

# The Intersection of Gender, Sexuality, and Religion in Mormon Mixed-Sexuality Marriages

Elizabeth Legerski<sup>1</sup> · Anita Harker<sup>2</sup>

Published online: 11 August 2017  
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2017

**Abstract** Mixed-sexuality marriages (MSMs) are defined in the present study as those where one partner identifies as heterosexual and the other partner identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or reports experiencing same-sex attraction. Members of conservative religions, such as Mormonism, may be more likely to enter MSMs given the religion's stance on homosexuality and doctrinal emphasis on heteronormative marriage. Using data from 56 interviews with individuals who either have been or currently are Mormon and in a MSM, we explore participants' ideas about gender roles and sexuality in the context of their ideas about Mormonism. We find that couples' ideas about gender, sexuality, and religion intersect to act as a resource or impediment to marital satisfaction. Among our sample, most couples maintain an outward appearance of heteronormativity; some view their private departure from the traditional gender order as a benefit to their relationship, whereas others view it as a source of strain and work hard to minimize gender deviance in their roles. The findings provide an important example of the way gender and religion are mutually constitutive and illustrate how notions of sexuality are sometimes used to reinforce a traditional gender order and religious beliefs, whereas at other times, the contradictions of MSMs challenge traditional gender norms and religious orthodoxy.

**Keywords** Mormons · Mixed-sexuality marriage · Mixed-orientation marriage · Gender roles · Sexuality · Religion · LGBQ · Sexual identity · Sexual orientation

Scholarship on mixed-sexuality marriages (MSMs)—defined in the present study as those where one spouse identifies as heterosexual while the other spouse identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer (LGBQ), or reports experiencing same-sex attraction—has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years (Hernandez et al. 2011; Kays and Yarhouse 2010). Historically referred to as mixed-orientation marriages (MOMs), the research in this area explores a wide variety of relationship factors, including motivations for marrying, spousal response to disclosure, and the evolution of mixed-sexuality relationships over time (Benack and Swan 2016; Buxton 2001, 2004; Schwartz 2012; Yarhouse et al. 2003, 2009). Some of this research explores the experiences of men in MSMs (Buxton 2012; Edser and Shea 2002; Higgins 2002, 2006; Pearcey 2005; Swan and Benack 2012; Tornello and Patterson 2012) and others focus on the experiences of women (Grever 2012; Hays and Samuels 1989; Pearcey and Olson 2009). Although much of the existing literature is dominated by explorations that reify monosexual cisgender binaries (Benack and Swan 2016), researchers who are careful to explore the unique experiences of bisexual, gay, and lesbian individuals note some important differences in experiences across sexual identity categories (Buxton 2001; Pallotta-Chiarolli 2016; Swan and Benack 2012).

Perhaps surprisingly, only a small proportion of the literature on MSMs has explored the role of religion (for exceptions, see Hernandez and Wilson 2007; Kissil and Itzhaky 2015; Wolkomir 2004; Yarhouse et al. 2009). Similarly, few have explored the gender dynamics of mixed-sexuality couples. One notable exception is the work of

✉ Elizabeth Legerski  
elizabeth.legerski@email.und.edu

<sup>1</sup> Department of Sociology, University of North Dakota, 205 Gillette Hall, 225 Centennial Drive, Stop 7136, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7136, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Sciences, Whatcom Community College, 237 West Kellogg Road, Bellingham, WA 98226, USA

Wolkomir (2004, 2009) which explores women's notions of femininity when their traditional gender ideology is challenged and the ways couples reconcile hegemonic ideologies of heteronormative romantic love within a MSM. Indeed, Wolkomir's (2004) work is particularly insightful for examining how religious ideas are related to patterns of gender relations. Yet few researchers have explored perceptions of gender roles among men and women in MSMs. Understanding the dynamics of MSMs is important because renewed efforts to promote traditional families and heteronormativity within conservative religious movements will likely continue to create pressure for religious LGBTQ-identifying individuals to pursue a MSM (Hernandez and Wilson 2007; Hernandez et al. 2011; Yarhouse et al. 2011).

There has been renewed interest in examining the complex intersections between gender and religion, including the ways individuals negotiate religious ideas and identities (Avishai et al. 2015). The religious doctrines of many conservative religions such as Mormonism rely heavily on notions of traditional, heterosexual marriage, and they emphasize the importance of distinctive cisgender roles (Sumerau and Cragun 2015). Yet, because notions of sexuality are intricately related to notions of gender (Ingraham 1994), when traditional, heteronormative assumptions about marriage are interrupted, as in the case of MSMs (Wolkomir 2009), how might that influence couples' notions of gender, including the way they "do gender" as they negotiate their roles in the marriage? Scholarly literature on the gendered household division of labor suggests that when the traditional gender order is interrupted (e.g., when a female spouse makes more money than her husband does or when a male spouse becomes unemployed), rather than challenging their gender roles, many heterosexual couples often actively work to preserve traditional gender arrangements in order to relieve the stress that their departure in roles creates (Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Legerski and Cornwall 2010). Previous research on MSMs by Wolkomir (2004, 2009) and others illustrates how many mixed-sexuality couples interpret their relationships as challenging components of traditional gender ideology—a conflict that is oftentimes not viewed positively, but rather interpreted as something they must endure or overcome.

In a recent study of 1612 Mormon sexual-minority individuals, the authors found that 31% reported entering a MSM (Dehlin et al. 2014). Given the likelihood that a significant proportion of Mormon sexual-minority individuals may enter a MSM at some point in their lives, it is important that we understand the experiences of both LGBTQ individuals in MSMs and also their heterosexual spouses, who may or may not enter the marriage knowing that theirs will be a mixed-sexuality union. In our analysis we explore data from 56 in-depth interviews with individuals who either have been or currently are Mormon and in a MSM. We ask how might individuals in MSMs interpret their departure

from traditional heterosexual marriage and gender ideologies? What is the relationship between their religious ideas, notions of gender and sexuality, and their gender roles? And how do these ideas shape their well-being and sense of satisfaction in their marriage?

Although it is difficult to estimate, some scholars have suggested that as many as two million sexual-minority individuals in the United States either are or have been heterosexually married (Buxton 2001; Ortiz and Scott 1994). Although previous research shows disclosure of a sexual-minority spouse's sexual identity to their heterosexual partner is more likely to take place after marriage, among at least one large sample of individuals in MSMs, nearly one-third of participants disclosed (or their spouse disclosed) their non-heterosexual feelings to their spouse before marrying (Yarhouse et al. 2011). In her work on MSMs, Buxton (2004) found that when disclosure took place following marriage, only one-third of couples attempted to stay together, and only half of that group remained married for more than 3 years. In Dehlin et al.'s (2014) study of Mormon sexual-minority individuals, the divorce rate among those who had entered a MSM was 51% at the time of their survey, and the author's projected an eventual divorce rate of about 69%. Given the high rate of divorce among MSMs, it is important to explore the factors that contribute to the dissolution of most relationships and the resiliency of others.

Those researchers who have examined the role of religion in shaping the experiences of individuals in MSMs find that religious beliefs and practices are often an important component of mixed-sexuality relationships. For example, several studies have found that individuals in MSMs report religious worship and practices such as prayer as helpful resources in coping with the challenges of their marriage, noting religious covenants and notions of obedience to God as reasons for maintaining their relationships (Wolkomir 2004; Yarhouse et al. 2009). Kays et al. (2014) found that embracing covenantal marital values was associated with greater marital quality among individuals currently or formerly in MSMs. In addition, Yarhouse et al. (2011) reported that whereas participants in their study overall indicated average levels of religious commitment, sexual-minority individuals reported relatively higher religious commitment in comparison to heterosexual individuals. Sexual-minority individuals in their sample were also more likely to report that they attended religious services and prayed or meditated. Such findings suggest that religiosity and religious practice may be a particularly important motivating factor for sexual-minority individuals in MSMs (see also Kissil and Itzhaky 2015).

Nevertheless, qualitative studies have been particularly helpful in illuminating the ways that religious doctrine and practice may not always provide comfort for individuals in MSMs and, in some cases, may even cause added turmoil. For example, several participants in Hernandez and Wilson's

(2007) study of Seventh-day Adventist heterosexual women previously in MSMs described the challenges associated with reconciling their religious beliefs with their experiences in a MSM, sometimes describing their religious communities as providing inadequate support. Wolkomir's (2004) study of Protestant and Evangelical heterosexual women currently or previously in MSMs also is useful for illustrating the intense challenges that spouses face as they negotiate a MSM. Despite these challenges, Wolkomir (2004) finds that part of the motivation for many of the participants in her sample to remain in their MSMs was a commitment to maintaining what they perceived as God's sanctioned order for men and women (i.e., heterosexual marriage).

Members of conservative religious communities such as Mormonism may be particularly willing to enter into a MSM due to doctrine regarding heterosexual marriage as a commandment with eternal consequences (Heaton and Goodman 1985). Though polygyny was accepted in the early history of the Mormon Church, and doctrinally there remain ties to polygyny today, mainstream Mormon practice emphasizes the importance of a gendered division of labor solely within the confines of legally sanctioned, monogamous heterosexual unions. In one of the most prominent contemporary declarations from Mormon Church leadership titled, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (colloquially called "The Proclamation on the Family"), the First Presidency of the Mormon Church explicates the religion's stance on gender and families (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 1995). The proclamation states that gender is an essential and eternal characteristic of men and women, heterosexual marriage and childbearing is a central part of men's and women's purpose on this earth, and men and women have distinct, divinely ordained roles in the family such that fathers are to preside, provide, and protect and mothers are "primarily responsible for the nurture of their children" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1995: para. 7).

