

# Mormon and Queer at the Crossroads

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Although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been instrumental in the passage of Proposition 8 in California in 2008, it surprised the national press in November 2009 by publicly supporting Salt Lake City's sexual orientation/gender identity non-discrimination ordinances in housing and employment.<sup>1</sup> In early 2009, Equality Utah, an organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Utahns, had proposed a "Common Ground" initiative because the Church, which heavily influences political discourse in the state, had stated after the Prop 8 campaign that it is not "anti-gay" and "does not object to rights for same-sex couples regarding hospitalization and medical care, fair housing and employment rights, or probate rights, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the traditional family or the constitutional rights of churches."<sup>2</sup> The initiative has not made much progress in the Utah State Legislature; but when it became clear that the city ordinances were sure to pass with religious liberties included (such as the right of a religious organization to hire only those of the same religion), the Church was in a position to follow through on its words. Church spokesman Michael Otterson stated before the city council: "Our community in Salt Lake City is comprised of citizens of different faiths and values, different races and cultures, different political views and divergent demographics. . . . The issue is . . . the right of people to have roofs over their heads and the right to work without being discriminated against."<sup>3</sup>

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported "secret meetings" between mid-level Church officials and queer activists prior to the unanimous vote.<sup>4</sup> As recently as a decade ago, the Church would probably have sided with more conservative voices, such as the Suther-

land Institute, a public policy think-tank based in Salt Lake City which continues to publish objections to the ordinances and warns: "The meaning of marriage will die by a thousand cuts. Each new inclusion in the law of such vague terms as 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' represents a mounting threat to the meaning of marriage."<sup>5</sup> Sutherland labeled the Church's support "a public relations opportunity . . . [to] assuage the minds and soften the hearts of advocates of 'gay rights' in Utah."<sup>6</sup> Here seems to be a suggestion that the Church's support of the ordinances was a mere concession to deflect the backlash received after Proposition 8. In a city, country, and world of contending faiths and cultures, the Church is indeed sensitive to its reception at local, national and global levels.

Yet to pigeonhole the Church as acting only in response to such external reactions overlooks the prospect of actual LDS support for the nondiscrimination ordinances. The Church referred to them as "for those with same-sex attraction."<sup>7</sup> It thus clearly acknowledged, at least to some extent, the "group" whom the ordinances were drawn up to protect. The definition of this group in Mormon culture, however, is in flux. Civil rights discourse would have individuals grouped on the basis of qualities subject to discrimination (such as "sex," "race," "sexual orientation," or "gender identity"), but Mormon cosmology holds that the ultimate potential for all individuals is to become gods and goddesses like Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother,<sup>8</sup> to become divine parents of spirit children who will go through the formative experience human beings are currently undergoing. The faith avows a concept of *eternal gender*, connoting that human souls are gendered male and female and that marriage between these two genders is "ordained of God."<sup>9</sup> Opposite-gender marriage and procreation have always been sacred for Mormons as foundations of this movement toward divine parenthood.

To this effect, in 1995, the Church issued a document titled "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" which declared that "gender" was "an essential characteristic of . . . eternal identity."<sup>10</sup> The proclamation addressed concerns the Church had about changing gender roles, primarily in the United States, including rising divorce rates, single parenting, and the phenomenon of working mothers, as well as same-sex marriage and parenting. In

the 1970s and '80s during the Equal Rights Amendment campaign, the Church found itself under feminist criticism for its mantra that the genders were “different, but equal,” with the understanding that such “equality” stops short of occupational and ecclesiastical realms. The Church’s position against the ratification of the ERA included concern that the amendment would encourage a “blurring” of gender roles as well as forcing “states . . . to legally recognize and protect [same-sex] marriages” because “if the law must be as undiscriminating concerning sex as it is toward race, [then] . . . laws outlawing wedlock between members of the same sex would be as invalid as laws forbidding miscegenation.”<sup>11</sup> One might see how Apostle Boyd K. Packer’s warning in 1993 of the “ever-increasing frequency” with which local leaders had to “deal with” the “dangers” of “the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement . . . and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals” addressed what was and remains an interrelated conundrum for the Church.<sup>12</sup>

The language of “The Family” proclamation to some extent perhaps sought to pacify all three groups by providing interpretive clarity. Yet, since the proclamation’s issue, the Church has found itself under a spotlight due to its campaign against same-sex marriage underpinned by its avowal of gender essentialism.

