scriptures and role models for women?

The personal pronoun of the scriptures is fascinating and I have come to know more in Moses, the creation of the earth, the Gods are plural. This is kind of interesting because when Terry Tempest Williams asked me to write that essay about the natural history of the quilt, she wrote an essay about Eden. I had just taught the creation lesson in gospel doctrine and she has not been to church for about 14 years. And she was writing her little essay on Eden we got talking about the creation, but when I first read her essay I thought is was fascinating that she has written “the gods,” she used God plural all through her essay. I thought, “well this is Terry she’s always pushing the envelope.” And I mean you know three weeks later when I am discussing my lesson there I find it right in Moses and I am thinking you know “what a jerk I am.” But at the same time she was perceptive about that and did she read it, I don’t know. But it is consistent in Moses, every time they use Gods, and in the creation story it is Gods, plural.

Well can we talk about gospel doctrine I mean when I started teaching gospel doctrine, women in our Relief Society will have sat in the same chairs before, the hour before commented all throughout Relief Society and then the men come in for Sunday school and they don’t say a word. And I have stood there and said “Oh gosh there are some of you who have been talking in Relief Society and we would love to hear from you”, I mean it was unbelievable.

What role models did you find that helped to foster your role as a mother?

I think every woman does anything she pick up things from people and ward. When I had this discussion with the Bishop, when he asked me if I wanted the priesthood and I said no and he said well what do you want? I said that I just wanted to see Colleen Thompson sitting on the stand, and he asked me what I was talking about? I said “she’s had to eight kids,” and she is still active in the church and she has a strong testimony. I just want you to plop her up there and let me look at her. He got a good laugh out of that, admitting the point was well taken. I mean Colleen didn’t have a career not that that matters not that she didn’t, or that she would have if she did to me, I know there are some Mormon women who think the only career is wife and mother. Oh, all kinds of women, I was thinking of the visiting teaching. My visiting teaching companion we are very different though we would have a great time together. I think it’s interesting in the gospel setting, where were teaching the first to importing Commandments her that we should first love God and love one another and then I think it’s interesting how women and young women really struggle with that.

But at the same time you have got Elder Ballard talking about, “talk to women, invite them to your meetings, please bring them in” they are not going as far as you know “women don’t have the authority, you are still in charge” but you really need to be listening to them. I think there is a certain amount of having been in meetings and all of that kind of stuff, where at this point I am just kind of “oh whatever” I can see where when if men in the church don’t have enough regard for women to value their opinion—they lose. And their decisions are just about 50% because they are just not listening and they don’t believe there is a
need. But it was interesting this kind of family and work interplay, my own struggles with just going back to just the church environment and where I had been respected as a person and listened to at Sundance, and I think that was probably the hardest part was that the church then becomes how you value yourself if that is what's you are doing outside of the home and the only thing you are doing outside of the home.

**Could you name a book or articles say from the Ensign or conversation authored by a Mormon woman that influenced the roles you have played?**

Brigham Young was so into women doing different things and having careers, in fact Kathleen Hinckley told me I needed to write a book *Brigham Young’s letters to his daughter* because there is *Brigham Young’s letters to his sons*. And I was thinking about that I have the book upstairs that his daughter Susan Young Gates wrote and she was quite a prolific writer. I’ve enjoyed reading her work. There aren’t enough Mormon women writing these days. You know my daughter got a letter from a general authority in ward and it was very complimentary and very nice congratulating her on her wedding and in the letter he said I’m sure you’ll make great wife and mother. And I thought isn’t that interesting that’s what he thinks his is number one, is to be married to a wife and mother. And that’s pretty much what he is married to. I hope I have taught my children that they can do whatever it is today they want to and whatever they feel is right for them to do. It is interesting because whether they are willing to deal with it or not they will deal with it. Because women are in those places [in professional work places].
Item #5 Molly Hansen*

Name: Molly Hansen  
Date Interviewed: September 10, 2001  
City of Residence: Manhattan, New York  
Age: 26  
Occupation: Graduate Student, Instructor, Volunteer, Daughter, Sister, Friend  
Relationship to Interviewer: Close friend to my aunt, and classmate.  
*Name has been changed

What are you doing presently?  
I am at Columbia in New York in Manhattan, doing a masters degree in Medieval Studies mostly Medieval literature. Actually my program is a medieval study program, it’s sort of a funny interdisciplinary program, but I really like having access to all kinds of different departments. But as far as being trained in a discipline, it is less than ideal. But I will eventually teach in English, but my undergraduate is in History, so I am actually making this transition between fields. So having access to the English program has been helpful in terms of getting the classes that I need to qualify me for teaching classes in English. But eventually I will take classes all over the place and I have had classes in medieval music and medieval economics and different aspects of medieval history and art history. I have a class with my sister in architecture of Constantinople, which I think sounds kind of fun. But by in large I have taken my classes in the English and comparative literature department, which is one department at Columbia. Medieval studies are actually under liberal studies masters degrees, where theories of American studies and modern European Studies are available to you. And so you actually are accepted into a specific program and then you go exploring into the different departments that offer classes about those time periods. So it’s nice to have that access to all that information, and you need that and I have noticed that in my literature classes that I know more about the history of the time period than anyone else does because they don’t bother to learn it, which becomes critical to the interpretation of the text.

Are you headed to the PhD programs?  
Yes I am just starting to deal with that, my language skills are not what they need to be right now. I need to be fairly familiar with Latin, and in my field they expect you to have the Latin. You can’t read anything if you don’t and then middle English of course which I do okay, but I could do a lot better and Anglo Norman. I don’t deal with Anglo Saxon or olde English. But that is kind of my weakness right now—my language skills aren’t what they should be and I don’t know how much that will affect my application or how much of a factor that will play.

For the Ph.D. what will you do?  
I don’t know, like I am working a lot right now with representations of women in the medieval text and I am looking at queens in the 13th century and they in which they interact with literature and literary other ways. So I think I probably want to stay there, although sometimes I will look around at things I am not reading, like around the corner in the library and see the whole shelf on commentary on
Victorian literature and think I should read some of that again, or I am a huge Willa Cather fan and I haven't read Cather or kept up on the literary criticism for years because it hasn't been my field. I am sort of wondering if there is a program where I can broaden a little bit that I can qualify myself to teach other things than medieval literature. I think I would rather end up in a department that requires me to be a little bit more broad, because as much as I love my medieval texts, I am not sure that I really want to go through Anglo Norman translations with graduate students for the rest of my life. As much as working with middle forms of language are like technical, there must be something a little more practical. I think I would prefer to be more broad than end up in a top research university where I am doing a lot of specialized publishing and teaching. It seems you can do that at a place like BYU.

When you look back at your education, how specifically did Tessa Santiago influence you?

I think, well just writing as a freshman, I was suddenly confronted with having to have my own ideas, which you don't get in high school. There is not sort of discussion about what you think about things you know you just sort of do it. And I had a couple of professors that year, one of them was Neil Kramer who is in the English department and Tessa was the other one and she was in the honors department at the time and Neil Kramer was actually in the honors department at the time anyway, I remember one of the first lectures that he gave I had him for History of Civilization, it was an all literature class. And he was saying some things that I wasn't sure that I agreed with and I made a comment back to him sort of disagreeing and he pushed me on it and I think it was the first time that I really felt like there was something I could get fight for. And Tessa was kind of the same way, I mean she presented a whole range of issues, gospel issues and women's issues and all sorts of issue and they expected me to defend it or have an opinion on it. And she required a lot of writing and so I was sort of able to work through what my thoughts were, so much so that... and then she would read from her essays which were incredible and they would have discussions on them and the text and what did they mean and how could we apply them and she is really good at the personal essay. And she takes something and puts into her life personally whether or not it is a valid interpretation for anything else or whether it's historically accurate or not, she is very good at looking at texts and emphasizing what it means to her and how it affects her, which was a very new experience for me because I had never dealt with that before. So it was a really intriguing form of writing, which I am still trying to develop and very different from my historical training, which was wanting to be objective, which of course you can never be.

But I loved her style, and her thinking process so much that I took her other classes offered a couple of years later, I took that one, and that one even though it wasn't a class that I needed, I had a history class that had satisfied that but I just thought whatever she is teaching I needed to take it. But I don't think she is teaching there anymore. I think it was her choice, she had four kids at least and she was in law school and she kind of changed directions. She was the editor of This people magazine and was a Mormon woman who was juggling many different roles.
What did it do for you in terms of the way you would view your role as a student, how you would continue in your career, your educational career and if she influenced other parts of your life, how so?

I think she opened up for me, she made me realize that there are more opportunities that I had considered. And the ways she approached herself and her role as a woman and her testimony and her motherhood and all of those things together, I thought was really interesting. And it was the first time that I had seen a woman really do that in an intellectual academic professional setting. And at 18, those were issues that I had never dealt with before, although I have always been a pretty independent sort— not wanting to fit any sort of traditional mold person. At the same time, I was sort of confronting: well how do I feel about this and where do I fit and where do I want to fit in and how do I construct my own role? And I think that she made me recognize along with some of my roommates at the same time (I would bring these essays home and say listen to this and we all sit there vastly attentive to Tess's words) I mean she was a hero for all of us. And we sort of formed, I think you are drawn to people that are like you anyway and so I saw in her writing something with which I really resonated and was just how I wanted to construct my identity and my roommates did as well and I think that was a very a natural path of— "oh yes this is how I see myself," rather than other examples, which I don't really know how to describe.

But I feel like what I experienced with Tessa in my freshman year is a much more common experience for me now than it was then. And maybe it's because I surround myself with those women, part of it is that in New York that is just more of an accepted. We had a homemaking night about women and careers, which I don't think would happen in Provo. But I mean here is my Bishop's wife is a business analyst and probably pulls in a million dollars a year, I mean she is just, and she has a child and she is the bishop's wife and that is just how it is and that is just what people do.

How do you view that though and how do you put that together with your family and your history? I mean really?

See the interesting thing, my mother is an interesting example in that she is someone who has always been at home. I mean she quit her full time job when she had me, they were living in New York at the time and her company thought she was crazy and it was in the middle of the seventies and huge feminist movement. And I had a conversation with her recently about growing up as a woman in the church during the age of those types of ideals, and ERA and those things that were being pushed. And how do you defend your divine role as a woman and as a mother and what you know to be true with what is popular. And I think we are much better at doing that now, it's much more comfortable to have sort of all that going at once and juggling it in different ways. But I think it was much harder then, and she has always been very intent in making sure people know that her career choice is to be a homemaker and to be a mother and that it's not something that she slipped into because she didn't have any other options or because she didn't feel like working or because her husband didn't want her to work either or any of that— but that it was very actively her choice. And she has always made sure that we knew that, which I think probably was there when I went to college and was dealing with a little bit myself, very much there in fact.
When I was in middle school we would have these career days, where you would have these different careers come and talk about what it was like to be a lawyer or a doctor or all kinds of things. And my mother would sign up for homemaker, and she would come to school and tell other what it was like to be a mother full time and all the responsibilities that she had and how she dealt with them and how she felt about it. And she was very intent that this was her career and she was going to make sure that people knew that. And the calling that recently that she has talked to me about is how that had to be a very active discourse with her and with her other female friends who were doing the same thing in the face of these very liberal feminists, seventies ideals that were being thrown at them. Yeah that were criticizing their roles, and now I think we have sort of calmed a little bit and those people who really militantly opposed to traditional families then, a lot of those women of course are looking back and recognizing those very natural nurturing mothering instincts which I think are so much more apart of our nature than we realize.

I read something by Patricia Holland who is another one of my heroes, talking about womanhood and motherhood. I think it was *Earth as it is in Heaven, The many faces of Eves*. And the point that she makes is that Eve’s title as the mother of all living was given to her long before she ever bore a child. And that motherhood is much more a description of our eternal nature than it is a head count of children and that sometimes we let the issue of motherhood divide us as women in the church and whether or not you have children and how you deal with your parenting and mothering skills, and that at all costs we can’t let that divide us because what motherhood is— is a definition of our nature and not anything else. I think that resonates with sort of how my mother has dealt with her role and how she fits in the other things in her life around what she is doing and she has always been very active in school affairs and in she is an interior decorator and she used to do a lot more of that professionally than she does now, but she has always kept up her business license and business accounts and associations with wholesale furniture and fabric and places. Which has been fulfilling for her because it’s what she loves to do but it fits in very well with her role as a mother.

**Did she do this your whole life?**

Yeah, oh yeah. And in fact when we were little, and living in Michigan she was very active in doing it, she had a really thriving business, which interestingly she eventually one of the biggest reasons for her stopping that was because we were all so young and needing so much time with her and it was becoming very successful and all of sudden all of the material desires became so much more of an option, and my parents would talk about oh we could build a fancier deck, we could put pool and we could do this and that, and finally she said I don’t really want that, My money isn’t for that and I need to be with my children and ahs been much more limited in how she does that since then. Which I think was an interesting choice for her, because she could have done it much more actively. But she has always kept up business accounts and business license and things like that, and she will go back to that some day, when she has more time.

She told me the other day we were talking about just sort of growing up and the things you think you are going to accomplish and the kind of person you think you are going to be and when she was thirty and she had four kids and I was
probably five, we were tiny right in a row and we were living in a really small town in Michigan in a really diverse ward which was sort of difficult and my dad was the Bishop and he was 33 or something I mean we were just kids. And sort of reaching that point and thinking, I hadn't read all these books I wanted to read and I haven't done this or that, and then recognizing that just because she had four kids and she was being a supportive bishops wife and living far away from either of their families, that her life hadn't stopped because she was mothering that she still had time to be all of those things and those interest. Which I think I sort of dealt with myself, I think over the past several years where I sort of have this image that I do all of the things I am doing now and the pursuits that I am involved in and then I married and have children and that stops and I sort of turn around and do something else. And as I have thought about that and sort of struggled with that, the real reason that I have come to is that you just don't change courses, this is not a career change for me, this is something I do in addition and welcome the opportunity but that all that I am doing now continues as part of that.

Carolyn Heilbrun speaks about the need for women's narratives, like you mention what are your thoughts there?

I think a lot of it is communication too, I mean I think far too often women don't say enough about their experiences and if they would talk about them and talk about what it's like to confront all of these pursuits and adding in marriage and children and how you do that and how you adjust to a marriage and how you adjust to your life and how you feel about your career as a mother and your interests other places and those roles. It would be nice if that were communicated more often. There is sort of this image that women retreat into childbirth and raising children and I think as I have sort of watched older women in New York or like Ann Madsen, Truman Madsen's wife, who teaches at BYU. There are like fifty years or more from the time you bear children to the time in your life is over that you have to deal with some how and how do you fill that space and what do you do with it. Annie Poelman (a good friend of our family, older woman) was talking to us as if we were her peers and I mean just saying things like women like us and because we are all this ways and recognizing our accomplishment and our abilities and talents and being very strong about the kind of men we need to marry who would recognize those same accomplishments and values and made sure that we continued in that.

But it was very flattering for us to have her put us in her category, because to us she is just so far and above but very much a model. Of course she hasn't raised children of her own, and so she's very much her career to think about at the same time she is someone who understands intrinsically her divine role as a mother in the gospel and values that and really lets that guide her life over and above anything else. Which I think is an important distinction in something that is hard to come to at a young age, when you are sort of struggling with well, I am not married and I don't have children and I can do anything I want and I can see anything I want and she really is intent that the gospel values come first and that we work within that model because it is divinely instituted. Which is interesting. I see that from Ann Madsen too, someone who very much works within that model and puts that over and above anything else and then draws into that, constructs from that model, her life. But she is someone who went back and got her Ph.D. years later, well into her marriage and child raising, which Claudia Bushman, same way went back much later, went back
for education and pursue other interests, which she insists opens up a whole new world.

So some of the concerns seem to come in when you do have women who reach this age when their children are grown, and the option to go back and to either start masters or a PhD just quite simply is not there. Women pigeon-holing themselves at some in the gospel and it’s frustrating, because many women haven’t thought out their real spiritual goals in life and so at some level that is hindering everything else...

And I think that if you are not listening spiritually and you are becoming complacent in your role, I think it’s an easy thing to slip into though, even with myself at the beginning of my masters program and moving to New York, I sort of have this image of myself doing this nice little masters program and wrapping it up and you know being a mother. And I quickly realized that I wasn’t good enough, not that I wasn’t good enough for me, it wasn’t good enough for the Lord, there was something more that was expected of me and not necessarily educationally or professionally as much as personally. I needed to know my potential and I needed to be on top of it and be active in my pursuit of the Lord’s will for me, whatever that may be. And it didn’t necessarily have to be more schooling or different schooling or some huge important position or career or research. But to say Oh I just want to retreat now into this nice little idyllic life of marriage and motherhood, whether or not that there was an option wasn’t good enough for the Lord, that wasn’t recognizing my worth as a daughter of God and it wasn’t recognizing my divine mothering nature. But it is so easy to slip into, because if women aren’t talking about how they feel about it, about their roles and about their lives, we see these nice wonderful pictures and it looks like something we want and so I think part of that is really being in tune spiritually and stretching beyond what you think you can. And so to say oh gosh, I can’t really see myself in a career really doing anything else outside of my mothering, not that there needs to be other things I mean I don’t need to do something else, but it’s just a recognition of what it is you are actually doing. But I think that framework is set up for us in the gospel, it’s there, it’s part of the doctrine, and it’s all over the place.

I think a lot of women miss that, I don’t know, it seems in forming roles they don’t see that, men don’t care about these same things, men make this particular thing work.

And part of it I think is a challenge, I think women are much more anxious about who we are and what we are doing than men are. And I don’t see this as a positive thing. I mean you sort of men, obviously in elders quorum and high priest they don’t sit around and talk about men’s issues. There aren’t any, and there is a lot to be gleaned from that frankly, I mean they go into their careers and their roles as fathers and they accomplish that. But I think communication can do a lot to help alleviate insecurity.

Do you feel like the discourse in your life has fostered security or insecurity?

I think it raises insecurity and then resolves it, that was sort of my process. You sort of recognize there are holes and then fill them. I wonder though, I mean I think I have made a very conscious effort to surround myself with peoples who lives I model or are a pattern for me to follow. I had a really interesting conversation one day on a plane, all night flight from Salt Lake to New York, I sat next to these two women who were really chatty, and who were just describing horror stories about their marriages and the communication between men and women and their family. And how they felt that their husbands were very condescending towards them and that their fathers in law treated them like children and that it came
from their roles as priesthood bearers in the sense of being an authority over them. And I was just saying really I just don't have never really experienced I never felt that way. I don't have men in my life that make me feel that way, my father doesn't, and my uncles and grandfathers don't. I don't date boys who make me feel that way, like I mean I don't stay in situations like that. I just have never dealt with that, and I think from their perspective it was a very very common experience. I mean they were finding solace in each other's stories and at the same time recognizing that all their friends were that way too. And none of my friends are that way, I just don't even have people who deal with that who I know well and spend time with, it's just not in my circle. And I wonder how common that experience is and what kind of frustrations and limitations are placed on women by men who mean well and but don't understand.

I sometimes wonder if it's women who aren't willing to assert themselves, because I think many women would laugh at a man who would try to assert his patriarchal authority over them.

And we would fight him on it. So responsibility does come back on the women. How can you honestly feel subordinate to men? Especially through the gospel. I think if people are willing to listen, there is a lot that is said in general conference and particularly in general Relief Society meeting to combat those frustrating situations. It is an eye opener to just listen to those women talk, (on the airplane). They were LDS, and had moved to Salt Lake and the other was raised here. They both came from families where their father's had asserted authority over their mothers and they married into families where that was also the case, and in their own marriages then obviously that had happened. They both had been married, one of them was divorced, they both had been married about ten years, maybe five years. And were just coming to terms with the fact that they were frustrated with that behavior and wondering how to fix it. But they both recognized and what I just kept saying, “Gosh I just never have dealt with that ever.” And finally one of them said: “What did you tell me your last name was?” And then of course that came out and they said “well of course you haven't dealt with that, I mean if you grandfather is the prophet than of course you haven't.” Which to me was an admission that the models their marriages were on were not doctrinally found, and that obviously mine was different because it was doctrinally found.

Do you find President Hinckley’s administration in the church more aware of the issues that women are struggling with now? What about President Benson? I am not asking you from a personal perspective but rather as a woman observing? I mean you do have that advantage, but what are your thoughts?

I have actually been really surprised how much emphasis has been placed on the value of women in the past several years, and that has been so validating and so helpful and has hit me in that same time in my life when I am an undergraduate and moving forward and dealing with all of those things. And so I see that from a doctrinal perspective certainly I have seen that emphasis. And I have seen it from a personal perspective too, although I have to say that my family has always been very noble from that, I mean I have never felt I mean there has never been a question in my mind as to whether or not I was valued or whether or not I was my abilities were of equal importance. I mean it just has never even been a question. Which has allowed me so many more opportunities than, because it was so interesting talking to
those women on the plane whose experience was so different than mine. And I just didn't know that people still felt that way or are treated that way. And I actually had a conversation with my cousin Celia who lives up the road recently she is one of my dearest friends. And she was talking, and my sister Adah just got married and one of the things my grandfather mentioned during that was the comment to her husband Chris about making sure that Adah has every opportunity to develop her talents and abilities and every opportunity that she needs and wants because those are important and such a strength to the church and such a strength to their family. And she and I were talking about that later and just coming to understand then how much our grandfather loves women and loves the woman of this church and how deeply he feels that, and it's obvious in the way that he supports us and he has always done that for me. I mean I have always felt from him that he wanted me to have every opportunity that I needed and that the Lord desired for me and he has taught his children obviously that way and our family has always been that way. And so it's been interesting to see that from both sides and to recognize that from both sides.

When you think back to maybe to President Benson and when he basically came out in the nineteen eighties and said “women go home” what was your perspective on that?

I think that I was too young at the time to actually internalize that counsel. I mean it's only been later that I have looked back on his administration and his intense desire to have women in the home and been able to sort of synthesize that with what I am feeling. And I think at the time that counsel was very needed and he was very strong on recognizing that our primary responsibilities and covenant obligations as women with children are to raise them in the gospel. And I don't know what was going on at that time in the church or in Salt Lake or some of the other things he was dealing with that maybe some of that perspective had been lost and needed to be re-emphasized. Because I think with all of the opportunities we have as women, which we are so fortunate to have, it could become so easy to forget those covenants and obligations as mothers. Or to stifle those desires for some one like me whose young and not married and no obligations to have children, or if I were newly married and thinking about that and thinking about the opportunities, it might be very easy for me to stifle those nurturing desires and not recognizing that those are the bed of my primary responsibility and that I have covenanted to do so. And that covenant is a very interesting one to me, now that I am older and have the opportunity to go to the temple and attend sealing ceremonies. The emphasis on family and that responsibility as a covenant that we have with our Heavenly Father is powerful. And so from that perspective I think President Benson was very strong on a lot of things, his style of speaking was very authoritative and I think he did a lot to really bring that into focus.

I believe President Hinckley was the prophet at the time that was addressing the stake presidencies specifically at BYU about the role were to play in missions. Do you remember this? How did you respond to that?

I do remember a statement in the October 97 priesthood session of conference saying that missionary work is primarily a priesthood responsibility. I remember being at BYU and feeling a lot of pressure both ways (mission and marriage), and I was at the time, I was getting close to graduation and I had spent
many years thinking that I really wanted to serve a mission and always having that a part of my life plan. I was dating someone very seriously at the time and really felt pulled in both directions. People saying well I mean you are so young, don’t you want to serve a mission? Yes I wanted to serve a mission. Well then don’t get married, and people saying what are you even considering a mission for? You are dating somebody, you get married then. You know women don’t go on missions if they are dating people. Which to me is totally absurd, whether or not you are in a dating relationship is really irrelevant if it’s whether or not you should be serving the Lord on a mission. And whether or not that relationship is something you should is something you should pursue, you need to ask.

Talk specifically about the women in your life, how were you feeling, pulled in both directions? How were they supporting you?

Both, women were pulling me in both directions and I had one roommate who was saying “now look at seriously what you are doing and what you want, you have always wanted to serve a mission, you have all of these ambitions, and if you get married now you won’t fulfill them, is that what you want?” I had another roommate saying to me “you are dating somebody who is a worthy priesthood and a returned missionary, if he wants to marry you than you need to do that.” And then I had other roommates who were thinking of serving missions and saying well I mean yeah I think I am going to go on a mission but if I were dating someone there would be no way I was going away”. And so there was sort of all across the spectrum perspective. My parents were actually really quiet about it, really wanting it to be my own decision and it was a hard one. Not that I was choosing either or, I was trying to work out these parts of my life as they came along. And when I finally came to the conclusion that I was going to go on a mission, I didn’t tell anybody. And meanwhile and I knew that there was this pressure and I think that it was more intense at BYU than it was anywhere else for girls to serve missions unnecessarily and I was sort of struggling with well I mean missions are good experiences and shouldn’t all women have that opportunity and why aren’t we pushing this more, not understanding the priesthood responsibility involved in that and my role within that structure, which I came much more to understand on my mission than anything else.