Mormon religious leaders regularly and actively construct gendered background expectations, often referencing the document described previously, to reinforce traditional femininity and masculinity and a gendered division of labor (Sumerau and Cragun 2015; see also Brooks et al. 2015). These discourses also contribute to the cisgendering of reality by reinforcing binary notions of gender that fail to recognize alternative gender identities in both Mormon doctrine and cultural practices (Sumerau et al. 2016). Those who have studied other religious conservatives similarly find that when traditional cisgender roles are emphasized in doctrine, heterosexual marriage and childbearing remain important ways of enacting what are believed to be gender ideals ordained by God (Gallagher 2003), traditional masculinity (Sumerau 2012), and femininity (Wolkomir 2004). Thus, LGBTQ members of traditionally conservative religions may feel compelled to enter a heterosexual marriage even without direct

encouragement from leaders to do so (Kissil and Itzhaky 2015; Ortiz and Scott 1994).

As interest in MSMs has grown in recent years, so too has interest in expanding efforts to consider the ways that gender and religion operate as "mutually constitutive social categories" (Avishai et al. 2015, p. 5). Indeed, as Avishai et al. (2015) suggest, the simultaneous resurgence of both religious movements and women's movements necessitates our ability to use a critical gender lens in order to understand the varied intersections of gender, sexuality, and religion. The Mormon "Proclamation on the Family" provides a fitting example of the way gender, sexuality, and family roles are all intricately connected in contemporary religious doctrine and practice. Thus, understanding the perspectives and decision-making of Mormon couples in MSMs requires examining the intersection of sexual identity, gender identities, and notions of ideal gender roles as influenced by religious beliefs. Drawing from Ken's (2008) work, which uses sugar as a metaphor for the ways in which race, class and gender intersect with one another, we posit that religious identities similarly interact with and shape the ways in which gender and sexuality are produced and experienced among individuals in MSMs. We argue that individuals internalize larger cultural messages about gender and sexuality and, in turn, digest and process these messages with varying effects dependent upon their flexibility of interpretation of religious doctrine and commitment to Mormonism as an identity. In this way, religion as an institution influences not only one's religious identity (in this case, as a "Mormon"), but also the way that individuals live and experience their gender and sexual identities (see Sumerau et al. 2016). Indeed, a person's religious identity intersects in profound ways with other identity statuses to reshape, reinterpret, and reify notions of gender and sexuality (see Avishai et al. 2015).

As we described, Wolkomir (2004, 2009) is one of only a few scholars who have explored notions of femininity and masculinity within MSMs. Her work is illustrative for understanding how "hegemonic heterosexuality and gender are interwoven and mutually sustaining and legitimating" (Wolkomir 2009, p. 511). In her earlier qualitative analysis of interviews with Evangelical women married to gay men, she finds that they "experienced their husbands' homosexuality as a direct threat to their femininity and notions of gender relations" (Wolkomir 2004, p. 740). She found that when many of the women learned of their spouse's sexual infidelities, they often blamed themselves for a failed traditionally feminine performance, and the process of disclosure made them feel very insecure in their sense of femininity. Wolkomir found that most of the women in her sample saw their role as aiding God in maintaining their marriages. As a result, women often "drew on biblical passages about the husband/father role in the family to influence their husbands' actions" (Wolkomir 2004, p. 750). In submitting their will to

God, the women could then use God's authority to convince their husbands to maintain their marriage, and thus God's ordained order.

In Wolkomir's (2009) later work, she conducted interviews with both men and women who were currently or formerly in MSMs. In her study she found that many MOCs attributed challenges with intimacy to the gendered nature of sexuality, namely the notion that women typically do not enjoy sex. She also found that heterosexual notions of desire were critical in shaping how couples responded to the disclosure. For the majority of her participants, successful femininity and masculinity required masculine desire for a woman. When this sexual desire was missing, many couples (over half) could not reconcile "the dominant model of hegemonic heterosexuality and gender" with their lived experience and thus felt they had to exit the relationship (Wolkomir 2009, p. 506). Some couples though (about a quarter of her sample) responded by separating the sexual and emotional components of their relationship, remaining married, but allowing for homosexual sexuality outside the marriage, which itself became asexual. Nevertheless, respondents who coped in this way often "still grounded their gender identities in traditional roles"; for example, gay men still provided and cared for their wife and children and saw that as an important part of their marriage and identity (Wolkomir 2009, p. 508). Wolkomir found that even among the remaining couples in her sample, who maintained a sexual relationship and also allowed for sex outside the marriage, they still held on to traditional gender ideologies in many ways. Although informative, Wolkomir did not explore the role of religious beliefs in this process, and her findings related to gender roles were tangential to her primary focus of exploring the variety of accommodations (or not) that couples were willing to make in terms of their sexual relationships and intimacy in order to reconcile their MSMs with their notions of heteronormative romantic love.

As Sumerau and Cragun (2015) show in their analysis of writings by Mormon leaders since the 1970s, a traditional cisgender order is a central component of Mormon doctrine and religious practice. Embedded in this order are heteronormative understandings of marriage and the primary roles of men and women within families. Previous scholarship shows that those who report their religious faith is important to them are also more likely to report that religious factors influence their decisions about marriage, work, and family (Sigalow et al. 2012). Research also shows that religiously conservative women perform more housework and stereotypically feminine tasks than do nonevangelical women (Ellison and Bartkowski 2002). Yet, others have found that among conservatively religious couples, traditional beliefs about the appropriate roles of men and women are often largely symbolic such that religious couples frequently display greater egalitarianism in their division of household labor given the practical constraints of real life (Gallagher and Smith 1999). In

addition, Denton (2004) finds that even when theologically liberal Protestants embrace more egalitarian gender ideologies, they often report decision-making practices that are not any more egalitarian than the practices of conservative Protestants are. Analyses of household division of labor have been useful for examining whether (and in what contexts) religious ideology and beliefs actually translate into traditional, gendered patterns of behavior. Thus, in our analysis we ask, how do ideas about religion, sexuality, and gender intersect to shape perceptions and the practice of family roles and responsibilities within Mormon MSMs? Exploring this relationship may provide insight into the factors that contribute to the success of MSMs for some, as well as create challenges for others.

## Method

### Participants

Table 1 provides some descriptive statistics about our 56 interview participants. Over half of the interview sample included individuals who were currently married in a MSM, whereas the remaining participants had divorced or separated. The majority of these partnerships were between a heterosexual woman and gay man. Of the participants included in our analysis, about half identified as heterosexual women. About one-third of participants identified as gay men, and the remaining few participants identified as lesbian, bisexual men, heterosexual men, queer men, or "other" men. Those who identified as "other" explained that they were "same-sex attracted." None of the individuals in our interview sample identified as transgender, pansexual, or asexual. Thus, the findings presented here largely represent the experiences of heterosexual women and gay men in cisgender MSMs.

Among the interview sample, over 40% either disclosed or learned of their spouse's sexual identity before marrying, and the average length of time between the wedding and disclosure was 5.7 years after marrying. The average length of marriage was 15.1 years, including both those currently married and those previously married. The average age at marriage was 26.1 years, and participants reported that they dated and were engaged for just over a year before marrying, on average. The majority married in a Mormon temple (a marker of religious orthodoxy at the time of their marriage), although only about one-quarter of respondents reported that they or their spouse were counseled to marry by religious leaders. Two-thirds of the sample described themselves as active members of the Mormon Church, yet a near equal proportion reported that their religious beliefs became less orthodox over time.

**Table 1** Characteristics of the 56 participants

Categorical variables	Frequency	Percent	
Sexual identity and gender			
Gay man	18	32.1	
Same-sex attracted, male	2	3.6	
Queer, male	1	1.8	
Bisexual, male	2	3.6	
Lesbian	2	3.6	
Heterosexual, male	3	5.4	
Heterosexual, female	28	50.0	
Sexual identity and relationship status			
Heterosexual, currently in MSM	15	26.8	
Heterosexual, previously in MSM	16	28.6	
Sexual minority, currently in MSM	20	35.7	
Sexual minority, previously in MSM	5	8.9	
Race/ethnicity			
White	54	96.4	
Asian	1	1.8	
Latina(o)/Hispanic	1	1.8	
Median individual income category	\$50,000–74,999		
Education			
High school degree	1	1.8	
Some college	9	16.1	
College graduate	16	28.6	
Professional or graduate degree	30	53.6	
Has children	53	94.6	
Married in Mormon temple	52	92.9	
Counseled to marry heterosexually	15	26.8	
Disclosure took place before wedding	24	42.9	
Discovery of erotica/flirting/infidelity led to disclosure	6	10.7	
Ever had an affair	14	25.0	
Partner had an affair	16	28.6	
Current status in Mormon church			
Active member	38	67.9	
Inactive member	9	16.1	
Excommunicated, disfellowshipped, or resigned	9	16.1	
Change in religious views over time			
Have become less orthodox	35	62.5	
No change	18	32.1	
Continuous Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	44.3	11.7	27–73
Months dated, engaged	15.0	13.6	2–73
Age when married	26.1	7.3	19–63
Years married	15.1	9.2	1–43
Years between wedding and disclosure	5.7	8.5	–3.4–27.4

## Procedure

In 2013 and 2014 a team of sociologists and psychologists recruited individuals formerly or currently in Mormon MSMs to participate in an online survey regarding their

experiences. Research procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Boards of two universities. Snowball sampling techniques were used starting with the team's personal contacts with mixed-sexuality couples. The team also invited 350 participants of a previous study of GLB Mormons

conducted by two co-PIs on the research project to participate. Information regarding the survey was also posted on online venues such as Facebook groups for organizations serving Mormon persons generally (e.g., Feminist Mormon Housewives) and Mormon GLB persons specifically (e.g., North Star), as well as the public blogs of Mormon couples currently or formerly in MSMs.