In this article, I analyze Mormon<sup>13</sup> conceptions of gender and sexuality by employing the insights of gender theorist and sexual historian Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick is one of a wide range of scholars who contend with the fact that gender and sexuality are not uniformly experienced or consistently expressed across time. In the academy, she is often referred to as one of the founders of “queer theory,” a field that emerged in the early 1990s at the intersection of feminist and LGBT studies. After laying out theoretical tools and a historical framework, I will then focus on homosexuality in Mormonism over the last thirty years in policy and social services.

### **Sexual Orientation and Its Contradictions**

As a historian, Sedgwick writes about how homosexuality prior to the twentieth century was not simply called by a different name (such as “sodomy”); rather, the same-sex bonding of past eras was potentially erotic without taking on a separate term to

differentiate it from the non-erotic.<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick uses “homosocial” to describe the same-sex bonding of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The word is an obvious analogy to today’s “homosexual” but is a neologism that takes into consideration the fact that homosexuality as a concept upon which identities are now constructed requires a link between “sexual object choice” and gender, a link not made *en masse* until the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the 1800s were home to the aberrational sodomite and the more frequent same-sex kiss, the 1900s were home for the homosexual as a species, a result of sexological classification.<sup>17</sup> A central problem of this classification system known as *sexual orientation* (in which people are categorized as homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual) is that the distinction between the homosocial and the homosexual is an unexact science of acts and feelings. As Sedgwick writes: “The unbrokenness of the continuum [between the homosocial and the homosexual] is not a genetic one . . . but rather a strategy for making generalizations about . . . the structure of men’s relations with other men [and women’s relations with other women].”<sup>18</sup>

In the late 1980s, in a context of ritualized debates about homosexuality—questions of nature and nurture, sexual essentialism versus constructivism—Sedgwick contended that these debates are caused by the classification system of sexual orientation itself. Nature and nurture, she writes, rest upon “a very unstable background of tacit assumptions . . . about both nurture and nature.”<sup>19</sup> For instance, in everyday political discourse, one might hear ideas about the “biological” basis of homosexuality. Sedgwick remarks that biology tends to stand in for “nature,” triggering an “estrus of manipulative fantasy” that human technologies (whether assisted reproductive technologies, genetic engineering, or psychotherapy) might someday surmount. The nature/nurture binary is a “Cartesian bipolar psychosis that . . . [can] switch its polar assignments without surrendering a bit of its hold over the collective life.”<sup>20</sup> During the 1990s, Mormon leaders also attempted to resolve the nature/nurture debates, taking a similar stance on the limited insight of science. In 1995, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks wrote in the *Ensign*, the Church’s monthly periodical for adults: “The debate over whether, or the extent to which, specific behavior is attributable to ‘nature’ or to ‘nurture’ is centuries old.

Its application to the subject of same-sex feelings and behaviors is only one manifestation of a highly complex subject on which scientific knowledge is still in its infancy.”<sup>21</sup> Oaks added: “It is wrong to use [homosexual] to denote a condition, because this implies that a person is consigned by birth to a circumstance in which he or she has no choice in respect to the critically important matter of sexual behavior.”<sup>22</sup>

Even now, more than fifteen years later, Mormon leaders are still keen on deploying “homosexual” as an adjective (homosexual acts, thoughts, feelings) and not as a noun (homosexual or gay persons); the Church upholds an attraction/behavior distinction.<sup>23</sup> Sedgwick clarifies that this framing does not escape the logic of sexual orientation but is, in fact, indicative of it. “Homosexual” as a noun and “homosexual” as an adjective are part of a contradictory dialectic.<sup>24</sup> The contradiction is that, in its noun form, “homosexual” posits a minority that “really is gay” while in its adjective form, it posits an impression that anyone might choose to be gay (or not) by engaging in particular acts and/or entertaining particular feelings agreed upon as homosexual. While the adjective form provides the notion that homosexuality is curable or at least controllable through behavioral adaptation, the catch is that particular acts and feelings must already be present in a cultural imagination to denote a homosexual status that is qualitatively different than everyday homosociality. In sum, if the adjective form exists in a culture, then the noun form is always extant, and vice versa.