But I remember once, being in a situation where I was, I think I was up at my grandparents apartment and it was a holiday gathering and there were a lot of his associates there from the quorums of the seventies and the twelve and I was talking to someone there who was saying to me, “Now I have a daughter at BYU and she is sort of your age and this is what she is doing, is there pressure at BYU for girls to serve missions, is there pressure at BYU for girls to get married?” And I said “yes there is pressure for both”. And I felt like as a member of the seventy he was very sincere in wanting to know what kinds of pressures I was dealing with as a woman approaching 21 at BYU and what sort of influences were really there? And really wanting to understand that and deal with it. Which was so helpful, I mean I really felt like he understood and was concerned about it. And when I made the decision, and my grandfather of course stayed totally out of it, except he would occasionally say “what mission? You are considering a mission? What are you doing that for?” which is very much his style, just sort of I think wanting to know why I was considering a mission? Was I feeling pressure? Where was the pressure coming from? Was I doing this for the right reason?
But I remember actually on my mission when he said in priesthood meeting that spreading the gospel is primarily a priesthood responsibility, I was shocked. And actually the funny part of that story is that I was actually sitting in that room listening to that session because we were in Avery and the Versailles chapel was under construction. I was on my mission my first general conference on my mission, and we were in Avery and we had to go way out to I don’t even know where some conference center somewhere where we could receive the broadcast of general conference. And it was very far away from trains, and so a member of the high council and his wife were going out also and offered to drive us. But we had to go very early in the morning because he was in charge of the sound system and needed to be there and so we were just sitting there. It was in a field or something I mean there were no neighborhoods; no one to contact there was just nothing. And so we sat there talking to members and fellowshipping the people that had come, and all the sudden they were showing the priesthood session first because the time differences you know how that works. And I thought I am not going to sit in the hallway for two hours doing nothing while Salt Lake is on TV. I just slipped in the back and listened, which maybe wasn’t a good idea I don’t know, because it was priesthood session. And so I was sitting in that room he (President Hinckley) started talking about missionary work and women and missionary work and said, “I admittedly have two granddaughters serving missions right now” at which point every eye in the room turns around to look at me.

Here I was supposed to be very inconspicuous, “oh I will just slip in the back,” and here I was in the priesthood session and now the very center of attention. And then he said the spreading the gospel is primarily a priesthood responsibility and women are under no obligation to go, as I am just sinking lower and lower in my seat and he is saying “neither of my granddaughters told me they were serving missions until after their papers were in, I had nothing to do with this decision.” And I just thought oh my goodness what I have I done! At the same time I think it was sort of nice for him to be able to say I had no influence in this decision it was entirely theirs, which had been true for both of us. So it was actually really funny, and it came as sort of a shock when he said that, “what missionary work is a priesthood responsibility?” I never thought of it ... and once I understood that it made sense, I mean obviously it’s a priesthood responsibility. (It doesn’t take away from the responsibility that you could feel) no, and I loved feeling that responsibility I loved being able to receive that direction for investigators and feel like I sort of had a stewardship over them and be able to testify in the name of the Lord and preach about Jesus Christ and perform all of these very wonderful spiritual duties and so I am very grateful for that experience. But I also understand why it’s not for every woman and why it’s required of the priesthood, which was an interesting realization.

**Talk about that for a minute?**

I think as, particularly after that conference session I really had to go through my own mind and think about how did I feel about my experience as a missionary and why was I there and what was I gleaning from it and how did I know that this was part of my plan? And how did I accept that it was right for me but not right for everyone? About that same time my sister Ann was deciding whether or not she should go on a mission and for her hearing that statement made the decision for her. She just thought “oh, I don’t have to go, I am not going” and she was so relieved.
The same sense of relief in making the decision to go, she felt in not making the decision and so to watch her to have that experience which was obviously a very spiritual confirmation to her, helped me understand how the roles could be different.

I always had this notion that I needed to go on a mission because I wanted to be this great scriptorian or have this deeper understanding of the gospel and that somehow if you didn't go on a mission you didn't have that. And watching a couple of my friends who didn't serve and particularly my sister Ann, I recognized she had no fewer opportunities to learn and grow in the gospel than I did, her location of doing so was different and her church calling was different but and I was not anywhere ahead.

The thing too, I think women who never come to that understanding feel some sense something missing. They will get up in Sunday school or relief society and say “well I never went on a mission, but this...” and there is no need to qualify that statement and I don't know why, there is something unresolved there that they haven't felt. My sister Adah nearly went on a mission before she met her husband and obviously realized that her path was different, but she said to me one day “well you know I just feel like my mission is to be a really good member missionary and that can be my mission” and I said well your baptismal covenants mandate that you be a member missionary. I mean like that is not an additional calling, and it's okay for you not to go on a mission, but don't substitute member missionary work for a full time mission. If you are not going on a mission, you are not going on a mission and there is no reason to qualify it or defend it or the old you missed out, you are choosing eternal marriage which is all kinds of important covenants and responsibilities and obligations and righteous choices, that is the right choice obviously. There is no need to qualify your life with well I'll just be a really good member missionary, which you should be anyway because you are a member of the church. I think even coming to that sort of recognition is something that took me a long time to do, but when I watched Adah going through that decision process, having watched Ann make the decision not to go, having experienced it myself, and then watching Adah go through that decision process of I really need to marry Chris now, but I would like to serve a mission. I was able to articulate to her hopefully that there was no need.

What are your plans for the future? PhD? More school?

I actually toyed really seriously last year with the idea of going to Law School, that I have always wanted to do, I have been talking about going to Law School since I was fifteen and then for whatever reason medieval literature sort of took over my life and I haven't thought about going to law school since my senior year at BYU. And I toyed very seriously with that and this summer I was at one point writing some emails to some friends, my New York circle of friends who were all sort of scattered around this summer. And I started putting together a little bit about how I felt about Art, how I felt about the books that I had read and was reading and the music that I listen to and the movies that I see and the ways in which that affects me and shapes my life. And as I finished writing this email which took me like seven hours and four drafts, (laugh) I mean I just got really into it. And as I finished that I was exhausted and I thought I can't leave this alone yet, I need to stay in the Arts and I need to be reading and I need to be surrounding myself with the finer points of culture.
And I noticed that at that point the decision not to go to law school, thinking interestingly for the first time in my life of characteristics that I wanted to insert into my personality and ways in which I wanted to develop my nature and recognizing that my tendencies to go like a bulldog after certain issues wasn’t necessarily doing me or anybody else any favors. And that that wasn’t, I mean as I look at things that I want to do in the future and my role as a mother and as a wife, for right now, my world of law and politics didn’t serve that purpose. And my world of Art and literature did. That was a really interesting realization for me, and I sat one night when, after I had made that decision, talking with my mom and talking with the mother of my dear friend who is in Law School in New York, who was in town, and she is an amazing woman and someone that I admire and she and I were talking and my mom and I were talking and I was saying “Oh yes and I am going to get my Ph.D. and then maybe I will go to Law school after that and do something practical with my life and I can do a lot of things at once, so I can go to Law School and if at that point I am a mother than I could do that too.”

And she looked at me and she said “you could, you could do that, you could be a mother and you could go to Law school, but you might be the kind of mother that you want to be.” And that really struck me as interesting, I mean there are a lot of things that I could do, at any time of my life, I could chose to do whatever I wanted, but that it might undermine some of my higher priorities— and those two experiences, recognizing that what I wanted to develop in my character was my passion for the Arts rather than my hard-nosed attorney, political maneuverings— and that I could choose whatever I wanted, but that there would be consequences as to how I would be able to raise children if at that point that was my opportunity, I think was a bend in my road.

What are your thoughts on, specifically when you think about the transition of being single and getting married? What are your thoughts about that particular path right now?

Of course all of my thoughts are theoretical because I am not dealing with it realistically, in fact I was saying to somebody the other day that I of my dear friend of mine who I have been dating that I am going through all these theories of my thoughts on transitions from being single to being married, having children and how, and if what I am doing fits in with that and continues and he said “you know all of that is true, but what you have to recognize is that with any major life change your priorities shift, just like they do, using the example of the mission, remember what you thought about going on a mission before you went, and then you got there and recognized it and it was a little bit different then your priorities change and thoughts changed and then you move forward. I have always felt, it’s one of my motto’s that my friends use and then tease me about, is “never make geographical decisions based on existing or potential relationships,” and I think that theory behind that is that you move forward with your life plan and you do what you know the Lord wants you to do and you make sure that you are on the right path and not worry about anything else and when it’s time for your marriage to begin that will come, it will be part of that and it will be natural. And I think sometimes, and this is a trap is easy to fall into as a woman, is that as you make adjustments and shifts, based on oh if I do this then maybe I will get married or if I stayed in Provo or if I choose this particular field of study or this job then that will make it easier for me to get married. And I don’t think
that is true, I mean I think that the Lord will guide you along the path that you need to have to develop your potential and fulfill the measure of your creation and when it becomes time for your marriage to be a part of that, it will be a part of that and you will be in the right place and you will know that and you will recognize that person and move forward. And so I sort of that, I think the other danger of that is being so focused on your own personal life plan that you have no peripheral vision and no ability to recognize shifts in the pattern, and I think somewhere in there is a balance that maybe I go back and forth between the two. So Right now, I really see my path as being clear educationally, and as I am looking at PhD options and schools and work experiences and things I am needing for the next phase of my life, I trust the Lord will guide me as to where he needs me to be for the service opportunities that I need to fulfill and that at some point, my marriage will become a part of that experience.

Which I think is an interesting balance, I think I have a tendency, I went through period last year where I just thought, I don't know that the Lord has an opinion on whether or not I chose a PhD or Law school or whether I chose New York or California, or Utah. I am not sure that that really matters, I think that choice is mine, and I was sort of talking very casually one day with another friend to our Bishop and he said I don't think that is true at all. I think that Lord is very intimately involved in our career choices that we make and he gave his own personal example. He is a Ph.D. in a science and researches cancer. He is a post doc in a lab doing cancer research. Brilliant. And he said you know a year into his PhD program he thought this is ridiculous, I don't want to do this, I am going to be an investment banker and I am going to totally change paths. And the answer was very clear to him that he needed to stay in his program and be a scientist. And the comment that he made, which I thought was interesting years down the road was that he said, now there is no way that I could be a bishop and serve this ward as I do if I were an investment banker and working those hours, I couldn't do it. He spends probably forty hours a week, on his church responsibilities, and I thought it was interesting that that to him was the answer, that the Lord needed him to be a scientist because the Lord needed him to be a bishop, which I had never put together before. That the Lord may not care whether or not that I am a lawyer rather than a professor, but what he does care about is where my time is spent and how I can use my time to serve him. And in what capacity does he need me to serve and what skills does he need me to have in order to serve him. And that sort of changed my perspective a little bit into thinking that the Lord is much more intimately involved in the details of my decisions than I had been acknowledging and that the reason for that was because I needed to make sure that I was giving the service that I needed to be giving and that I was developing the skills and characteristics of my personality that he needed in his work, and that my purpose in doing all of that was to be part of the Lord's work and be a builder in the kingdom and that all of those decisions about location and education and careers are for that purpose. That was a whole paradigm shift.

When the time comes, how do you envision yourself cultivating your daughters, specifically your daughters, what do you see yourself passing onto them, how do you see yourself shaping their lives, how do you want to shape their lives?

When I was making my decision to go on a mission, one of the things that kept coming back to me and I think this was specific to me, was how can I encourage my daughters to go on missions or understand their missions if I don't take this opportunity. And if I ever had the opportunity to be a mission president's...
wife, how could I fulfill that function if I didn’t know what it was like to be a missionary. And a lot of women do those things having never served missions themselves, but for me I really felt like that was something the Lord was telling me because there are consequences to my decisions and there are skills that I need and opportunities that I need or experience that I can share particularly with my daughters, that if I don’t get them as a missionary that I won’t have the capacity to do. And so that was a very big part of my decision to go on a mission, that opportunity of cultivating my daughters or the opportunity of cultivating the sister missionaries as a mission presidents wife. And so I think I have sort of kept that in mind in other aspects of my life. One of the things my parents have been very intent on is education and libraries, libraries are a big deal in our family and always have been in my father’s family, there have always been a library and the emphasis on books and learning has been intense. And that is something that I would like to emulate particularly with my daughters in helping them understand the importance of their education and that that is and their self worth and because of that as part of that. Which is actually something that I am looking at with these medieval queens, and it’s their education in a society where they don’t have actual political power, but are used for political alliances which sort of gives them power.

These two queens that I am dealing with were very highly educated and very literate and they use that to control the education of their children and to make decisions for their children. And there is an instance where the King wants to marry off a daughter that is twelve or thirteen for a political alliance and the queen Eleanor and her mother in law who is Eleanor (of Aquitaine?) later, but Eleanor of Aquitaine is my very very favorite medieval queen of all time. This is her grandson, her grandson Henry the III married Eleanor of Province they had a son Edward the First who married Eleanor of Castello, so this was the daughter of Eleanor of Castello and Edward the First and Eleanor of Province was still alive. And two Eleanor’s kind of come together and stop the marriage and say “no this daughter is not educated enough, she needs to continue her education and become more learned in her responsibilities as a queen and literacy before you can send her out to this marriage” which I always thought was fascinating, that training, I think I picked up on it of course because it’s something that I was interested in, but it just indicates I think to me the importance of women in the education their children in having a responsibility in that and the obligations that it extends to them.

On the issue of cultivating your daughters, how do you want to help them understand their relationship to God?

Well I am just honing of course their divine abilities and divine nature and that there are aspects of their personality that come from him. And that he is very personal, very real and that they are a reflection of him and that he is a parent. Which I think is an important realization, I mean we address him as Heavenly Father, but he is literally a parent and so he is part of us, we have part of him. And I think that’s important and in doing that I think it adds a confidence and a peace in their approach to the gospel and as they work out their tenets of the gospel and go through that process of understanding themselves as women of God. I think it’s necessary that they view him as a parent.
How do you define yourself?

This is something that I must admit I don’t think about that much. It’s hard to answer. I think more of myself as having different interests and goals, hobbies, whatever, but not really in terms of having an easily articulated identity. A few of my identities would be a woman, a graduate student, a Mormon, a Christian, I would like to think that I am a spiritual person, I like the outdoors, I like to help people, these are a few of the aspects of my personality but I still don’t feel that I have identified myself. I am going to answer some of the other questions and come back to this one.

What were the surprising decisions in your life that lead you to new and unexpected roles?

I think that I always wanted to pursue a graduate education—my mom went back to school to get her graduate degree when I was finishing elementary school. She graduated when I was in junior high and I remember going to her graduate at BYU and really wanting to go on to graduate school. Another experience that I had—although you’ll die—that really impressed me was when I was a cheerleader. During the summer before my senior year the mall in the area would have a spirit week—during school shopping time as a type of promo things—anyway, they would have different competitions all week between the different schools and one thing the did for the cheerleaders was a competition where we drew pieces out of a hat and we had to compete in that specific area and mine was a debate with another cheerleader. So me and another cheerleader form a different school had to stand up on this stage a debate all these different issues that they would ask us about. I won and they gave me a planner as a prize but I remember feeling really excited that I had the opportunity to speak my mind—although it was only in a cheerleading contest.

I enrolled in debate classes and joined the team that year and actually went to state. I think this made me want to go to law school and that is pretty much what I decided to become even before I started college. I think it is interesting though, because I remember having very clear thoughts about working, graduate school, and how I would never get married, and at the same time I have clear memories of always thinking I would get married. It was like these two worlds existed in my mind and to a degree I planned for them both although I don’t think I ever forced them to communicate with each other. I honestly always wanted to go to graduate school, but I never thought I would make it—although I wanted to go to school, I always knew that I would end up getting married. Maybe that is
because school was my goal but marriage was the role model that I was given. Anyway, to be honest, I am still amazed on a pretty regular basis that I’m working on my PhD. It’s still a shock to me. As much as I feel like I planned for it, I also feel that this was always the path of least resistance. This is going into another area entirely, but I really feel that going to school has been easy. To explain this further, I feel that opportunities have presented themselves in this area of my life in an amazing way. I have had opportunities with school that I clearly do not deserve. I feel that I have earned the respect of some of my professors in a way that I can’t even begin to explain or deserve. This has served though, as some type of a reassurance that what I am doing is right. I have always gained faith in God by looking back on my life and seeing the intervention that I miss as it is happening. I clearly see ways that he has provided opportunities, sometimes fully against my will and desire. I am grateful for these opportunities and they make me happy. I lose sight of this though, too often. Because I am not having a family at this time I shortchange my experiences. I think I need to remember more often that these experiences are from God.

An example would be when I had to make my decision for the PhD I told the school “No.” Because I had decided to wait another year. But instead of not going, one university called and gave me even more funding that they had originally offered. I didn’t feel that I could say no but I remember bawling—I called you crying if you can remember—while I told the program director that I had changed my mind and that I would be attending their program. I cried when I told my professors and when I told my parents what I had decided. I clearly did not want to go and almost couldn’t understand why I had said yes. Anyway, I now feel the experience has been fabulous and recognize it as another time when God stepped in. Anyway, all this to say that I really did not expect to be where I am. I must say that I am happy and it does make me love God to realize what a great life I have had. The only thing that nags at me though is the issue of marriage. I fully expected that I would get married. I think I prepared myself for graduate school to be the unfulfilled dream rather than marriage being the unfulfilled dream.

**Did you pursue career-oriented paths? Such as education and job?**

I think I talked about this already a bit. I pursued a career in a very half-assed way but I don’t think God cared. I think that he helped maximize those small efforts. I think a lot now about how I could have done so much better on entrances exams and applications if I would have given myself more time and worked harder. But, I realized that with whatever effort I put forward, things happened. This hasn’t been the case in relationships. It’s almost as if I haven’t been allowed to pursue those things. I find it interesting that I only talk about a career or marriage—I think it’s unhealthy to pose these things as such opposites. Especially when most women in the church are working. I think we could be pursuing both things and really pursuing them, not just giving lip service to a career like I think we are taught.
What was the most difficult decision you have ever made? Why was it difficult? How did it change the role you were playing?

I think I have made many decisions that were temporarily hard. I think it is wonderful that we forget the pain that these decisions sometimes require. As I mentioned, I think the decision to go on to a PhD was hard, but at the same time not because I almost feel that I am not the one that made the decision. I really didn’t have another option. When I moved to Boston—that was an easy decision but I think that experience dramatically changed the direction that my life was headed. I think it kicked my butt into gear again. As much I have lately acquired an angst toward the situation that I moved away from, I think I have recently realized that had that situation not happened, my life would be so different today. I was dating a boy that I thought I could easily marry. Over a summer I was ready for the relationship to move on and he was not. I had graduate from BYU and gave myself a year before I told myself I had to move on. It was coming to the end of that year and I was getting antsy. I think I felt like I needed a reason to stay in Provo so I wanted to see if he would be that reason or if I should make other plans. Anyway, the relationship wasn’t going anywhere and so I broke up with him only to have him start dating my roommate in three or four days. Before I had even found out they were dating, my mom suggested I move away—like Boston, or DC. I picked up the phone and bought a plane ticket. I think later that day or maybe the next day I found out that they had started dating. I was so glad to already have a plan though.

I move three weeks later and moved in with two girls in Cambridge. One was working on her PhD at Harvard; the other had her PhD and was doing a post-doc at Harvard. Most of my friends were at Harvard or MIT. In a lot of ways I was really inspired to get into grad school. This experience really got me back on track. That year I applied to BYU’s program and went through that and then went into my PhD work. This is another one of those moments where I feel out of control during the time but then afterwards I recognize a great pattern of events. Although that break up was harsh, and the decision was not necessarily planned, it put me on the path that I am now on. I was so pissed off and bitter about what happened between my roommate and this guy that I honestly did a 180. At that point I had had enough of the marriage idea. I was lucky to go to Boston where the bishop wouldn’t talk marriage in church and people were doing amazing work and research and still single. I really opened my eyes to what is really going on in the world not just the Mormon world. Anyway, I feel that I have had hard times and to a degree I feel that I haven’t made decisions. I think that events have happened and that god has enabled me to make the most of those experiences. I think there is something so different between religion and spirituality. I didn’t expect to talk about god as much as I have. I must say that the church gives me strife a lot in my life, but god seems to make that strife a good thing. I wish they would cancel church for a year. Maybe then we would forget about all the expectations and realize how we live the gospel and live with god rather than live with rules and expectations.
How did the other women, (mothers, in-laws, sisters, grandma, friends) react to your decisions? Do you remember anything in particular that they said to you?

I feel very fortunate here because all the women that I care about have done nothing but given me support. My mom and sisters have been fabulous. I think it helps that my mom got her masters. My brother is now going back for his masters and my older sister that didn’t finish school because she stopped to raise her kids is now going back to finish her degree also. It seems that in my family my decision has not only been supported but it has also been mirrored by the decisions of my brothers and sisters to value education. I don’t feel support when I come back to Utah—particularly Provo—after being away and when I realize that everyone is getting married. It is hard too keep up with friends because that seems to be the pursuit that I have not accomplished. To my face no one says that I’m off base. But in regular conversation I sometimes feel a little out of place. As far as things they say to me, there are a million things I could say here. Probably the best thing that happens as far as being supported in my decision is the talks that I have with my mom. She really is level headed about what changes the church needs to make but also some changes that the church will never see.

If you could choose one way in which something strongly affected you during this transition, what would it be?

Leaving Utah. If I had to stay in Utah for PhD work I could not have done it. I don’t know if this is what you are looking for, but honestly, the thing that has helped me get back on track was going to Boston and the thing that has keep me on track and sane was again leaving Utah. It’s the whole collective identity thing. I don’t feel that I fit inside of it when I am here but outside of Utah I feel that I can forget that I don’t conform to some of the most basic teachings of the church.

Could you name a book or an article, say from the Ensign, or even a conversation or something you read in the newspaper that was authored by another Mormon woman that influenced or affected the way you perceived the roles you were playing?

Right now I am drawing a blank on this one. I can’t think of anything in particular that has been incredibly inspiring. I, like everyone else, really enjoy hearing Sheri dew speak. I remember bringing investigators to Chieko Okasaki’s “Cat in the Cradle” talk during General Conference and I was so happy. There’s no other way to say it than she kicked butt in that talk. She really put things into perspective in such a beautiful way. Women do a fabulous job in the church and I wish they would teach the gospel more. Like it says in D & C 25—we like Emma have been commanded to expound the scriptures, or rather to explain the scriptures. I think too often women shy away from actually tackling doctrine because they are not returned missionaries and because they don’t have the priesthood. But when they do talk doctrine, they are right on. I wish we saw more of that.

I do remember being really inspired by Ardeth Kapp. She was the wife of my mission president and she also said things straight and directly. She was
amazing and would always give us insights that the prophets and apostles had given her. She would share experience of how she felt before she spoke in General Conference and I think it was Elder Packard who said, “when you speak make sure that you always say something.” But she did that; she always said something of extreme importance when she spoke. She also made a point of teaching us how to be strong women in the church. We also need more of this. She told us that whenever we sat on a board or fulfilled a position in the church that we could not complain about a problem until we had a solution. The point here was that anyone could be a complainer and everyone can point out problems but she wanted us to become problem solvers. Even if our solution didn’t eventually work it would at least set a tone. I am also influenced incredibly by my female friends in the church. Quite often I have conversations with women and I’m inspired by their actions or their faith. But most often I am inspired by how much they care about other people. I notice that there are women that I am very attracted to (in a very non-lesbian way of course) because they make me feel good about the person that I have become. I notice that these women draw not only me but also everyone to them.

One thing that I have listened to lately that I find inspiring is a talk given by Elder Maxwell at the spring 2000 General Conference. Here he is talking about how we should be content with what the Lord has allotted to us. It’s good—he says that all things that we look at as limitations: not being married, not having kids etc, will be taken care of in the next life and that the only thing that cannot be taken care of is unrepented sin. I like that because again, it makes the gospel pretty easy and straightforward. The gospel is about not sinning or at least repenting of it when we do it so that we can make it back to god. Also, I have enjoyed listening to church talks—sometimes—because here I feel that what I consider to be my hard experiences are really put to shame. Today a woman talked about the baby she lost and that miracle of having another one. I like these stories of faith. Sometimes I admit they are totally corny and they really piss me off. But sometimes it really puts thing into perspective and they can teach us important lessons about how resilient humans are.

Do you read the Ensign regularly, or the Church newspaper, or another periodical, magazine that is somehow related to Mormonism (Dialogue, Sunstone, Women's Exponent)? What has been your exposure to these journals?

No, not even my scriptures. Honestly though, I don’t read these magazines and I must say that if I were to devote time to reading church related material it would be the scriptures and the manuals that we are now using from the prophets. I do try to read the opening message in the Ensign though. Here I feel that I want to bolster my testimony of God, Christ, the Holy Ghost, and the prophets. Considering the issues that I have with the church I need to always feel the spirit and I want to realize the divinity of the prophet and his message. I get this from reading the primary sources that we have been given rather than the secondary sources. If I read the Exponent and Sunstone and am continually being told that woman are suppressed that is a damaging as going to frou-frou Relief
Society meetings and being told that women’s role is to be married. Anyway, the point here is that I don’t want to leave the church. I truly believe in it and I believe that the gospel is not sexist. We can buy into any ideology—a good or bad, left or right, conservative or liberal one. I would like to read the word of god and trust myself—along with the feelings that I receive from the Holy Ghost—to create my own interpretation of the gospel. I think god trusts us an incredible amount and his plan attests to this—he allows us to be co-creators with him as we are parents (both are we give physical life and spiritual life to others), it seems that he wants us to make the gospel as personal as possible. For this reason I choose to stay away from Sunstone, Dialogue, etc. Besides, I don’t need to read an article to tell me that polygamy is a pissy thing and that it has done a disservice to women. My exposure to them—I’ve read a few Dialogues and Sunstones. I used to edit the current Women’s Exponent (Exponent II) while I lived in Boston and have only read a few article from the original exponent.