The survey included questions on topics such as courtship, sexual identity formation, sexual attraction and aversion, reasons for marrying, disclosure context and reactions, premarital and current attitudes on sex and intimacy, spousal sex and attraction, extramarital sex, gender attitudes and division of labor, relationship satisfaction, coping and social support, quality of life, religious beliefs and practices, and general demographic information. At the conclusion of the survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview. A total of 255 people completed the survey and 189 indicated that they would be willing to participate in an interview. The initial goal of the qualitative component of the study was to understand the experiences of heterosexual women in MSMs and their partners. Later efforts were made to recruit interviews with at least four people in each of 16 categories based on their activity in the Mormon Church, whether they or their spouse disclosed their sexual identity before or after marriage, if they were currently or no longer in a MSM, and whether they identified as heterosexual or LGBTQ, in order to capture a more diverse range of experiences.

Overall, 84 respondents were contacted to participate in an interview, with 58 of those contacts resulting in a completed interview. Two interviews were lost due to failure in recording. The majority of the interviews were conducted via Skype. Only the audio was recorded for transcription purposes. Interviews typically lasted around 60 minutes and were conducted by one of five members of the research team. The findings of this analysis are based on interviews with 56 respondents and their associated survey data.

### Interview Schedule

Interviews followed a semi-structured schedule which typically began with the question: “Can you begin by telling me about your dating experience, and the events that led up to your marriage?” Subsequent questions depended on the information revealed and the sexual identity and marital status of the respondent. Interviewers probed for details such as: “How did you decide to marry this individual?”, “What do you think your spouse was attracted to in you?”, and “When did you learn of your partner’s sexual identity/orientation (or reveal your sexual identity/orientation to your partner)? What were the circumstances that led to the disclosure? What was your (or your partner’s) reaction to this information?” The probes that generated the bulk of the data for this analysis included:

“Did the disclosure affect your decisions to get an education, be employed, or stay at home?”, “What did you imagine your role in the marriage would be?”, “How have these ideas shifted over time?”, “What do you think are the typical roles for men and women in marriage in general?”, “How is this similar to or different from your marriage?”, “What do you believe about your divine nature as a [man or woman]?”, “How does this apply in your marriage?”, “What role does being sexually attractive play in femininity? ... In marriage?”, and “How does this apply to your marriage?”

### Data Coding and Analysis

After the audio was transcribed, the transcripts were deidentified and uploaded into Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis program, for coding. Analysis of the interviews was conducted by the lead author of this manuscript following conventions consistent with an essentialist/realist epistemological approach to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). As I conducted interviews I noted participants’ discussions of prescribed gender roles and their ability to implement these ideals in their marriages. After the interviews were transcribed I conducted a microanalysis of several interviews to create a list of recurring topics and prominent themes (codes) used to classify the data (Lofland and Lofland 1995). These codes identified semantic features of the data, such as whether participants described their household division of labor as consistent with traditional gender roles or not. After coding 14 (25%) of the interviews in their entirety, patterns related to the primary themes explored in this analysis were observed and sub-themes were identified. “Node” reports for the major themes in this analysis were then read to determine if coherent patterns were observable within each theme. I then discontinued exhaustive coding of the manuscripts and began coding the remaining 42 interviews for only these select themes and their associated codes.

### Results

The themes that were identified within three major categories of findings, their definitions, and prototypical quotes are summarized in Table 2. The first category is related to whether respondents had expectations for traditional gender roles in their marriage and their perceptions of the Mormon Church’s teachings related to gender traditionalism. This category includes themes regarding the divine nature of men and women and the centrality of traditional gender roles in Mormon doctrine, as well as descriptions of gendered expectations about men’s and women’s attractiveness and sexuality. The second category of themes is related to participants’ interpretations of their heterosexual gender nonconformity,

**Table 2** Themes, their definitions, and sample quotes

Theme	Definition	Example quotes
<b>(a) Gender traditionalism</b>		
Traditional gender roles are ideal	Descriptions of the inherent and distinct nature of men and women and the God-ordained roles that these differences entail. This includes men's primary role as leaders and providers and women's primary role as caregivers in the home.	As a woman I believe that I am a daughter of God and that it is my call, my role, my responsibility to nurture and care for my family and to raise my children in a righteous environment in a righteous household.... he's supposed to be the one, ideally, out making the money and providing physically for our family where I provide more emotionally....his job and his responsibility [is] to provide physically as well as our spiritual leadership. (Karen, heterosexual, in a MSM)
Traditional notions of gendered sexuality	Descriptions of gendered expectations about men's and women's attractiveness and sexuality. This includes the notion that men are inherently hypersexual and women are less sexual.	Part of the sacrifice [of being in a MSM] is never feeling that essence of femininity and being swept off your feet by someone who is lustfully passionately desirous of her body in a carnal way....that's not something that she will experience in her relationship. (Trevor, sexual minority, in a MSM)
<b>(b) Challenges of gender nonconformity</b>		
Impact of disclosure on sense of attractiveness	Descriptions of the way the LGBQ partners' disclosure impacted their heterosexual partners' sense of attractiveness and self-worth as a woman or man.	It makes you feel good if someone desires you. I think the worst thing my ex-husband ever said to me was I am no longer attracted to you physically. That was one of the worst things he ever said to me. It was kinda painful. And you think, well, maybe I'm not woman enough, right? (Linda, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)
Our MSM undermines our traditional gender roles	Descriptions which include the belief that one's MSM and/or the characteristics of one's LGBQ spouse act as an impediment to heterogendered marriage and the traditional roles of men and women.	A big part of our disputes over the years was that she got to stay home and enjoy the kids, and I didn't. That was a big, big part of our breakdown of our relationship....It seems almost contradictory to the old traditional Mormon values – I was the one who wanted to stay home and tend the kids .... another big thing that my wife and I fought over was we had an unequal marriage, and she brought up gender all the time. Like, it was my responsibility to do this, this, and this – there was men's work and women's work. Even though she, in the back of her mind, didn't really like the women's work at first, you know, the nurturing mother. (Dan, sexual minority, in a MSM)
<b>(c) Benefits of gender nonconformity</b>		
Rejection of gender ideals	Descriptions which include criticisms of traditional gendered expectations of marriage and sexuality. This includes criticisms of gendered Mormon doctrine and cultural practices.	I really think I am more of a nurturer than she is. She is more the disciplinarian and I am much more the nurturer. And I don't think that's a bad thing to have – you know, her be the disciplinarian and I be more the nurturer. But to specify that the mother is the nurturer, if nurturing is not maybe her natural ability with children, why can't the husband? Why can't they do it as a team? (Tim, sexual minority, in a MSM)
Our MSM enhances our relationship	Descriptions of the perception that the gender-nonconforming characteristics of MSMs and/or LGBQ spouses serve as an asset to one's relationship.	I don't know if it's personality directed to him or because he's SSA [same-sex attracted] but he does more easily pick up those normal maternal roles of household stuff – part of it out of necessity at times, and the other part of it does come more naturally to him than most guys I think. He still does it like a guy at times, which creates issues. But I think those [feminine roles] came more natural. (Jane, heterosexual, in a MSM)

including how the disclosure experience impacted participants' sense of self as women and men and if they viewed their (or their spouse's) sexuality as a barrier to their abilities to maintain traditional gender roles. The

third category includes participants' challenges to traditional gender roles and perceptions that their (or their spouse's) gender nonconformity is a unique characteristic of their relationship to be embraced.

The quotes presented here were chosen to represent each of these themes, and effort was made to include as wide a range of respondents as possible. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms and in some quotes potentially identifying information was removed or altered to protect participants' anonymity. We are sensitive to the issue of bisexual erasure in academic research and recognize that the experiences of, and attitudes toward, lesbian, gay, bisexual men, bisexual women, and transgender individuals may vary in important ways (see Worthen 2013). Nevertheless, because our sample includes such a small number lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) identifying individuals, in order to avoid potential identifiability by spouses, the specific sexual identity of LBQ identifying participants is not provided with quotes. Instead, the generic term "sexual minority" is used. Instances where the experiences of LBQ individuals appears to differ from those of the gay and same-sex attracted men in our sample are noted where appropriate.

We find couples' ideas about religious doctrine, gender, and sexuality intersect to act as a resource or impediment to marital satisfaction. While most couples in Mormon MSMs maintain an outward appearance of heteronormativity, some view their private departure from traditional heteronormativity as a benefit to their relationship and gender division of labor, while others view it as a source of strain and work hard to minimize gender deviance in their roles. Importantly, we also find that religious orthodoxy, and the maintenance or reinterpretation of religious identities, are related to this negotiation. We first provide a summary of the demographic characteristics of our sample. We then describe our findings related to the three themes identified above. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of these patterns.