Sedgwick suggested the noun/adjective dialectic is usefully described as producing competing *minoritizing* and *universalizing* discourses. Simply, “homosexual” as a noun is minoritizing because it will never be the case that every person is a homosexual. “Homosexual” as an adjective is universalizing because everyone can choose to engage in acts and/or entertain feelings constructed and labeled as homosexual (although many would prefer not to).

In the early twentieth century when the classification system was first employed by sexologists, Sigmund Freud’s notion of “innate bisexuality” was merely the dialectic problematically overlain onto a “proto-sexuality” of children. For Freud, homosexuality was the result of deterministic mishaps in a child’s development

toward heterosexuality. Many of Freud's colleagues and followers disagreed with his concept of innate bisexuality and instead considered heterosexuality to be natural while homosexuality and bisexuality were deviations. The quest for a cause and cure of same-sex desire in childhood ultimately made no sense, though, because many adults who might self-identify as gay would not say they had had gay childhoods (while many others would say that they were indeed gay as children), and some "proto-gay" children do not later identify as gay in adulthood.

During Freud's heyday, homosexuality was called "inversion" (the "effeminized" male child and the "masculinized" female child), but this notion also proved problematic, as many people with same-sex attraction are "gender conforming" in all ways but sexual desire—that is, they can pass publicly as stereotypically masculine or feminine and not be suspected of having the desires they do. This passing of some, and the inability to pass of others, (as well as the fact that many heterosexuals are sometimes perceived to be gay) points to a second contradiction that Sedgwick explains as resulting from the classification system. Homosexuality has been framed as gender-nonconforming yet at the same time as a "group" within each gender (gay and lesbian).<sup>25</sup> This second contradiction explains why homosexuality and transgenderism (or gender variance that may have little to do with sexuality) have often been conflated, but it also demonstrates that the historical relationship between sexuality and gender is quite entangled.

### **Mormons and Sexual Orientation**

In the 1950s and '60s, when Mormon leaders first spoke publicly on homosexuality, it was condemned as unnatural and unnecessary and therefore as illegitimate and sinful; an orientation toward the same sex was considered implausible.<sup>26</sup> Like much of the rest of America at the time, Mormons regarded homosexual feelings and acts as chosen and therefore amenable to repentance and correction—an affliction to be cured. This position altered slightly during the last quarter of the twentieth century when the choice of homosexuality was nuanced to include feelings as temptations to be resisted but which were not sinful in themselves unless acted upon. While this shift might be said to have occurred because curing homosexuality proved unfeasible (or an "orienta-

tion” was given credence through scientific experiment), what a poststructuralist historian like Sedgwick shows is that such a shift was the inevitable consequence of a classification system in which “experts”—both clinical and spiritual—who discern what aspects of desire are voluntary are compelled to make concessions about which aspects are not.<sup>27</sup>

This development paralleled another. By the 1970s, sexuality in LDS culture began to be seen as not just for procreation, but also to enhance sexual happiness within marriage.<sup>28</sup> This change had two main catalysts that had developed in America throughout the twentieth century. The first was an overwhelming consensus that sex for pleasure was not necessarily physically or emotionally harmful. Initially, this concept was a movement away from nineteenth-century notions of “vital force,” or the idea that men possessed a limited quantity of sexual fluids that, when released detrimentally, affected their health. For many Christian groups, vital force was linked to “original sin”: Sexual desire was imbued with vice and led to children who were born as sinners like their parents. For nineteenth-century Mormons who had rejected the concept of original sin, polygamy was seen as the best way to adhere to God’s commandment to be “fruitful and multiply.” Mormons believed that sexuality, when employed with reproductive intent, could be health-giving (a gift from God for being obedient) rather than a draining of life force.<sup>29</sup> By the 1920s, when the vital-force model had fallen from scientific grace (and polygamy had fallen from societal grace), most Americans understood sexual happiness as essential to marital intimacy between one man and one woman; the question became one of the moral standing of sexuality without reproductive intent. While the country underwent a sexual revolution during the 1960s, even by the 1970s and early ’80s, LDS leaders spoke routinely against masturbation and oral sex, finding these practices “wicked” in their self-indulgence. By the 1990s, Church leaders ceased asking married couples about their sexual activities (except for assuring marital “chastity,” by which they meant “fidelity”); they also stopped asking about particular practices, except for the use of pornography, which remains strongly condemned in and outside of marriage.

