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“Men never cry”: Teaching Mormon Manhood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

J. E. Sumerau, Ryan T. Cragun, and Trina Smith

University of Tampa

ABSTRACT

We examine the ways Mormon leaders establish “what it means to be a man” for their followers. Based on content analysis of over 40 years of archival material, we analyze how Mormon leaders represent manhood as the ability to signify control over self and others as well as an inability to be controlled. Specifically, we demonstrate how these representations stress controlling the self, emotional and sexual expression, and others while emphasizing the development of self-reliance and independence from others’ control. We draw out implications for understanding (1) how religious leaders create ideal notions of manhood, (2) what the religious interpretations of secular constructions of manhood are, and (3) how these relate to the reproduction of gender inequalities.

In recent years, scholars have begun to direct more attention to the interrelation of gender and religion as well as to the ways religious males establish and signify masculine selves (see, e.g., Aune 2010; Gerber 2015; Heath 2003). These studies imply that religious males draw upon the symbolic resources provided by religious representations of what it means to be a man in a wide variety of ways to signify “Godly” manhood¹ (McQueeney 2009; Sumerau 2012). Further, these studies reveal that religious males often construct manhood in ways that symbolically and structurally subordinate women (Bush 2010; Sumerau, Padavic, and Schrock 2015) and transgender people (Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016). While these studies have invigorated sociological understandings of the interrelation between religion and gender, as well as the ways religious men individually and collectively fashion masculine selves, they have, thus far, left unexplored the religious representations males respond to in their daily lives (however, one exception is Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). How do religious leaders construct manhood in their official representations of what it means to be a man in God’s eyes? What consequences might these constructions have for the reproduction of gender inequalities?

Understanding official or dominant constructions of manhood by religious leaders, however, requires shifting our focus away from the ways individual males interpret religious doctrine to the ways religious leaders and their chosen representatives (intentionally or otherwise) embed notions of manhood into the institutional structure of a given faith (see Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015;

CONTACT J. E. Sumerau  jsumerau@ut.edu  Department of History, Sociology, Geography and Legal Studies, 401 West Kennedy Blvd., Box Q, University of Tampa, Tampa, FL 33601, USA.

¹In this paper, we build on recent articulation of “manhood acts” (Schrock and Schwabe 2009) perspectives, which seek to overcome limitations of “hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) approaches by focusing on the social construction of manhood in practice rather than the categorization of varied types or forms of masculinities (for an exhaustive critique and revision of hegemonic and multiple masculinities literatures, see Schrock and Schwabe 2009). To this end, we do not assume males are necessarily men (i.e., many males do not become or identify as men in their lives and many people who live as men are not male), but rather examine the ways in which social leaders and individual people create the identity “man” and establish rules, norms, and representations of “what it means to be a man” in a given social setting, context, or structure (see also Ezzell 2012; Sumerau 2012; Sumerau, Padavic, and Schrock 2015 for examples in this line of scholarship).

Sumerau, Padavic, and Schrock 2015). Mirroring larger patterns within sociological studies (Schwalbe et al. 2000), existing studies typically focus on variations and nuances in the ways individual males interpret official assertions (see, e.g., Burke and Hudec 2015; Gerber 2015; Sumerau 2012). As a result, we know far more about how subordinates (e.g., religious laity) respond to institutionalized religious beliefs, but surprisingly little about the ways dominants (e.g., religious leaders) establish the dominant beliefs subordinates will navigate in their own lives (but see Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). In this paper, we examine religious leaders' institutional construction of ideal or hegemonic manhood (see Connell 1987) in order to unpack, as Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun (2015) suggest, the gender beliefs individual religious people utilize to make sense of their own gender and the gender of others throughout their lives (see also Martin 2004).

To this end, we examine religious leaders' construction of official or ideal manhood through content analysis of doctrine created by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church)². Specifically, we analyze the ways official LDS doctrine creates an ideal image of manhood for members of the religion, which facilitates the ongoing subordination of women within and beyond the LDS Church. In so doing, we synthesize and extend previous treatments of religious masculinities by demonstrating some ways religious leaders "represent manhood" (Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015) for their followers through their creation of official doctrine, and consider the possible consequences of such lessons for the reproduction of gender inequalities (see also Schrock and Schwalbe 2009).

Rather than seeking to generalize our findings to other religious leaders or traditions, we utilize the case of Mormon leaders to demonstrate some ways religious leaders may establish beliefs about manhood that facilitate gender inequality (see also Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015 and Sumerau, Padavic, and Schrock 2015 for similar approaches). While Mormonism³ differs from other contemporary religious traditions in terms of ecclesiastical and theological structure, it is built upon and asserts the same foundational gender beliefs as most other contemporary Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions (see Beaman 2001; Bush 2010; Sumerau and Cragun 2015). As such, we utilize Mormon official doctrine – created by leaders of the Church and their chosen representatives – as an illustrative case of representations of "what it means to be a man" in contemporary religious traditions while outlining the ways these representations facilitate the persistence of gender inequality in mainstream society (see also Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016 and Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015).