## Gender Traditionalism

### *Traditional Gender Roles are Ideal*

Many respondents, especially those who were still active in the Mormon Church, described the ideal division of labor as the man being the main breadwinner and the woman being a stay-at-home caregiver, but that couples were to operate as equal partners. Indeed, the majority of participants expected to have a traditional gender division of labor when they first married. John provided an example of this when he explained:

I always foresaw myself as the breadwinner and my wife as the stay-at-home [mom] taking care of the kids....we definitely wanted kids and I was....always determined to be like a really good husband and not yell and help her out, help with the kids.... We're definitely equal partners; make the decisions together and help each other out. (John, sexual minority, in MSM)

The rhetoric of "separate but equal" is an important component of the Mormon Church's gendered background expectations (Sumerau and Cragun 2015) for men and women and was frequently described by participants in their discussions of the roles and divine characteristics of men and women. This language is consistent with "The Proclamation on the Family" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 1995), which was commonly cited as justification for participants' support for traditional gender roles. As one participant said:

Well, I adhere to the Proclamation on the Family that women are nurturers and that men are—should support the family. Ultimately, that's the ideal, [but] there are circumstances that warrant things to be different. (Kimberly, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)

Embedded in perceptions of ideal gender roles were often notions that women are to provide emotionally for the family and men are to provide leadership, especially when it comes to spirituality and religious practice. As part of this perspective, men's roles include presiding over their families as ordained priesthood "holders," whereas women are perceived as being more naturally attuned to spiritual matters and therefore, in less need of direct personal access to the formal priesthood (see Brooks et al. 2015 for more nuanced discussions of these dynamics).

Respondents provided a variety of justifications for preferring a traditional gender division of labor. For example, one man explained that even though he thought his sexual identity challenged the traditional gender order in some ways (i.e., making him more feminine than other men), he liked the traditional role of being a chivalrous man:

A lot of guys say you need to just be okay with your manliness and your manhood....I was really okay with myself as a man. I could see that there are things that are more feminine about me but I could also see that there were things that aren't. So just in terms of being man enough, it wasn't that so much. I like being her prince....I like being that role for her....We enjoy the male female roles in the relationship. That part was there, is there, and for the most part always has been there. (Allen, sexual minority, in a MSM)

Another participant explained that although she was employed and had more formal education than her spouse, it was important to preserve the image of him being the primary breadwinner:

We definitely have roles. The lines are a little bit blurry....he really expressed a lot of remorse that I



wouldn't just stay home. And so I think there are some things that are really traditional about him....I am glad he makes more than me....I think that it's a really good thing for the power structure in our relationship to have him be [the primary breadwinner] ....we've never verbalized that, [but] I think it's a really good thing that he has a better job than I do. (Shannon, heterosexual, in a MSM)

For some, a traditional gender order was perceived to be based on preferences and practical considerations, whereas others perceived the importance of men fulfilling the bread-winning role as heightened for individuals whose masculinity might otherwise be threatened.

When a traditional gender division of labor was embraced ideologically, departure from this ideal was often a source of strain for respondents. For example, when women felt compelled to be employed or husbands did not lead the family in religious routines, this was sometimes described as a significant source of consternation. As Karen explained:

I'm the one that provides for the day to day physical necessities, financial necessities – I feel like I'm juggling 9/10ths of the balls and it often feels unfair to me....I'd love to go back to school. I kind of sometimes want nothing more. But then I feel like it's my role right now in life to be home with my children so it can be frustrating when I want to be out there doing something else and I'm home.... for years I was the one that would have family prayer with the kids and read scriptures with the kids and I was leading in those responsibilities.... it's just taken a long time for him to come around and so I guess I hope that he eventually will be the one to lead in those. (Karen, heterosexual, in a MSM)

Women whose faith is core to their identity may experience an additional “second shift” of sorts when their husbands fail to provide the religious leadership in their homes that they feel is ideal.

#### *Traditional Notions of Gendered Sexuality*

Beyond direct instruction related to gender roles, several respondents described how religious teachings also included gendered expectations regarding sexual behavior. For example, one woman described the gendered notions of sexuality she picked up while growing up:

Righteous patriarchy was integrated with the exercise of sexual behavior—men were the instigators of sexual behavior. They are the ones who ask the girls on dates.....men are the ones who ask the women to get

married. Women do not ask men. And that's a larger cultural thing, although I think that's starting to change. But men are the sexual instigators, and women are the passive recipients. (Kathy, heterosexual, no longer in MSM)

Although some respondents were critical of the patriarchal culture of Mormonism that shaped gendered interactions, these gendered notions of sexuality played an important role in the sexual identity formation of both women and men in our sample. For example, one woman described how this contributed to her inability to acknowledge her sexuality earlier:

Growing up a woman in a Mormon church...I interpreted the things I was taught, was that men have intense sexual desire and you're supposed to control that desire and not let them touch you, that kind of thing, and that as a woman you don't really have sexual desires. And so I thought, well, if I'm not really attracted to guys that's pretty normal, girls don't really experience that like guys. (Nancy, sexual minority, in a MSM)

Several other respondents also described how prohibitions against premarital intimacy similarly contributed to their inability to fully recognize their sexual identity before marriage. In such cases, respondents often interpreted their lack of physical “chemistry” to sexual inexperience and expected things to get better once they were able to be physically intimate in marriage.

Notions of masculine virility were also embedded in many respondents' expectations for an ideal, heteronormative marriage (Wolkomir 2009). One participant described how the heterosexual women in her MSM group felt about having a stronger libido than their spouses:

Sometimes in the wives group we talk about it, and then we all just marvel because everybody else looks so beautiful and confident, and we can't believe that they're having the same things that we feel....they have more sexual hormones and drive than their husband. That's a hard thing for a lot of the other women. (Ellen, heterosexual, in MSM)

While acknowledging that sexual attraction was something lacking in their current relationship, many respondents were hopeful that this would be resolved in the afterlife:

[My spouse] believes that he's not going to experience same-sex attraction in the next life, that he'll be resurrected with the perfect body and that this is an imperfection—which I know is a hot topic for a lot of people—but that's how he perceives it. So that's

comforting to me to know that whatever hardships that have come, or will come...that eventually that's not gonna be an issue at all, that eventually my husband will be—every piece of me will be attractive to him in every kind of way; sexually, emotionally, everything, really. So that's comforting. (Rose, heterosexual, in a MSM)

## The Challenges of Gender Nonconformity

### *Impact of Disclosure on Sense of Attractiveness*

Participants in our study described a wide range of events that led to the LGBTQ spouse's disclosure of their attraction to members of the same sex. In some cases, disclosure occurred willingly in an effort by LGBTQ individuals to reach greater authenticity with their spouses. In other cases, heterosexual spouses suspected their partners might be gay, lesbian, or bisexual and then simply asked their spouse. In a few cases, such suspicions were sometimes the result of heterosexual spouses discovering their partners viewing gay porn, flirting with others online, or being unfaithful. When disclosure occurred, the heterosexual women in our sample often described how these events impacted their sense of self. Several heterosexual women described how they felt used as a way for their spouses to accomplish heteronormativity:

When my husband told me he was attracted to men and he wanted somebody with a penis and not me, it reduced me to my uterus. Suddenly, my worth and my value is my ability to bear children, the end, period. He wanted a family. I felt so used. I felt so non-entity. I finally got it. I finally understood the whole feminist issue. We are worthless except to raise children and nurture and love and do dishes and laundry—that's it. [Interviewer: You felt like that's why he had married you?] Yeah. Well, I know that's why he married me. He said it. He said, I wanted a family so badly, and the church teaches this is the only way—the only acceptable avenue to get a family or to have relationships. (Mindy, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)

For Mindy, her husband's disclosure helped her to see the harm of “sanctified gender inequality” (Sumerau and Cragun 2015), which allowed her to understand feminist grievances better.

Being sexually attractive to your spouse is an important part of the gendered sexual script in marriage (Wolkomir 2009). When asked about the role that being attractive plays in her sense of femininity, one woman explained:

Being beautiful is part of being a woman.... my whole life I was kind of hoping to look attractive for someone

else and when it really hit me, like again and again, we would have these conversations; oh wait, he isn't attracted to me, he's not going to be attracted to me. It doesn't matter what I do or how I look, this isn't going to affect him. (Rose, heterosexual, in a MSM)

Like Wolkomir (2004) found, many women in our sample described how their partner's lack of physical interest in them had profound effects on their sense of self. Several described the loss they felt over the thought of never being an object of physical desire for someone else:

So it was just kind of this massive sense of rejection that I felt, because it was like he did not desire me, and so I started being very, very self-critical. I wasn't pretty enough. I wasn't thin enough. I was a workout fiend. I ran like crazy. I went through all the stereotypical list—why would someone like me? Am I not thin enough? Am I too fit? Do I talk too much? Am I not spiritual enough? Am I not making him enough sandwiches? (Kathy, heterosexual, no longer in MSM)

Some women described how their sense of failed femininity created greater urgency to “do gender” well in other aspects of their life. For example, one woman said:

If someone doesn't want to have sex with you, well then you're useless. [Interviewer: Is that how you felt?] Yes, I think so. I never quite thought of it that way, but I did try to compensate and be the perfect wife otherwise. I mean, I had dinner on, I had that white shirt pressed...I was involved in the school, I was involved with civic things....so I really was looking, I think, just to feel okay about it by doing lots of other stuff. (Patty, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)

The importance of feeling attractive was also expressed by men in our study. Todd, for example, described feeling like something was “off” in their sexual relationship for many years. He explained how his wife's disclosure actually helped reassure his sense of masculinity—illustrating the importance of sexual desirability in heteronormative notions of romantic love and gender identity (Wolkomir 2009). Several other heterosexual respondents, both men and women, also described feeling a sense of relief following disclosure because it provided an explanation for aspects of their relationship, such as a sense of stilted sexual attraction and intimacy. Although the disclosure was difficult, it helped provide clarity in some respects for spouses.