The second main catalyst was feminist thought. Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century (or “first-wave”) feminists

called for a woman's right over her body, which includes the right to choose pregnancy as opposed to being required to birth children, given the dangers of childbirth. Mid- to later-twentieth-century feminists ("second-wave") called for a women's right to sexual pleasure that need not necessarily lead to pregnancy and motherhood (nor even be in the context of marriage) given the advent of reliable birth control and the rising financial independence of women. Many LDS women came to distrust second-wave feminists who, during the time of the ERA, homogenized them as "victims" of their beliefs in divine marriage, motherhood, and gender symmetry. Sentiment against "feminism" has continued to pervade LDS thought ever since, as most Latter-day Saints are unread in more nuanced post-1980 ("third-wave") feminism(s).<sup>30</sup>

While homosexuality had been condemned in large part due to its non-potentiality for procreation, by the 1980s this argument no longer provided full justification, as Mormons increasingly engaged in intentionally non-procreative sex within their marriages for the purpose of shared sexual happiness. In the 1980s, heterosexuality was considered by many Mormon therapists to be the only "true" orientation while homosexuality was classified as "gender dysphoria"—a trope that continues within the culture to this day.<sup>31</sup> This logic opened up space for non-procreative sex to be acceptable as long as it occurred within the intimate bounds of marriage between one man and one woman; in other words, acceptable and normative sexuality was linked to gender and not just reproduction.

In the 1990s, official discourse by the upper echelon of Church leaders, whom members ritually sustain as "prophets, seers, and revelators," saw a rise in use of the phrase "same-gender attraction," described as an affliction that should not be acted upon. One way of thinking of the phrase "same-gender attraction" is as an expression of homosexuality without the "sex" (and thus without the sin, leading to a "love the sinner, hate the sin" approach), although Church leaders also maintain that "same-gender attraction" itself should be resisted as non-normative desire, as something against which one must struggle.<sup>32</sup>

Today, the Church seems to me to be in a precarious position. In maintenance of what I will call an "eternal heterogender," Church leaders have ventured into making definitive statements

about the “mystery” of this particular “affliction.” In recent years, the question has been said to be resolved in the next life where “same-gender attraction” will be “repaired.”<sup>33</sup>

Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland has also recommended that Latter-day Saints not use their sexual feelings as primary identifiers (such as in use of the words “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “straight”) and to concentrate only on sexual behavior (no sex outside of marriage); yet this statement is made, paradoxically, in an article whose title identifies people by their sexual feelings: “Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction.”<sup>34</sup> This paradox arises from the fact that, in using “homosexual as an adjective,” Mormons have written themselves into the logic of sexual orientation, not out of it. Holland’s request that Mormons not use their sexual feelings to identify themselves might be read as a kind of nostalgia for an earlier period when the Church did not have to deal with people asserting a sexual orientation or feelings of attraction to the same sex. Yet absence of the classification system by no means equals automatic heterosexuality. In the past, cultural forces along the lines of gender, race, and class dictated “ideal” family structures, just as those forces continue to do so today.<sup>35</sup> D. Michael Quinn’s work on nineteenth-century Mormonism points to a church that, without an established concept of sexual orientation, saw a greater tolerance of same-sex intimacy, even while acts of sodomy (both homosexual and heterosexual) were condemned as unnatural because they were non-procreative.<sup>36</sup> In the twenty-first century, powerful forces outside the Church—both secular and religious—consider same-sex desire not as a mystery with which people must struggle, but as natural feelings that can manifest themselves in intimacy that is morally neutral.