Representing Manhood

In their synthesis of masculinities literature over the past thirty years, Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) conceptualize masculinities as the result of the dramaturgical work males do, individually and collectively, to signify and affirm masculine selves (see also Goffman 1977; West and Zimmerman 1987). Specifically, they show that males encounter societal ideals about "what it means to be a man" disseminated by cultural elites, such as religious, political, and other leaders (see also Kimmel 1996 and 2008). Males interpret and use these symbolic representations to fashion creditable masculine selves in varied settings and contexts. To this end, cultural elites establish and males affirm the existence of "man" as a dominant social category, one which is due privileges and deference in the

²In the process of peer review, a reviewer requested disclosure of our relationship (or lack thereof) to Mormonism. To this end, the first author has published numerous peer reviewed articles on Mormonism, engaged in romantic and platonic relationships with Mormon people at various points, but has never practiced or been a member of the religion. The second author, however, was raised in Mormonism, was a devout member for roughly half of his life, and is part of a family with long ties to Mormonism. After years practicing Mormonism, however, the second author left the religion, and has since published numerous books and peer reviewed articles related to Mormonism in contemporary society. Finally, the third author has no relationship to Mormonism personally beyond this study.

³While our focus here is on the broader patterns of gender inequality, manhood, and the social construction of masculinities captured within Mormon doctrine, readers less familiar with this religious tradition can turn to Cragun and Phillips 2012 for further information on the religious tradition in general and in relation to gender in society.

social world (see also Connell 1987). Rather than fixed, immutable elements of biological selfhood, leaders and followers collaboratively construct “manhood acts” (Schwalbe 2005), or patterns of self-presentation that convince themselves and others that they possess a masculine self. Although the content of manhood acts may vary in relation to cultural notions of race, class, and other social statuses (Johnson 2005), all such acts rely upon the acceptance and adoption of dominant representations of “what it means to be a man.”

As an extension and revision of previous scholarship concerning hegemonic and multiple masculinities (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), a *manhood acts perspective* seeks to unpack the social, relational, and representative processes whereby males learn to believe they are men, signify the existence and necessity of distinctions between cisgender women and men, and utilize these endeavors to claim and reproduce male privilege embedded in the institutional structure of society (see, e.g., Ezzell 2012; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). Rather than categorizing groups of men or outlining the characteristics of such groups in relation to an abstract ideal, as became common in studies of hegemonic and multiple masculinities scholarship, a manhood acts approach focuses on the ways males learn to distinguish themselves from and gain power over women and other gender minorities in the course of their lives (Sumerau 2012). Our focus here is not on what category or rank a given male may have in society, but rather on the things males do to define and maintain the category “man” as elevated above other gender identities in social practice and understanding.

Although rarely the focus of analyses, religious representations provide one of the primary symbolic resources people use to make sense of gender. Following Bush (2010), religious traditions promote ideal (or hegemonic, see Connell 1987) versions of women and men, and believers interpret and align their actions with these representations in daily life (see also Avishai, Jafar, and Rinaldo 2015; Robinson and Spivey 2007; Sumerau and Cragun 2015). We conceptualize religious leaders’ creation of official doctrine as “enabling conditions” (Schwalbe 2008), because these efforts provide believers with signs, symbols, and codes that may be interpreted as evidence of gendered selves. These representations may prime others to “know” what a man is and how a man acts in specific secular and religious situations (Bush 2010). Religious representations are not necessarily the causal factor of why followers engage in manhood acts. However, they indirectly make it easier for believers’ manhood acts to be interpreted by themselves and others as “appropriately” masculine, while making it more difficult for believers to imagine other ways of being a “man” or “male” (Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015).

Previous research has documented some ways religious males respond to official doctrine when constructing masculine selves. For example, Sumerau (2012) found gay Christian men construct manhood by adopting and signifying contemporary Christian notions of male leadership and authority (see also McQueeney 2009; Sumerau, Padavic, and Schrock 2015). Similarly, Heath (2003) found that males active in the Promise Keepers Movement signify masculine selves by adopting “Godly” notions of male headship over families and homes (see also Messner 1997 and Gerber 2015 for similar findings in the Ex-gay movement). Further, Burke and Hudec (2015) found that religious men worked to reconcile their own sexual and gender desires with existing expectations of “what a man is” within their religious traditions (see also Burke 2014). In each case, religious males signify masculine selves by adopting and presenting existing religious notions of what it means to be a “Godly” man, while adjusting these representations to maintain both religious and manly selves.

Researchers are beginning to explore the ways in which religious media sources represent manhood for their followers. Based on an extensive review of sociology of religion literature, Bush (2010) found that religious leaders regularly emphasize the subordination of women to men’s leadership, scriptural interpretation, familial headship, and spiritual needs. Similarly, Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun (2015) found that religious magazines from varied Christian traditions emphasize fatherly guidance, men’s leadership and protection of women, and excuses for men who fail to live up to romantic and familial obligations. Further, Robinson and Spivey (2007) have shown that leaders of the Ex-gay Movement regularly preach that instilling “Godly” manhood in their sons prevents the development of

homosexuality and femininity. While these studies reveal representations of manhood embedded within religious media, we know far less about the ways religious leaders construct God's version of manhood for their followers within specific religious traditions.