Many gay and lesbian partners were aware of the sense of loss and rejection that their heterosexual spouses often felt following disclosure. Nevertheless, Trevor explained how this

sense of loss also applied to the experiences of gay and lesbian partners as well:

So in entering into this marriage, she and I both sacrificed something pretty profound. I sacrificed never having any kind of relationship with a man, romantic or sexual, which is a really big loss and something that I had to grieve and process through and find resolution with. And her sacrifice is sometimes I think equally weighted, and that is that she will never be loved by a heterosexual male who can view her as sexual in a way that a heterosexual male could be romantic or sexual with her. And there are times where that is something that she feels. (Trevor, sexual minority, in MSM)

Some couples in our study coped with the lack of attraction between spouses by separating the notion of love from physical attraction. By deemphasizing the sexual component of their relationship they could skirt the issue of attraction, a strategy also observed by Wolkomir (2009).

Other couples coped with the issue of attraction by describing their spouses as exceptions. For example, Beth believed that although her spouse was not attracted to women generally, he was attracted to her:

I need somebody who finds me beautiful, which I know that's kind of shallow. I'm so messed up in my head that I need that....over the years we've found that there's kind of a sliding scale, and some people that are gay, or have same-sex attraction, are so attracted to men that they find women disgusting, but then like he said there's the bisexual where you'd take either/or. For [him] it's more like he's very rarely attracted by women. So we kind of feel like that's been a little blessing for him that he kind of finds me so attractive, because it's so rare for him. (Beth, heterosexual, currently in a MSM)

This theme tended to be more common among couples that included bisexual partners. Such couples acknowledged that their ability to achieve mutual physical and sexual attraction was an asset to their relationships that may not have been possible in a heterosexual-gay/lesbian MSM. This notion is supported by previous research which suggests bisexual-heterosexual MSMs are more likely to maintain the marriage following disclosure (Buxton 2001).

#### *Our MSM Undermines Our Traditional Gender Roles*

Many heterosexual female respondents described their GBQ spouse as having characteristics that were non-gender conforming, such as displaying more traditionally feminine characteristics and abilities. In these instances, several participants interpreted their spouse's sexual identity

as a challenge to traditional gender roles. For example, Karen explained:

I tend to be less [feminine] 'cause I feel like somebody needs to take the masculine role and because it comes so naturally, the strong leadership, fix it—the things that I view as the man's job because they come so naturally and easily to me—yeah, it has been a problem. (Karen, heterosexual, in a MSM)

In the previous quote, Karen attributes some of her gender departure in roles as necessary due to her spouse's perceived gender inadequacy. This notion illustrates the power of the gender essentialism purported in “The Proclamation on the Family” decree, in that effective families need to have a person who nurtures (i.e., a mother) and a person who leads (i.e., a father).

When spouses challenged the traditional division of labor, conflict sometimes resulted. For example, one woman described how her spouse felt cheated by their traditional roles:

I thought we were on the same page as far as he being the breadwinner and me staying home taking care of the children. I thought that he valued that. And now he says he thinks both people should have a career, and both of them should take care of the children....he feels shafted because he feels like a caretaking person, and he would rather have been home with the kids than taking care of us, but he played it by the book. He did it by the book, but now he resents it. And I'm just Molly Mormon, glad to have been a mother in Zion. Nothing thrills me more than the talk...where the prophet said, mothers, go home, be at the crossroads. 'Cause I wasn't a career-minded person, and I wanted to be home with my children. I'm very conservative. (Elaine, heterosexual, in a MSM)

The prior quote illustrates the power of the discourses used by religious leaders to reinforce gendered background expectations in the Mormon Church (Sumerau and Cragun 2015). In another example, Ellen described how their religious beliefs caused them to actively work against what she saw as her husband's natural tendencies towards nurturing:

[In the Mormon Church] there's much more push to have the woman be a stay-at-home mom as much as possible, where circumstances will allow it, and....a man is supposed to provide, preside, and protect. And so we've worked to incorporate those into our relationship because my husband would just really rather be at home with the kids. And he's great and so loving and really nurturing too. And so it's been hard for him to be told by the church—because it feels against his nature.

But we've worked to put that in place into our marriage, based on our religious views. (Ellen, heterosexual, in a MSM)

In these examples, female heterosexual spouses interpreted their husband's nontraditional gender characteristics as challenges that needed to be overcome.

Women's concerns about their spouse's gender nonconformity were sometimes palpable to their spouses. For example, Chris explained how he sometimes worried his wife was frustrated by his lack of gender conformity in some respects:

We kind of have to constantly redefine our roles in our relationship cuz they aren't as straightforward as if we were just your typical 1950s heterosexual couple....I think she wants me to lead in the home a little bit better. She wants that strong arm to hang onto, to make decisions and protect her from the world. At the same time, she doesn't want that all [the time]. She wants to be involved in making decisions and kind of run things... I think it just bothers me because I worry she's thinking, if you weren't gay, you'd be a better man, kind of a thing. And I spent a lot of my life attempting to compete with the guys—be better at sports and be tougher. You're supposed to have certain stereotypical interests....

I'm just not your typical man's man. And so, it's not uncommon for my wife and I to be at a dinner party and we're both talking to all the ladies. And those are probably the moments when she likes my hobbies and she's interested in them, and at the same time, she kinda thinks, shouldn't you be going over there and talking football? Shouldn't you be more of a guy? And I'm just not. (Chris, sexual minority, in a MSM)

Chris's description illustrates the contradiction of espousing the traditional gender-role ideology of male headship on one hand, yet also desiring egalitarian decision-making. Although this is a common challenge among conservative Protestants generally (Denton 2004), this conflict has a slightly different connotation within MSMs in that the gender meanings behind this division of labor are also related to notions of sexual identity. Other LGBTQ spouses also acknowledged how an inability to embrace roles that matched their preferences caused strain in their relationship.

Participants not only expected gender "appropriate" behavior from sexual minority spouses, but in some cases they also expected heterosexual spouses to maintain gender norms. For example, Hank described the gendered expectations he had for his wife:

It's not like I want a traditional [relationship], like traditional in the sense that I work and I come home

and kick my feet up and she takes care of me....[but] I want her to be feminine and look pretty [but] I don't care about the makeup....I don't know if that's because I'm still insecure....I think oh, if she were a lesbian and they knew that I was gay, [they would] think oh, they just got married because—that's I think my worst fear with telling people is that it means that they think that I don't really love [her]. And so I think that's why I want people to know how much I love her, and even though she's feminine. [Interviewer: So you want her to have a feminine appearance and traditionally feminine behaviors because people will see that and understand that you really love her for her?] Yeah. (Hank, sexual minority, in a MSM)

For Hank, his wife's ability to "do gender" appropriately was shaped by his desire to avoid judgement if others suspected he was gay.

## Benefits of Gender Nonconformity

### *Rejection of Gender Ideals*

Despite the challenges described so far, not all participants in our study perceived their gender nonconformity as an impediment to their relationship. In fact, even respondents who had more traditional gender roles often recognized that gender divisions of labor were not always ideal, and they described how their ideas on the matter had evolved over time. For example, when asked what she believed were the ideal roles for men and women in marriage, one woman said:

I don't think I can say there's ideal roles in a marriage, because I've seen so many marriages that the roles are all mixed up and things work, [their] families are good and happy—I feel like I can't call a judgment on families that don't follow the traditional role models of men working and women in the home. For us, that worked great—but I think for each family, an ideal is different. [Interviewer: Do you think you've always felt that way, or do you think that your attitude about that has changed over time?] It's changed. Definitely, it's changed. I think when I was younger and first got married, I perceived the family should be the man works and a woman stays in the home, except if there're special cases. And it was pretty black-and-white when I lived in Utah and we first married. (Stephanie, heterosexual, no longer in MSM)

Rejection of the institutionalization of gender ideals in the Mormon Church was even observable among couples who maintained fairly traditional gender roles, providing examples

of how theologically liberal Protestants with more egalitarian gender ideologies may simultaneously report practices that do not seem egalitarian (Denton 2004).