### **1980s Changes in LDS Therapeutic Discourse**

Throughout America during the first half of the twentieth century, various reparative therapies were administered in hopes of changing same-sex desire to opposite-sex desire. Brigham Young University was endorsing electroshock therapy as late as the 1970s. Homosexual Mormons were coaxed into marriages with an assumption that their desires for the same sex would disappear in the context of spousehood and parenting but, if not,

could be eliminated or substantially reduced (or heterosexual desire could be added) through the use of reparative therapies.

A turning point might be best characterized by the 1987 statement of Gordon B. Hinckley, then first counselor in the First Presidency of the largely non-functioning President Ezra Taft Benson: “Marriage should not be viewed as a therapeutic step to solve problems such as homosexual inclinations or practices.”<sup>37</sup> In his 2005 study of gay Mormons, sociologist Rick Phillips argues that conversations among Church leaders, LDS Social Services, and faithful members during the 1980s moved the Church to “compromise” its policies on homosexuality—from assertions that homosexuality was freely chosen to a more careful consideration of desire with a continued condemnation of homosexual practices.<sup>38</sup> Phillips suggests that this modification occurred because curing homosexuality proved untenable despite decades of attempts.

This explanation, however, does not take into account the historical development of the diagnosis. For example, Phillips summarizes the movement as a shift from Mormon sentiment against “*being* gay” to against “*acting* gay,”<sup>39</sup> which is confusing since “*being* gay” has never been part of official LDS vocabulary except in terms of its negation. A better explanation would be that, while some in LDS Social Services subscribed to a minoritizing view of homosexuality in the 1980s—claiming that homosexuality was “incurable” except by “miracle”<sup>40</sup> (in essence, attesting that some indeed are “gay”)—the culture as a whole merely shifted to the universalizing realm of acts. The goal changed from becoming heterosexual, *per se*, to becoming marriageable. Same-sex desire, insofar as it had been understood to be of a certain quality over decades of clinical classification, was believed to be, in most cases, neutralizable in service of married life. I would not describe this as a compromise, as Phillips does, but rather as a strategic reassertion.

Even given this reassertion, Hinckley’s 1987 statement that marriage should not be regarded as a cure came in the midst of a change in Mormon sexual mores generally: a movement from sexuality being understood as primarily for reproduction, to affirming sexuality as important both procreatively and recreatively—for reproduction, of course, but also as an element of happiness within marriage. Thus, while a Latter-day Saint no longer needed

to be heterosexual to be worthy, one had to be prepared to perform heterosexually (and not just reproductively) on account of one's spouse. Church leaders recognized by the 1980s that marriages suffered if same-sex desire was not sufficiently addressed prior to marriage or the happiness of one's spouse would be compromised. In 2006, Elder Oaks stated in hindsight: "To me [Hinckley's statement] means that we are not going to stand still to put at risk daughters of God who would enter into such marriages under false pretenses or under a cloud unknown to them."<sup>41</sup> This framing conjures notions of male selfishness (see next section) if the given affliction was not attended to beforehand, but "risk" also implies physical danger. By the late 1980s, Church leaders had become concerned during the nationwide panic over the "gay plague" that HIV was being transmitted to LDS wives from LDS husbands who were secretly having sex with men.<sup>42</sup>

As Phillips shows, the 1980s saw sentiment within the Mormon therapy community that a homosexual orientation was a tangible phenomenon to the extent that a cure for same-sex desire seemed doubtful. But others agreed that a kind of logic was needed for a new era of neutralization, whether or not an orientation was verifiable. In their 1987 article "Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse,"<sup>43</sup> LDS therapists Ann and Thomas Pritt attempted to provide this logic. They alleged that homosexuality was more than a set of behaviors and/or feelings; rather, it was a "way of life" that required "years of pathological coping [that] . . . affect[s] most areas of the lives of those moving toward gender dysphoria."<sup>44</sup> The Pritts' dismissal of sexual orientation and their replacing it with gender dysphoria is significant for three reasons. First, because marital sex that lacked procreative intent had become normative in Mormon culture, the wrongfulness of homosexuality could no longer be articulated in terms of reproduction alone but was constructed as an issue of gender—hence, "gender dysphoria." The fact that many heterosexual couples cannot reproduce reinforces this point. Second, this dysphoria was explained as something one acquired through behavior (or "choice") so that gender-conformity was, in principle, all that was required to unravel it. Third, with gender-conformity as a cure of sorts, the Pritts resorted to stereotypes about what makes *all* homosexuals gender-nonconforming. This framing also conflates transgenderism

with homosexuality. Their answer: unfilled emotional bonding with members of the same sex.