Building on these insights, we present an examination of religious representations of manhood in a specific historical and cultural context (see Schwalbe et al. 2000). Specifically, we examine how Mormon leaders define what it means to be an "ideal Mormon man" through their official speeches and publications. In so doing, LDS leaders create and disseminate enabling conditions for the construction of Mormon manhood. This construction of manhood reproduces social structure that contributes to the subordination of women by associating manhood with the ability to exert control over others and avoid being controlled by others (see Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Our research also demonstrates how some LDS leaders' constructions of manhood mirror masculine expectations of other Christian traditions and secular situations suggested in previous gender and religion scholarship. While Mormon – and other religious – males may interpret such representations in any number of ways, they will ultimately, as Burke and Hudec (2015) note, need to make sense of these dominant versions of "what it means to be a man" to maintain their religious and masculine selves throughout their lives (see also Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). Throughout this analysis, we focus on the initial creation of dominant or ideal notions of "what it means to be a man" that followers of the Mormon faith will likely wrestle with in their own individual interpretations and performances of manhood.

Methods

To examine Mormon representations of manhood, we draw upon a larger data set exploring the social construction of gender in Mormonism. This data set includes archives of the LDS General Conference talks and its monthly publication, *Ensign*, from 1971 – 2012. The LDS General Conference is a biannual meeting where members and others gather to receive instruction and inspiration from church leaders. *Ensign* is the official publication of the LDS Church, which generally contains faith-promoting and proselytizing materials for adult members. Although members who do not hold elite positions may publish in *Ensign*⁴, LDS leaders have full editorial control and approval over all publications (Mould 2011). This larger data set represents a comprehensive record of official LDS doctrine construction over the past five decades.

As part of our larger project, we sought to capture all the ways LDS leaders created or represented gender, so we searched for any term that could lead us to such discussions. We identified all relevant usage of terms, including, but not limited to, *femininity*, *masculinity*, *husband*, *wife*, *mother*, *father*, *marriage*, *equality*, and *housework* in the data set. We then pulled all documents where these terms were used, and further searched for generic terms, such as *male*, *female*, *man*, and *woman* to make sure we gathered all possible gender discussions. This process yielded a final sample of 11,622 *Ensign* articles and General Conference Talks spanning the years 1971 – 2012.

To ultimately answer the question, what it means to be a "Mormon man" according to official Mormon doctrine, we drew upon elements of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006), using various stages of coding, verification, and comparison with published literature. First, eight research assistants coded a section of data for relevant themes, resulting in an initial coding sheet. This yielded over 1,000 pages of coded, single-spaced excerpts. For example, when reading a speech or publication that said "A man and a woman think differently. They see things from masculine or feminine viewpoints"

⁴The structure of the Mormon Church places sole authority for official church doctrine in the hands of males / men (i.e., the General Authorities, Prophet, and Priesthood holders of the Church). These leaders, however, allow others to speak for the church in General Conference and *Ensign* at times. In such cases, the chosen representative – whether female, male or otherwise – is subject to the editorial control of the leadership, and may publish or present only materials approved by the leadership. As a result, there are times when female members of the Church speak at General Conference or publish in *Ensign*, but in such cases the representatives in question are only allowed to offer material already approved by the all-male leadership of the Church.

(Gabbott 1971), coders would place this example into a category labeled “Similarities and Differences.” In the following analysis, we utilize the illustrative examples of the excerpts that fit into the categories “what does manhood mean” and “what do men do” to capture LDS leaders’ construction of what it means to be a Mormon man.

This coding was evaluated and verified by the authors’ own coding of the data and consultation of published statistics, large scale data sets, and material from academic, institutional, and media sources on gender and Mormonism, as well as scholarship concerning gender and religion more broadly. Using inductive analysis, the team further analyzed the data for recurring themes and sorted these patterns into categories (Charmaz 2006). We compared the emerging patterns to prior research examining conceptions of gender, Mormonism, and religious masculinities in the published literature. From this, more refined categories and labels were created to describe “what it means to be men” in Mormonism.

To further define “what it means to be men” in Mormonism, we examined nuances in the coded content while comparing the emerging findings to those in published research on religious masculinities. We first thought of the LDS representations of manhood in the Church as almost literal examples of “ideal” or “hegemonic masculinity” (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). However, in consulting the literature on religious masculinities, we recognized these representations shared elements of other religious official doctrine about manhood (see Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015) and that Mormon lay members could interpret these lessons in a wide variety of ways (see Gerber 2015). As a result, we created categories to capture the ways LDS leaders defined “control” as the essence of “ideal” Mormon manhood – control of the self, controlling others, and avoiding control of others – as well as the ways Mormon males could signify such control in their lives.

Due to space limitations, here we provide representative cases to capture the breadth and depth of Mormon representations of manhood evidenced throughout the data. In doing so, we focus our analysis on patterns that have remained constant throughout the past 40 years in official LDS speeches and publications. Although there have been many shifts in Mormon gender relations and rhetoric during this time, LDS leaders’ overall conceptualization of gender has remained constant (see also Miles 2008; Sumerau and Cragun 2015; Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016). In fact, LDS leaders offered similar definitions of gender to those we discuss as recently as February 2014 when arguing that men and women were essentially different and separate in court filings supporting same-sex marriage bans (see *Kitchen v. Herbert* 2014). As a result, we use illustrations from each of the past four decades that capture the ways representations of ideal Mormon manhood have remained stable in the face of ongoing social changes.