What do you want to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival?

I don’t think I want daughters. I never really have and I have never been able to articulate why but it sucks to be a girl sometimes. I feel that I was raised quite genderless. We really didn’t do anything different than the boys in my family and my mom and my dad did a good job of not fulfilling traditional roles. It just seemed like people did things more according to age than gender. I always thought that the sacrament was passed only by boys because there were just not any girls in the ward at that particular age. My sister was the oldest girl I knew and I was excited for her to start passing the sacrament. Anyway, I used to practice—my mom had a relish dish that had a handle so I would break bread and pass it to dolls and whatnot. All this to say that I had a rude awakening when I clued in that gender does matter. I think this was a gradual thing and I think I fought it. But as much as I’ve tried to reconcile issues in my personal life, the church, graduate school, etc. I’ve always felt a bit outside the norm, one step beyond being understood by anybody. I think this is because the mark of normalcy in our church seems to be getting married so regardless of what I do, I am not normal yet. So what would I like to pass on, something that I haven’t quite figured out yet? How to completely not care about the church but how to also make it the center of your life. I don’t want my kids to grow up in Utah, that’s for sure.

Right now, because I’m experiencing a transition of moving back to Utah. I would like to describe that a little bit. I’m frustrated right now because I am on campus and everyone I run into is getting married to someone who is absolutely fabulous and they are moving away to an Ivy League grad school where both the husband and the wife can pursue advanced degrees. I’m quite frustrated because I feel like I have tried to do all the things that are “right” in the church and I feel that I am ending up with the short end of the stick. As I hear people talk about everyone who is getting married I’m not so much frustrated by not being married myself but because the options are depleting rapidly. I think I have always tried to live in a way that I allowed myself to have lots of options—I always took entrance exams, and made certain connections, etc thinking that it would increase my options. In a way it has. I have really networked in an incredible way in my grad school experience.

Some of the connections that I have made and others that people, particularly my professors, have made for me are amazing. I am honestly astounded
quite regularly by how much my professors have been willing to do for me. But I must say I get so pissed off when it comes to church matters because it's a completely different ballgame. I'm so out of control here. By trying to keep various options open in my life I feel like I've closed in the option of getting married. By being serious about a career—mind you, a career that I chose because it would allow me to stay home with my kids during the summers and to work from home a large part of the time—I have left the dating Mecca of Utah and I feel that I have also made quite a statement that I don't care about marriage. I also feel like the good Mormons get married when they are 23-25 and only the losers can't find a spouse beyond that time period. I don't know if these are the ways that I identify myself or the experiences that I have or what. I feel that I have a love/hate relationship with Utah and the church sometimes. It gives me so much that I need and provides a real connection with God, etc., but at the same time I feel totally estranged by it. I think I feel this way because I'm not married, because I want to be married at some point (I want something that I can't get—this seems to imply that I'm not worthy), and because I've pursued a career that takes me outside of Utah and really all the places where the young singles like to be.
Item #7 Natalie Hill*

Name: Natalie Hill
Date Interviewed: 
City Of Residence: Salt Lake City, Utah
Age: 33 
Occupation: Mother, Instructor, Volunteer, Waitress, Friend, Daughter
Relationship to Interviewer: Classmate in graduate program, close friend
*Name has been changed

How do you define yourself?

If I was to define myself there is no definite state of arrival, you know I think we would like there to be with our careers, with motherhood and in our marriages. But that's what is the most amazing. But yet the frustrating and overwhelming part is that there is no definite state of arrival and so therefore those roles they change and they spill into one another. And I am a very compartmentalized person, so when I'm at Five-Alls as a waitress, I'm at Five-Alls as a waitress, I'm not a mom, I'm not a student, I'm not a Young Women's President, that is my role. I'm intense and I get criticized for it but yet that is my strength because that's where I've been for so long. So when I'm with my girls and I get a call that's concerning Young women it bothers me because right then in the heat of the moment I'm a mom and it's my time to be a mom.

And so at this point in my life at age 33 after having a second baby that's the struggle that I am going through because I want things to be tightly finished and the hours to be clean clear cut and when something spills over into things it frustrates me because then I feel like I'm letting myself down or I'm letting my girls down or I'm letting Young Women's leaders down or my students down. So you know maybe I just need to come to the realization that that's what it is, that everything just merges into one and that's me, it's a balancing act. And you know I'll never forget when I went to Mary Catherine Bateson who you've really used as a touchstone, but I'll never forget I was 27 years old I went up to the University of Utah lecture, and I must have heard about it in one of my classes and it was a full house and I got pretty good seats. I'll never forget her sitting up there and I was fascinated with her because I knew that she had experienced and had achieved a lot at a young age and I'm fascinated with women who can cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time.

I sat there and she said you know we as women we have discontinuities. And that was the first time I had ever heard that word and she stood up there and she had this scarf, and she pulled this scarf and she said and while we are holding our baby and the baby became the scarf here we are holding the baby and we are on the phone and we're trying to shut the door with our leg. And she just created this image for me that I've never been able to forget, and it made me feel really comfortable with that fact that I could do fifty things at once. You know and so I've got Lizzy in my arms and I'm trying to read a poem for school and Kyle's crying and the phone's ringing that's the first thing that comes into my mind is Mary Catherine Bateson doing this and talking about the discontinuities of our lives and it's not like we are going to drive on a highway and if we didn't look at the things on the side we wouldn't get the whole picture. So I think that every little thing defines whether we like it or whether we don't. Today in class we were talking about marriage and we were talking about
Kate Chopin and so many students today said you know husbands and wives they really don't define each other. And I thought wow, you know I look at Dave and I think whether I like it or I don't he defines me and brings wholeness to me, sometimes he fragments me but that's I think normal in a marriage. I think relationships define you and those you don't want to, they do.

The one thing that I am comfortable with is that I am not afraid to say that I'm more than just a mother, because I am so much and I have worked so hard to be something that reaches out to so many things in so many places and then comes back to me, so many different things. I've taken the notion of the hat concept off, you know where we put a certain hat on for a certain place. I used to believe that and now I don't. I think I have worked through that this last year of my life at 33, that is that not a hat it's just, it's within and it spills over and it spills over and it spills over and it's messy but that's what you ask for when you take on several different pieces of identity, you have to be comfortable with the growth and the stretching and it's not easy, it's not easy at all.

What would you say has been the most difficult decision that you have had to make, and this doesn't have to be one, particular? If there are a few what would they be?

I was just telling my Young Women this on Sunday, when I was in High school I used to wait for my mom and dad to make my choices for me. Primarily because I wanted the blame to fall back on someone other than myself if something went wrong. And so my parents were very careful not to force anything on me not to make my choices for me. My mother would have never in a million years pushed me to get a Masters degree; she never would have pushed me to go to Israel never in a million years. So my parents taught me at a very young age to be very comfortable with the choices that I make and that if I make them and something goes wrong I'm accountable for them. And so making choices has always been an easy thing for me. The thing I'm most grateful for about choices is that I've allowed myself to have choices. I see so many women that have shut doors; they have no room for choices. And so right now I feel like choices are hard for me, but they bless me that they're the blessed thing that keeps me going is that I've allowed myself choices and that I haven't shut the doors because I hear so many women say to me “wow you have so many choices available to you, what I want to do, what I want to be” so you know I look at myself as a person in progress and that's why choice is a big deal.

As far as difficulty, difficult choices, you know I made a choice to apply for graduate school once and didn't get in. And it knocked me right off my, my feet. I applied at BYU, I wasn't ready like all choices, it was a difficult choice for me to apply again so I applied again. You know I wrote Rick Deurden an email the other day that said “I'm so grateful for the experience that I had down there” and it was so hard, driving down there, I thought to myself this morning as I was coming home from running I thought I'm so glad that I don't have to fight traffic. I can not believe that I did what I did, I'm amazed that I drove an hour and left my baby, she was always in good hands. But I would race back going 90 mph, and it was a difficult choice. But because I had a husband who totally supported me and a mom who totally supported me, I knew that something was wrong if those two people in my life (who I believe are the true/two gages of who I am)— if they said you know what this is not working, it's not working out. Are you sure what you're doing is right? There was always support, and when I crashed and burned they were there to say you know what this will work out I will come help you and you will be fine.
I have always felt comfortable with my choices, I've always felt very comfortable and when I haven't I've known that there's no right or wrong choice. It's that there's an abundance of great choices and that's the hard part, the difficulty of my decision is that there are so many great ones out there. And that I've never really made a wrong or right one it's just that I've been comfortable with my choices.

What were the surprising decisions in your life that lead you to new and unexpected roles? Or surprising experiences?

Having one [child] was very easy for me, it was a breeze. I was able to do everything that I possibly could, I have a really large capacity and a high energy level and I've been blessed with that and I have good health. And so I have the ability to do a lot in a short amount of time and I crash and burn and I bottom out and I melt down and I recognize that, but having a second child was a little bit harder for me because the patterns in my life were hard to get back. It took me a little bit longer to figure out how I was going to run at five in the morning and feed her and be back and still have time and enough heart for another child. So that was a surprise for me because I thought having one child would be a breeze so I thought two will be great and that's been a surprise. I think and if I can pull the church into this, but I think the hardest part of that was and something that I've struggled with for the last year is right when I was out to bingo bop pregnant, ready to have this baby— I was called to be the Young Women's President, and peoples jaws I think really hit the floor. There were two types of reaction, what in the heck is your bishop thinking? And well wow that's normal. And even from my two best friends, two of my closest girlfriends Elaine, who's on the General Board of the Relief Society said that makes sense and Linda was like the logical one saying now wait a minute is this divine intervention or what? And my brother Jeff saying what in the heck was he thinking and Nick saying, totally makes sense, the girls need to see this.

So right when I was called I had a baby and that was the curve ball and never in a million years did I expect to learn or stretch or grow and learn about Christ as I have this last year. I believed in the church my whole life, but my testimony has been placed, I feel like in a fish bowl, and I feel like and maybe (this is just my own feelings) but I feel like I am being scrutinized I feel like I am always ever present and for the first time in my life I don't want to be ever present. I want to just come and sit with my two girls and partake of the sacrament and just be me. And so that's been a surprise to me, it's been a surprise to me that I've learned this lesson this young in my life, I still feel like I'm a baby. And I just said to my mom, I am too young for all of these lessons I'm learning about church politics. I'm learning about being a leader to other women, I'm scared for my daughters, I'm learning lessons that really have been a surprise to me because I've watched women be young women's president and I never campaigned for it but I thought wow that would be great. But I've learned and it's been a surprise, and it's been a heartache, it's been a discouragement but it's also been a very blessed experience. Not a choice that I made, I guess I had a choice, I guess I had a choice to say no when they asked me but I sat here and said how could I say no when I've been so blessed. And that was my reaction, and I knew that the girls were in trouble and I knew that they needed someone who could show them what it meant to be a woman right now and I felt really comfortable with that.
I am going to go a little bit more with that right now, especially since this experience seems to have brought some insight to you? When your brother says you were what those girls needed, what do he mean? Expand on that a little bit.

I think my goal is to be able to bring a spectrum of choices to those young women, 26 of them and show them all of the spectrum of choices that they have. To throw at them as many possibilities of life, choice, marriage, and experience. I don't think there is one grandiose pattern for being a Mormon woman and I think they teach you that you have to a) get married and then have these kids and then do this, and it's changed and I think the girls need to know that they need to be comfortable with their choices. They have mothers, they have grandmothers, but they need role models, they need mentors to show them all the different spectrum that life has to give them and there is so much out there and I am not discrediting the model Mormon woman. But wow, you know if they have the capacity to do something why not show them the possibilities. And so that why I felt really comfortable. And the bishop when he sat here I said you realize I work, and I looked at all three of those bishopric members whose wives do not work and I said I teach English, I'm a waitress, I have two jobs. Logically on paper I am not your woman, I am too busy for this, I have no time, I mean I am having a baby. But they were comfortable with that, and the bishop has always, has never given me any trouble with it what so ever, he fully supports everything. I think he saw me on the treadmill grading papers at this gym, and he knew, I think that's when he said you have the ability to juggle about forty-five things at one time and I do it. That's what his answer always is, and I think it's because I was on the treadmill grading papers, running home, you know I was doing a lot. And visually he thought ok. You know I don't know his process but, but the girls are in deep need of that, they really are.

Why do you see a need for that?

I was going to give you this, but I think I've sat in a lot of Relief Society lessons, I've taught a lot of Relief Society lessons, and I am in a leadership position right now where the majority of I've heard things come within the last six months of what a woman's role is. And well “the prophet said ...” has come up quite frequently, and so I found a quote that I read frequently and it's by Gordon B. Hinckley. And it's an invitation to women, and that's what's incredible is that it's an invitation, it's not a proclamation, it's not a commandment, it's an invitation. And he says, “I feel to invite women everywhere to rise to the great potential within you. I do not ask that you reach beyond your capacity. I hope you will not nag yourselves with thoughts of failure. I hope you will not try to set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. I hope you will simply do what you can do in the best way you know. If you do so you will witness miracles come to pass.”

I've learned not to be so judgmental of everyone's choices, but to bring an awareness to everyone else that we do not all have the same capacities. And a lot of women would not be able to get up at five and go running and come home clean the house teach two classes be with your daughters go hiking and then come home and be with your husband at one night. That would overwhelm a lot and it does and I get that. A capacity, when I was serving at Five Alls the other night, but Kim Raybold said to me “you are so lucky you have an outlet, you are so lucky to have an outlet” I said “you think this is an outlet, I'm sweating, I've got ketchup everywhere, you know I've done this for thirteen years, I'm at Five Alls as a waitress, I said this is no outlet, this is a job, it's money, it
allows me to pay for Lizzy to dance, so that I can afford her the spectrum of opportunities that I would want my Mom to do, it pays for Discovery. " So my goal is to allow her as many opportunities and choices as possible, so I am trying to instill that in her right now. And she says “yeah but your teaching is an outlet”, and I said “no, my teaching is something that I've worked really hard for, to be where I am, to teach two classes, to leave the campus and run.” And I said “are you still running?” and she said “ah yeah, here and there” and I said “no that's my outlet, that's my hour where it is my time and if I had a free hour on a Saturday, we were asked that, people said they would sleep in, and I said I would run for three hours with my brothers” that's an outlet for me and I think it's in my capacity right now and I am grateful for it.

But I have people roll their eyes and say “uh, I don't know how you do it, just watching you makes me tired” and I think hmm you know, I guess it’s the friends that I have I have a sweet friend Linda Dunn who is high energy, she was the sister that I never had and so I’ve watched her and she mentored me through her example, we ran this morning and we were just talking and it's constant the conversation and dialogue of women working, it’s not just one conversation that I had, I think that’s one question you asked what one conversation, it’s continuous and even she at age forty, it’s continuous for her and it’s fun cause she can look back at her life and look forward and I am a big fan of retrospection, I always want to know where I’ve been and where I am going, constantly.

You had mentioned you were going to invite a guest speaker to Young Women’s, could you elaborate on how you handled that and how that has helped you in the future?

I sat in a few PEC meetings and ward council meetings and there’s a girl in our ward, I first met her when she was out running with her two dogs on a really snowy day at about seven in the morning and I thought there is a girl after my own heart, and she has a little boy and Dave grew up with her and she had waitressed, there was a kinship, we had a couple things that we shared. Her name came up in Ward Council and the Relief Society President said we need to “fellowship” her and I thought you know this girl is rock solid, Dave knew her, and I thought this girl is rock solid. She has a testimony. She’s there, but she’s made a choice and her choice is that she is going to work full time. So I asked her, it was a lesson dealing with this quote, I handled it out to each woman in the audience, because I felt like there was this barrier of women that were a little bit too much, they were judgmental of one another. And so I thought you know what I am going to use this Relief Society lesson as a platform for my agenda and I am going to get this taken care right now, so that there is no more questions. Because I gracefully was trying to handle it, my mom said handle this with grace, handle this with grace, and I was tired of grace. I was flat out tired, because I don’t have grace in me when it comes to certain things like this and I think that runs through the blood with my mom. So I had this sweet girl stand up and she started with tears in her eyes and said, “I am a daughter of God who loves me and I love him. You know, I am a lawyer, I might not be the woman to bring you dinner every night, but I will tell you this that the majority of my clients are Mormon women and I am helping them in ways that no one could and I am able to help them.”

And so the girls to hear this, and she told the girls, (this was a forum of Relief Society women and Young Women all joined together, a group of 200 women) and she said “I have received a lot of flack for my choice but I made it with God and I was taught if you made a choice with God you knew it was a righteous choice.” And that’s when I was trying to give them this image of a woman, a righteous woman who had made a choice and she had made it with God and yeah she has received a lot of flack for it, but wow she’s comfortable and you know I love her because I just love to know she is doing the balancing act too. And when we see each other and we say “how’s work?” it’s an
I remember you making a comment about one of your counselors and her concern with this representation?

For about a month we spent in young women, it was the subject of motherhood, like I say Alyssa, some women would not have the capacity to do what I am doing and that's why I need to be really comfortable with, and that's I think where I wanted to just jump down their throats and say get a clue. And so I had to come at it from another perspective, and they threw the prophet said this, the prophet says that, and so finally I threw that at them and said look the prophet says this, capacity, what's your capacity? It's not mine. For a month I sat by and it was so difficult and it was so hard, so discouraging and I sat by and listened to these lessons "women shouldn't work", well you know 90 percent of the young women's mothers were working because they had too. And I was baffled that they were saying you shouldn't work, and I'm thinking wait a minute how can you tell this, how can you say this when a) your own in-law down the line husband passed away, and she had to go back to work. And again, we make the choices we do based on our experiences, I've watched my mom and just the other day she said to me, you know you have been trained to do what you love, why should there be any questions? I don't question it, do you question it? And I said No, I'm great. And so that's why I've always felt so comfortable because I have a really wise mother who never ran my life, but who stood by and supported. But I think, you want these girls to know that there are so many great opportunities where they can be a mother to other people. I go into my classrooms and if I can give them one ounce of good human value, I know I have done okay for the day, I know I've done okay.

And yeah I can't shove my religious beliefs down them, but some of them don't even believe in marriage anymore, today our discussion was on marriage, so for me even give them one glean of hope that marriage is great, it's hard, but its good.

Then I am a mother in a sense, and so you know I think again, I just don't think there's one. I mean motherhood is a great thing every night as I put these two kids to bed, I literally fall to my knees in between their two beds, they, they have made me who I am. You know I carried them, I took the prenatal vitamins and I do everything to feel like I was creating them, but they've created me. I wouldn't be a mom without them, and everyday they create me in ways that I have never been created. And so if we would just shut down all these the role of a mother, the role of a mother, and really realize what the role of a mother is and what it can do for you and what these kids can do. That's the miracle of birth and we just place these roles and expectations and society and culture and these words come up and you say, "you know what remember the miracle, the miracle of birth is creation and we create one another." That's what I learned this last little bit, and it was hard for me, it was hard for me to sit by and have someone tell me what a mother should be.
doing and what I should be doing because again it came back to choice. We're told to do things, but my mother has always taught me we have a brain, we have a heart, we wouldn't have been given those things to make choices if we were just told. And we can still make choices; I mean that's what it all comes down to, being accountable for them.

What do you want Leslie to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about survival and self identity?

You know, my mother's mother died when she was 8 and her father died when she was 13. And you know she will continually say to me now you know why I am the way I am. I think my mother had tried. She is a very independent women, and I think independence and being comfortable with your choices. You know I would hope they would experience as much as possible, take dance then take soccer, ski and then do. That's the one thing, if I could offer my children a childhood like my parents did me, even though I grew up with four brothers I was still able to have a spectrum of experiences. Even in my patriarchal blessing it says, be very careful what you choose to do because you have so many abilities and be very careful what you choose as the final thing. And that's why I come back to I don't think there's one final state of this is what I am this is what I've become, it comes back to that Madeline I'Engle, it's my favorite I mean I drill it into my young women, I have it plastered through my book, "I do not believe that I will ever reach a state of existence where I will say this is what I believe, finished. What I believe is alive and open to new growth" and that how I believe, that's kind of my credo, my motto, everything is alive and open to new growth. And I think we as women, we just need to just give each other the benefit of the doubt. We are, we are our own worst enemies, we are. We are our own worst enemies, you know if we could just build one another up and you know it's not, that's a pipe dream we're not all going to do that.

But you find those two or three touchstones, and you lean on them and you watch them and you call them whether it's your mom, or your grandmother or the friends that you run with or a childhood friend those are the women that I come back to and when they can see my life through a perspective and I feel comfortable with them and I know I can discard anything on them that's when I know I am okay and I'm safe. Natalie McCullough, one of my best friends has a quote up in her kitchen and it says "your name will always be safe in my house" And I think there are very few women, there are a just a certain few that I hold that quote to, that my name is safe with them, and I know that I can pretty much tell them anything.

I ask this question because so many women have had to deal with this, and I don't know if you have had to deal with this or not? Has anyone in your family had cancer?

No, My mother thought she had the stomach flu, and she had a mass, but they took it out and she is healthy as a horse. But you know I cry very often for a dog that, that I lost. I cried today in the car when I saw someone running with their dog. And I think she taught me how to love in a way that some human beings don't know how to love. And so when I hear the word death, I grieve her, and even my friend this morning said are you ready for another dog? And I just, it's so hard for me, because she was it for me for so long. And so it seems so silly, but I think God just give us ways—he teaches us ways to love and that was one way that I never expected to learn about love but I did. And so many people don't understand it, and so you just it's like this sacred gift that you knew how to love something that loved you back so much. And I think I ran with her everyday, and so when she died, it was hard. And my mother lost dogs and so maybe that's the connection that I have with
her. I do miss Grace very much; even Lizzie will say, "I miss her." And I will think, does she even remember her? Yeah death has been hard for me in that respect. And it's not been a child, but it was a huge, huge piece of my heart, huge piece. I think when we were holding her and she passed away and I saw him cry. I don't think he misses her in ways that I do, I miss her when I am folding laundry at night, I always say that, but I missed her yesterday. And maybe it's just the season, but I pray that she is there. She better be the first thing that comes to me before I get to heaven. She just better be there, otherwise I am going to be really let down.

Could you name a book, or an article, or even a conversation or something that you read in the newspaper that was authored by another Mormon woman that influenced or affected the way you perceived the roles you were playing?

You know that's interesting just as you said that, recently I read an article in the new paper, in the tribune and I think it was October 15, it talked about the role of women. Did you look at that? Where the 100 women signed their names? It started out with a quote about women being very content in the gospel and it was by Gordon B. Hinckley. And It was a beautiful quote about the priesthood and that women were very comfortable with who they were, and then they said they beg to differ. And this was written in the Boston Globe and 100 women that were not content, they said those women were not content, they signed their names. And they said that for every name that is on their list we suspect there are at least 100 more for each name, so that would have been thousands and thousands, ten thousand. I think when I read that it grounds me, it makes me a little bit more grounded and firm in why I am believing in this gospel and there have been some things where I this last six months I've said to my mom now I know why people leave the church. Something I believed in my whole life has been put to test and never did I ever think it would be. But that article again made me really kind of realize what my role was and that I'm content in this gospel. Maybe because I'm content as a woman and who I am as a human being.

So the article was about women who were not content, they went against Gordon B. Hinckley, they signed their names no - we want the priesthood. Is that what you are saying?

It made me realize I am content; I don't have any problem with having the priesthood. But there are certain things that I have gone through in the last six months where I have not been content with how certain things have run. Mainly dealing with the men in the church, I'll be really honest, they have been critical, I think what it is that they are not like my husband, my husband I think thinks I could rule the world, he knows I can't, but he thinks maybe I could, but they don't support me in the ways that he does, they don't just let me go like he does, and they question me where as he doesn't question me. And he sees it and so that's why it's been very interesting to see my role as a woman, I'm comfortable with it my husbands comfortable with who I am and the way I am and so like you say the rest of them can go fly their kites. You know and you hold your tongue a lot in this gospel I'm learning that, you have to have grace, and it's hard.

But I am entitled to divine intervention, and that's the mantel, the mantel's heavy, I question myself more than I ever have in my whole life, and that's what's hard for me. I'm always questioning. And finally I've had to say this is not between
me and anyone else, this is between me and God and I am accountable to him. And so that's what's so hard for me because I am a perfectionist type. When things don't hit the mark and my expectations are not met, I feel like it's a direct let down. And people say "lower your expectations Natalie," uh-huh I'm not going to lower my expectations, everyone else is going to rise to my expectations.

Another book, I always go back to Gifts from the Sea, by Anne Morrow Lindbergh. When I was doing my thesis I've never seen so many women repeatedly quote Anne Morrow Lindbergh. One thing that I've learned from that book is that she learned how to be introspective, she learned how to spiral inward and then spiral back outward, and I do that constantly in check saying ok where have I been, what have I done, where am I going, how am I doing? I am always doing that, whether it's every day, or every six months or every year. I think that's one book that had a really direct benefit, and there's a great part about marriage in there, fabulous part about marriage about what marriage is and how many stages it goes through. But I always go back to that book read it every year right before the beach because the beach is where I heal everything with salt. I mean I have always looked at the beach as a very healing thing for me; the salt always heals all my wounds when I am in the water. So that's why Gifts from the Sea has always meant a lot to me as a woman.