The data the Pritts relied upon to make this claim were Mormons whose attempts at same-sex pairing were unsuccessful and led to unhappiness, a circular logic that it was homosexuality that failed their clients rather than Mormonism's heteronormative environment. The Pritts made a cognitive leap that homosexuality could be "changed" into heterosexuality through "appropriate" same-sex bonding. They wrote: "All of their thoughts and behaviors are involved in their 'coming out' process, so their entire self will necessarily be involved in their 'coming in' to their very real heterosexuality." This therapeutic process was said to require that past transgressions and thoughts be kept "strictly confidential" due to "homophobia and long-held misconceptions about the nature or possibility of change, [as] many people would see these growing men as they had thought they were, rather than what they really were and were becoming." Here, homophobia, as it remains understood within the Mormon context, is made clear: It is the fear, banishment, bad-mouthing, or ill-thought toward persons that prevents the construction of shared spaces where "heterosexuals [can] . . . comfortably establish healing relationships with identity-impaired individuals."<sup>45</sup>

That the Pritts attempted to match their theological ideals—gender complementarity and reproduction within marriage—with real world queer encounters is obvious. For them, homosexuality was a kind of underdeveloped homosociality; heterosexuality was attained through a struggled, perhaps lifelong performance. The Pritts' logic, however, raises the question of whether linking homosexuality with gender-nonconformity can ever be done without stereotyping. As Sedgwick comments: "Attributions of a 'true' 'inner' heterogender may be made to stick . . . so long as dyads of people are all that are in question. [But] the broadening of view to include any larger circuit of desire must necessarily reduce the inversion . . . trope to a choreography of breathless farce."<sup>46</sup>

In other words, if heterosexuality were ubiquitous, then it would not need to be made compulsory; it would simply happen on its own for all people. Calling homosexuality "gender-nonconforming" is an attempt to preserve an essential heterosexuality within desire itself. This essential heterosexuality might corre-

late to a theological ideal of gender complementarity, but to make this ideal fit the world will require a “choreography of farce.” As an example of how this choreography plays out, the Pritts’ notion of “change” stems from their data of homosexuals as unhappy and feeling guilt and remorse after committing acts deemed sinful. Practically speaking, the “change to . . . very real heterosexuality” might include an avoidance of homosexual behavior, a tight self-control on sexual attraction, and a maintenance of a belief in a “true, inner heterogender.”<sup>47</sup> All of these factors, however, point to celibacy and not heterosexuality; an actual performance of heterosexuality within marriage has yet to occur. Using the Pritts’ schema, homosexuals who are unrepentant and speak of love and happiness in the context of same-sex relationships are simply lost to their “pathology”; their happiness might be described as unhappiness in disguise or as a temporary illusion of happiness destined to become disappointment. Such sentiments seem deficient in empathy, though, and would be interpreted by the majority of today’s psychological community as signs of heterosexism.

A therapeutic stance that resembles that of the Pritts today is maintained most notably by LDS therapist A. Dean Byrd, a past president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), who has written and contributed to several books on homosexuality. Much like the immediate descendants of Freud, Byrd declares heterosexuality to be the only “true” orientation. He rejects the notion of homosexuality as innate (or a minoritizing view of homosexuality), attesting that it can be changed. The field of psychology, however, has long since problematized and moved beyond questions of sexual determinism and is now interested in sexuality over one’s lifespan.<sup>48</sup> The field has been introspective of its history, recognizing that the campaign to cure homosexuality was merely for the sake of upholding heterosexuality as superior. Byrd, on the other hand, paints a one-dimensional picture of a field overwrought with politics and averse to science. As recently as September 2009, Elder Bruce C. Hafen, a member of the third-ranked First Quorum of the Seventy, following the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, cited Byrd approvingly,<sup>49</sup> which means his work remains relevant in terms of a discourse analysis; however, his use of gen-

der stereotypes and his propagation of misinformation about human sexuality is harmful and regrettable.<sup>50</sup>