Indeed, not all respondents perceived traditional gender roles as natural or beneficial. Some described how gender expectations created significant challenges in their relationships. One woman, for example, believed gender ideals contributed to struggles early in her marriage when things were not working like she thought they should:

Mormon women are culturally conditioned not to complain...Mormon women are conditioned to kind of be Betty Draper from *Mad Men* [a traditional television 1950s housewife]. You smile. You look beautiful. You make a casserole and you just roll with it. I grew up surrounded by extremely neurotic role models. They all had very nice middle-class homes with embroidery and cheap cardstock framed prints of the temple on the wall. And I suspected that a lot of them were profoundly unhappy, 'cause they didn't speak up about their needs. And so I didn't either. I assumed that if something wasn't right, then it was my responsibility to be better, to be more optimistic. (Kathy, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)

Kathy's comment also reflects the range of gendered expectations Mormon women are expected to live up to as "keepers of the home." Although one might expect critical evaluations of the gendered background expectations for Mormon women to come from respondents who were less active in the Mormon faith, among our sample, even some committed members of the Church challenged the gender dichotomy they felt was embraced in Mormon culture:

I think the delineated binary—these are all female roles, these are all males roles...the lines are not as firm as we think they are, and every couple finds things. There are some things that are silly, like whose job is it to take out the trash. If you ask people from our [Mormon] culture that question, most of 'em are gonna say it's the man, or both, or...But you can find people who have strong feelings on who takes the trash out. You know what, who cares? [Laughs] So many of the rules in the delineation [of] male roles—female roles are cultural...it's individual. (Mindy, heterosexual, no longer in a MSM)

Several other respondents also expressed frustration with the gendered messages they received at church. Nancy, for example, noted how gendered background expectations not only impacted her sense of self, but also limited men's opportunities to be nurturers:

As a young woman I was really uncomfortable by the idea that my role was to bare children into this world and I did not like the idea that my body was a receptacle or something to be used. I thought, it's who I am; I don't want it to be an object for some [one]....And then the whole idea of, you are the nurturer or the caregiver and your responsibility is toward your children. I absolutely believe that being a parent is incredibly beautiful. I love my children to death but I also think that men have the exact same potential for being nurturers, and loving, and caregivers, and their responsibility to their children is—should be—considered just as great as the woman's and not in the sense of being a breadwinner. I feel like that really bothers me because it kind of pushes men into this position where they don't have the same responsibility towards their children, or else they feel like they shouldn't. (Nancy, sexual minority, in a MSM)

Nancy also made the astute observation that perhaps part of the Mormon Church's reluctance to alter their position on homosexuality may in part be due to the fact that embracing same-sex unions, for example, would challenge the traditional, essentialist gender order that is so central to Mormon doctrine. As she went on to explain:

I'm tired of being told that I'm more nurturing naturally because I'm a woman and that men have to fit certain roles of masculinity. I don't like any of that and certainly the church teaches that your gender is part of your eternal role...you know, women don't hold the priesthood, they have babies—all that kinda stuff—it's really an important part of everything in the church, which is why I think to a large extent that the church has such a hard time with homosexuality because it challenges all those gender constraints. (Nancy, sexual minority, in a MSM)

Because of the strength of gendered background expectations in the Mormon Church (Sumerau and Cragun 2015), we expected most of the participants in our sample to have more traditional family roles. Nevertheless, many participants actually described having a nontraditional gender division of labor. One example of this was Frank, who explained:

[My wife] did end up working for quite a long time....she's trying to build a career for herself. Her family was [a] very traditional gender role type family. But I think both of us kind of discounted the relevance of that kind of a family structure in modern day life....I don't think I ever expected her to stay home and raise children going into it. In fact, we had a [child] fairly early in the marriage, as [Mormon] people tend to do, [but] we put [our children] in day care....so we could

make ends meet. We shared duties around the house. We shared income generation. We shared child rearing. It wasn't ever like, no, you're the person that takes care of that. I never do that. We had defined roles like things that she preferred to do around the house versus me, but it wasn't like the house is you and I'm a man type of thing. (Frank, heterosexual, in a MSM)

For participants who described their division of labor as less traditional, they often attributed this partially to their spouse's gender nonconformity. For example, Rachel explained:

I mean, I did stay home with the kids, so that was gender specific, but...[my husband], if anything, he's much more of a nurturer than I am. Even though I think of myself as loving...I'm probably more harsh....He has a softer spot—and he is very much a cleaner. He does all the laundry. Pretty much we settled into that. I'm mostly the one who cooks. So it really comes down to what we're good at. So we have no qualms about crossing over genders and doing things differently....When people say, oh, you know how men are, I always go, well, [my husband]'s not really like that,....He doesn't really care for sports, which, it's really hard to find anybody to connect to in [this city] if you don't. He loves Broadway tunes. [Laughter] It's hard to find anybody here who does....but in terms of the way we divvy out the workload, it's whatever makes sense. We just try to keep it even. (Rachel, heterosexual, in a MSM)

Rachel's quote above is illustrative of the way that respondents often mingled their perceptions of their spouse's nontraditional characteristics with their household division of labor. Nevertheless, some respondents also described the “gender flexibility” in their division of labor as simply a result of changing social norms in marriage or a reflection of the practical nature of contemporary family life, rather than the result of a concerted effort to implement an egalitarian gender ideology in their marriage or their partner's sexual identity.

#### *Our MSM Enhances Our Relationship*

Whereas some struggled, other heterosexual respondents currently in MSMs believed that the characteristics they attributed to their spouse's sexual identity were beneficial in some respects. In fact, some participants explained that it was their spouse's nontraditional gender traits that attracted them to their partner in the first place. Elaine also believed that her acceptance of her spouse's non-masculine characteristics was what made him love her:

The reason why he wanted me is because he was relieved that somebody actually fell in love with him and that I admired the qualities in him that he thought were too feminine or that he thought were revealing his gay character, which he was trying to hide....I was very outspoken about admiring those qualities...he told me now that he was relieved that a good-looking woman wanted him. And he wanted a family, so he wanted to get married.... [Interviewer: So when you referred to qualities that might be seen as more feminine, are you talking about his artistic qualities?] Artistic, and also he wasn't afraid to cry. I always told my kids, and I told my friends, that [he] was a person first and a man second....He wasn't a macho type guy. He wasn't strutting and the kinds of behaviors that I saw other guys do that I did not admire. And I'm sure in my husband's eyes he was like, wow, she really likes me, the real me. She doesn't know the real me, but she isn't offended or isn't put off by any of those qualities. (Elaine, heterosexual, in a MSM)

This quote provides an important example of how traditional notions of heteronormative romantic love (Wolkomir 2009) were reinforced simultaneously with the longing to be desired for one's authentic, nonconforming gender characteristics.

In another example, Rose described how she believed that her spouse's more sensitive nature was a benefit to their relationship:

I feel like [my husband] is very much connected to the emotional ins and outs of our family. He is more sensitive than other men, I believe from what I've seen, and so that makes him more of a nurturer probably than others, which I think benefits us. So we have two nurturers but we are different still. Like I said, he's a thinker and I'm a feeler, and so in my mind men are thinkers and women are feelers, most generally, and that does apply to us....I definitely don't feel like I've lost. If anything, I feel like the same-sex attraction has made our marriage stronger. It makes us deal with things. We have to be honest with each other, like we have to push it out of each other. And then also, just hearing him with our [children]—he's so kind and so sweet, and I feel like those traits, the nurturing quality that he has, I don't know [how] much of it is a part of his personality, [or] if it's the same-sex attraction or, I don't know what it is, but I feel like it's enhanced our relationship. (Rose, heterosexual, in a MSM)

Rose's explanation is also illustrative of how respondents simultaneously reinforce gender essentialism (e.g., “men are thinkers and women are feelers”) while also challenging

heteronormative gender roles in marriage (e.g., “we have two nurturers”). Even among couples who maintained an outward appearance of traditional gender roles (e.g., he is the breadwinner and she is home full-time), they sometimes interpreted the individual characteristics of their spouses as challenging heteronormative marriage ideals. In addition, although many of the prior perceptions reinforce stereotypical notions of gay men being more effeminate, they also illustrate how gender nonconformity in MSMs may contribute to the undermining of traditional divisions of labor and notions of gender.

This perception was echoed by several gay and bisexual individuals in our sample who described their sexual identity as an asset to their marriage. One respondent described:

I think it's made gender roles a lot more fluid in our marriage, because we basically share in everything in terms of housework—I actually really like cooking... so I really probably do that more than typical, or at least stereotypically...if it comes to actually repairing something that broke with the kids, I often make a good-faith effort but I don't know if I just missed the repair gene, or what. I don't seem to have any intuition on how to fix a thing. And [I'm] also not nearly as spatial [as] I notice other men are...if we're trying to fix a tire on a bike...I might do an okay job, but my wife actually does a much better job ...she knows the names of tools in the toolbox better than I do. So, in some ways, that has maybe created some fluidity and even some role reversals in there—at least as people think of them. I honestly think that we put people in boxes—I'm not sure how useful it is....And I guess in some ways, modern society is becoming more and more less-traditional. But I think we probably are more so, and in part it's probably just because of both our kind of areas of strengths and weaknesses that vary a little bit from the typical [couple]. (Eric, sexual minority, in a MSM)

While Eric acknowledges in his explanation that modern marriages seem to be less gender rigid, he also believes that his own and his wife's gender nonconformity has contributed to an even greater sense of fluidity and flexibility in their division of labor, which was based more on the specific skills, talents, and interests of each partner rather than on prescribed roles.

Several other respondents also believed that their MSM was deeper than perhaps other relationships that may revolve around what they perceived as superficial attraction. For example, one participant explained:

One thing that's almost a benefit of him having the same-sex attraction is he doesn't view women as objects, and I think that is definitely a problem in our world today. So many people see women as just something to

be looked at, and we are so much more than that, you know. He sees that in me, and he appreciates that in me....I know I'm so much more than that. That is not my defining characteristic. (Beth, heterosexual, in MSM).