You know Kate Chopin back in 1850 had six kids and her husband died and she wrote. So it's interesting that I am studying about this and here's a woman, capacity right there, to raise six kids have a husband die and it's so interesting maybe it's just me making everything connect. As far as the conversations, I can't tell you enough that it is one continual conversation, it's not just one, it just keeps going. Leap, Deseret Quartet and some of Terry Tempest Williams essays in Unspoken Hunger. Refuge was great but those are the books, I sift through it for a voice from a woman that is strongest in her voice when she talks about her mom and her family. Leap, I did it, I did it in Refuge. I did it in all of her stuff. So, I think there's a voice that has affected me because I think that's not the voice as far as a professional, career or writer I would never want that voice. A voice, I love is Natalie McCullough who has four kids who writes about sitting by the swimming pool with dripping Popsicles, that's the voice that's real, it's a realistic voice for me. And those are the voices that I kind of go to. Again Mary Catherine Bateson, you know I mean in full swing, because she can give me everything I need. And I have a hard time; I have a hard time reading about women's lives where I can't find any redeemable qualities, so I put books down. I want a woman that can be someone that I can imagine in my mind, when I'm having difficulty in my own life.

Would you say that you are on the up or down side of the spiral of life?

I would definitely say that I am on the up swing, I feel good. I never had postpartum depression; I think I attribute it to good genes. But I've had some bad bouts, it's a form of hussing, gets me is through discouragement, it's right there in my patriarchal blessing. I guess because I have been reading that a lot. But you know I am on the up swing definitely, I have a friend I run with in the morning who looks at the silver lining in everything, and I don't have the ability to do that, you know I grit my teeth. When I am on the down side of things, I grit my teeth, my mom taught me to grit my teeth, and I grit them hard and I move right through things. I don't move around, them I don't skirt, I don't twiddle my thumbs, I move right through them.
I guess running marathons has helped me do that, because I look at I said to Dave just last night today's the first day of class, I am on mile 3 thinking what in the heck am I doing, you know I'm teaching I'm doing thing, this is the hardest class I have every done, it's going to be so hard, and then I came out of there today feeling like okay I am on mile seven and it's feeling good and when I get to eighteen it's going to hurt again. But I think running a marathon, or being a marathon runner—you liken that metaphor and you can always use it and overuse it and use it, but it works cause you know how it feels to be in the hardest trenches of a mile and have no one out there but yourself and people ask me why I run marathons and they say you know are you getting sick of that? I say you know what every marathon that I run I learn something new about myself, because it's me and myself out there. Yeah, I've prayed through miles and yeah I've memorized poetry through miles, I've done different things to get through the race but it's me and it's always me. I've run fifteen of them now, and does it makes me who I am? Yeah. But it's a very inward peace, I don't run for the outward for the awards or oh she's running another marathon. But when I run them it's just total inward. It's like it stretches me out a little bit more so that I can shove more in myself. So it is a ritual process and I love that.

I've learned about it early, my mom taught me about it early, my mom and dad taught me that life is not easy and it's the best thing they could have done for me. My mom has always said “Life is not easy Natalie,” and she's a realist. I was always grateful for a mother that taught me that I can appreciate the finer things and that's the one thing right now that I am doing in my life right now—I am learning to appreciate sitting on the carpet with my two girls eating yogurt like I did yesterday thinking gosh look at her smile, and watching Kyle look at Lizzie and thinking I didn't have a sister but look at the way that they look at each other. I think of the love that they have and I could just bottle it up. But I carry it inside, and I think that, if I struggle with anything right now and the Christmas card I even put this on the Christmas card, and it's a funny thing because every message I put is there for myself, to carry space inside, and that is if anything my struggle because I fill it up, I fill it up with things that perhaps I don't want. I long for just for those bottled up visits with dear friends, or a conversation with my mom or my husband or reading something beautiful, that's the space that gets me from the ebb to the flow, back to the ebb to the flow. That's it that's the collection of my days, learning to appreciate those small moments.

About your mother? If there are a few things that you could attribute about your role as a daughter? What has your mother imparted to you that you will impart to your daughters?

You know I was never close to my mother growing up, I was always a daddy's girl. I grew up on the ball diamond. And when I first had a baby, my mother and I called each other for the first year of Lizzie's life and she'd say, how many hours did she sleep last night? For a full year, I got a call from her, and it was like a weather report it became a ritual, it became folklore to me in the sense that we checked in and it was like this was my bond. I think when I first had my babies that's when I realized how blessed I was to have a mom like my mom. As I have had girls, I said to Dave the other night I want all girls, I don't want to go to football games. I
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don't want to go to baseball games, I want girls, I want sisters, I want a family like Linda who I grew up with and they were my older sisters. But you know already I see my mother trickle through my daughters, I mean that's evident and I'm an only girl and so the bond with my children is going to be stronger than with her other grandchildren because I'm her daughter, her Lizzie Beth is named after her, Kyle Bell is named after Sarah Bell who raised my mom. So those two names are priceless to her. I remember giving birth to Lizzie and my mom not being there because it was a very private thing to me and to my husband. She was there within the hour and she asked me “what have you decided to name her?” And I told her, Lizzie Beth, she looked at me and she said “thank you” and I just have that image of her looking at me a saying thank you as if I know you love me as much as you do.

If I could impart anything on my daughters— just the need to tell the stories, to keep the stories alive. My Mom talked about Sara every five minutes, that she was a widow at age 32 and to keep my daughters aware and ever present of my mothers life. It's hard to see your parents get old, and it's hard to hear your mother say things that you wish she wouldn't say to you about a relationship or a marriage, you see her worry. I see myself as her caregiver down the road, and I feel myself changing my little girls diapers and thinking my mom did this for me all these years and then I think I will be her caregiver; and it's exciting to me. I love the movie “Steel Magnolias” where Sally Field says “I watched her come into this world and I was there when she took her last breath.” And you know that for me is my mom, you know it's the day to day checking in with each other and it's an incredible relationship, it's phenomenal and I feel very blessed because she's a rock. I know that I am ok when she knows I'm ok, she's proud of me and I adore her, and I hope my girls will adore me, you know I hope that they will love me and they will know that I have worked hard to give them opportunities. Lizzie knows that I'm at campus, she says “how was campus?” and I tell her I loved it because I want to teach her it's a good thing, it's a real good thing and she know what it means to me, she knows at age three she knows that I love it.
Item #8 Sara Smith*

Name: Sara Smith  
Date Interviewed: July 8, 2001  
City of Residence: Alpine, Utah  
Age: 31  
Occupation: Mother, Volunteer, Educator, Caretaker  
Relationship to Interviewer: Close friend from college  

How do you define yourself?  
I think I am a person that is trying, I am trying to do what is right by my family, by myself. Sometimes I think I feel like a fraud, because sometimes I feel like I am not, that I go through the motion of things and yet maybe the roots aren't always there. I think though all and all I am a good person and I am trying to be a good person and I am trying raise my children to be good people. But I mean I said trying but I have a lot of things I know that I need to work on.  

What would be sort of your end goal?  
Oh well, I guess salvation in the end. Trying for I don't know if you want to say happiness because you are happy as you go along in the process, but I think that eternal destination and goal I guess is what ultimately I am working towards and perfecting my relationships here, with my children, my husband and my family and my friends, things like that.  

What about the roles that you are playing?  
Well, what are my roles in life? I am a mother, I am a teacher, I am wife, I am a slave (laugh), I am still a girl, you know. I am a disciplinarian, I am a worrier and I guess that goes along with being a mother too, a lot of the worries and stresses of that calling are upon your shoulders. But I guess I am a warrior too, in some respects. I feel like in some respects in some things that I do, that I can be a leader in some respects. But in other times I am definitely a follower, so I guess it depends on the issue.  

Go back to your comment about being a girl? What do you mean by that?  
What are your thoughts?  
I think that sometimes we get so caught up in being a mother, being a wife, being a worker, that we loose sight of ourselves. And I think that whether it's taking time to read, taking time to exercise or taking time to you know color my hair, whatever, I am still a girl. And I am still wanting to improve myself aside from improving myself for someone else. You know, aside from serving someone else. And so I still look around and feel like I am eighteen, and then all of sudden I look and I have four kids and I think "how did that happen?" You kind of go through those phases where you sit there and think, you know "where did I lose that?" And I think that is the process, I think you find it for a while and then you lose it, and then you find it for a while and then lose it. But um, I guess I think that sometimes I want to go back and be that selfish again, and you can't. You still have that in you.
How would you describe, the main role that you are playing right now?
Mother, most definitely.

What has the role of a mother meant to you?
Well I think it's been the most ... role I have ever had, I don't think that once you are a mother that you ever stop being a mother. Where as you know I think that there are callings that you have that kind of stop. But this follows you forever and it begins abruptly and then it follows you forever. So it's one of those things where once you start there is no going back, but that is by far my most defining role right now. And I think that you can have lots of kind of sub roles underneath that, but I think that is my main role right now.

Do you like doing being a mother? How do you value it?
Well my brother in law, Matt's younger brother stopped by around dinnertime just to see if anything was going on? And he stopped by and I was kind of chasing around and he said “are you fulfilled in your calling as a mother?” or something to that affect and I said to him “you know John some days I am and some days I am not” and he was kind of teasing me because I think he was here for about two hours and I didn’t sit down once. And he said “you should sit down sometime you might enjoy it” you know and just making comments like that and I thought you know you don't. And you're so busy and things, and I thought but I am happy that way. I am the type of person that I like to be busy and I am happy when I am busy, so I am happy that way. But I think all in all I am very happy in that calling, sure there are days when I think I need time to myself I need to go. But really I feel that is what I was made for, I mean I have had to make sacrifices, I have had to give up schooling, I have had to give up a career I mean there were certainly, it wasn't an easy choice, it certainly wasn't always an easy decision, but I ultimately think that it was what I was made to do.

What was hard about the decision?
I had always enjoyed school, and did very well in school. And so I always thought I would go to medical school and my whole growing up I thought you know I wanted to be a doctor. I can remember kind of a turning point in my first year of college when I was doing all of my prerequisites, and thinking you know I have really got to decide if I am going to do this, if I want to be a doctor it's going to be ten years at least and that means not having children and at the time I wasn't married and I wasn't sure who I would marry. I kind of remember a turning point when I went to get information on Physical therapy and then thinking well maybe this is an option and then on nursing and I would feel like I was still in the medical field, but it still wasn't really what I wanted to do.

And it was a hard decision, and I just remember changing my major, but I didn’t do that until Matt got home and I knew that we were going to be getting married. And he was very supportive, he wasn’t like he said “oh you can’t do that”, I mean to this day will say to me, “you go back to medical school and I will go work at a garage,” I mean he would do that for me if he felt like that was what I ultimately wanted. But um, I don’t know if it was, of course I prayed about it and things, but I had a feeling that I knew myself well enough to know that I wanted children and I didn’t and as much as I would love to be a doctor and would enjoy it and felt had an
affinity for it, I just didn’t feel that it was ultimately, I don’t know I guess in the long term I kind of played with the idea that I would do both. And I would try to do both. But really I had to choose and that is what I chose. And I did continue, you know even after I had the two boys I continued in school.

I had decided to go into nursing. I worked in physical therapy for a little bit and hmm it wasn’t my favorite, but I had really limited access to it. I don’t know that I ever really tried it that hard. But I decided to go into nursing, simply more so once I had the boys because I felt like I could do night shifts. And I still wanted to do both, I wanted to raise my kids and to be with my kids all day and ok I won’t sleep at night, but I still get to be a nurse. Anyways then I got all my stuff done for that, my prerequisites, and stuff and applied to nursing school and was accepted into nursing school and when push came to shove you know I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t take time away from my little boys. Kent was a year in a half. Matt was just graduated, and looking for a job somewhere else. I was supposed to start school in September, and I was physically sick over it, I had this high anxiety over it. I was going to have to be gone all day you know at school and Cole was starting preschool and Kent was a year and a half old and I was going to have to put him in day care. And I couldn’t do it, just couldn’t do it.

How did the women in your family respond?

Terrible, just terrible. It was one of the bigger tiffs I had with my mom. Both my mother and Cass, my older sister, felt that it was a very wrong decision to give up going to nursing school. They felt that Matt should make me do it almost, that they felt that he should say “you have got to this” and that either he would quit his job and stay home with the kids or do something to enable me to do it. They felt very strongly about it, you know Cass was hampered and had all this, and she felt like it was important and not that I didn’t, but I also felt like I needed to raise the boys. And anyway, I just remember Cass making her viewpoint very clear, and I remember being mad at her because I could tell she was mad at Matt for not pushing it on me. But Matt had seen me, I wasn’t feeling well I was so stressed about it and I really felt some relief once I had called and told them that I wouldn’t be coming.

My mom actually went behind my back and called my doctor for one, and talked to her about it. You know I am a grown woman, I have two children and she calls up and says “what do you think Dr. Macy?” and she says “you get her back into nursing school.” And she called up to the College of Nursing and tried to get me back in and then called me and I let her have it. And my mom and I have plenty of control issues as it is, you know whenever she tries to control me—I revolt. And she called and she said that she had called up there and that they had already given my space away but if another one came up they would look into letting me back in. And I am like “I am not going back in” and it was just a big mess and she knew I was going to be mad, she prefaced it by saying “you are going to be mad at me.” It’s like what are you going to do? Are you going to force me to go? I am not going. They were not supportive of my decision. I don’t think they thought I was quitting, but I really felt like I knew that that was what I was supposed to do, and as it turns out we moved to California two months later—I would have had to leave anyway. But to them it was my giving into Mormon ideals and being the little homemaker and giving up on my education, which it wasn’t. And I ended up still going that quarter and I went at night and took other classes so it was continuing my education.
in some sort. I just was not going to the full time nursing school, I couldn’t leave my kids, so that was ultimately what happened there.

We moved to California and I was not able to complete school and that is something that drives me crazy, it bugs me, I want to do that. But I also feel strongly that I don’t do that until my children are in school. When Sage was born, and we really had kind of felt like she would be our last one and I distinctly remember thinking five years from now I can go back, and I know that I feel strongly that I will do it. But a lot of people I guess say that and don’t ever do it, but I certainly hope that I do. But that’s, I mean when I think of the sacrifices that I have made that is the biggest one is education.

That is a very non-traditional response in a Mormon society, why do you think they responded that way?

I think that they had more of an intellectual background, especially Cass. Cass is kind of a on the fence, fringe, in terms of mainstreams women’s roles in the church. She is more open minded, and she gets quite worked up about it, she does not tow the party line by any means. I think my Mom’s is more out of wanting what was there for me, her child. I think my mom never completed college and I think that has always bugged her and she didn’t want me to have the same feelings of inadequacy. I think those were issues. I think even my Dad, who is one of the most faithful men, but he is also a little bit intellectual in terms of his perception of the church, he doesn’t always agree with everything that is said. Although I have never really heard him ever come out and say “I don’t agree with that,” but I know him well enough to know. And that’s where we all get is, but we all have it (cynical) cynicism.

My dad was a convert of the church, my grandpa was a drinker through out his life and so my dad had to grow up very fast and was very mature for his age and had a lot of responsibilities and he was a thinker. He had to come to his testimony of the church by his own means and his ways of doing— that is studying it a lot and he ties a lot of secular things. We have always been raised that way, a lot of my quotes or things I remember him giving or talks, he often turned to historical things and secular things to reinforce the spiritual things.

Has your Mom always wanted a lot for you and your sisters? She seems pretty open minded, is that unique for her age?

Well, she changes with the wind though, like most. I mean Sam my younger sister, is doing the whole career thing and my mom is like well she should be married and having a baby.

Have you felt resistance playing this role? Where has it come from?

In California, which the culture is a little bit different there, but you know often I would hear people asking if I was babysitting. I would say, no these are my kids. They would be shocked, you know if we went to dinner at a fast food restaurant and there were a number of times when people would come and just and be amazed that Matt and I were that young and had that many kids. Some of them would ask if we were Mormon just because it was so unusual. I think that there was I can remember a few times talking to people, when they found out I was Mormon, then they would talk to me differently they had real misconceptions. And I think
there is that thing that you have too many kids, you know and you have them too fast and you don’t think for yourself and it’s a very patriarchal system and women are less than men. And I have always felt that we are no less than men, we just have different roles. You know as in any biological roles. And not one is any better than the other. But with resistance, yeah I think there is resistance within the church, within either competition between women and men. I think there are some that take some of the roles too far, I think there is some of that that goes on, not that they are supportive of each other because you are trying to find fault with what others are doing, you know they aren’t doing it as well or to the same extent that maybe you were doing and I think you find that more in Utah, well maybe not, there were some in California, too. But there are so many that feel that you have to do something to define yourself, to make yourself exceptional. And I did notice in California, that there was, it was easier to be seen as exceptional, because there weren’t so many.

What about the resistance from within the church?
There is a little bit of that, I have run into a couple of people here “I can’t see how you can stay home all day” you know that kind of stuff. “I have to work I have my own money.”

How do you respond?
I say you know what I do not know where I would find time to work, you know to hold down a job other than the work I do at home. Both of the people who have mentioned it have little kids, not in school yet, not doing many extracurricular activities because I do think it gets busier as they get older. So you know maybe that is the difference. I have heard that comment recently and in the past that, maybe similar to what the non-Mormon people say, maybe you are not as bright, and you sell yourself short because you are staying home.

How does that make you feel?
Well I get defensive, sure I think anybody gets defensive I think you get defensive. I think I used to try and explain it more, but when I get it from within the church from other people, I figure there’s not much really they are arguing because either they feel guilty about the fact that they are leaving their children, or you know if they feel very strongly that they want to have their own money. I mean they must have different issues than I have and so I have to concentrate more on why I feel it’s important that I am doing what I do. I mean but I certainly get defensive and I don’t like it and I don’t agree with it and I try not to judge them although it’s tempting. I think ultimately I have to answer to myself and I have to answer to the Lord, and I and I am easily swayed. I am not saying that I always know what is right, I am swayed just as much as the next person, by opinions especially those I care about and you know I know they care about me. I feel strongly that there are those few times in my life when you kind of have to go with your gut on some of those things. I think it’s interesting because as you see more and more Mormon women working that some of these issues are coming more to a head. I know Matt has mentioned priesthood lessons and talked about how men should not have their wives working, you know things like that and its very heated and very touchy and I don’t know that you can make a blanket statement. Because I don’t know that you can make it an
issue, I mean but you can see the men whose wives work get very defensive and you can see why— because you are telling them they are doing something wrong.

**What are the critical moments in your life?**

First off, my grandmother and my aunt died somewhere between ten and thirteen. They died due to obesity, and shortly after that my mother fell into a deep depression where she didn’t function for about a year and I can remember having to stay at home from school in order to take care of her so that she wouldn’t hurt herself. I was twelve, my dad would ask me to stay home to watch her, so that was the first time I started feeling like it wasn’t safe, that I was no longer safe, that I had responsibility, and that she wasn’t always going to be okay— and Mom doesn’t function like she used to function and so I think that looking back on that I think it changed my awareness in terms of some of the stuff I am going to have to do on my own. Cass had just left for college, and Mark was probably a senior in high school, or the year before his mission.

Then there was the Anorexia stuff, and that had a lot to do with control issues with my mom. Even though I took it too far, it was a breaking away from my parents and becoming an individual. It was something that made me realize that I had and was in control of myself, and my way of acting out. I didn’t want to let my grades go and I wasn’t going to get knocked up and that was a changing point in my life. When Matt left on his mission, I stopped depending on him and started working things out for myself.

Losing the two babies there, at the time it was really difficult for me. At least the first one, not so much the second, but it was a very emotional time for me. (It is scary to think that your body can deceive you in this way) I think I feel like that was a lot of it, I think it might come from a high achieving family and this is the thing I do well and now I don’t do it well anymore and as stupid as that sounds is was like I failed now at this too. And worrying that it was a late miscarriage, and hearing the heart beat, so disappointed and worrying because I had heard the heart beat and you know you make plans for that child and I really had a lot of questions as to what that child was, you know, was it a child? I heard that heart beat, is that a child that is now in heaven or is it a recycled spirit.

I remember asking Matt a lot questions and there weren’t a lot of answers and there is a book that I read called “Gone too Soon,” written by a Mormon. It talked about miscarriages, stillborns and down syndromes babies and I had a friend who had had a stillborn, who had a knot in her umbilical cord. It really did affect me; it was really difficult.

I remember being very hurt by a comment my aunt made, it was after the ultrasound and that the baby had problems, that the skull hadn’t been closed and I remember my aunt called after she found out what had happened and she said “you wouldn’t have wanted that in your family anyway.” I remember thinking, “Oh that’s nice,” of course I would have— I would give anything to have that baby, and it was just the wrong this to say at the time. But you know I think you take any child the lord gives you and I think she was just saying you wouldn’t have wanted a disabled child in your family. I was amazed at the other support we had, because we were away from home.

Last thing, has been Jack’s illness has been the most amazing experience of our lives I guess to this point. I think that (what do you mean by “amazing?”) Well I
mean as horrific as it's been at times, it really has been an amazing experience, it's been, I have never experienced such service in my life. I have never felt more blessed. I have had my priorities completely change, and I have learned to say no to some things, I think it gives you a real sense of desperation at first and then just a will to survive, a will to make it better. I think just the way it all happened, and being misdiagnosed at the beginning, and thinking you had something else and then finding out that its cancer and different things, it was a whole progression.

Do you look at it as a preparation?

I think it made sense at the time, the diagnosis. Although Matt and I were talking about this the other day, after we brought him home the first time and he never got the arthritis and I said to Matt on a number of occasions that I was just worried that it was something else. He'd just say, “be grateful that he doesn’t have the arthritis.” We just felt lucky, that he hadn’t gotten it. And I just had it in the back of my head that this was not right, and even his rheumatologist, and the pediatrician going over the scans, they said something to the effect, that there was some smoldering illness. They would say well, maybe we will never know what it was, but then I would say I just know something is not right and they would say well he looks just fine and then they would get the blood work back and say “whoa, something is going on.” It seems like he has it but he doesn’t have any symptoms. I mean I look back and I don’t fault them, but cancer just presents itself in so many different ways. You really never know, I second guess myself on some things I mean he was in a lot of pain and I just should have been more of an advocate for him and said put him in the hospital now. It’s been the worst experience and the best experience in a lot of ways. You know we do have some regrets and you know we have been trying to make the best decisions for him. I mean I can see how it can be devastating for families and to marriages and things like that; it’s certainly not easy. But we have been really blessed, I mean we have had amazing neighbors take care of us and take care of our other children, you know there were some days that I didn’t know where my kids were but I knew that they were okay because I knew they had these people taking care of them.

But there is a lot of stress as a mother right now for me, because I have to take care of him physically and take care of him emotionally and I have three other children to take care of. When we first came home from the hospital I felt like I wanted everything to just keep going as normal, I am not going to let this take over our lives we’re going to act just like everything is fine and keep going about our business. And I was in the Primary Presidency, and I stayed in that calling, and I think about two months ago, we had a long hospital stay and you know Jack emotionally, and my boys emotional needs were piling up and I just felt like you know we can’t act like everything is normal because it’s not. And you know I can’t I think that a lot of women think that they have to do everything and I just had this little breakdown and I just thought I just can’t I have got to take care of him, and there are fifty women that can do this calling and Jack has one mom and Kent has one mom and Cole has one mom and Sage has one mom and I have got to be their mom. That was one of the hardest decisions a very hard decision, because that was still something for me, something that I felt like could kept me busy other than cancer.
But you know we have had to kind of prioritize and give up some of those things over the year, and you know we all just have to learn just live and learn, I mean I still want to have something outside of this illness. It's not like that is all we are going to do, but I just felt like I don't want to look back on this year and have regrets and wish that I had done things differently with him because of a calling or because of a lot of other things. That's what I mean when I had to learn to say no, because I don't like to—I don't want to be a quitter, it goes against everything I have been taught. I feel like I need to fulfill these things, but I know we did the right thing, and the right thing for our family. But Matt, I think never said it, but I know when I went to him and told him this is what I was thinking of doing and that if he felt like that—that we probably should have done this a while ago. I know that he felt like that was right that we needed to concentrate on these guys right now. I think the first year you are kind of in denial, and you really defensive thinking I can do this, but then you have to admit when you get to the point, you know that I can't do this. You know in our culture it's hard to do admit to, because you are not supposed to say that. When it comes to literature, a couple of different things that I can remember. We had a lot of poignant experiences, you know Elder Maxwell came and gave him a blessing. Which was just an amazing experience. Yeah with the first illness, the Still's disease, and I got a call about six in the morning and I thought it was Matt and I thought "Ooo not good" and I answer and say hello and this man says "Hello this is Elder Maxwell, I was wondering if I could come and give John a blessing" and I say "ah sure" and he said alright I will be there shortly. You know I jumped up and ran to one of the nurses and say do you know who Elder Maxwell is and she said yes and I told her he was coming and said "I have got to take a shower." So I jumped in the shower. And so then this amazing man walks in and he has a mask— he was being treated for leukemia, he has a mask on because he says "oh you know I have to be careful what I am around" and we still did not know what Jack had at this time he had taken this great risk coming to this room. They didn't know if he had an infectious disease or what he had.