Representing Mormon Manhood

Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) note that the essential element of manhood in contemporary society lies in the ability to exercise control over, and evade the control of others (see also Ezzell 2012; Johnson 2005; Kimmel 2008). Our analysis demonstrates that Mormon leaders advocate this definition by constructing ideal Mormon manhood as an expression of control in varied areas of social life. Specifically, Mormon leaders encourage men to signify masculine selves by exercising self-control, control over sexual and emotional expression, and control of others. Further, they emphasize self-reliance as the avoidance of being controlled by the outside world. In so doing, Mormon leaders officially create a version of manhood that reproduces societal patterns of men’s dominance and control over women. While LDS leaders often blend these ideas in their speeches and publications, we consider them as analytically distinct elements of ideal or hegemonic “Mormon” manhood.

Controlling the Self

Masculinities scholars have long noted the association of manhood (as well as hegemonic masculinity, see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) with self-control (see, e.g., Connell 1987; Kimmel 1996; West and Zimmerman 1987). Rather than expressing themselves as full people capable of a range of

behavioral and intellectual processes, boys and men are often encouraged to develop “personas” (Goffman 1977). These suggest men are seen as being in control: they always know what they are doing and have a (preferably rational) plan (see also Cragun and Sumerau 2015). Related studies of religious men have found similar patterns, wherein males emphasize constraint (Erzen 2006) and rational decision-making (Sumerau 2012) to signify their masculine credentials. In this section, we demonstrate the ways LDS leaders establish “manhood” defined by the ability to control the self.

LDS leaders often emphasize the importance of self-discipline for boys and men. Whereas self-discipline could take a wide variety of forms, emphasis has been placed on the self-control men would need to gain success in both God’s and man’s worlds. For example, a passage from a 1984 *Ensign* article, “The Banner of the Lord,” written by Victor L. Brown, a past Presiding Bishop and general authority in the LDS Church, offers an illustrative case of this type of representation delivered to the Church as part of General Conference and reprinted within the magazine for consideration by the entire membership:

Now that you have been accepted, if you expect to succeed, it is essential that you do those things that will bring about success. When you do succeed, which requires not just months but a lifetime of living and proving yourself, you may not receive the applause of men. You will not be performing before large audiences of enthusiastic supporters, but you will have performed many of the necessary labors in private and without expectation of recognition. And that, of course, requires greater self-discipline than just about any other human endeavor.

In addition to making associations between self-control and success, LDS leaders suggested males were naturally more prone to controlling the self, as this 1971 *Ensign* “Editorial: Fearless” demonstrates:

It seems to be the nature of most men to show some reserve as they deal with people. This caution undoubtedly promotes some small successes in human relations in the world, since the sharp edges of human beings are thus blunted and the abrasions between men may not be quite so frequent.

In fact, such representations – then and now - often suggest that all men’s endeavors are tied to the ability to control the self in much the same way studies have noted LDS representations of women emphasize accepting men’s control as essential to their morality (Sumerau and Cragun 2015). According to ElRay L. Christiansen, a general authority in the LDS church, in a 1971 *Ensign* article, “The Sifting”:

Man’s progress is to a great degree dependent upon his willingness to remain steadfast and immovable, especially when faced with opposition and adversity. Yet no person will ever be given more opposition than he has the potential to overcome or to endure. Some have a battle with infirmities, some with lust, some with addiction, some with envy or selfishness, some with sorrow.

According to LDS leaders (and, thus, according to God, for Mormon men), manhood is predicated upon the construction of a self that is disciplined and reserved in social relations. Self-control is thus essential to successfully signifying Mormon manhood.

LDS leaders also defined male self-control as necessary for a moral life. While their representations often covered topics most people would see as moral (e.g., honesty, faithfulness, kindness), they linked these behaviors specifically to men’s ability to self-regulate their actions. In a 1971 *Ensign* article, “The Meaning of Morality”, Victor L Brown wrote, “Honesty ... is the first virtue mentioned in the Thirteenth Article of Faith. It is founded on the first principles of human society and is the foundation principle of moral manhood.” Expanding on this argument, Brown further states:

Let all men who are elevated to positions of trust in the Church live so that no man can point to their faults, because they will have no faults; so that no man can justly accuse them of wrongdoing, because they do no wrong; that no man can point out their defects as ‘human’ and as ‘weak mortals,’ because they are living up to the principles of the gospel, and are not merely ‘weak human creatures,’ devoid of the Spirit of God and the power to live above sin. That is the way for all men to live in the kingdom of God.

In order for men to surpass “human” weakness via the construction of masculine selves, Brown and other leaders stressed the importance of controlling the self through prioritization. This is exemplified by a 1974 *Ensign* article, “Happiness Is Having a Father Who Cares,” in which James E. Faust, an LDS apostle, quotes LDS President Harold B. Lee’s lessons from the Bishop’s Training Course and Self-Help Guide:

Most men do not set priorities to guide them in allocating their time and most men forget that the first priority should be to maintain their own spiritual and physical strength; then comes their family; then the Church and then their professions.

Considering historical constructions of American manhood as predicated on strength and power (Kimmel 1996), it is noteworthy that strength (whether physical or spiritual) comes before both family and God. LDS leaders encourage male Mormons to prioritize manhood – via focus on the self – rather than service to others, which directly contradicts their emphasis when discussing moral Mormon womanhood (Sumerau and Cragun 2015).