Rose also described how she felt she and her spouse had a connection that was deeper than physical attraction and that that was reassuring in some ways:

I feel like our sexual relationship is really good. So I don't know that it would be any different [than those in a heterosexual marriage], and it may be even better because I've always been self-conscious of my body but knowing that [my spouse] is not necessarily attracted to what my body looks like, it's more of a relationship and an interaction that really puts me at ease, so I'm not stressing about, you know, like extra fat on my stomach, that kind of thing. (Rose, heterosexual, in MSM).

Thus, whereas some participants perceived their MSMs as creating challenges to sustaining a traditional gender order, for at least some participants in our sample they interpreted their MSM as actually challenging what they perceived as harmful components of traditional gender roles and gendered sexuality. In this way, they described their relationships as subverting heteronormative gender expectations.

## Discussion

The findings of our analysis illustrate the way in which gender, sexual identity, and Mormon religious teachings about ideal family roles intersect to shape the experiences of individuals in MSMs, and they provide an opportunity to examine the ways gender and religion operate as “mutually constitutive social categories” (Avishai et al. 2015, p. 8). By asking Mormon mixed-sexuality couples about their gender role ideals, we are able to observe the complex ways in which individuals internalize and at times challenge religious hetero-gendered messages. Although Mormon MSMs outwardly appear heterosexual, the internal contradictions of a MSM either act as a resource for greater gender equality or impediment to “doing” heteronormative marriage adequately enough to live up to traditional, conservative religious ideals. A couple's ability to make sense of and navigate the intersection of religious teachings and personal experience in a MSM has profound consequences for personal authenticity and well-being as well as marital satisfaction and longevity.

The findings of our analysis also illustrate how stereotypes about gender and sexuality shape the expectations of spouses and the meanings they give to gender nonconformity. Individuals frame these stereotypes in the context of beliefs

about gender essentialism, which suggests heterosexual women are naturally nurturing, gentle, and feminine, whereas heterosexual men are naturally leaders, strong, and masculine. Embedded in this ideology are stereotypes about gay men. When individuals deviate from their hetero-gender appropriate characteristics couples must evaluate and make sense of these deviations. In the case of Mormon MSMs, some couples viewed these deviations as an asset to their relationship, fostering greater nurturing, egalitarianism, and/or balance in family responsibilities. Yet among other couples, such deviations were not viewed positively, challenging the traditional gender order and creating a source of strain and conflict in their marriages. How couples responded to these deviations relied heavily on their religious orthodoxy and willingness to challenge the traditional gender order.

Analyzing data from individuals in Mormon MSMs, we find further support for Wolkomir's (2004, 2009) findings regarding the impact of disclosure on heterosexual women's sense of femininity and heteronormative expectations for romantic love. Both heterosexual women and men in our study described how being attractive to, and desired by, one's spouse was important to their gendered sense of self. These norms are embedded in larger cultural norms, but also have particular significance for Mormon gendered background expectations (Sumerau and Cragun 2015) which suggest that the inherent nature of womanhood includes being attractive and lovely to one's spouse, children, and God. One of the contributions of our study is that by including men in our analysis we are able to observe how heterosexual men are similarly impacted by notions of heteronormative romantic love and attractiveness. Part of being sufficiently masculine includes being desirable to women. Consistent with the findings of Buxton (2012), heterosexual men in our study also described how their spouse's lack of desire for them impacted their sense of worth at times. In addition, some couples described a gay and lesbian spouse's attraction to their heterosexual partner as an exception to their general lack of interest in members of the other sex. MSMs in our study which included a bisexual partner seemed to have an advantage in this regard in that nurturing mutual physical attraction within the marriage was often believed to be more realistically achievable. Nevertheless, such cases reify notions of monogamous heteronormative romantic love (Wolkomir 2009).

The experiences of the individuals in our sample also highlight the contradictions inherent in espousing traditional gender-role ideologies (e.g., male headship), on one hand, yet also desiring egalitarian decision-making on the other (Denton 2004). These contradictions were even evident among participants in our sample who described their beliefs as less orthodox—many of whom still replicated a traditional gender division of labor even despite their criticisms of religious dogma. Often couples explained their decision to maintain a traditional gender division of work and family was due

to what they perceived as practical considerations and not necessarily permanent. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that contradictions such as these may be particularly salient among MSMs in that the gender meanings behind a traditional division of labor (e.g., gender essentialism) are also related to notions of sexual identity. These data illustrate the complexities of negotiating dominant religious ideas and identities with their gender, sexual, and even political identities (Avishai et al. 2015).

One of the benefits of our analysis is that it includes interviews with both women and men in MSMs. Our findings suggest that the gendered background expectations reinforced by leaders in the Mormon Church apply not only to women (Sumerau and Cragun 2015), but also to men and may be particularly salient for Mormon men who do not fit the traditional expectations of heterosexual masculinity. Our findings also illustrate how the gendered practices of mixed-sexuality couples (i.e., their divisions of labor) are embedded in larger understandings of gender and sexuality, which cannot be understood without considering the religious context of Mormon doctrine and norms. By asking couples to describe their expectations for marriage and their gender roles we were able to uncover their larger understandings of gender and sexuality.

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the benefits of our study, our findings speak primarily to the cisgender monosexual perspectives of heterosexual women and gay or same-sex attracted men in MSMs. Previous research suggests attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals vary considerably (Worthen 2013), and analyses of bisexual individuals in MSMs confirm there are unique components of the bisexual experience, such as less well defined cultural scripts from which to draw from while navigating their marriages (Buxton 200; Swan and Benack 2012). Although in some respects lesbians' and heterosexual women's experiences in our sample were similar in that they were both subject to the same heteronormative gender expectations regarding female beauty and roles, the disclosure experience did not seem to have the same impact on lesbians' sense of attractiveness as it did on heterosexual women's. Although the lesbians and bisexual men in our sample may have shared many of the same challenges as the gay men we interviewed, we are reluctant to make generalizations about the experiences of lesbians and bisexual men in Mormon MSMs due to the fact that we interviewed so few people who identified in these ways.

Entirely unrepresented in our analysis are the experiences of transgender Mormons in MSMs, who previous research shows have experienced a particularly profound level of marginalization in the Mormon Church (see Sumerau et al. 2016). Another group that is underrepresented in our study is LGBTQ individuals no longer in MSMs. The networks and online



organizations we used to recruit participants may not attract as many people who are less active or resigned from the Mormon Church. Finally, although the heterosexual men in our sample shared some experiences that were similar to those of the heterosexual women in our sample, such as the impact of disclosure on sense of attractiveness, these groups likely have other unique experiences that we were not able to uncover sufficiently in our data given the small number of heterosexual men included in our sample. Future research on Mormon MSMs would do well to take greater efforts to recruit individuals in these underrepresented categories in order to better reflect the unique components of the MSM experience for LBTQ and heterosexual male individuals.

### Practice Implications

The simultaneous growth of conservative religious movements and progressive political movements requires a nuanced understanding of the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality in the lived experiences of individuals and families. Our findings serve as a useful example to scholars interested in applying a gender lens to analyses of religious cultural schema (see Avishai et al. 2015). Our findings also provide an example of the usefulness of exploring “discrepant data” (see Benack and Swan 2016) for understanding the range of experiences in MSMs. Whereas some of the participants in our sample viewed their departure from gender norms as a challenge to their ideal marriage, other participants perceived their gender deviance as a boon to their marriage that provided the opportunity to undermine traditional heteronormative family ideals. By acknowledging and giving voice to these divergent experiences we hope to advance the scholarly conversation on MSMs. Outside academia, understanding the dynamics observed in our study may help religious leaders and other professionals assist Mormon mixed-sexuality couples as they work to reconcile their religious identities with their gender and sexual identities.

### Conclusions

The case of Mormon MSMs provides an opportunity to observe how couples negotiate religious schema, family roles, and sexual identities when gendered notions of heteronormative marriage are challenged. Our findings illustrate how perceptions of sexuality and marriage are highly gendered and also tied to religious orthodoxy. Although traditional notions of gender in marriage were strong for many participants in our sample, a near equal number of participants were critical of religious teachings and cultural norms that privilege prescribed gender roles, acknowledging how harmful an emphasis on the traditional gender order can be for both men and women by constraining what they perceive as acceptable routes to individual authenticity.

In addition, our study provides an opportunity to observe how traditional notions of heterosexual marriage and gender can be both undermined and reified simultaneously. On one hand, we find evidence that some Mormon couples in MSMs perceive their spouse’s sexual identity as an impediment to the traditional gender order and family. In these contexts, couples may work to minimize their gender nonconformity in order to maintain the appearance of a heterosexual marriage. At the same time though, we find evidence that other Mormon couples in MSMs interpret their spouse’s gender nonconformity as a boon to their relationship, facilitating a more equal and balanced gender division of labor and responsibilities. In this way, Mormon MSMs may operate to challenge traditional, heteronormative understandings of marriage.