I had hurried and called Matt and he wasn't there. And Elder Maxwell gave him this amazing blessing, and to be honest I don't remember much of what was said, I really don't. It was more just, I mean Jack had been so fickle and he was notoriously rude in the hospital because he was just so agitated and in so much pain and he would just— I mean if someone would walk in a suit and he thought it was a doctor and he would just yell "get away, go away" and he was mean. And Elder Maxwell came in and Jack was asleep and usually if someone touches him he would just wake right up and Elder Maxwell put his hands on his head. Jack had already had a blessing so he had already been anointed, so he put his hands on his head and I remember thinking what if he wakes up and starts screaming and he just stayed right in bed and stayed asleep it was amazing he didn't move. And it really was, probably one of the most profoundly spiritual experiences in my life. I feel so badly that Matt wasn't there; he came running in the hospital, he had just missed it. But it really was neat, there was just a peaceful feeling, and it was a really emotional tortuous thing. I mean we had visions of him being crippled and really awful things. I mean we had a number of blessings that were really helpful, but I just remember feeling with Elder Maxwell that he would be okay.

In terms of literature, and things that people gave me, my Dad, one night after we had come home from the hospital, and the door bell rang and on the
doorstep was this envelope with four to five hundred dollars cash in it and a quilt under it and a note that said from people who love you. And you know we just sobbed and I called my Dad and asked him what do I do how to I thank people? I mean what do we do, you know I just don't know how to handle this? And he quoted me this quote from a book called Sandpiper and it goes,

“What does one say when surrounded by such bounties, one simply thanks God and remembers.”

And I just have thought of that so many times because I think, maybe there is nothing I can do, everything comes from the Lord and you thank the lord for what you have and in turn I will remember and we will always make sure that Jack remembers and that we will serve others as we have been served. So that has burned in my ears many times because you know once we found out he had cancer, and went back in the hospital I mean you know they came and finished our basement I mean they just were amazing it was just a remarkable thing.

Another thing while we were still in the hospital, my older sister came, you know Jack he was on morphine, he had stopped breathing at one point one night, and I was at my mom’s and Matt called and said that he had coded and had stopped breathing and they pushed all the alarms and they came in and got him back breathing again and it was just horrible. That was Sunday and then we got the diagnosis on Monday. I mean we knew it was bad, but we just didn’t know what it was. I remember my sister coming up to the hospital while Jack was still in so much pain, he was on morphine and they couldn’t get him comfortable and I was trying to rub his back, and she said something like to the effect “you are my hero” or something like that because I was sitting there dealing with this child who was beside himself and I said “I just can’t, I feel like I just want to get off” and she said that she had been talking to her mother in law who is not a LDS woman, whose husband has lung cancer and is really just struggling. They didn’t have much time left and Cass was talking to her about all these heart breaks that her kids have been going through, and you know Caitlin has had this happen, and Maddy’s been disappointed by this and she said “I feel like I just want the world to stop I just want the ride to stop, I just want to get off” and Jean their grandmother said “Ah honey, you just have to ride harder.” And when Jack got sick and this happened, and Cass brought me this that says “Ride Harder,” with this little lasso. There are a thousand times that I think “I can’t do this, I gotta quite I can’t do this it is too hard” and but you just have to ride harder and you just hold on tight and have to get through it.

And then sometimes I think I’m never happy that this happened, but almost in ways that I feel (honored). It’s just that Matt and I could handle this that we could have this child. Because I do, right after he got sick and we came home I thought what if something happened to me? Who would do all this and who would take care of him? And no one could take care of him like I take care of him, but sometimes I think that I am lucky that I can do this, and have this happen as dumb as that sounds. Well at least we have been given this chance to do things right, and I think that one thing that has been hard for me is you know I am the Mom and I am supposed to take of everybody else and I am this Mormon woman who is supposed
to serve everybody else and then to have this kind of service rendered to you, it's hard. It's been really difficult to accept, and I mean you just don't know what to do; you just want to run around and give it back. You know you feel like I can't take this, you people are too nice, too good and we can't do this and they do it anyway. What I have learned is that it is important and it is very difficult to receive graciously. And to be classy about it, because there are plenty of opportunities where and I feel bad even thinking this but there are times I think, you are kind up being set up because, I am worried that if someone has a baby and I don't bring them dinner and they have brought me dinner so many times you know "well she didn't bring me dinner and think about how many times I brought her dinner." I mean I feel a great responsibility to turn around and serve others and I worry that I am offending people, and there is a lot of that. But you know ultimately it has been a challenge but it has been a great experience.

The most challenging moment in your role as a mother?

It's been his sickness, I think in that is partly that you aren't allowed, even if you were sick you could be sick but because it's your child, you still have to be a middle man to the doctors and you child (who's like flinging insults at the doctor, and you like oh he's just kidding) and trying to still be a regular mother to your other children, is just really a challenge unlike any other that I have ever had.

What about your long-term future, what do you see yourself doing?

I hope to finish my education; I hope to be contributing in some way. You know to be outside my family whether it was on a volunteer basis or on a paid basis. You know something, I mean I have volunteered at school and I feel it's very necessary for me I enjoy it. I still sometimes I wonder with my affinity for the medical field is preparing for all this stuff with Jack, you know I really think that, I don't know I have a different view of nursing now, I don't know if that is what I want to do you know I have had to do a lot of it, I have had to do a lot of the grunt stuff of it and I have seen a lot of what they do and I am not sure that is what I want to do, so a lot of my perspective has changed. So I don't know that I necessarily see myself as a nurse, but I see myself doing something but I don't really know exactly what that will be I hope that I can be supportive of my children and my husband and those kinds of things. But whether or not I see myself in a career, I don't know because I still think that my kids will have needs even when they are forty You know that I think that there are always needs there, but I am sure that I will have more time to put towards either my developments, you know I see now people my visiting teachers who are twenty to fifteen years older than me and they have daily scripture study and they have so much time for things that I can not find the time for. I hope to be able to do some of those things that I don't feel I can do now.
Larson 212

Item #9 Emma Clyde*

Name: Emma Clyde
Date Interviewed: October 30, 2000
City of Residence: Manhattan, New York
Age: 30
Occupation: Mother, Accountant
Relationship to Interviewer: Close friend from college
*Name has been changed

What role are you playing right now?
Mother, probably first and foremost just because with young kids and being as needy and dependant as they are, I would have to say mother just because that is always what I have wanted to be, I guess. Wife, obviously, and I still like to define myself in a professional way I guess, although I am not working currently.

You are a stake auditor.
Laugh, I am a stake auditor, that's true, that's true. But I don't know, I think part of it is defining myself to other people I like people to know that I have an education and that I did work. Maybe eventually I would like to go back and work, although it is not my main focus right now. I guess when people ask what I do, I always say that I am a stay at home mom, but I was in the work force as a tax accountant and just quit with my second child because it was just too time consuming and it was something that was too hard to do. I felt guilty when I was at work that I should be at home, when I was home I felt like I should be at work, so anyway.

How do you define yourself?
That is an interesting question, I don't know as a mother and a wife and a woman with separate interests, but those interests kind of tend to take a back seat as a mother with young kids, I think that is part of the frustration of being a mother, but also part of the joy. Because you are seen as the primary person and the comfort and the person that your kids need the most at the times when they are the most needy I guess. But it is also frustrating I guess, because your other interests tend to take a back seat. I like to say that I have tons of other interests, I like to travel, all kinds of athletic things, I love to hike, I love to bike, I love to climb, I love to play tennis, but all those things kind of tend to take a back seat, so I guess I would define those as interests and things that I enjoy and that I want to continue to enjoy, but do I do those things on a daily basis, no. I would include those things I guess in the definition of who I am. I would also say that I am a person, a religious woman, I mean I don't know what you would say, but church is a main priority, and certainly my callings are important to me and being an example to my kids in that respect is important.

What about professionally?
Oh, definitely that is a part of who I am and I still like to use that in describing what I did. You know I worked for six years and was a big part of who I
am. I went to BYU got married when I was 20 and transferred to NYU because Dave went to Law School and so I finished my undergraduate degree in accounting at NYU. And then I started to work for Price Waterhouse as an accountant, an auditor for three years during which time we moved to San Francisco and back to NY. I transferred into the tax-consulting department. And during that time, kind of getting back to what this is all about, I think that a lot of my roles sort of shifted, first getting married and sort of feeling like you have to start thinking about someone other than yourself, and putting the marriage unit first, so I think that was a big role shift. And then moving to New York was a big shift too, because I sort of went from being in the majority sort of in a religious way, living in Utah you don't have to talk about your religion, every one knows you are Mormon, everyone knows what that means, what that entails, you know not drinking, not smoking, no premarital sex. Which was different from being in New York and just feeling that I was definitely in the minority in terms of my religion, in terms of being married at the age of 20, at that point time I was 21, and people thought that was strange.

And so I felt like I was defending my religion and at the same time I was asking myself questions as to why I believed what I did, and I never really had to do that before, growing up in Utah. And so I think that was really good for me, because when people would ask why I didn't drink, you know drinking alcohol back East is like drinking a coke here, sort of well not just back East but just generally just people, you know I think growing up in Utah I thought it was so bad, anyway. So it is just strange to people and you have to defend why you do what you do, and people thought that my marriage had to be arranged because I was so young, and I said, "No, I wanted to get married" and that was very strange for people to understand.

So that was a big thing and then getting into the profession, I felt like I worked so hard, we took out loans for my school and I felt like I wanted to do something with my degree. And so, it's not even that we didn't feel like we were ready to start a family, we just, I just kind of wanted to work at that point because I wanted to use what I learned and use my degree and pay back some of my loans and I don't know and it wasn't really even an option at that point. But I remember coming back to Utah at Christmas and during the summer and having my mother in law say "Oh friends of hers had asked when we were going to start having kids?" and it was such a big issue to people like, why we weren't having kids and I think that people sort of thought having a career and having kids, like you couldn't do both or something. People would say well doesn't she like kids, can she not have kids, you know what's the problem? And I remember defending that too, thinking I want to have kids, like that's the most important thing in my life. But at that point we were still moving around, and it just wasn't really an issue. And I remember thinking that was so strange that people were so concerned, they just didn't really understand. I couldn't do both, and if I was working you know I remember Marilyn saying "oh my neighbor so and so thinks that your career is so important to you that you just don't want to have kids" and I just thought "first of all it's none of her business and second of all, you know of course I want to have kids but you know we just have decided to do this" and it was very strange. And so I always felt like I was defending my religion back in New York, when I came back to Utah I was defending what I was doing professionally.
I think people see women with professions, but I think Mormon women I should say, see women with profession and think “oh, that woman shouldn’t....” I know not all Mormon women are like that, but I think you know we have been brought up to raise families and I think in Utah people get married really young and start their families really young. I mean even still I come back and I am like “whoa, she has four kids, she is younger than me and that seems so strange and she looks like she is still in High school.” But that is just our culture, and so I think when other women sort of step outside of that role they just, think that something must be wrong or that person must be different and I don’t think that that is necessarily the case. When we lived in Michigan I will never forget I hated going to church truthfully, because I was branded, when we lived in Michigan I was commuting back to San Francisco it was because I had a new client, and they paid me a lot of money to do what I was doing and Dave didn’t have a problem with it, but everyone in the ward had an opinion on it.

I remember when I went to church in Michigan for the first time, a woman came up to me and said “Oh so you are Emily Marriott?” and I said “yeah” and she said “so you work in San Francisco?” with just that tone, and I said “yeah” and she said “I just don’t know about you leaving your husband.” And it was this big issue and obviously people had talked about it, and I told Dave I was not going to church, that it really annoyed me that people have talked— some how it’s right for a man to travel with his job, I mean if a man was commuting with his job, doing what I was doing, people wouldn’t even second guess that. We didn’t have any kids; it was just that fact that I was a woman, so anyway. I think that people, I think it’s just our culture— that the woman has to generally been at home. I don’t get that in New York so much, if anything I get the opposite now, now that I have quite my job, I think people are like “oh so you are not working you are just a stay at home mom” and I don’t think they mean “you are just this” but you sort of feel like that and I feel like now I am defending “well I did have a profession and I did do this for so many years and I am qualified in this way.” I think that is so silly, I am not just a mom, I am a good mom and I work a lot harder than I did as an accountant even when I was working twelve or fourteen hour days. I don’t know I just think it’s interesting that a lot of it is Mormonism. I think also it’s just people coming from different backgrounds and different situations and their thinking. Sometime I will just say to Dave, I want a home, I want to raise our kids in a more normal environment and he gets so mad when I say normal because when I say normal I am not saying that everyone else living in New York City is abnormal, because they want to stay in New York City, I just mean normal as in what I know and what has worked for me when I was growing up.

Talk about, you said, now that I am a mom, I work much harder than I did as an accountant, talk about that a little bit, what do you mean?

I just think it’s interesting, because as a mom, I think as a mom, it’s not like you have an assignment and you have to turn it into this person and you get a grade for it and you receive recognition for it. And you don’t have specific duties, you do in taking care of your children but it’s not like you are necessarily rewarded for those. I read a story, I don’t even know who it was by, but it was a story about a woman who was talking to her husband on the phone at work and he was saying something like “Oh what have you done today?” and she was saying “Oh, nothing I haven’t
really done that much today” and her little four year old little boy in the background piped in and said “that’s not true, we have done a lot today, you sewed on my button, we went to the park, we got some groceries, you read me stories,” and he like named all the things they had done and she was like “yeah, I have really done a lot today.” I think a lot of times it’s just like oh, I haven’t really done anything.

But being a mother and being a role model for your child and teaching them right from wrong and reading to them and spending time with them, I mean that’s the most important thing you can do in life. And I think those things somehow because you know I guess they are more personal and because they are not I guess weighted, or you are not rewarded. Or I think they get kind of overlooked or they are seen maybe not as important in life. I think that is kind of sad. I mean I even remember when I was working and a friend of mine had kids and she always seemed so busy and you know “oh my life is so hard” kind of thing. And I remember thinking “oh right, you have kids, you are at home all the time, what could be so hard about that?” And then until you do it, you don’t really appreciate. I think that is true now of how much I appreciate my Mom is I didn’t really, when I was growing up I was always like she worries so much, she is always nagging me. And now you can understand that a lot better as a parent, and as a mother and as someone responsible for another life, I mean I am always at the jungle gym I feel like I am always like “CASSIE!” and I am like she’s three, stand back.

It just because you feel so responsible for these little bodies and they have been entrusted to you and it’s such a big responsibility and I think that does get overlooked. And I think it’s unfair, I think that women have the hardest; they just have a really difficult situation. I don’t know, I mean because it’s like men sort of are expected to work to have a career to have a profession, and even though it’s hard and a lot of times the would like to be home more and be and do things differently. They are rewarded externally for those things and they receive recognition and women I think if they try to do something they are sort of looked at the same way men are it’s not like oh that woman has so much to do. I just remember when I was working part time and I had Cassie and people were like oh yeah you can work part time that’s no problem, we will cut your hours.

But when I was at work and I had to leave because I had to pick Cassie up at day care or whatever, it was like “oh she is leaving early” and people would sort of frown at me for that, and I don’t think they meant to because I think they understood but at the same time I wasn’t getting as great of reviews as I was when I was available all the time. And even though the environment is moving trying to accommodate that a little more, I think that women are always going to struggle because they when they try to do something they are either looked down on by other Mormon women. I think it’s just like you you are always going to be feeling guilty. So that was my problem and I think it’s great when women can make the two, when they are able to balance the two, I mean I look at you and I think you are doing an amazing job at balancing work and family, because for me it was too hard I felt like I was always bringing work home. I was always feeling guilty that I wasn’t getting stuff done, if I was trying to do something at home or a conference.
call and I was “shshshing” Cassie or like feeling and I don’t know my personality was just unable to do it I guess.

I think it’s unfortunate because I think it is important for women to maintain an identity you know beyond just mothering. Although I do think it’s so important, that is not your only role. I mean I look at my Mom for example, my parents have been through a divorce (that was another role shift in my life in that my parents were just rock solid to me and so when they got divorced it was like I began to question everything) and now I feel like a lot of times that I am the parent and my mom is the child. Because she is still recovering, and it’s so hard for her and it’s very frustrating for me. It’s almost like she is too human now. I never wanted her to be that human— like she was always at a different level. And now that I am older and you see more weaknesses in your parents and I also think that it’s just because of what she has been through. She’s just struggled and I feel like okay I am the parent and she is my third child in a way and I feel bad for her.

No, I think mothering and parenting is like the most important thing you could ever do, but I still think it’s so important for a woman to maintain her own identity beyond that, because my mom for example, now that she is divorced and my younger brother is on his mission, she’s on her own and she doesn’t know what she’s going to do with her life. She still has a lot of good years, she has a lot of potential, but she is scared to go out and get a job. The whole process of it intimidates her beyond belief and she has been so wrapped up in everything that we have done our whole lives that I don’t even think she knows where to begin. And I think I feel really bad for her, because I really think she is in a difficult situation. She is fifty-five, I mean it’s not like she can go out and do a whole lot. But at the same time, she is so capable, and you know I think mothering has given her the experience that she could use for any profession, but at the same time you know “I have been a great mother, you know hire me”— no one’s going to listen to that.

People who are thirty, who are my age are interviewing her and that is very hard on her. I think in a lot of ways it is important for women if they can maintain to somehow maintain a little independence, their own identity beyond being a mother. Because I think it will serve them better, and they will probably be happier for it. I mean now that I am home full time with my kids, while I love it and I wouldn’t change it—I do feel like I need a babysitter. I need some time to myself.

And Dave works so much that when he is home, we all want to be together because I don’t see him very much— it’s not like I am going to say, “I am going to leave the kids with you, I am going to go have some time for myself.” But I think everybody needs some time to themselves or you start to lose yourself, you start to lose what your interests are and that was part of the reason I just ran the St. George marathon. Because I thought 1) I need a goal to feel like I am getting back in shape 2) I need some time on my own to have my own thoughts, to just you know do whatever. And although I had to run because I had this goal that I had to train for, I just needed to do something that was sort of apart from everything else that I was doing. And I hate when I say that because I feel like it makes what I am doing sound like it’s not important and that is not what I mean at all, because it is, but I don’t know I just think it’s so important. And I have to say that when I finished I was prouder of myself than I had been in so long and I thought it was such a great feeling. The more I think about it I think it’s sad that I felt so proud of myself for doing that because having a baby, you know, your joys are different. You are just
happier, it's just more joy and just gratitude and like this overwhelming feeling of love when you have a baby. But it is not like "WOW, I am SO Proud of myself, you know after nine months of being pregnant and the labor experience and I conquered it."

But I don't know it was nice to have something where there was an end insight—raising children there isn't an end insight, there isn't. My mother-in-law made a comment to me once, she said "you are only as happy as your unhappiest child" and I will never forget that because I thought that is so true. I think now, and my kids are so young and life is so hard and they are so feisty and I can't go shopping without having a tantrum from one of them. And I think life is so hard for certain reasons but then when they get into the adolescent phase they are going to be so hard for different reasons. And they are going to be happy and unhappy, if the right person doesn't ask them out and you are going to be feeling all of those emotions all over again. I think I don't know that that is just hard.

Did you work with your first child?

I did but I wasn't very happy, I felt like I was doing everything. I liked the fact that I was a mom and I had a profession, and I had church calling and I was active in the ward. I was a good daughter, and this was when my parents were going through their divorce and I was there for my mom whenever she needed me. And I liked the fact that I was doing all these things, but was I really enjoying my life, I don't think that I was. I really felt a lot of stress, and I think that is why I ending up quitting just because it was very stressful. It goes back to the feeling guilty, you know when I was home I couldn't enjoy being home being a mom, I couldn't enjoy being a mom because I felt like I had so much to do at work. And I felt like I was being evaluated and judged and compared to people who were working until midnight. Sometimes I would put Cassie to bed at night and then go back to work until 3:00am in the morning. You know and I just think that I wasn't truly happy and I think it's kind of sad because in a way I would like to be able to have something. Because when I quit, I really did miss having something that was just mine, I didn't miss so much what I did. I missed the time that I had to myself. And I think that mothers in the past weren't given that and I don't know maybe they were just more easily contented with whatever, but I think for me I sort of need to have some time for myself. I need to have my own thoughts. I don't want to forget the interests that I had before things got so busy that I wasn't able to have those anymore. I think that maybe, I don't know I just see my mom, I just keep thinking about that she was so happy while we were growing up and while she was so involved in tennis and cheerleading or whatever it was. But now, I don't know, she is sort of lost. Because she doesn't know what to do and heaven forbid anything like that should happen to us. But I think you just kind of need to be prepared, that these changing roles can kind of help prepare us better to be happier long term.

Do you think your mother could have done things differently or should have?

I think it's an interesting question because in a lot of respects I think she would be happier. Because I remember growing up—my mom, I mean she's very educated and a very smart person. And she would say comments like when we would go out to dinner we would all say "oh thanks dad that was really great" and she would get really mad at us and she would say no "thank mom, thank dad I work
equally as hard as your dad if not harder, I do not earn the money, but that does not mean that I am not working." And so we got into this thing of "thanks mom, thanks dad dinner was great, whatever" "thanks mom, thanks dad for the new outfit for school, I really like it" because she made the point of saying "I work, I could have been the number one attorney or number one whatever it is" she always said attorney because I think she maybe saw herself as a great negotiator and debater or whatever. And she would always say that "I could have been the best at anything that I did and I sacrificed that because I wanted to be home with you guys, so you need to thank me" and so growing up that was always something that I thought of. But now I see my mom in a situation where she can go out and do whatever she wants, she's really in a situation where she could go and do whatever she wants aside from being fifty-five and having that as a restraint. I don't know, but she is scared to death to do it, she doesn't want to do it because 1) she doesn't think that she should have to do it, she feels like she is entitled to a certain life style based on the hard work that you know putting my dad through medical school and raising a family of five, she thinks she is entitled to not have to.

My mother in law is someone I couldn't have lived through my parents divorce without, so she has been a huge influence in my life. My grandmother has just always been so rock solid in the church and carefree about life and the details of life, I have always respected that. And truly I have always loved the story of Ruth in the bible and I think she is very courageous and I've liked... but in terms of role models like the Young Women's President of the Church, I just don't, I was never, I don't feel like I really exposed to. Sometime reading through your article I was like "oh no, I can't pin point an article in the Ensign by Elaine Cannon that I just loved or this book" I mean I have read a few books by women in the church but there is not one that I can tell you I absolutely love and is so memorable to me you know, and so I think that is kind of strange. I don't know why that is so much? What do you think? Like I was telling Marilyn, I said I don't really have, aside from you, my mom, my grandma and this one mutual teacher that I loved. I can't really say so and so is so influential in my life and that article and that book meant so much to me.

I was going to say, back to the question about my mom and if she was working, how would I view that? Because I like the idea of her being home when I came home from school and her being able to carpool. And I don't know if I would have appreciated her having something for herself until I am at the stage I am now. And I think that is the dilemma that women have is that you want to be available to your children, you want them to be in your home you want them to feel comfortable, but at the same time I think you want to be a good role model? What does that mean to be a good role model? I don't really know. I don't know I think it's important for Cassie to know that she can do anything, just like Will, she can do anything she wants to do. I think I am going to push that forever. To my parents, one thing that I loved about them was that education was extremely important to them, that when I got married so young at twenty, I was almost twenty one and I was moving back to New York and schools in New York cost ten times what they cost at BYU. My Dad was opposed at first because he just felt like I wasn't going to be able to finish my education and I will always remember Dave saying to my parents "you do not have to worry, I promise you that Emily will finish her school." And he took out money
from his trust fund to pay for my education for the first year, and we took out loans for the second year.

**Have you had experiences in your life where you have received resistance in terms of your professional life?**

Oh yeah, I think I have received actually probably more negative resistance from women in the church than I have positive in terms of my professional aspirations, and I do think that is sad. I think that goes back to the whole thing of that you don’t really think about what you are going to be doing after school. I think education generally speaking in Mormon culture is important, it is good to be educated, it is good to know how to use a computer. I mean Utah is one of the highest statistic for personal computers in the home, I just think that people are generally interested in being educated, but I don’t think that people or women sort of use that to the extent that they could, and I don’t know even with Cassie she will ask what so and so does or we will talk about something, the garbage collector or whatever, and she will ask “why does he pick up garbage?” and I will say because that is what he does for a living. She’s like “Daddy’s a lawyer and Mommy used to work as a tax consultant but now she wants to stay home” and because I think it’s important for her to know and right now her thing is that she wants to be a truck driver and I want her to know that her skills are not just limited to driving a truck, she can do anything.

**How have you evolved in your relationship with Dave?**

I think we have both changed in a lot of ways. I think probably me more than him, but I think I was a much more dependent like when we first got married and moved to New York, I was very dependent and I don’t know not as comfortable with myself, I don’t know I never really questioned things. I just believed, I probably am too much of a believer, too much of a romantic. But I think being married to him, because he questions everything, not questions like as in the church, he questions things in a very positive and good way and I think that has rubbed off on me, I am not just so accepting of everything you know and I think that has been very good for me.