These representations of male self-prioritization become more evident when LDS leaders address men and women or boys and girls. In such occasions, they generally argue that all should be moral and hardworking, but then give explicit advice for males. For example, in a 1985 *Ensign* article, “Adventures of the Spirit,” Robert E. Wells, a general authority in the LDS Church, wrote:

Now you young men, unmarried, nineteen to twenty-six (eighteen outside the United States), healthy and worthy—from the time of the recent prophets the spiritual adventure of a mission has been emphasized as a priesthood responsibility of such priority that again today we stress, your mission comes before marriage, education, professional opportunities, scholarships, sports, cars, or girls.

Echoing the above notions that development of the self via prioritization comes before all relations with others, LDS leaders define “men” as those who see relationships and responsibilities as mechanisms for developing greater self-control. These same messages are seen in more recent representations, like this article from a 2001 issue of *Ensign*, titled, “Happiness, Health, and Marriage” by Elizabeth VanDenBerghe:

Men, in particular, benefit from such a safety net. While a woman’s statistical chance of dying decreases gradually over time once she marries, a man almost immediately upon marrying experiences a sharp statistical decrease in the hazard of dying. Researchers point to the improved lifestyle many men encounter in marriage, one which counteracts such tendencies as irregular meal and sleep habits and a lack of social integration.

Despite the fact that these representations are separated by almost two decades, the underlying emphasis upon males learning self-control and prioritizing their own needs remains clear.

In fact, both official LDS leaders and women allowed to publish in official outlets utilize language about self-control to draw clear distinctions between women and men. The following excerpt from a 2001 *Ensign* article, “It Is Not Good for Man or Woman to Be Alone” by Sheri L. Dew offers a typical illustration:

Satan seeks to confuse us about our stewardships and distinctive natures as men and women. He bombards us with bizarre messages about gender, marriage, family, and all male-female relationships. He would have us believe men and women are so alike that our unique gifts are not necessary, or so different we can never hope to understand each other. Neither is true.

Expanding on her articulation of difference, Dew ties this difference to males’ need to take responsibility for their privileges, and demonstrate their worthiness to exert God’s power:

Young men, your ordination to the priesthood is a grand privilege and responsibility, and not a license to dominate. Be unfailingly worthy to exercise this godly power, which is given you to be of service. A man is never more magnificent than when he is guided by the Spirit to honor the priesthood he holds.

In representations like these, the ability to self-determine actions both creates and relies upon distinctions between womanhood and masculinities. In so doing, LDS leaders define self-control as essential for men seeking to enact God’s divine plan. Similar to previous studies on gay Christian

(Sumerau 2012), evangelical heterosexual Christian (Heath 2003), ex-gay evangelical Christian (Gerber 2015), and African-American Christian (Pitt 2010) males, Mormon men learn that self-control is an essential ingredient of manhood in much the same way boys are taught these lessons in nonreligious settings (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015).

Controlling Sexual and Emotional Expression

Alongside general notions of self-control, researchers have demonstrated that males are often explicitly encouraged to monitor their sexual and emotional expressions (see, e.g., Kimmel 2008; Schwalbe et al. 2000; Sumerau 2012). Rather than sexual beings capable of a wide variety of affectionate or intimate displays, males are taught to engage in hyper displays of heterosexuality in secular settings (Kimmel 2008) and exhibit sexual restraint in religious settings (Pitt 2010). Furthermore, males are generally taught that any sign of emotional experience – other than anger – marks them as lacking masculine credentials (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Previous studies have also found that males emphasize emotional and/or sexual control to signify masculine selves and claims to religious power (see, e.g., Erzen 2006; Sumerau 2012; Wolkomir 2006). In this section, we demonstrate that emotional and sexual control also represent essential elements of Mormon manhood.

Similar to other Christian males, Mormon men learn they must control their sexual urges to signify Godly masculine selves. While this representation takes many forms, LDS leaders typically focus on males achieving “dominion” over sexual desire. For example, in the 1971 “The Meaning of Morality” article in *Ensign*, Victor L. Brown speaks of the Lord’s command for men and women to reproduce: “To man he gave a mind with which to reason so that he might have dominion over ‘every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’ With this mind he also expects man to have dominion over himself. He expects man to exercise control over his sexual drives.” Further, Mormon leaders’ representations suggested that failing to control sexual desire would cause males to lose sight of the “meaning of life” and the richness of God’s plans. As Marion D. Hanks noted in her 1972 *Ensign* article “Joy Through Christ”:

When the falconer is not heard, the falcon is lost. So are men when they cannot or will not hear the voice of the Master. Things fall apart in human life, the center cannot hold, trouble is born, and the “worst,” who are “full of passionate intensity,” do their own thing, follow their own base appetites and wayward wills, and impose upon those who are less intense and involved—and particularly upon the young—false constructions and interpretations of the meaning of life.

Rather than seeking pleasure in natural sexual appetites, Mormon men should restrain their sexual selves in order to signify moral masculine selves (see also Burke and Hudec 2015; Erzen 2006), which suggests that those who decide to do otherwise will have to reconcile such decisions with the official definitions of manhood provided by the Church (see also Burke 2014).