Although research on MSMs has been growing, none of the known literature has explored the impact of gender-role ideals in such contexts. Our findings support the usefulness of applying a gender lens to understand the intersection of religion and sexuality and suggest that the way Mormon mixed-sexuality couples interpret and respond to a LGBQ spouse’s sexual identity disclosure is influenced at least somewhat by their notions of ideal gender roles. Our findings also illuminate the ways in which our understandings of gender and sexuality are highly interdependent, and they help us to understand the range of experiences individuals in Mormon MSMs may face as they make sense of their family relationships and individual religious, gender, and sexual identities.

**Acknowledgements** The present research supported in part by a Midwest Sociological Society Research Endowment Grant and a University of North Dakota Senate Scholarly Activities Grant.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest** This research was supported in part by a Midwest Sociological Society Research Endowment Grant and a University of North Dakota Senate Scholarly Activities Grant. We do not believe this creates any conflicts of interest.

**Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals** This research involves human participants. All study materials and protocols have been approved by the Institutional Review Boards of Utah State University and the University of North Dakota.

**Informed Consent** All participants in this study consented to participate in the online survey and an in-depth interview. The informed consent materials have been approved by the Institutional Review Boards of Utah State University and the University of North Dakota.

### References

- Avishai, O., Jafar, A., & Rinaldo, R. (2015). A gender lens on religion. *Gender & Society*, 29(1), 5–25. doi:10.1177/0891243214548920.
- Benack, S., & Swan, T. (2016). Queer people who enter “straight” marriages: The academic community’s struggle to understand an

- anomalous choice. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 16(3), 312–338. doi:10.1080/15299716.2016.1167152.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478008706qp063oa.
- Brines, J. (1994). Economic dependency, gender, and the division of labor at home. *American Journal of Sociology*, 100, 652–688. doi:10.1086/230577.
- Brooks, J., Steenblik, R. H., & Wheelwright, H. (Eds.). (2015). *Mormon feminism: Essential writings*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Buxton, A. P. (2001). Writing our own script: How bisexual men and their heterosexual wives maintain their marriage after disclosure. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2–3), 155–189. doi:10.1300/J159v01n02\_06.
- Buxton, A. P. (2004). Works in progress: How mixed-orientation couples maintain their marriages after the wives come out. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1–2), 59–82. doi:10.1300/J159v04n01\_06.
- Buxton, A. P. (2012). Straight husbands whose wives come out as lesbian or bisexual: Men’s voices challenge the “masculinity myth.” *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 8(1), 23–45. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.641369.
- Dehlin, J. P., Galliher, R. V., Bradshaw, W. S., & Crowell, K. A. (2014). Psychosocial correlates of religious approaches to same-sex attraction: A Mormon perspective. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 18(3), 284–311. doi:10.1080/19359705.2014.912970.
- Denton, M. L. (2004). Gender and marital decision making: Negotiating religious ideology and practice. *Social Forces*, 82(3), 1151–1180. doi:10.1353/sof.2004.0034.
- Edser, S. J., & Shea, J. D. (2002). An exploratory investigation of bisexual men in monogamous, heterosexual marriages. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(4), 5–43. doi:10.1300/J159v02n04\_02.
- Ellison, C. G., & Bartkowski, J. P. (2002). Conservative Protestantism and the division of household labor among married couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23, 950–985. doi:10.1177/019251302237299.
- Gallagher, S. (2003). *Evangelical identity and gendered family life*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Gallagher, S., & Smith, C. (1999). Symbolic traditionalism and pragmatic egalitarianism: Contemporary evangelicals, family, and gender. *Gender & Society*, 13, 211–233.
- Greenstein, T. N. (2000). Economic dependence, gender, and the division of labor in the home: A replication and extension. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 322–335. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00322.x.
- Grever, C. (2012). Unintended consequences: Unique issues of female straight spouses. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 8(1), 67–84. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.641372.
- Hays, D., & Samuels, A. (1989). Heterosexual women’s perceptions of their marriages to bisexual or homosexual men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 18(1–2), 81–100. doi:10.1300/J082v18n01\_04.
- Heaton, T., & Goodman, K. (1985). Religion and family formation. *Review of Religious Research*, 26(4), 343–359. doi:10.2307/3511049.
- Hernandez, B. C., & Wilson, C. M. (2007). Another kind of ambiguous loss: Seventh-day Adventist women in mixed-orientation marriages. *Family Relations*, 56(2), 184–195. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00451.x.
- Hernandez, B. C., Schwenke, N. J., & Wilson, C. M. (2011). Spouses in mixed-orientation marriage: A 20-year review of empirical studies. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 37(3), 307–318. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.2010.00202.x.
- Higgins, D. J. (2002). Gay men from heterosexual marriages: Attitudes, behaviors, childhood experiences, and reasons for marriage. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42(4), 15–34. doi:10.1300/J082v42n04\_02.
- Higgins, D. J. (2006). Same-sex attraction in heterosexually partnered men: Reasons, rationales and reflections. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 21(2), 217–228. doi:10.1080/14681990600631849.
- Ingraham, C. (1994). The heterosexual imaginary: Feminist sociology and theories of gender. *Sociological Theory*, 12, 203–219. doi:10.2307/201865.
- Kays, J. L., & Yarhouse, M. A. (2010). Resilient factors in mixed orientation couples: Current state of the research. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 38(4), 334–343. doi:10.1080/01926187.2010.493464.
- Kays, J. L., Yarhouse, M. A., & Ripley, J. S. (2014). Relationship factors and quality among mixed-orientation couples. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 40(6), 512–528. doi:10.1080/0092623X.2013.788107.
- Ken, I. (2008). Beyond the intersection: A new culinary metaphor for race, class, gender studies. *Sociological Theory*, 26(2), 152–172. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9558.2008.00323.x.
- Kissil, K., & Itzhaky, H. (2015). Experiences of the marital relationship among orthodox Jewish gay men in mixed-orientation marriages. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 11(2), 151–172. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2014.900659.
- Legerski, E. M., & Cornwall, M. (2010). Working-class job loss, gender, and the negotiation of household labor. *Gender & Society*, 24, 447–474. doi:10.1177/0891243210374600.
- Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Ortiz, E. T., & Scott, P. R. (1994). Gay husbands and fathers: Reasons for marriage among homosexual men. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 1(1), 59–72. doi:10.1300/J041v01n01\_04.
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2016). *Women in relationships with bisexual men: Bi men by women*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pearcey, M. (2005). Gay and bisexual married men’s attitudes and experiences: Homophobia, reasons for marriage, and self-identity. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 1(4), 21–42. doi:10.1300/J461v01n04\_02.
- Pearcey, M., & Olson, M. (2009). Understanding heterosexual women married to gay or bisexual men. *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, 5(1), 34–44.
- Schwartz, L. B. (2012). Mixed-orientation marriages: Coming out, staying together. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 8(1), 121–135. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.641375.
- Sigalow, E., Shain, M., & Bergey, M. R. (2012). Religion and decisions about marriage, residence, occupation, and children. *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(2), 304–323. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5906.2012.01641.x.
- Sumerau, J. E. (2012). “That’s what a man is supposed to do”: Compensatory manhood acts in an LGBT Christian church. *Gender & Society*, 26(3), 461–487. doi:10.1177/0891243212439748.
- Sumerau, J. E., & Cragun, R. T. (2015). The hallmarks of righteous women: Gendered background expectations in the Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day saints. *Sociology of Religion*, 76(1), 49–71. doi:10.1093/soarel/sru040.
- Sumerau, J. E., Cragun, R. T., & Mathers, L. A. B. (2016). Contemporary religion and the cigendering of reality. *Social Currents*, 3(3), 293–311. doi:10.1177/2329496515604644.
- Swan, T. B., & Benack, S. (2012). Renegotiating identity in unscripted territory: The predicament of queer men in heterosexual marriages. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 8(1), 46–66. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.641371.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. (1995). *The family: A proclamation to the world*. Ensign, November. Retrieved from <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1995/11/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng>.
- Tornello, S. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2012). Gay fathers in mixed-orientation relationships: Experiences of those who stay in their marriages and of those who leave. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 8(1), 85–98. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2012.641373.

- Wolkomir, M. (2004). “Giving it up to god”: Negotiating femininity in support groups for wives of ex-gay Christian men. *Gender & Society, 18*(6), 735–755. doi:[10.1177/0891243204268772](https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243204268772).
- Wolkomir, M. (2009). Making heteronormative reconciliations: The story of romantic love, sexuality, and gender in mixed-orientation marriages. *Gender & Society, 23*(4), 494–519. doi:[10.1177/0891243209340033](https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243209340033).
- Worthen, M. G. F. (2013). An argument for separate analyses of attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF and FtM transgender individuals. *Sex Roles, 68*, 703–723. doi:[10.1007/s11199-012-0155-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0155-1).
- Yarhouse, M. A., Pawlowski, L. M., & Tan, E. S. N. (2003). Intact marriages in which one partner dis-identifies with experiences of same-sex attraction. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 31*(5), 375–394. doi:[10.1080/01926180390223996](https://doi.org/10.1080/01926180390223996).
- Yarhouse, M. A., Gow, C. H., & Davis, E. B. (2009). Intact marriages in which one partner experiences same-sex attraction: A 5-year follow-up study. *Family Journal, 17*(4), 329–334. doi:[10.1177/1066480709347361](https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480709347361).
- Yarhouse, M. A., Poma, H., Ripley, J. S., Kays, J. L., & Atkinson, A. N. (2011). Characteristics of mixed orientation couples: An empirical study. *Edification: The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology, 4*(2), 41–56.