I remember when we were dating and he would say and knocked on your door and said “oh you know I want to tell you about my church” and I said “oh well you know I would probably listen to them for a minute, but probably not because I belong to the true church, I don’t need to know” and he would say “Emily you are the investigator that I would hate to run into because you are so close minded.” I think I was much more close minded ten years ago than I am now, not that I wasn’t accepting of other people because everybody has a different background and whatever but I think that I believe what I believe, and I belong to the true church and there is only one and I still believe that but in a different way. I think there are so many good people that aren’t Mormon, people that I respect, I respect I think I respect some of the friends that I have you know so much because they don’t live my standards, but what do they believe it so much for reasons that are so good and so right where as when I was doing the right thing it wasn’t for the right reasons. So I think now that I have sort of evolved to sort of believe in myself more and believe in why and be more confident in why that I am doing things. So I think that I sort of evolved that way, I think Dave sort of to be a little bit more of a
compassionate person. I think we have evolved, I think we have balanced each other out. We both have very different strengths, and sometimes I think I don't know how we could have ever ended up together you know when things are bad or whatever. I don't know it's just but you know I think that he just has made me stronger in ways that I never thought I could be and it's funny I believe in myself in different ways. I use this as an example because my sister in law Lindsay, she is in communications and she just did this little package of a story. And she did her story on the marathon and so she interviewed me and she asked what helped to motivate me to keep going through those times when I were ready to quit? And I said truthfully it was my husbands comment he said “you could do it but you won’t” and I think she saw it like my mean brother how could he say that. But it was very motivational for me, because I knew that he believed that I could it, but because of everything else that was going on I did not see it as a negative thing I see it more as a motivational tool and him playing the devils advocate sort of thing. Trying to get me to be better sort of and that is sort of how we are, and I think other people don't see that and they think that he is not supportive of me, but he totally is they just don't understand it. I mean he is a very strong believer in the church; he has as strong of a testimony of anyone I know. But at the same time he doesn't think certain things are the way they have to be, like mothers in the home. He thinks everybody's situation is different and you need to do what is best for you and for your family and so he has always encouraged me to work. And it almost got to a point where I felt like I had to keep working because I wanted to be everything in his eyes. Then I realized that I could be everything in his eyes and be as unhappy as this person buried in the cemetery, I felt like I was so unhappy and so then I had to realize I sort of tied things up Because Dave feels that way he wants me to work. And so then with the second baby it's just going to be too hard as much as it's important to me, it's also more important to me to be happy and I think if I am happy I am going to be a better mother and a better wife. And he was like “that's great” you know it wasn't like an issue, and it was interesting because I was all prepared for it to be, and so it was like I feel like even though I feel like we know each other so well, each year something happens or something changes and we rediscover and I just think why would I think that he would think less of me because I wasn't going to work? That is so dumb, but that was a concern, and so I feel like each year we are still evolving so that was an issue a couple years ago.
Item #10 Kristen Olsen*

Name: Kristen Olsen  
Date Interviewed: January 12, 2001  
City of Residence: Salt Lake City, Utah  
Age: 28  
Occupation: Law Student, Mother, Volunteer  
Relationship to Interviewer: College friend, neighbor

How do you define yourself?  
Wife, mother, member of the church, student

What about on an ideological level, the different roles?  
Part of how I define myself is how other people define me. I mean Mark I think looks at me as a pessimist, I probably am a pessimist, but I would call myself more of a realist.

A professor at BYU would say to us “I am not who I think I am, I am not who you think I am who I think you think I am.”  
But that’s true; wherever you are you are a different person. You mold yourself to become what you think people want you to be in certain role.

What would you say is or has been the most difficult decision you have had to make?  
The stuff, the decisions I am in right now, going back to school, and everything that entails, what to do with my kids, how that’s going to affect my marriage, and whether or not it’s even worth trying to put myself through something difficult. At least for now, I mean I am not that old. I think right now that’s just about as big as anything, I mean it doesn’t just affect me it affects so many other people.

Why is its difficult? That decision in particular.  
I think you can divide it into two categories, the first one is the things it will do to me and then the things it does to others. I mean on the others list it affects just the day to day running of the house you know who’s going to dress the kids, going to the grocery store, who’s cleaning the house, you know the stuff for the rest of my married life has been taken for granted. I’ve always been home, I’ve never been away, that’s just what my husband grew up with, it’s not what I grew up with but it is what he grew up and so he’s use to that and he’s never seen it or done it any other way, even though he’s quite game for it all. You know it’s really stressful what effect it will have on my kids, to be away from them to know if this person I am bringing in my home is going to treat them the right way, teach them the right things. There is always the possibility of being raised the right way.

It affects my calling because I know even the calling I have right know, because of being in school I mean I am fighting against being released. You know the Young Women’s President has been really difficult lately; it’s been interesting I’ve had to go around the normal channels to not lose my calling because I love it. But
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they think for some reason that I can't handle it, I don't think I am too screwed up, but that's another story. Another that is hard is for me that I don't want my kids lifestyle to change just because I am doing something for me now, but I have taken it upon myself to go back to Law School and do the best I can do there but not have anything change at home. For example you know, birthdays, for example they have always had home made Halloween costumes, they will continue to have home made Halloween costumes or home made Easter clothes or whatever it is, or home made Christmas cards, but I figured that I couldn't take that away from them and so now you know I don't ever sleep, but at the moment things seem to be smooth so maybe I pulled it off, we'll see. Part of the problem is that has been my lifestyle, and that's why it's hard, it goes back to what you've always done and so why should I have to change it? And so far we have done it, there's not been much that's given, except for sleeping, that's about it and that's ok.

What other kinds of challenges came at you in making the decision to go to Law School?

Oh gosh, family was very interesting. I don't know what you know about my parents background but they are both professionals, I grew up with them working, but not full time; I mean my mom took years off here and there. But she's always been, they are both judges now. My dad is in the State Supreme Court and my mom is a juvenile court district court judge. I mean they have always done the big things, but they weren't particularly traditional. Like my dad, the minute I made the decision to go back I knew I was going to have full support from them it was more of an issue that I wouldn't, now they knew I was putting it off but they were game with whatever works for us. And so when I decided to go back they were so supportive and fabulous. Marks family was more along the lines of (you know they never said it out right at least at the beginning, you know it was kind of implied) "are you not satisfied with your life? Are you not just happy just being the wife of, the mother of? It never crossed their minds that there were other reasons to do something, rather than not being satisfied with your life.

What do you mean exactly?

For my mother in law and sister in law, I think to be a mom and to be a housewife, (I am not belittling it, I have done it and I loved it it's fun to be home)— I think that is the end all be all and that is all they have ever dreamed of wanting to do and it's really fulfilling everyday I think. But for me, even when I stayed home all day I found that I needed something more. So I got involved in other stuff, you know when we lived in LA, I got involved in different service type things, I just wasn't particularly happy sitting home watching Barney, it was driving me nuts. So going back and deciding to go back, I knew that I was going to face, not opposition, because that's not the right word, but just some resistance, it wasn't going to be "oh great how can we make your life easier," even though my mother in law has been fabulous— she takes the kids once a week. She has been great. But you know the actions have been fabulous, but sometimes the words? I mean they still don't get it even now. I mean they have asked Mindy (the nanny) independently of each other "why is she really doing this?" You know they just don't take much what I said as a true answer, they just don't get it, which is fine—they're happy, which is good. But that was a newer person there; I knew that that was going
to be one of the harder parts of going back. I would never have felt that from my friends, because all of my friends in high school and pledge class have gone on to do professional stuff, so it's not weird to them.

**What about other Mormon women in your community, your neighbors?**

Because I didn't grow up in a high school around here, like so many of us in the Greek system grew up lived and died together. My high school group of friends was very different and we're still very close but nobody lives in state, we all live away. I was the first one to move back, and they have been very a whole different influence than my Greek group of friends, because they all got married a lot later, some of them have only been married a year or two. Half of them don't have kids, there's a group of about ten of us. We've got attorneys, people with PhD's and Masters and they're just all really accomplished and they are amazing and they were more of the "you should have gone to law school years ago, why did you wait? You may be crazy to do it with kids, but we're glad you're going back." So that was kind of weird with them, but they were more critical when I wasn't going to school, which is kind of funny because they all were. This was my high school friends from Bountiful. But I got married young, I mean I was twenty. And so for them that was weird, they were like what are you doing? But the beauty of that is that I was done with College. So that was fine. So they cut me a lot of slack for that. So that group of friends has always been pro, do the hard stuff— go be whatever.

My college friends, you know they have all been a real funny group. You know half of them have master's, the other half have stayed home. There hasn't been support or discouragement on either side. They just are really casual, but when I told them I was going back they were cool they were very cool about it. A few of them were like what are you going to do with your kids, which I think is a valid question to ask. But nobody said I was crazy. I get a lot of that from ward members, and most of them have been women that are older than me. And I don't know if it's that they wished they went back? I don't know, but it's not that, it's often "I am thrilled for you, good luck", its " how are you going to do this?" is the classic end comment. "If you ruin your kids, will you quit?" or "If you ruin Mark's career, will you quit or drop out?" I don't know.

**Were those questions that people asked you?**

Before I started, and then to complicate it I got in two years ago and then I got pregnant with David and so I deferred a year. And most people, but a long those same lines the high school friends were like you will still go won't you? The church friends and in-laws were like you're not going are you? My family was like that'll be more complicated but you can do it. We did it you can do it. There were very distinct groups.

**Where have you received the most resistance, where would you categorize that?**

The really really traditional LDS women. Most of them older than me, because if you look at there aren't many people younger than me who are in a position to say anything. I mean I did a lot of things a lot earlier than most people, I got married earlier, I had kids quick not necessarily always planned. I mean I've got some interesting friends, I've met at law school who are married LDS, twenty two to
twenty four year olds and they think I am so old. And I am not, I mean I am hardly older than they are, but they are very cool about it. I don't know if it's just because they are open minded or what? But it's the traditional women though, but those women are all college graduates. These are not people who never went to college when you think about it. A lot of them worked for a couple of years until they had their first kid and then quit and never went back.

I think of my mother in law and when Ed, Mark's brother, went on his mission one year and a half ago, he'll be home this May. And when he left, I remember she was so melancholy about the whole thing, it was like all of sudden her purpose for living was gone. All of her kids were gone and now what? I remember just sitting there thinking, I don't ever want to be her. I don't ever want to be stuck with nothing, and having that be my only purpose and I think that you know raising kids is so fun, but I don't want that to define me, is that bad? Is that bad? But there is so much pressure to be that, huge. There is almost pressure not to say that you don't want to be that, and that sucks.

Well both of your parents were professionals right?

And Happy, my brother went on his mission and came home and they were having the time of their lives. They did things like I did, young, the hard way. Everything they did the hard way, and now they are young, their grandparents, they are playing, they both have great jobs, they travel, they have great callings that they devote their time to, I mean I look at that and I think when I'm that age I would rather be there than where my mother in law is, but there's nothing wrong with I mean I think she's happy, but I don't know, how do I know? Technology capabilities alone are going to be make it so much easier than it ever did.

And that is why it changes the face of our culture and our society and in that the role of a woman will change...

And that is good... it's really interesting because the ward we lived in, they wealthy were very wealthy, I mean we were kind of like the white trash it was fabulous but, no I am not kidding you, we were the charity case, these were multi million dollar families for the most part in the neighborhood and us. It was interesting cause the vast majority of the women in that ward that I got to know really well had secondary degrees. And most of them had worked and chosen to took some time off, but all planned to go back nobody had done it all for their kids. They were taking time off and some of them were working from home part time but it was very common in that ward, I don't know if it was a California thing vs Utah. It was very common, when I talked about going back to school there nobody even batted an eye, it was not weird, here it's weird.

But I think in our culture it's interesting, because I think that people like to take some of our culture and turn it doctrinal where it isn't doctrinal and then preach this made up doctrine for your ears, when their not getting it anywhere. And that when we talked about moving back that was an issue, whether or not we wanted to come back let alone having our own kids raised in it because here being a Mormon is different than being, your kids are raised with very different ideas of what is acceptable within the parameters of the church guidelines. It's just a whole different deal here.
Are there other critical moments in your life or roles that have been challenging?

Getting married wasn’t a big one for me, because it was a natural break in time for me. I was graduated from College and had been dating Mark for two years and so I kind of knew that that was coming so I hadn’t specifically planned on like going to graduate school immediately knowing that the timing with going to school back East, I’d had to wait until we moved.

I think that the biggest critical moments where I’ve had to deal with pressures on myself—I’m probably hard on myself, self imposed pressures and pressures from other people have always come around each kid. And I don’t know why that is and maybe it’s all in my head, but every time I’ve gotten pregnant it’s been an issue. When it comes to my goals, when it comes to my role in our family, our little family and how that’s related to. I will give you an example, when we got pregnant with Christian I had been preparing to apply for graduate school and he was kind of an unplanned surprise, we hadn’t been married that long and at that time you know things were kind of complicated and I just abandoned graduate school at that time. Which you know some people thought was a great idea and a great decision and than other people were like why? This is you, a part of you? What were you thinking? At the time, I mean it was the right decision at the time. The second baby wasn’t as big of an issue; third, David was during the whole accepted to Law school phase. And you know people like to give advice and like to stick their nose in when maybe it isn’t welcome.

People have freaked out about my decision to go back to Law school or to do anything, if it’s more than they’re doing for some reason it’s not okay. Which seems really crazy to me.

President Hinckley gave this quote on capacity, have you read it?

I am familiar with it, I think. Capacity is defined by what you want it to be and need it to be. When I was in California and I was a stay at home mom and I had one kid and then Sara. I mean it was just a different deal I didn’t need to have a capacity to be able to handle and juggle 37 things, I’m sure that I could have handled it then no different than now. I didn’t need to, I mean I could have done more than a lot of people and that was fine. But it seems kind of odd especially in a culture where as Mormon women we should kind of help each other out, for heavens sake, life’s hard enough as it is, but the perfect person to illustrate that is Elizabeth Burt, she and I teach together, her kids and my kids are exactly the same age, we both have these little babies, she was like okay what do you have lined up for day care? And at that point I didn’t have it lined up and I was stressed out about it. And she said, “Ok, I will watch your kids” and I said “You watch kids?” and she said “No, but I’ll watch your kids” and I said “No.” And she said “No, Kristin we have to watch out for each other, women have to stick up for each other” and I said “no, I am going to find somebody to come in” and she said than I want to be plan B, and well my mother in law is plan B, and she said well I want to be plan C. And then when she find out yesterday that my sitter hadn’t come she was all over my case “why didn’t you call me?” You are supposed to call me” Don’t make life harder, please let us help you. I mean there are very few of those, far too few. I mean maybe, I don’t know that I am good at
How do you think your capacity fits into this?

Well I think I am who I am in large part because of who my mother was, because of what she pulled off. My life is so much easier than hers was. You know she had two kids and a third during law school and was Relief Society and worked a part time, and my dad worked two jobs and they both in law school at the same time and were so poor and lived in student housing. My life is so privileged compared to what hers was, and she pulled it off. I look at what she is doing now; she had taken her degree and she has taught me a lot about what I can do and not limit myself. I have watched her in all the sorts of different things she served in her church callings. I look at the way she has served and I really think she has been able to teach people things that they maybe wouldn't have gotten any other way. Just because she had experiences that you know most people haven't. And she fought at a time where she had a law professor tell her, "I am going to fail you because I want you out of law school" Oh to her face, it was great. And I can't imagine when she was in school and my sister had pneumonia, and she had missed like three weeks of school and she called me and said you know can I bring my sick daughter to class? And she did she brought my sister to class for like three weeks—can you imagine? Now, I can't fathom doing that today. And my mom is one of those women who she honestly feels like she's changed the world, she works with these kids and she feels like she's changed the world, she works with them in her office and say "okay I don't want her job. But there are definitely things you can do. And to think that she spent her life being, I mean people just nailed her for years—she lived in this neighborhood she lived down in this next ward, I grew up on this next street of Hubbard. But people were very hard on her, I mean and she takes everything very personally. But I watch her go through these things and she is the type of person who she honestly feels like she's changed the world. And she fought at a time when she was in school and she said you know I can't do it. I mean that seems like the most foolish thing in the world. That's why seeing the pamphlet made me laugh, because I can so strongly remember having our home teachers show up on our doorstep with this pamphlet and looking at me and just thinking, my first thought was kind of a protective thing in my mind you know "I can not believe you would bring this and do this to her." And she just
laughed and she's like oh I received tons of these. People give it to her thinking they were being helpful about the prophet ways or the Lords way or whatever. All I remember is that it was probably about fifteen years ago, a big pamphlet.

But you know President Hinckley has gone so back on that and he is so much more open and accepting that I think it's easier now to not let it bug you, I mean you could but you don't have to, I don't know it sucks.

A couple of weeks ago I had to teach Young Women's that was interesting because that's exactly what the topic was, cultivating women, and it had a few quotes from President Hunter, and those were these quotes and I spent more time praying about three or four of these quotes about whether to even include these in my lesson, things like “a woman should only get her education before marriage and only use it if her husband dies or is incapacitated in some way.” That was the quote and I struggled with that, it was the hardest lesson to give. And it didn't have any of the new stuff in it, this was the Young Women's manual, the current manual for last year. But on the other hand I was so glad that I was the one teaching it. And so but it scares me I mean what are the girls these days getting if that's what the manual says. But frightening, that was the text, that was the lesson manual. So I used President Hinckley's book “Stand for Something” and it had a fabulous set of quotes in there that I pulled out and said ok here is the current stuff. And you know these girls all know what I am doing anyways and think what they want, it was shocking to me. I used parts of those other quotes, but I didn't read the verbatim and I didn't read them in the context they were asked, I didn't, I couldn't, I couldn't... I am sorry.

But beyond that there is as beautiful thing called personal revelation, you pray about it and may be for me and maybe not. And that's what saved my mother was it's up to you, it's not up to what everybody else decides. But for me the only way I got around this lesson, my patriarchal blessing is was very specific about education it's very long and a quarter of it talks about education. I got my blessing when I was older, it was the week before I graduated from college, and two weeks before I was married Mark. So it wasn't his education is going to be a big deal for you later because you got your undergrad. It was, the patriarch knew me very well, he'd known my family for years so to have gotten it at that point, I remember just thinking whew, and I read it now and I go yeah I am fine, I am not listening to you folks, if it's in here, it's me, it's specific, I can ignore this and that's hard.

What kinds of literature, books, articles authored by Mormon women or just Mormons have influenced you?

Yeah there is one that is not church article or anything like that, it was probably five months ago, it was on the editorial page on the newspaper. And the only reason I was even drawn to it was because one of my high school friends called me and said “I've got the best article for you, you've got to read it” and I was like I looked it up on the web in the archives. I can tell you who wrote it, because it turns out it's a girl who was in my ward who is fabulous, she talk about breaking every Mormon stereotype on the face of the planet, she's done it. Elizabeth Harmer, is her name. It was a response to an editorial. It was very validating to read that, to say yeah well I'll be darned.
Why did that particular article affect your role?

The need to be validated, we all need to be validated especially amongst our own peer group, I mean we know that there are women who are out there who are doing fabulous things that are non-Mormon, but amongst our own culture we really need that, we need to know you're not doing something bad or wrong or ruining your kids or whatever it may be. And to have other women who are able to say that what you are doing is good, it serves a purpose, it's got value, it is important and we need it. I don't know if it's a woman thing or I don't know.

What about that? Has it been easy to find that validation?

When you find validation it's fabulous, but it seems to me that the women who validate you are much less likely to jump out and come find you rather than the converse, they are more likely to be vocal and tell you that you are doing a bad thing rather than the women who think you are doing something great. But they are out there, I mean in random places they will come say you are doing something wonderful and I am glad your doing it, not necessarily school but whatever your doing.

And I don't know about you but I know an awful lot of women that don't get involved in their community, they don't get involved in anything, because their community services is their church calling, which I think is insane. I mean yeah church callings are awesome and you are supposed to do 110 percent, but there are so many other needs, above and beyond school and above and beyond careers. Just in the community alone women can make more of a difference, and it's a shame that in Utah most of the community service, at least my experience has been, is not done by the Mormons or the women.

Mark dragged me into the Lowell Bennion Center, I didn't even know what it was, but he dragged me in and I fell in love with it, it was awesome, the vast majority of the volunteers that did anything were non-members, guys, girls it didn't matter. And the flaky volunteers were the LDS kids because they were too busy with their church calling and institute, which are all great things to spend your time doing, but it seems to me that there is more to, I mean you look at the whole example of Christ and what his whole point in life was and it wasn't to be self-centered around Jell-O. It was a much bigger, get out of this community, get out of the box do something for somebody else and I don't know that that is something that we Mormon women are teaching each other at all. I think we're teaching to serve each other in our ward boundaries, so long as we don't cross the lines to the next ward we're great, but I don't know. It's a little frustrating for me.

What do you want to pass onto your daughter and granddaughter about survival and self-identity?

I don't want there to be any limits on it, period. I got this from my mom; it was you decide what you are going to be. I will support you 100 percent, no matter what, period no discussion, great. My sister chose to stay at home, and she started her Masters and stopped, great complete support no problem. Everybody's happy, and you know when I decided to be home for a while, great whatever we can do to make your life easier. You know we are with you, and they were always interested in what ever it was, and then as soon as I decided to go back to school it was great, what can we do to make it easier, I think because my mom has been there, both
sides. She has been stay at home, she did that for years here and there, and she has done what I'm doing.

I don't think it's because she's an attorney that I'm going back to law school, I really don't, it's more the personality driven part of me. But because she's been there, I think she's even more supportive than any other mom could be. She knows what not to say and what to say and she knows life is stressful, like during finals she had a day where her calendar had canceled and her days off are very precious because she doesn't get many. And she calls me up and she knows very well that we pay our babysitter and it's expensive and it's well worth it to me, but she calls me up and says I will come and take the kids and my mom is not the kind of mom who loves to be a big babysitter all day, but she did it. She took them to McDonalds, which was a big step for her; they watched movies and played with them all day. I mean it's great. If I can pass that onto Sara that regardless of what you chose to do, I don't care what it is, I am going to be there for you to do whatever it is to make it easier on you. That would be ideal, ideal. But I also don't want her to think that by choosing to go back to school that I have chosen to give up a lot of things either though, that's the one thing I got from my mom. I mean in some ways its very hard to be related to her because she is in a lot of aspects too perfect, I am not kidding you.

I want Sara to see that there are both, I remember going to my mom's graduation from Law school, only happy memories, I remember wearing matching dresses and parousels that my mother had made. But all through her career and her personal life, she hadn't given up on that; I don't think she ever missed a soccer game or a dance recital or anything else. And we always had homemade dresses, she knits and she canned seven tons of pickles this year. She does it all— her capacity is ridiculous. And mine is not that big, and I'm good at that, I don't need it to be, but I don't expect Sara to be that big. I mean I want her to be who she is, but I don't want her to feel restrained, I don't want her to feel that just because her friends or her classes at school or friends in the ward because their doing this that she needs to do that. Because there are so many people out there who are being held back and there is no reason for it, and I think a lot of it is what your taught when you grow up and if you are not taught it, it may never cross your mind to do it.
How do you define yourself?

I think I have pretty much defined myself by what I do, and I am working on this. I think realistically I define myself by what I do and I am actually working on changing that, I don’t like that I do that. Well I think a lot of it comes from my upbringing, but I think also it’s kind of a big part of Mormon culture is about like what you do. You know we are like the busy bee type culture, we are busy and we do a lot and I think there is a lot of emphasis on what you do which is not a bad thing but I think it can be a bad thing. I just grew up in a house where kind of you are what you do and you are a good person by how productive you are and the effect you are having on other people and that what you are doing is beneficial to the world kind of an attitude. So I have also sort of thought that or defined or that I am who I am by what I do and the kind of good things that I like share with other people, society in general.

If you were to look at that in terms of gender though, maybe not in your family, but just in general do you think that the church holds that same standard for men, do you think that men feel that same pressure?

I do, but I think it’s easier, because it is pretty black and white that they are going to work, so they are going to be busy all day because they are at work, they work all day and then come home. And if they have a calling they are probably going to be busy one or two nights a week. I just think it’s easier to fulfill that and to feel good about fulfilling that, because oh I am busy I am doing a lot I am providing for my family, that kind of thing. Where as I especially I think it creates a real problem when women are stay at home moms because then they feel like they aren’t doing enough or they are not doing something. Because it really bothered me when we lived at University Village and lots of new moms and moms and they would say things to me like “Oh you are so lucky you have a life, I don’t have a life” about staying home cause I would get up and they would watch me go off to work and dress up and they be like “oh you are so lucky you get to dress up and go to work” and it bothered me so much and I just thought that was so sad that they are viewing what I do as more you know I am doing something, they don’t have a life they don’t do anything because they just stay home with the kids. So that’s where I think it becomes a problem, because I think that is a big reason why we have so many like overdone women, who are doing a thousand million things. But that is just my perspective.

And especially this year since I have been sick, I mean I have not done much to speak of, so what? Am I a horrible person? You know because you know
I am not accomplishing huge things everyday? But some days I just couldn’t I was just like ok I can get up and I can do the dishes and I can do my reading and go to my class and that is it. I can’t make dinner, I can’t do the laundry, I can’t go to anything at night. So with that same mind set, if I am judging who I am by what I do, I mean I didn’t do much, so it has been a good time for me to kind of think about that.

So how do you find yourself handling the shift?

It is really hard, but I have actually liked it. And I realize in the mode of like going, going, going, I sort of lost a lot of the enjoyment I had found in a lot of things. I just have never been able to like enjoy the moment; I had so much to do in a day. You just have to be in high speed all the time. So like I noticed the other day I was grocery shopping I am like oh my gosh I am walking up and down every isle. This is so nice, because usually I just have Saturday to do a thousand things, and I am running to the grocery store and grab whatever I can really fast and hurrying kind of thing. So I have realized that actually I have liked it I didn’t think I would and it took me a while and I think the I actually had to get sick to be able to like say “it’s okay” to like slow down and it’s okay not to be doing a lot, or doing something.

Do you think that it has increased the quality of your life?

I think it will eventually, I really do. I think it is going to be a conscious effort on my part to say, to keep my life simpler, cause I just have a tendency to over do things.

What do you see yourself wanting to go more towards, defining yourself by or what has become your ideal?