LDS leaders also echoed secular (Vaccaro, Schrock, and McCabe 2011) and religious (Sumerau 2012) notions of manhood predicated upon emotional restraint (see also Hochschild 1983). As Margaret Woods explained in her 1972 *Ensign* article “The New People,” real men did not show emotion even in difficult times:

I saw something shining in the corners of his eyes. They couldn’t have been tears; men never cry. He looked a bit frightened when he opened the letter that had come for him that day with all the pretty cards. He whispered a word that sounded something like “overdrawn,” but I didn’t know what that meant.

In fact, LDS leaders often suggested women and men experienced different types of feelings, which always positioned men in control of women, exemplified by LDS apostle Boyd K Packer in a 1977 *Ensign* article “The Equal Rights Amendment”:

There are basic things that a man needs that a woman does not need. There are things that a man feels that a woman never does feel. There are basic things that a woman needs that a man never needs, and there are things that a woman feels that a man never feels nor should he. These differences make women, in basic needs,

literally opposite from men. A man, for instance, needs to feel protective, and yes, dominant, if you will, in leading his family. A woman needs to feel protected, in the bearing of children and in the nurturing of them.

Rather than fully formed beings capable of a wide variety of emotional experiences and expressions, LDS leaders' representations suggested emotions were not to be experienced or expressed by Mormon men. The lack of emotional expression echoes longstanding American constructions of stoic men who gain meaning and purpose by protecting emotional women (Johnson 2005).

Controlling Others

In alignment with decades of masculinities scholarship (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), LDS leaders argued that controlling the self was not enough to signify manhood. Rather, Mormon men should also control others. While this element of religious manhood is implicit in previous studies of religious men (see, e.g. Bush 2010; Messner 1997; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015), official Mormon representations gave it explicit emphasis. As Sumerau and associates note in their analysis of religious and secular media, the conceptualization of religious males as inherent leaders of others parallels findings in secular settings, such as rehab facilities (Ezzell 2012), batterer intervention programs (Schrock and Padavic 2007), and many other social contexts (Kimmel 2008). In this section, we demonstrate some ways LDS leaders defined Mormon men as those who control others.

Mirroring religious doctrine in other Christian traditions (see Bush 2010), LDS leaders often argued men should control their families and relationships. The following excerpt from a speech by Boyd K. Packer published in the 1993 *Ensign* article "For Time and All Eternity" offers a typical case:

Some roles are best suited to the masculine nature and others to the feminine nature. Both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider. Those responsibilities of the priesthood, which have to do with the administration of the Church, of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that "the order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son. This order was instituted in the days of Adam."

In fact, Boyd K. Packer made a similar argument almost twenty years before. In "The Equal Rights Amendment," an article published in 1977 in *Ensign*, he stated: "I am for protecting the rights of a man to be a man, a masculine, male man; a husband and a father." Similarly, apostle Russell M. Nelson emphasized the role of men as the leaders of households in his 1989 *Ensign* piece "Woman-Of Infinite Worth":

We learn from the scriptures that men are to hold priesthood responsibilities and, as husbands and fathers, provide for (see Rom. 12:17; 1 Tim. 5:8; D&C 75:28; D&C 83:2, 4) and protect their families (see D&C 134:6, 11). From the beginning, the priesthood has been conferred only upon men, coming through the "lineage of the fathers."

We found throughout our data that LDS leaders returned to the idea of men as necessary and inherent leaders of the Church and family. In so doing, they argued that an essential element of manhood could be found in men's control over other religious people and family members.

At other times, LDS leaders explicitly linked the control of others to provision. Specifically, they argued that real men were supposed to be providers, and should prioritize this role in their lives. In the 1971 *Ensign* article aptly named "Priorities," Wendell J. Ashton offered an illustrative example of this type of representation:

Every able-bodied man should be a good provider for his family. Yet some men let the providing take priority over those for whom they provide. Some let their ardor for their Church positions crowd out the precious moments for their wives and children at home. Years ago a noble woman said to me of her beloved husband, a respected Church leader in our area, "He is so busy doing Church work, I hope he does not forget how to be a Christian." Every man and woman will be happier if he gives his best to the Church, his job, his community

service, and his hobbies. But even happier is he who remembers the lesson of Jesus to Martha and keeps his priorities right.

Rather than simply suggesting men should provide for and lead their families, LDS leaders often linked these manly ideals to scriptural references that indicate men's control of others was a divine mandate from God. This is illustrated by Brent A. Barlow in the 1973 *Ensign* article "Strengthening the Patriarchal Order in the House":

The recent trend in family government is also a departure from biblical teachings. The apostle Paul admonished, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." (Eph. 5:22; see also Col. 3:18.) He also taught that "the husband is the head of the wife." (Eph. 5:23.) In addition, the Lord instructed Eve in the Garden of Eden that "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3:16.) It is true that in some Latter-day Saint homes the wife or mother must assume a major portion of the responsibility in governing family affairs. Such would be the case, for example, if the father were absent because of death or divorce or if he were incapacitated through illness or injury.

As even the title of the piece demonstrates, LDS leaders defined men as those who created patriarchal homes wherein they established control over others.