### **The 1990s: The Proclamation on the Family**

In conservative Christian communities during the 1990s, the idea that people were separatist when they engaged in homosexual behavior (rather than merely experiencing same-sex desire) gained traction.<sup>51</sup> Increasingly, Latter-day Saints in the pews asked that a “hate the sinner who sins” environment be replaced with “love the sinner, hate the sin.” The latter approach was viewed as more inclusive and conducive to helping practicing homosexuals cease their behavior and encourage those who felt tempted to never engage in “experimentation.” In essence, these Saints were asking for a Church atmosphere *sans* “homophobia,” as they understood the term. In his 1995 article, Elder Dallin Oaks quoted a letter from a parent:

Another concern we have is the way in which our sons and daughters are classified as people who practice deviant and lascivious behavior. Perhaps some do, but most do not. These young men and women want only to survive, have a spiritual life, and stay close to their families and the Church. It is especially damaging when . . . negative references are spoken from the pulpit. . . . Many simply cannot tolerate the fact that Church members judge them as “evil people,” and they, therefore, find solace in gay-oriented lifestyles.

Oaks responded: “The person that’s working [to resist] those tendencies ought not to feel himself to be a pariah. Now, quite a different thing is sexual relations outside of marriage. A person engaging in that kind of behavior should well feel guilt. . . . It’s not surprising to me that they would feel estranged from their church.”<sup>52</sup> Here is a movement of blame in which those given to “those tendencies” find solace in “gay-oriented lifestyles” because either (a) the culture pushed them away, and/or (b) the individual was separatist. In both explanations, homosexuality is framed as the source of the division, and Oaks expresses surprise at those who “feel that the Church can revoke God’s commandments”<sup>53</sup> to bridge the divide.

Outside the Church, a growing consensus had found homosexuality to be neither a sign of illness nor homosexual behavior an estrangement from God. Gays and lesbians in search of marital

rights in the 1990s, pedestaled by gay rights organizations, forced conservative Christians, including Mormons, to grapple with non-libertarian queer activism.<sup>54</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking as Church president in 1998, stated that “those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians” are “love[d] as sons and daughters of God,” but the Church could not “stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called same-sex marriage situation.” Hinckley added: “To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.”<sup>55</sup>

Yet is a queer family any less a family because it is queer? Official Mormon discourse has not yet addressed the familiness of these households, even while they are increasing. Nadine Hansen, an LDS lawyer, argues that, since the family was already central to Mormon theology long prior to the 1990s and in light of the Church’s attempted intervention in the 1993 litigation regarding same-sex marriage in Hawaii (and its later involvements in Alaska in 1998 and California in 2000 and 2008), a “subtext” of homosexuality is key to understanding the proclamation’s timing. This point is particularly important given the politically mobilizing language in the proclamation on the family: “We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.” Hansen has stated: “I am unaware of any time or circumstance under which the Church has urged members or government leaders to enact a single measure to strengthen ‘the family,’ other than legislation that would undermine homosexual relationships.”<sup>56</sup> Yet, as mentioned already, concern over same-sex marriage was on the Mormon agenda as early as the 1970s during the time of the ERA. I would adduce that the issue of homosexuality for the Church is, at its core, about gender, as accepting same-sex parented families in full communion would upset the ecclesiastical relationship between men and women rather than necessarily disrupt theological ideals of marriage and parenthood. It is no coincidence that religions that validate same-sex marriage also ordain women. As Sedgwick writes: “It has yet to be demonstrated that . . . patriarchy structurally requires homophobia”—consider ancient Greece, for exam-

ple. Rather, the different shapes of “male and female homosociality . . . will always be articulations . . . of the enduring inequality of power between women and men.”<sup>57</sup>