More like more who I am instead of what I do, that I don’t look at day and say okay what did I do today? Today is a good day, I was a good person today but tomorrow I am not a good person because I was lazy. I don’t do this or all I did was just watch my kid, or whatever you know I didn’t to anything to show... I think it’s more of like I am getting a product, to have at the end of something. So I think I am just trying to get away from that and just be a little more content with living and not feeling like you always have to accomplish something. I mean not that I don’t want to accomplish something, but I am just trying to take the being away from it, and actually I kind of started to think about it more. Elder Maxwell gave a talk about it, and I have an example of a women writer too, but actually before I read his talk I read a book and I think that your mom read it too, *Confronting the Myth of Self Esteem*, Esther Rasband, I think she has authored stuff too, she is from Provo and teaches at the Y.

What got you thinking about these?

Well when I read it I started to think about, her whole view is that a lot of people, and she was kind of focusing on women, but this is for people in general, but they base their self esteem on what they do, versus like their relationship with God and who they are. So that kind of got me thinking about how people set up
their, I don’t want to say self esteem cause it’s not really that, but their worth, how they define themselves.

So do you think for you, you are rethinking what it means to have an accomplishment?

Yes, I think I am rethinking what it takes to be happy, and it doesn’t necessarily take a bunch of accomplishments to be happy. I don’t think that will do it for you. Or feel good about yourself, because you will feel good for a minute maybe, but that really isn’t long term.

I think it’s huge right now for all women. I think, I don’t know in my program and I work with a lot of women who do so much, they teach all day, and do their masters at night, when I think of my friend and she has six kids on top of that and she is just doing it and just going, and she is going to sign up for this other class, she wants to be trained to be a certain kind of teacher, and huge intensive training, she wants to do it on top of her masters and it’s just like a never ending cycle, you know and she has already got her masters and now she is getting re-endorsed for reading. It is just like, I see it And it’s like this constant desire that is never really filled I don’t think, I don’t think it can ever really be filled. Cause I was really thinking about it, cause all of the sudden I am getting to the end of my masters, which was really fast. So then I started to think about PhD, so I have been talking to one of my advisors about it and she wants me to come and do it with her and do some research and stuff. But all of sudden I am like oh my gosh I am getting sucked in to this, like I have to be, not that you don’t want to progress, because that is the whole plan of salvation is progression, but I don’t know it has just made me think.

How do your parents respond to this? How does your Dad and your Mom respond to your thinking about going on to get a PhD?

You know it’s funny, my dad was really excited about me getting my masters degree, he was totally excited, he offered to pay right then, the second I even thought about it, he said do it, I’ll pay for it. I said it’s okay, we have money of our own, we can pay for it. He was totally excited about it, but that is my dad, education always important. He was totally excited when Ryan was going to be going to Duke or a big name, he just thinks education is great. My mom, she was funny she was like, “well if you are doing your Masters just to get a Masters than I don’t think you should do it, but if there is something you really want to do, and you are doing it for the right reasons, that is kind of her thinking. She doesn’t think you should get stuff to just have accolades or whatever. But they have been supportive, I think my Mom feels better about it know that I have shared a lot of information with my sisters and their kids. About how they are learning and she is like “that will be so great when you are a mom”, I think she is getting the whole idea of it now. But her answers to all of our problems are “oh if you could just have a Baby, and stay home and get out of this mess (she thinks of our lives as a mess) and I am like “mom”! But she has been supportive just in different ways than I thought. My dad was just totally excited, it’s funny when this Professor approached me about getting a PhD and asked me to work with her and I mean I have idolized her for years, she is like so well known in the reading field. And I
was really flattered that she would ask me and I came home and I was like John
you won’t believe it, I could work with her and do comprehensive research and he
was like “what?” (Not as in why would you do that, but as in what in terms of
magnitude of excitement and importance of the opportunity) And so really
honestly I wanted to tell my Dad I knew he would appreciate it, but I didn’t tell
my Mom or my sisters.

But I don’t really; communication isn’t fabulous with my Mom, so I tell
her selective amounts of my life. I don’t know and I thought she would be like, I
was totally sick at the time, and I think she would have been like “ohhh, just stop”
and the hard thing is she doesn’t want me to ever work again, she just wants me to
rest and eat chicken soup for the rest of my life! (laughs) And I am like mom I am
twenty-four. Well I think a lot of decisions that I make now are not necessarily in
response to her but I am very aware of things that I want to keep doing from her
and things I don’t. Actually she is a very good example of someone who does
way too much.

So I mean and I respect her for it, it is all good intentions completely and
she has the best intentions of anyone I have ever known and I don’t think she has
ever hurt a person intentionally in her entire life ever. She is the most empathetic
person I have ever known, I think I learned empathy from her like other kids
never do. I never made fun of kids, I invited everybody to my parties, I just didn’t
know about hurting feelings, because she had just taught us so well. You just
don’t, just how to treat people.

She is really great that way, and I have nothing but positive things to say. I
don’t know, I think sometimes I feel bad for my mom because her life is really
tiring. Like I went to women’s conference with her you know, she slept through
the entire thing. (laughs) I am going why are you here you have slept through
every session, except Sheri Dew’s (laughs). I mean she
is just overdone, just tired,
she is really tired and she has way too much to do. And she doesn’t work, not like
career wise, but just with that many kids and she is involved in a lot of things and
with my Dad and his job. She is just really involved in a lot of ways; I get tired
when I think about her.

Do you think that you have picked up on some of those habits in your own
life? I mean the go, go, go attitude?

Well I mean I think the same thing for her, she like measures herself by
what she like does? She is like “I didn’t get anything done, oh I didn’t do
anything today.” She actually gave a talk at the Women’s Conference a couple
years ago, she has actually spoken quite a few times, but it is called “Must we
always run faster than we have strength.” I mean she is aware of it, it was actually
a really insightful talk. It was a really great talk, her whole thing is women are
continuously badgering themselves about what they didn’t do and not recognizing
all the good things that they really did do. And she said one day, she felt this way
and then she sat down and then she made a list of all the things that she had
actually done and she read it at the beginning of her talk and it’s like “gosh, she
did so much”. But I don’t know she has been guilt ridden, which is really
common thing for Mormon women.
Could you expand?

Like I think they are really guilt ridden about everything, you know and not just gospel stuff, like little tiny things. I remember learning that you are supposed to feel guilt for sin, that guilt is a good thing it reminds you that you have done something wrong and you need to repent, you should feel guilt when you really sin. But I don’t think you should feel guilt for like not cleaning the floor well enough or not like calling somebody, you know just like acting out of guilt always. You know I think we all do that a little bit, I don’t know my mom did that a lot. You know really guilt ridden, like “I should, I should”. You know never like, I mean she likes to do stuff, but a lot of times it’s “I should” “I need to” very heavy laden with this like guilt. I feel like she calls me out of guilt, you know “how are you guys? I have been meaning to call you?” You know and so I am like please don’t add me to your “to do” list, you know I am fine. And so I am always trying to like relieve her, I am fine mom. I didn’t tell her for months that I was sick, and when she finally realized how bad it really was and that I had to stop working she totally flipped her lid. She like came buzzing down with soup and bread, and everything and I was like “Mom I am fine.” But I didn’t want to add to her, because I feel like she is going to like kill herself off, like I should be down there helping her, and I am sure she would have so I didn’t want her to worry about it. So I don’t know the guilt thing, I feel a lot, I do remember hearing Sheri Dew talk about it, and saying that guilt does not come from Christ. Which I think is really good because I don’t think that any religion or anything is supposed to make you feel constantly, like oh my gosh, and it almost seems like really old puritan beliefs or something where you feel guilty for everything. Especially when it’s not really sin, I feel guilty for stuff.

How were the women cultivated in your home?

I don’t feel like I was really cultivated differently than my brothers. I mean we different things because we were on a farm, which I think makes things different in that my brothers were always working on the farm, so they didn’t do house work you know but it was fair because I didn’t get up and go gather the eggs and feed the calves and they did. And so like on Saturdays, girls cleaned and my brothers and my Dad were usually out on the ranch doing stuff or we all helped do yard stuff together. But that way was the only way I felt like things were different, but I didn’t feel like it was unfair because they worked, but they didn’t do much around the house. But they worked hard on the ranch, and I didn’t really want to get up at 4:00 and milk cows and stuff. I loved to ride with my Dad in the tractor, but I didn’t want to do stuff like that, but my brothers always had a lot of pressure that way. But I don’t feel like things were that different but I really honestly was always pushed in education, I mean there was no question that was just what you did, everybody went to college. It was more of just where you go, but you go.
Did you feel like they wanted you to do something with your education or just get an education?

I think, do something. If I would have gotten married and gotten pregnant off the bat, what would my parents have done? But I know that they really wanted me to like work, my mom taught school for a few years and she thinks it’s really valuable to have that experience and to be out there in the working world and to make money and to have to face that whole thing. Because my sister Julie really hated working really bad, and they really were hard about that, just like this is life. She really would have been happy, I wish she would have just had a baby right after she graduated, she hated working it was the biggest trauma, and kind of she just wasn’t able to ever find a really good job, it is kind of like the Sara Snow, she was like jumping around jobs and hating them, but Sara is different she really wants to work. She was kind of like, “Oh Julie”. I do feel like, I mean I do not think, I know my mom would not be happy if I worked as a mom. She would be very sad and so would my Dad, they would be sad; they would think that I had made a poor decision.

When you say work, what do you mean by work, do you mean work full time? Or what exactly?

Yeah, full time and even, I mean it would have to be very minimal if I worked and if it was at all at my kids expense, I know that my parents would have a really hard time with it. And my mom would tell me, she is very forthright about women’s roles, she speaks about it all over and she says people always get mad at her and she doesn’t care, she feels very strongly about it. Yeah, even my older sister Lindsay up in Spokane, she is a dietician, she loves her job, she is really good, she wanted to teach a few classes, like once, she would work like once a week or something like that. And my mom was like “have you heard Lindsay is going to try to work once a week, I just don’t want her to leave Jason, he is just is so little.” I know she was worried about that.

How do you feel about that?

You know I actually feel pretty similar, I don’t know I just think when I have kids, I want to do other things but I don’t know I will have to see. Because I don’t want to do anything that would take me away from them, except maybe like what do you do teach one class? You know I would do that, but I would only leave my kids with Chris or like your mom or my mom or you guys and I don’t know. I just feel like yeah, I feel like the greatest work you can do is with your own kids. I just do, I have seen in the schools and nobody can replace what parents can do, nobody, teachers cannot do it. We did a study on the success of a student and fifty percent of it is home, forty percent is teacher and so even if you have a great teacher going on, it is only forty percent of it of achievement.

I have really wanted to have a baby now for a while, the second I have that baby, I just can’t imagine wanting to do a lot. I love my job and I love education, it is a total passion. John always says I wish I had a passion about the Law like you are about teaching because I just love it. But I would give it up in a heartbeat for my family, I gave it up for John last year I did. And I had a really good talk with our
department chair, someone I really admire, it was when my principal came back to me with another offer about staying and said I will take away the extra and give you honors. I would die to teach the Junior Honors program, it is so much fun to do and I am like “oh my gosh, Amy what should I do, I love junior honors and I love junior English, it is so much fun?” And she is like “Marianne, you do what your family needs you to do.” And it took a lot of courage for me to say I am not going to work next year, I am not going to teach full time because it is hard on my marriage, and my husband needs me around a little more, my marriage needs me around a little more, I really felt like it. I really felt like it was really necessary. But you know I got total pat comments from all my friends at Hunter, because all of them are really, there was kind of a group one guy was from Duke, all really educated people working on their Master’s Degree’s, and one has a Ph.D. And they were like “you are such a spoiled brat, you aren’t going to work anymore?”

Who do you think you got the most criticism from?

Probably my principle, a man. Most of the women were understanding of the situation that I needed to put some time into other area’s of my life, my family, my grandma had just had a stroke. I just felt like I needed to be around more, I didn’t have time to call anybody or do anything really. Yeah, I still remember at the closing banquet, he was like “Marianne Hunt is moving, or she is leaving us for a year, she has got to get a life, she wants to have fun” He made me sound like a real ditsy bopper girl, you know which really made me mad. I had worked my butt off the past two years at the school, and he wouldn’t he feels like he shouldn’t give any good deals to a woman kind of thing, because I tried to go part time and I worked with him on it and he doesn’t believe in part time, and then he said and “why should I go part time for you anyway because I bet in a year you are going to be pregnant and out of here?” Can you believe that? I said “Well Mike, it sounds like you are discriminating” and he said “oh don’t use the “D” word” and I said “I will use it if it fits, I sure will”.

Do you think females see themselves as valuable in the classroom in church and school?

Well, I think in the gospel, if you don’t go on a mission, and you don’t feel it because you went, but you know I have never studied the scriptures in depth like a missionary does, I will never get to have that kind of a time in my life and I think state side missionaries especially because they are not studying a language, they are just totally in the scriptures and I think nobody can match that. Unless over the years you are studying the scriptures, but nobody has like total intensified scripture study for two years at that age in your life. And I think we are always at a disadvantage that way, scriptural knowledge wise. I remember going to BYU, and I had this one class, an honors class my freshman year I felt so stupid in there and it was all these loud mouth returned missionaries commenting up a storm. Now I am like they were so full of it, but at the time I was barely eighteen right out of high school and I was surprised they were comparing everything to a scripture, quoting scriptures anyway it was a really thought provoking class and they brought the gospel in a lot it was really cool.
But I just think I didn't really feel like I matched up to them, because I didn't know the scriptures that well.

*Did you have role models in education?*

Yeah I don’t know, that is interesting. I have had a lot of role models within my teaching career, with women I have totally clicked with, older and younger. But I have had a lot of support that way, encouragement to do my masters, some of my really close friends my mentors were like ‘you need to do it’. So that kind of got me thinking about it, but you know it’s funny because I had always wanted a masters degree, I just kind of thought about it as out there. I didn’t know what or when. Another one of my friends and I were talking about this the other day because we both did our masters and now we are both talking about doing our PhD’s. But she said “you know I never even really thought that I would be this far” and I thought you know I really didn’t think I would be either, not this far anyways. And we both talked about it and we hadn’t really planned beyond getting married and working for a couple of years. That was pretty much it, which is what I am pondering right now because I am like I don’t have a baby, I can’t get pregnant what if I can’t for like forever? You know, what do I do? And I am glad I have a career, I am so glad because I think even, I’d be so lost. My sister was devastated for one year trying to get pregnant and not wanting to work for one more day. And so maybe seeing her was I was like I wanted to have a career and do my thing, and so doing my masters, John was like well what if we get pregnant? Are you okay with doing both? And it was like I didn’t really know, but I really felt like I should get my masters, like I should apply and I couldn’t see a year down or whatever and but here I am you know and I will have now finished without having a baby for sure. I don’t think I ever really planned beyond… you know I planned for college and I knew I wanted to be teacher for at least a couple of years. But then that was sort of like the drop off point…

*What was the most difficult decision you have ever made and how did it change the role you were playing or a role you were playing?*

Getting married was the hardest decision. I can think of a few hard decisions to make, but getting married was the hardest, not because of any questions about John, I never had one question that he was right for me. The first real conversation that I had with John, I knew, I was like oh my gosh. I was like I totally love this guy. I knew I was going to marry him, there was about a month after I had first met him and one night after talking to him I came into my roommates and started crying, and said I am so scared I know I am going to marry this guy. I knew it was weird because I had never felt that way before. I never had to go through questions about him, but it was the whole mission thing that made my whole decision so horrible and so traumatic. That is just me, nothing is really low key. That was just the hardest decision for me, because it dragged on and I couldn’t feel good about it either way.

*What do you want to pass on to your daughter and granddaughters about survival and self-identity?*
I think I really feel a responsibility as a mother to introduce to my
daughters the good things in life, the good opportunities, and to create
good things. Introduce them to all of these wonderful things, I really want them to see
that there are really good things they can do in their lives. As a parent you have
the incredible option to introduce them to all of these wonderful things. Just the
good opportunities in life and so many good things you can be a part of, and there
is the bad, which they will experience on their own. I don’t want them to feel like
there are so many good things you can do in your life and good opportunities, I
don’t want them to feel like I wouldn’t want them to be educated, or didn’t want
them to experience something. But I don’t want them to feel, like if they don’t
want to go to graduate school, I mean I said to John what if you son wants to play
the trombone and not play basketball? You know, where I love dancing and what
if my daughter wants to play basketball and not do ballet? What will I do? I think
just be willing to let them be who they and let them know that is okay. There is a
quote, Children come through us and our role is to help them find their way. I
really want my girls, not that they are any different from my sons but to just to
feel like there is options and that I will accept that whatever they choose to do.

When you say good things, what do you mean?

What makes them happy, I would hope that that is in line with the gospel
but that they would chose a path in their life that makes them happy. You know
like Marme says in little women, that is my favorite seen you know when Joe
overhears her friends talking, that her daughters need to be married to wealthy
men, and she says I would rather be married to a poor man and have your
thoughts and your thinking and be happy with that, rather than be in a situation
where it wasn’t really you, just for money, I don’t know. I love my parents so
much, but I feel like sometimes they push a lot of their what they view what is
right and good onto me and I think I would like to ease up on that a little bit.
I don’t mean like push the gospel, I am going to teach my children the gospel. But
I think in other ways of life and living and how you chose to spend your day. I
think there are different ways to do it that are okay, and that are totally fine. I love
education and it brought me a lot of happiness, but I don’t think that a lot of
degrees bring other people happiness, for me it did, for me I love that and think
that it is wonderful. But I also think that you have to have a bigger vision, that
there are other things that people can do and be happy. I don’t know that I would
be able to do it, maybe it’s harder than that.

I want to teach them who they are, that they are a daughter of God and
what their role is in the plan, in heavenly fathers plan, because I think if you
understand that, than you can deal with whatever. But I do think that you have to
have a solid understanding of the gospel to face adversity.

What are some practical things though that you would suggest to your
daughters to help them deal with some of that?

I would say confidence in dealing with people. I don’t know my parents
always took me with them in adult situations and I would talk to adults when I
was really little. We were taken places, we did, my parents took us people. My
parents took us to Europe when I was five and I remember it, I just felt like I was always part of the grown up world and I could walk into any situation and feel confident talking to older men and anyone who was older than me. I think my parents really taught me how to articulate myself and look them in the eye and I would like my daughters to have that and to learn that.

I think also to have them read everything they could; it changes people's lives. You learn so much about the world. It increases your knowledge base even if your IQ is lower than someone else. I think it gives you a lot of confidence and gives you things to talk about and helps people to think about things more deeply. It forces you to think about things. So reading I lump that with the education thing.

I don't think that by encouraging my daughters to be a mom, that I am discouraging education, learning and growth. I have never viewed it that way, and I know that a lot of people do. But my mother taught me to be at home with my children and she was happy to be at home and we were always learning and growing and doing things. It's not like you literally "stay at home" and not learn and grow. It depends on what you view as fulfilling, which becomes the real question for everyone. I don't think that by teaching them to be mothers and being a stay at home is stifling them at all, I mean tell me that a job from eight to five is not stifling in some professions?
Item #12 Claire Johns*

Name: Claire Johns  
Date Interviewed: October 15, 2001  
City of Residence: Salt Lake City, Utah  
Age: 42  
Occupation: Mother, Attorney, Volunteer  
*Name has been changed

How do you define yourself?

I define myself as a mother and wife who works part-time as a lawyer. I view myself as being on the fringes of Mormon culture both because I have chosen to work and because I have chosen to work in a field that is not viewed as very feminine. Still, I am comfortable with my choices as being suitable for me.

What were the surprising decisions in your life that lead you to new and unexpected roles?

I was about to graduate from BYU in English and had applied and been accepted to law school, but was unsure about whether to proceed with more school (as I was feeling burned out), or to take a year off to work. I then abruptly decided that I should go on a mission. I arranged to defer my law school admission for a year, but still felt very undecided about whether I wanted to attend law school upon my return home. Just before I entered the mission field, I received my patriarchal blessing, which was general in many respects, but very specific in directing me not to abandon my educational plans. So I went ahead with my mission, and then returned to go to law school at BYU. Those two decisions—to serve a mission and to go to law school—took me into some new and interesting roles that I had not previously thought of as roles I wanted to play.

Did you pursue a career? If so, what kind of response did you experience from other Mormon women or men? (Include the decade if you can, ‘60’s, 70’s, 80’s etc.)

When I graduated from law school in 1985, I was newly married, and needed to work off my graduate school debt. So I started working in private practice. I had made some wonderful Mormon women soon-to-be-lawyer friends in law school, who were, of course, very supportive. Some of the men in law school were supportive, but some were antagonistic and would actually say things like “You should not be here because you are taking the place of a man who has to support a family.” The Mormon women in my ward in Park City were not sure what to make of me, but generally accepting. One woman in our ward in Park City who was a stay-at-home mother, Kristin, was very bright and was involved in the community (she was on the City Council). She was a great role model for me—she was devoted to her family, but she also had her own interests that she pursued. My mother was very supportive, but her views changed when I continued to work after I had children. For her, my degree was really just for
prestige and insurance in case my husband died, and working while I had small children was a questionable choice. I feel that other Mormon women were also less supportive after I became a working mother. Although working part-time I think was perceived by some as evidence that I was trying to keep my priorities straight. On the whole, I think that men were less supportive, and viewed things more in black and white: women with children should be at home with their children, and mothering and working were mutually exclusive, so that if you worked, it must mean that your children are not as important to you as they were to women who stayed home.

My own father had strong views about women not working, and he had been dutifully supportive while I went to law school, but I knew disapproved of my decision to work, although he never said anything directly to me. While Craig and I lived in Park City, Kristin had asked if I wanted to participate in a scripture study group of Mormon women. This group was mostly composed of women older than myself, who, like Kristin, did not work, but actively pursued intellectual and community interests, and they embraced the idea that Mormon women had more than the single role of mother; although their generation had done it more with sequencing (raising children, then going back to professional or community pursuits) than with simultaneous juggling. Between those women and my law school friends, there were Mormon women who had a positive response to the juggling act I was undertaking. Since then, I have found that the stay-at-home mothers in my neighborhood have been supportive in the sense of allowing me to choose the carpool days that work best for my work schedule, and other small accommodations. However, I am definitely not part of the social group. And I have observed with interest that some of the women who are most openly critical of “feminism” do not necessarily spend more time at home than I do.

What was the most difficult decision you have ever made? Why was it difficult? How did it change the role you were playing?

The most difficult decision I have ever made would probably be whether to keep working after Dylan was diagnosed with autism. At the time, I really agonized over whether I could most help my son by being with him more, or by working so that we had enough money for any evaluations or therapy that he needed. I wanted to do the right thing for him as his need was so great, but was very unsure as to what that was. The roles I was playing ultimately did not change dramatically, as it became apparent that the best therapy for Dylan could not be done by me and would require a lot of money. I have undertaken the new role of “autism specialist” as I have managed his interventions.

How did the other Mormon women, (mothers, in-laws, sisters, grandma, friends) respond to this difficult experiences/decisions? Do you remember anything in particular that they said to you?

Several women asked me if I was planning to quit my job, as if it were a given, which I found interesting since my being home full-time did not seem so obviously the best choice for Dylan to me. My twin sister was extremely supportive, and I talked through different issues with her. (My mother had passed
away earlier.) At the time, I was in the Relief Society Presidency in my ward, and it was becoming apparent that I would need to be with Dylan full-time at church, so that it would be impossible for me to attend Relief Society. The Relief Society President said to me "You know what you need to do better than anyone, and just let me know how I can help," which I have since thought about as being a good example of how Mormon women should support each other.

Are there other roles you took on during your life that you did not necessarily feel prepared for? (Loss of a parent, orphaned at any age? Being married, being single? Being a professional?)

I was very unprepared for the sudden death of my mother. I have really missed her. Even though she was a difficult person in many ways, she was very emotionally supportive.

Who supported you? Who gave you the most resistance or the least support and why?

It's interesting to look at the different responses I get from the men in the office here, you know the Mormon men seem to respond like: oh you work, you must not love your kids. But the non-Mormon men respond more like: oh wow, you are trying to do it all, good for you. It is more of an admiration type tone than anything.

If you could think back to the 70s, 80s, 90s what do you remember being the main influence on Mormon women's roles? (This could be a talk in Conference, women's Conference, or simply a relief society lesson or even a conversation you remember that reminds you of this) What was your response to it?

I really did not like Ezra Taft Benson's talk about women staying home, which I think was given in the late 80s. I thought that he missed the point entirely—no one I knew was working to buy unnecessary luxuries, and the father's role was not discussed. But I remember that different people, both men and women, used that talk to raise the issue of women's roles with me. I can't remember exactly who it was now, but I shocked someone one day by responding to their question of what I thought about the talk by saying that I thought Ezra Taft Benson would be dead soon. Which was a really irreverent way of expressing my opinion that he was completely out of touch with the times.

In the 90s, for me, the fact that the Church would choose as general Relief Society leaders women I respected like Chieko Okazaki and Eileen Clyde was very reassuring. But those choices did seem to conflict with the party line about women staying home, since some of these role models had not. I remember one Relief Society lesson where feminism was discussed as one of the great evils of our time as it drew women out of the home. My own view was that focus, and not mere presence, was important. For example, I got into an interesting (friendly) discussion one day with a stay-at-home neighbor who is an avid quilter and very dedicated Church member about whether it makes any difference to your children what you are doing when you are away from home. Is away for a career different...
from away for a hobby or church work, or is it all just “away?” And what about community service?