In fact, LDS leaders often explicitly linked men's control over others to traditional notions of the male breadwinner (see Kimmel 1996). In so doing, they argued that males had the divine right to rule over others because they were tasked with the "obligation" to provide for the financial needs of others. Illustrative of this idea are sections of Ezra Taft Benson's "To the Fathers in Israel" 1987 *Ensign* article. He noted: "The Lord clearly defined the roles of providing for and rearing a righteous posterity. In the beginning, Adam, not Eve, was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow." Expanding upon this point in this same article, he echoed common elements of Mormon doctrine:

We hear of husbands who, because of economic conditions, have lost their jobs and expect the wives to go out of the home and work, even though the husband is still capable of providing for his family. In these cases, we urge the husband to do all in his power to allow his wife to remain in the home caring for the children while he continues to provide for his family the best he can, even though the job he is able to secure may not be ideal and family budgeting may have to be tighter. Also, the need for education or material things does not justify the postponing of children in order to keep the wife working as the breadwinner of the family.

While it might be tempting to hope for changes over time, LDS leaders continue to stress men's "obligation" to provide for their families when constructing controlling or ruling over others as an essential element of Mormon manhood. For example, in the 2007 *Ensign* article "Crossing Thresholds and Becoming Equal Partners", after outlining the importance of males ruling over their homes and family finances, Bruce C. Hafen wrote: "This doesn't make Adam a dictator. A ruler can be a measuring tool that sets standards. Then Adam would live so that others may measure the rightness of their conduct by watching his. Being a ruler is not so much a privilege of power as an obligation to practice what a man preaches." Thus even when LDS elites suggest "equal" partnerships, they contradict "equality" by placing control of the family in the hands of men only. In so doing, they echo many other Christian traditions by calling for a "separate but equal" distribution of power wherein males rule and females serve (Bush 2010).

Avoiding the Control of Others

While exerting control over others often receives the bulk of attention in masculinities scholarship (see Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), equally necessary for the social construction of male privilege is the ability to avoid being controlled by others (Kimmel 2008). In secular settings, males may signify this capacity by engaging in reckless behavior despite the concerns of family or health care officials, resisting the opinions or complaints of romantic partners, or dropping out of conventional roles and obligations (Connell 1987). Similarly, in religious settings, males may accomplish this by dismissing the opinions of women on religious matters or revising official doctrine to suit their needs (see Pitt

2010; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). In the case of Mormonism, LDS leaders stressed cultivating self-reliance, a traditional American conception of the “self made man” (Kimmel 1996).

Self-reliance was a common theme throughout our data set. LDS leaders often defined self-reliance as a prerequisite for recognition as a fully developed Mormon man. This is illustrated in the 1984 *Ensign* article “The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance” by Marion G. Romney:

Can we see how critical self-reliance becomes when looked upon as the prerequisite to service, when we also know service is what godhood is all about? Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak.

Further, LDS leaders suggested developing “godhood” (women, too, can become gods, but they cannot become the worshipped gods of planets) required males to stand alone free from the constraints of others. Using key phrases such as stand, talk, and walk, for example, Wendell J. Ashton in his 1971 *Ensign* piece “Unchanging Principles of Leadership” illustrates this point:

Stand on your own feet. Stand tall. Hold your heads high as though you are truly sons of God, which you are. Walk among men as holders of powers beyond your own, which you have, through the priesthood. Move on the good earth as though you are partners of the Lord in helping to bring immortality and eternal life to mankind, which you are. Walk quietly, as in stocking feet; but walk fearlessly, in faith. Don't let the ill winds sway you. Walk as leaders with the priesthood in the government of God. Walk with hands ready to help, with hearts full of love for your fellowmen. Walk with a toughness in righteousness.

Note that LDS leaders tie “godhood” and “manhood” to classical American ingredients of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987), such as fearlessness, toughness, standing on one's own, and leadership. In so doing, Mormon leaders defined ideal manhood as an expression of self-reliance, wherein Mormon men exemplify consistent control over and influence in their worlds.

Alongside the overall emphasis upon men's self-reliance, LDS leaders often suggested males would need to develop their independence from others before they would be capable of establishing relationships with others as men. In so doing, they argued that the cultivation of manhood was a necessary ingredient for appropriately handling important interactions with others. President Harold B. Lee's speech, published in 1974 in the *Ensign*, promotes this idea focusing on the dangers of early marriage:

I am not trying to urge you younger men to marry too early. I think therein is one of the hazards of today's living. We don't want a young man to think of marriage until he is able to take care of a family, to have an institution of his own, to be independent. (“President Harold B. Lee's General Priesthood Address,” *Ensign*, 1974).

Echoing this sentiment in relation to church relationships over 30 years later, in 2012 LDS President and Prophet Thomas S. Monson encouraged Mormon males to foster independence necessary for other relationships in his *Ensign* piece “Welcome to the Conference”:

We affirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty – and we encourage all young men who are worthy and who are physically able and mentally capable to respond to the call to serve. Many young women also serve, but they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young men.

While males must become independent voices for the Church capable of bringing others to God, women's service is not framed in the same way. Rather, as other studies have noted (Sumerau and Cragun 2015), women's service is generally regarded as an accompaniment to men's development into future LDS leaders capable of controlling the ongoing growth and development of the Church throughout time.

Conclusions

The Mormon leaders' official construction of Church doctrine we examined emphasized “signifying control,” which is in alignment with secular notions of ideal manhood (see Schrock and Schwalbe

2009). The LDS leaders' representations drew upon these secular ideals and integrated them into their religion rather than constructing a distinct religious ideal of manhood. Specifically, they defined control as essential to signifying masculine Mormon selves. In so doing, they stressed the importance of signifying control – of the self, sexual and emotional expression, and others – as well as the ability to be free from the control of others and self-reliant.