Today, it seems to me that the main influence on roles has always been what is in fact occurring in Mormon women’s lives—as opposed to rhetoric from the pulpit. More women now have multiple roles and there is more talk about unity of purpose and less talk about specific dos and don’ts. I thought it interesting that the latest BYU law school alumni dinner featured a husband and wife duo speaking about balancing professional and family commitments.

What about books published or talks given about women but authored by Mormons in general, is there one you liked, disliked or that affected you in some way?

Definitely the Ezra Taft Benson talk I discussed above. That validated criticism of working mothers.

What about the ward you live in? Do you generally feel accepted by the women? Why or why not?

I do feel generally accepted in my ward. It is a relatively diverse ward, both in the ages and incomes of the women, and in their educational levels. There is no majority profile, and everyone tries to work together.

What do you want to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival?

I think that women should make choices that are individually right for themselves and their families, and that other women should be nonjudgmental and supportive. Not every woman wants to juggle multiple roles, just like not every woman wants to be home every minute. I have been very interested to observe how my law school women friends’ lives have progressed. Some who I thought would always be working have quit, and vice versa. I hope that my daughter and granddaughters are able to choose what they feel is best for them, and are able to feel comfortable with those choices.

One of the main reasons I hung in there with work when it got tough with kids and family and so on was that I thought I needed to do this for my daughter, Courtney. So that she would see that she had more choices.
Did you find a need to reconcile yourself as a working mother with children and say the things the prophets would encourage? When President Ezra Taft Benson came out and really encouraged women to stay at home, how did you reconcile that and how do you reconcile that? What is your advice to women today?

If you read that talk, if you read beyond, he says there are circumstances in peoples life, that make it necessary for people to work—it would be better for them to stay at home. And so I think that nobody knows what their circumstances are, it’s only between you and your husband and God. And so you have to make a decision as to what is best for you and your family. And I think there is also a need for the couple to share homemaking roles in the home and to understand that the family comes first in whatever they do. And much of what we do (I believe in Ecclesiastes, where it talks about the seasons) for me anyway, I look at different seasons in my life and every season of my life I have had to sacrifice something. And I think too many times we go on throughout life adding more things to our lives and not giving up.

For example I see young people getting married, and they don’t sit down and talk about what must change in life now that they are a married couple. For a person to be single, they can do a lot of things, but if you live in a family, you have to think about the composition of the family and what your role is in the family. For them to be able to be part of the family they are not going to have as much freedom. But when you go out on your own, you have the freedom to make your decisions by yourself. So that season of being in the home with the family is different from the season when you are on your own: you are making your money, you have your own apartment. So then when you meet someone and get married and you combine two people—it means that you have to decide what is best now for that season.

We can not do whatever we were able to do when we were single, so you have goals to reach, financial obligations to keep, and you have to know what the future is going to hold for them and how they are going to make payments and whether they are going to buy a house or a car. All of that comes into this season of their life, but if they take the same attitude and the same thinking when they were single to this marriage, it won’t work, it will never work.

So then you have children, then that is another season, and you have to decide. See each season is a sacrifice season, and the couple has to know that “when I was single I was able to do this, but now that we are married I have to sacrifice some of my desires and some of my wishes that I could have easily done when I
was a single person.” But now they can’t, because there are two people who will have to generate as well as think what is best for both of them. Besides that we have set lots of goals, that we want to reach, and what we want to have happen in our lives. And so then when the children come, you have added goals and you have more sacrifice.

To me, raising our children was with my husband. I went back to teaching school, nobody knows the reason why we had to do this. But there wasn’t one time when one of our children didn’t have one of us in school for their programs. There wasn’t anytime when our children lacked something, because we made the decision that we would sacrifice movies and we did not go to concerts. We weren’t going to do any of that. Because the time we spent doing that was time we could spend with our children. So we never went to anything except to the children’s cub scouts, children’s programs in school. That was our entertainment—we didn’t have anything else, because that is the season to raise the children, even if I worked.

And then also, I had to and also my husband had to sacrifice time. After our children went to bed I did laundry and he helped with laundry and cleaning the house during the week. I did ironing so that our Saturday and Sunday were free to be with the children. So actually we never saw any movies when our children were growing up, never went to concerts. If we went to concerts, the entire family went together. So, in fact our vacations were spent with children all the time, they never were left home. Only once when they were in music camp did my husband and I go to Sun Valley. It was close to their music camp but then they said, “Oh you are going on a vacation without us” because every vacation was with them.

After they get older and they go to school at university, then you have a sacrifice in other ways. [There is the] sacrifice of keeping them going with tuitions and board and room and whatever else. So we could do a little bit more between husband and wife, because our children were gone and they were on their own. We could do some things, like travel and go to concerts and do all the things that we really enjoyed doing. But I think what I see is [that young people think they can continue to enjoy doing what they are always] doing for the rest of their life. And I think it is wrong, because when you go to the temple and you consecrate yourself and you sacrifice—you consecrate yourself and the consecration is to the family too, and the sacrifice is to the family.

And so for me I think I know what I want, I know what is best for us, so to have somebody criticize me is really a terrible thing I think, because they don’t know the inner workings of my family...They don’t know what we had to do to be able to have me go to work and for my husband and I [to take] care of the needs of the children. I think we accomplished a great deal more than some of the women who stayed home, I am sorry but you know. They always [asked me] how do you get to do all of these things? And if they came to my house I had sandwiches made for the whole week for my children and they were all in the refrigerator with labels on them...In the morning our children would just pick up what sandwiches they need, and I had all the vegetables in packages so they could just take what ever they wanted—I mean it was efficiency.
And so I think that the notion that blocks people is [that] the woman’s place is in the home, and I believe that—but I also believe it is a man’s place too. It’s the parents place to be in the home with the children, the responsibility is theirs also. So our children had a lot of responsibility, and we all worked together to do this. Of course I only had two [children] and that is all I could have. But I think sometimes when you are brought up in a home when all of your descendents are Mormons; it is passed down from generation to generation.

At one time I think you would think that the Japanese people felt that women didn’t need education, but in my home it wasn’t so. My mother and father thought because I was the oldest that I needed to go to the university so that I didn’t need to live the plantation life. [They said] “You are going to be somebody” and so they did [this] with the other children. So I didn’t know how that was going to happen, but somehow being a laborer on the plantation wasn’t an easy thing—so they sacrificed a great deal. They didn’t do a lot of things that other people did, never went to movies. I was brought up seeing a family’s consecration and sacrifice; I saw that within my own family.

It isn’t a Mormon doctrine; it was a doctrine in our home. But never once did they say that because you are a woman you can not compete in the world—and all of the parents of my classmates that I went to college with...felt the same way. We were brought up in that kind of an atmosphere and in that type of surrounding and so we had no guilt. I wasn’t brought up with the guilt; I found it when I came here.

And I can understand why, because when you are taught that your place is in the home, you are to raise children, you have to have as many children as you can, and marriage is the most important thing in life, and that eternal marriage is wonderful and that going to the temple is what ought to happen in your life. See that is sort of something that they have been raised with and so when they are raised that way, it can’t help but become part of you, just like my own upbringing was a part of me. But you can’t say which is right or wrong, because they choose that; a choice is made. When they make that choice and I make this choice there should be no criticism... And you know we forget that agency was given to us and that agency made us make those choices.

But I think that the place that women should be in charge, their role is probably a lot more with children than the fathers. But it depends on the man too, because my husband, he was a good mother, (laugh) he was a very good mother. He took care of our two boys, I mean he was a father and mother role, and I was also in my father and mother role. We took turns doing things. So it’s a mystery to me, but I think that the church feels that it is important to designate certain roles to the man or to the woman, and because of the designation of the roles than it is secure that the children will be raised up in the proper ways, and in the ways of the church. So I don’t blame the people for wanting to be a mother in the home and think that is a role that they must uphold and I bow my head down to all of these women who raise so many children and who do a great job of doing it and I think that that is their way of life.
Do you think it is necessary for the church to continue to designate the roles?

Well you know, I don’t know, sometimes. It used to come from the pulpit I think a lot more than now. Now, I don’t hear it as much as it used to be. It has changed a great deal, but you do hear it once in a while. And I think it is because when you see the youth growing up today and the way they are raised, it is different from the time we were raised. I guess the Church does worry because when you look at how the youth themselves think and feel, I guess if they were part of the world, if they live in the world and they are Mormons in the world. It is important to have a foundation given to them and maybe some of these children as I see them, their foundation is really weak and loose, you know. And because of that, I think that the church probably worries and so they feel as though the home has the obligation of doing that. But many of these people probably don’t know how to do that.

I think that we learn a lot of principles in the church, but what I found is that to apply that in your life and to know the skills to use to be able to live that principle is not as clear as I think it should be. And so for me, I think that Relief Society classes ought to teach principles, explain what the principle is and then explain how we apply this in our life. They also ought to teach skills in which we can live that principle and teach that principle to our children.

And you know this is a busy world, and I see too many parents having their children in too many things. When I taught school some of my children used to say I have to go dancing, ballet and then I have to go play the piano and I have to go play soccer and this and this. One girl said you know what I am so tired, this little girl came to me and said “I am so tired” and I asked her why she was so tired? [She told me] everyday after school she had to do so many things. So I asked her what would she rather do? She says, “You know I don’t have time to play.” So why are we doing this? I think it is either that the parents don’t know how to teach the children at home or what kinds of things to do with them, so they are lending their children to ballet teachers, or to piano teachers or somebody to teach their children. And so you know, there is a lot of confusion to me as I look at what is happening in the home. But at the same time I think those who know how to do it look at this and be critical of them instead of teaching them. You know and so they say, “what is wrong with that family?” So instead of helping, they criticize. And so I don’t know, I feel sorry for many of these people who have to work, you know who have to work, especially without a husband. That you can’t help. They have to make a living. So I used to say instead of criticizing them why don’t you say, you know what you need a break, I am coming over to your house and feed your children, you go do whatever you want to do. And if you bake cookies, you just bake another extra dozen for them. I said you know we just need to help one another, she is consecrating and sacrificing her life so we can consecrate and sacrifice some of our time to give to her instead of being critical and then maybe they will learn through our affiliation with them that you know “I have to become more like them” or “my children will see this” and they will learn some love and charity which they may not have in their home.

So I really think it is much easier, (laughs) if everybody does the same thing (laughs) that’s true. The church says all women should stay home; maybe
it’s much easier to do it that way. But as long as we are thinking people, and we have talents and abilities and some of us are not going to be able to do that. [A good example is when] I visited in Canada, a Huderite colony. We had this young woman, nineteen, taking us around. I could see that she was having a difficult time, because they have laws to live by. I was really surprised and I thought what a wonderful thing is happening in this colony; because she said she learned how to sew when she was twelve, she makes all her clothes. She can sew and make drapes and whatever, she has all the skills of a homemaker, she can cook, she can dress chicken, she can kill hogs, she can do anything, but she doesn’t have that freedom to think for herself—because everything is told to them. I could see this and she talked to us like “oh you know yeah this is really fine” she says but I could see that she says “one day sometime I would like to leave and have some freedom” see so she is raised in that colony and yet she feels as though she would probably be a person in the world to go to the university and see they only go to school until they are fifteen. Eighth grade is all they can have, but she is very intelligent I can see. If she were in the world she would probably be somebody. So no matter, I thought to myself she is raised in this colony, born there, you would think that she would follow the traditions and her intelligence would be focused on what they do in this colony, but no, I could see that she wanted to go beyond that. Which is a good thing, but you would think because she is raised that way, that she would just be satisfied, but it isn’t. So I am saying whether you are a man or a woman it doesn’t matter, it is who you are, some people are satisfied staying home and doing all of these things and raising lots of children and that is wonderful that they can do that. But there are some of us who want to go beyond and do things outside and you may call it a career but they don’t like that word either (laughs) so you know, “foster your talents and move on, you know” and move on, but then not feel guilty about it. Of course I don’t believe also in women who don’t take care of their children and only think of their career either, so I think there should be a happy balance.

Do you see a trend or a significant portion of women who demonstrate that trend, who are too concerned about working? And maybe work, could we say, for the wrong reasons or maybe irresponsibly do you think?

You know most of the women I have met have been responsible women, yeah, they really care for their families and they really care for their husbands and their husbands care for them. Those are the kind of women I have met, well you know if you think of irresponsible women—I read about them in the newspaper. You know when you read about what is happening to the children and that’s when I see they are very irresponsible the way they treated their child or left their child or whatever. To me those are the irresponsible people and we may have some of those, but most of the women I know and talk with are very responsible, they love their families they want to do the best for them and they love the church, they love whatever they do.

And I speak with so many of them and they are so sad when their children don’t live according to the ways they think they ought to, but they still know they can’t force them into it. I was in Canada talking with this sister and you know she is concerned about her children, but she says you know they are adults and they
are living their lives according to what they think is right. She has no control, but to just love them, to cherish them. Maybe, they will come back to church, and you ask why did they leave? Well some of them have to seek their place in the world and then after they have satisfied themselves, then they return. I think there are human beings who don’t like to be told, you know. I know many children in school that I taught that I had to be careful as to how I talked to them because if you pounded things into their head, they resented and they do the opposite, so you have to know each child and some children need this pounding.

And so everyone is different, in fact my first week of school when I taught children I had to study their ways and to find out who they were. And this was how I got a long with children because I could not do the same thing I did with one child to another. So the trend, you know when you look at the trend in the world, there are so many different kinds of trends. The ones that I know I think still feel the family is important, the people I know. You have people who live together before they get married and I don’t believe in that you know, there are people who are homosexuals who live together and you know I respect them but I don’t go for the life style. But then they are choosing their way of life, so you know so many of these things that the young people confront today, if they don’t have a strong foundation it must make them think “why is this happening, is it okay?”

It’s interesting because as I have done a lot of my research, I find there is a strong element of fear among the women especially the ones born and raised in Utah in this Mormon culture, and they seem to cite that the evil is the woman who works, of course, who works for money and you know I would stop them and say, I don’t know any of those women?

Yeah, how do they know that?

Right, I don’t see that in the church, I see all of the women that I know that work in the church are women who are very concerned about their families, who are very responsible about the time, and maybe they are working because you know there could be a variety of reason, it could be mental health, it could be a lot of different things, and like you were saying we can’t judge what their circumstances are.

Exactly, you know when we first came to Utah the only place we could rent was a basement apartment, my husband and I. Because of our finances, I was teaching school while he was going to graduate school. In 1950 when I came the salary wasn’t very high, so the only way I could keep him in school (he also worked a little bit part time while he was getting his graduate work done) was to find a place that was less expensive so a basement apartment was less expensive. And then we didn’t have a car, so we rode buses everywhere because a car would be a lot more expensive. And we didn’t travel airplanes, if we went anyplace we went on greyhound cause it was less, and so we sacrificed a lot and people don’t look at this. So here my husband went to school and after he finished his school then I got pregnant with the first child. We couldn’t have children and then after four years I got pregnant and so I stayed home and he worked, but his salary wasn’t that big either. So it was just like exchanging salaries, so we still lived in a basement apartment, but we tried to save as much as we could so we could buy a
home. We couldn’t buy a home. We finally got a place, and but the thing for us was to get a home we needed two salaries; we couldn’t do it on one, so I went back to work.

And my children were cared for, in fact I still see this guy and thank him for taking such good care, it was wonderful school and they learned a lot, it was a preschool type thing, so because of that we were able to buy a home and build a home. Otherwise we would still be renting, (laughs) you know how do you advance yourself? And after, the children grew and they were fine so I just kept working. But I worked for twenty three years as a teacher, and of course I worked in Hawaii, and here and then in Colorado and then I was able to become a principal but I went back to school again, to get my Masters and my administrative certificate when I was fifty. So the thing is we took turns and in fact he encouraged me to go and so I did go back. But what I am saying is that when partners work together to see what is best for you as a family then you make a decision and you work together so that it doesn’t burden the children.

And I was home all summer, so it was really a good thing because I was home June, July and August. I was with my children and we did a lot of things. So as far as the people saying and they are fearful about their role as a women, and I think that fear comes because they have been raised that way and then when they don’t do what they were raised to do then they are fearful think that they are not obeying, they are not obedient, it’s like a commandment, they are not obeying the commandments. But it is interesting when I talk to women and when I say some things, they always say “oh I feel that way too, but it’s hard for me to say it.”

It’s interesting I have Gordon B. Hinckley’s most recent talks to the Young Women, “How can I become the women of whom I Dream?” And I read that and I was very pleased to see that in the ending he gave an example of a woman who was a nurse and she had gotten her master’s and had attained the highest degree in her field so that she could have a flexible career and she could work as much or as little as she wanted. She had three children and he was praising that and I was very happy to see that because I think that it is important that a woman has choices.

And the thing is I know many women who go crazy staying home all day, for their mental, their mental status is in jeopardy, they need to do something and they are better mothers because of that. There are so many different reasons, and I don’t think God would look down on us and say because you worked you are going to the Telestial kingdom, you know. He is going to say what did you do with your talents and abilities? What did you do to serve other people? It is funny because I have to say that when I was teaching school we didn’t have children then when we first came here but I taught President Benson’s daughter, and many of the people who were prominent in the church. And then they all thank me for being a good teacher and I was a good teacher, I mean really and these kids come back to me and they will always say if it weren’t for you I’d never be the way I am today. I had to struggle to teach some of these kids, you know and I gave up my time and I came early in the morning and stayed after school. And so I am thinking to myself, you know that is me and that is what I wanted to do and I served and I helped people so how can I be bad? You know?
Well I don't think the generations will change, I mean as long as we have people in the world preaching to the young, they'll say "you are a girl, so you know you don't need as much education" some people say that. So as long as this takes place you will see this trend continuing, and you know now there so much emphasis of families and the role of the women, look at the proclamation and look at the Relief Society things that they gave us, what our role is, you know. [Meaning they give some latitude, but still serves to focus on women's roles] You know there are still so many general authorities who feel that their wives place is in the home, and I could name many of them on one hand. And they used to say their wives were "Mothers of Zion" and you know I would think to myself "I am a Mother of Zion" you know, and I would say that to them.
Appendix B
Consent To Be a Research Subject

The purpose of this research is to enhance the investigator's understanding of LDS women's career patterns and choices including both the homemakers and professional women. This research will entail interviews with a specific group of Mormon women and will be used in preparation for a master's thesis. You were selected for participation because of your experience in this specific area of study.

There are minimal risks for participation in this study; further your participation in this study will benefit Women's studies research and your unremunerated assistance is appreciated. Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw any given information for this study and/or yourself at any time without negative consequences.

It is understood that the tape-recorded (audio) interview becomes the property of Alyssa Snow Larson, where it will be indexed and preserved on audiotape cassette indefinitely. Access is limited to only the collector and the informant who retain the right to free access to the collection through normal procedures of contact. The purpose of the collection is to provide the primary investigator, Alyssa S. Larson, research material from which she may quote and include in her written study where she must agree to give proper credit to both herself as collector and you as the informant. Access to the written study in the form of a Master's thesis is open to the public and indexed in the BYU library. Please see below.

I, ____________________________, hereby give my interview with Alyssa S. Larson, conducted on, ________, to the collection of interviews for research on “Cultivating Women within Mormonism” for purposes of a Master’s thesis and note the available treatment as being referred to BYU Counseling Center in Provo or a local counselor in your area in the event of a negative psychological response at my own expense.

Restrictions and Stipulations
Circle one of the following:

Use of name is approved.

Use of name is not approved.

Use the following pseudonym.

If you have any questions regarding this research project you may contact Alyssa Snow Larson, BYU, 378-4257 or Professor Jacqueline Thursby, 3139 JKHB, BYU, 378-3747. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Shane Schulthies, Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee, 1122 SWKT, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602; 801/378-2138.

Signature, Date
Just as change stimulates us to look for more abstract constancies, so the individual effort to compose a life, framed by birth and death and carefully pieced together from disparate elements, becomes a statement on the unity of living. These works of art, still incomplete, are parables in process, the living metaphors with which we describe the world.

--Mary Catherine Bateson

I am grateful to all the women who have consented to participate in this particular thesis project and study. All of you are women whose choices and personalities have served to shape my own life, which is why I have included you here. My goal is to gather women’s narratives in particular phases of their lives that tended to be critical and poignant moments, that could be described as interruptions or conflictions. Often these decisions included missions, marriage, divorce, death, life threatening situations or more subtle events such as career decisions, higher education choices, moving, having children or anything really that has caused you to shift in your roles. Women are much more akin to shifting and adapting to the many demanding roles they play than are men. However, today in academia and often in life we tend to view “success and achievement” in terms that are usually only granted to someone who has followed through with a life long goal, such as going to school to attain the profession that will sustain a family, or writing a book, or running a marathon. We don’t normally look at the ability to play several differing roles in our lives as “successful” or as “achievements” rather we view them as disconnected, chaotic and resulting from the lack of real discipline it takes to achieve any one significantly important thing.

Mary Catherine Bateson points out this problem in her book Composing a Life, saying that “the real success stories are supposed to be permanent and monogamous”, she goes on to explain however that “children cannot even know the names of the jobs and careers that will be open to them; they must build their fantasies around temporary surrogates. Goals too clearly defined can become blinkers. Just as it is less and less possible to replicate the career of a parent, so it will become less and less possible to go on doing the same thing through a lifetime”(7). Her point is that the reality of our lives lends itself more to changing environments than to any other one stable thing. She explains “ancient walls covered with ivy are more lovely than tents and trailers, but we need to teach the skills for coming into a new place and quickly making it into a home. When we speak to our children about our own lives, we tend to reshape our pasts to give them an illusory look of purpose. But our children are unlikely to be able to define their goals and then live happily ever after. Instead, they will need to reinvent themselves again and again in response to a changing environment”(17). Therefore, when you begin to brainstorm about the moments in your lives that have caused you to shift roles or take a new one on, I would like you to know what purpose I have for inquiring, and that is to make more accessible and concrete the many roles women do find themselves playing inspite of criticism from friends, religious contemporaries and finally even from family. And to evaluate more specifically how you were influenced, supported or discouraged from those roles by other Mormon women or women in general.

The other half of my study will deal specifically with this last aspect of looking more critically at the female Mormon influences during these moment in your lives. The reason for doing so is two fold: Primarily, I am interested to see whether or not Mormon
women are supportive of the many different and diverse roles we find ourselves playing inspite of the very strong and mainstream push in Mormon society to be a “stay-at-home mother”. Secondarily, I will look at how the female discourse (which can be texts such as the Ensign, books written by other Mormon women, talks from women or men at Women’s Conference or General Conference about women, or simply other oral exchanges) that have either helped you or hindered your decision making when shifting roles. My hope is that in doing so, we might be able to add to the knowledge and experiences of Mormon women whom have followed their convictions and commitments in their lives despite opposition from others. I hope also to be able to look more specifically at how other Mormon women have shaped our decisions during critical times, knowing that in doing so we are becoming aware of how effective or detrimental those elements might be. Part of progression in our lives deals with uncovering some of the reasons why we do the things we do and I believe we can become quite surprised, enlightened and even frustrated to discover how in fact covertly and subtly we are influenced. Therefore, in addition to the narratives, I will take a theoretical look at how your were influenced particularly by other Mormon women or men talking about women, during these transitory periods in your life.

There are two things I’d like you to consider prior to our answering the questions:
1) Think about the critical moments in your life. Moments that shaped your life.
2) Think about and what texts, discussions, magazines, books, articles, anything written or spoken, that affected the way you perceived yourself, your roles. This could be authored by another Mormon women, a lesson in Relief society or a talk in Conference that influenced your life and decisions (positive or negative) around critical moments or during them or even after them. This may include conversations with other women as well.
Questions:

1) How do you define yourself?

2) What were the surprising decisions in your life that lead you to new and unexpected roles?

3) Did you pursue a career? If so, what kind of response did you experience from other Mormon women or men? (Include the decade if you can, '60's, 70's, 80's etc.)

4) What was the most difficult decision you have ever made? Why was it difficult? How did it change the role you were playing?

   a) How did the other Mormon women, (mothers, inlaws, sisters, grandma, friends) respond to this difficult experiences/decisions?

   b) Do you remember anything in particular that they said to you?

5) Are there other roles you took on during your life that you did not necessarily feel prepared for? (Loss of a parent, orphaned at any age? Being married, being single? Being a professional?)

6) Who supported you? Who gave you the most resistance or the least support and why?

   a) Are there conversations you had that now stick out in your mind as frustrating or as helpful or both?

7) If you could think back to the 70s, 80s, 90s, and today, what do you remember being the main influence on Mormon women's roles? (This could be a talk in Conference, women's Conference, or simply a relief society lesson or even a conversation you remember that reminds you of this) What was your response to it?

8) What about books published or talks given about women but authored by Mormons in general, is there one you liked, disliked or that affected you in some way?

9) What about the ward you live in? Do you generally feel accepted by the women? Why or why not?

10) What do you want to pass onto your daughters and granddaughters about self-identity and survival?
October 9, 2001

Alyssa Larson
2054 E 900 S
Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Dear Alyssa:

In accordance with BYU policy and Federal Regulations, your research proposal, "Cultivating Women Within Mormonism" was re-reviewed. All active protocols must be reviewed annually by the Human Subjects Committee.

The research continues to pose minimal risk to human subjects and meets the Federal guidelines. It is determined that the research as outlined provides adequate protection for human subjects and the consent form will provide the necessary information. Any changes in the consent form, data collection instruments or procedures will need to be reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shane Schulthies, Chair
Human Subjects Review Committee

SSS/sgr

cc: Shane Schulthies