These findings support research on the ways religious men utilize existing assumptions in their religious traditions to signify manhood (see, e.g., Gerber 2015; Heath 2003; Sumerau 2012) and extend these findings by revealing the ways religious leaders create such assumptions or ideal versions of manhood in the first place. Mormon males may interpret and respond to these representations in a myriad of ways, which has been shown in other religious traditions (see, e.g., Burke 2014; Gerber 2015; Sumerau 2012). Yet, the ideal or hegemonic form of masculinity is created and emphasized throughout official speeches and publications, and any Mormon male may be called to account for these ideals at any moment (see also Connell 1987; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987). Whereas researchers have importantly begun to explore the ways individual males construct manhood acts in many religious contexts, our findings suggest it may be just as important to ascertain what religious leaders define as evidence of manhood within their traditions, and how they represent “what it means to be a religious man” within official doctrine concerning God’s plan for the world.

These findings also support previous scholarship on masculinities in secular settings (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), and extend this research by drawing attention to the ways males are also encouraged to define manhood as predicated upon control in religious contexts. Whereas researchers have noted the importance of control to men’s definitions of manhood in a wide variety of secular organizations and groups (see, e.g., Ezzell 2012; Kimmel 2008; Schrock and Padavic 2007), there has been less attention paid to the ways religious traditions emphasize men’s control over self and others (but see Sumerau 2012; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). Although Mormon leaders would call their ideal man “Godly” or “moral,” our analysis reveals that in practice “Godly” or “moral” may simply mean capable of exerting the same types of control many religious people believe God exerts over the world. Rather than an expression of morality or goodness, such representations encourage men to establish patriarchal control in this world while granting this control divine affirmation (see also Sumerau and Cragun 2015). Our findings thus reveal the necessity of disentangling and critiquing the use of the terms “Godly” or “moral” to justify men’s dominance over women and other men.

Our findings also support studies revealing the similarity between religious and secular notions of manhood (see, e.g., Clawson 2005; Robinson and Spivey 2007; Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015), and extend these findings by revealing some ways secular notions of manhood are reproduced and/or created in specific religious traditions. Rather than expressing divinely inspired notions of manhood, one could argue that LDS leaders are simply granting secular patterns of masculine privilege divine authority and legitimacy. On the other hand, one could argue that secular notions of ideal manhood find their origin in religious institutions, which would suggest religion might be the ultimate battlefield upon which to wage campaigns for gender equality. In either case, as Avishai and associates (2015) note in a recent review, the evidence is mounting that gender and religion are interrelated social constructs (see also Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016), and that the future of one depends at the very least upon the continued belief and practice of the other. Our findings thus echo the assertion of Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun (2015) that eradicating gender inequalities may depend heavily on critically exploring the ways religious *and* secular representations convince people to grant each of these belief systems meaning and power in their lives.

Our findings also have implications for scholars examining enabling conditions (see, e.g., Ezzell 2008; Schwable 2008). Whereas masculinities scholars have noted the use of secular (Ezzell 2008), religious (Robinson and Spivey 2007), and the combination of secular and religious (Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015) media offerings to promote ideal forms of manhood, our findings suggest official religious doctrines may be equally important. Considering that studies have shown that people in secular settings (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009) often transmit ideas about “what it

means to be a man” to others, it is not surprising that religious leaders accomplish similar effects in their creation and interpretation of official doctrine (see also Kaylor 2010). However, scholars have generally left religious doctrine out of the equation when ascertaining the construction of effective enabling conditions for the construction of masculinities (but see Sumerau, Barringer, and Cragun 2015). Coupled with previous findings about the importance of widespread cultural representations in the maintenance of gender inequalities (Johnson 2005), our analysis suggests there is much to learn from the ways religious leaders enable their followers to imagine a necessarily gendered world by representing and defining manhood in specific ways.

Unraveling the multitude of ways that religious leaders may accomplish such endeavors within and between varied traditions, organizations, and time periods requires asking questions beyond the scope of our study. By providing a baseline account of the ways religious leaders may represent manhood in a specific context, we propose researchers could, for example, systematically examine the representation of manhood people raised in many different religious traditions receive while comparing and contrasting these ideas in relation to secular traditions. Further, researchers might gain important insights from exploring the ways manhood is represented in the churches men leave in relation to the churches men join over the course of time. While these are merely two of the possible avenues for such study, our findings suggest we could learn much about the representation of manhood via analyses of religious and secular leaders who create ideal beliefs about what it means to be a man that individuals navigate in the course of their ongoing social lives.

About the Authors

J. E. Sumerau is Assistant Professor of Sociology and the Director of Applied Sociology at the University of Tampa. Professor Sumerau’s teaching and research focus on the intersection of sexualities, gender, religion, and health in the interpersonal and historical experiences of sexual, gender, and religious minorities.

Ryan T. Cragun is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Tampa. His research focuses on religion, with an emphasis on Mormonism and the nonreligious and has been published in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal of Sex Research*, *Journal of Religion and Health*, and *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.

Trina Smith is an independent scholar, trained as both a sociologist and social worker. She is interested in gender, sexuality, mental health, communities, and applied sociology.

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