Insofar as homosexuality had been understood within the Church as stemming from an affliction that lends to a kind of selfishness if not kept in check,<sup>58</sup> this selfishness has been gendered male.<sup>59</sup> Women who do not want to marry or produce offspring are considered to have problems adhering to their gender, as opposed to any credence being given to their desire, whether same-sex or otherwise. Internalized, this stance has rendered lesbian voices within the Church dim. The desire of the male, on the other hand, is reasoned to be of desire only; the Church has exercised diligence in displaying a conquering of male same-sex desire. The contradictions of this gendered discourse emerged during the 1990s with the increased public visibility of lesbian motherhood. The “lesbian as mother who is unselfish” quieted conservative Christian discourse of homosexuality as mere selfishness as well as deflecting arguments that homosexuality is wrong because it is non-procreative.<sup>60</sup>

In the LDS context, the conversation concerning the wrongfulness of homosexuality saw a gradual shift from ideas of carnal selfishness and reproductive incapacity in the 1970s and '80s to a question of a God-ordained family structure and gender roles in the 1990s and beyond, as evidenced in the language of the proclamation on the family. Essentializing gender roles was a succinct way to “protect” the traditional family after the Church came to terms with the following two realities: (1) non-heterosexuality is not just a question of sex, but also often of love and family-building, and (2) sexual happiness (or carnal selfishness) is often part of marital intimacy.

God-ordained gender roles do not hold up in an American court of law, though. As Judge Vaughn Walker concluded in 2010 regarding Proposition 8 in California: If mandating sexual activity, child-bearing, and child-rearing to occur within marriage were really in the state's best interest, the proposition did not help this at all because it requires some sexual activity, child-bearing, and child-rearing to occur outside of marriage.<sup>61</sup> In other words, Walker did not find gays and lesbians to be separatists but in fact made the same argument that had concerned the Church during

the ERA campaign: “Because of their relationship to one another,”<sup>62</sup> gays and lesbians are discriminated against due to their biological sex.

### **A Dialectic in Full Swing: The 2000s**

Elder Packer in 1978 stressed that use of “homosexual” was dangerous because it might lead people to believe they really are homosexual.<sup>63</sup> By the turn of the twenty-first century, it was not possible for the Church to avoid the terms “gay/straight” and “sexual orientation.”<sup>64</sup> A believing Mormon in good standing with the Church today can self-identify as gay and even claim to have a homosexual orientation, provided he or she acknowledges or at least chooses to act only upon his or her “eternal heterogender.” LDS therapists who still advanced the idea of heterosexuality as the only true orientation explained this new phenomenon of Mormons self-identifying as gay as the result of bad science infiltrating Mormonism and indoctrinating its youth; it was the product of a “worldly” conspiracy asserting that homosexuality is innate.<sup>65</sup> On the part of Mormons who self-identified with “same-gender attraction,” “being gay” was a vernacular way of describing consistent same-sex desire with little to no opposite-sex desire, not unlike the Kinsey scale that does not require one to identify with one of two poles for a life course but allows one to place oneself somewhere on a continuum for now (including the poles) and to be open to what the future might bring.

Church leaders in the 2000s referred to celibacy as the only other possibility for the unmarried—an acceptable but lesser option given the “blessings of eternity” that marriage is said to provide. In a 2006 co-interview with Apostle Oaks, Lance B. Wickman, of the First Quorum of the Seventy, compared “same-gender attraction” with disability. He spoke of his disabled daughter who “stand[s] at the window of my office which overlooks the Salt Lake Temple and look[s] at the brides and their new husbands as they’re having their pictures taken. . . . [S]he’s at once captivated . . . and saddened.”<sup>66</sup> Her image served as a call for humility among those whose differences do not place them beyond the realm of marriageability in this life. Only “same-gender attraction” that is unable to be controlled was deemed to reasonably necessitate lifelong celibacy.<sup>67</sup> Mormon scholar Ron Schow noted in

2007 that descriptions of “same-gender attraction” as being “repaired in the next life,” like disabilities that may not be “repaired” in this one, have been expressed by Church leaders only as recently as the last decade.<sup>68</sup>

In an era of the internet and increased media representations of happy and productive queer people not considered identity-impaired or sinful, Church leaders have had the difficult task of creating continued stigma for categories of identity no longer considered shameful by large segments of American society. They have done this, in part, by steering the rising generation of Latter-day Saints away from the “worldly” designations of identity (such as “gay” or “lesbian”) that their peers use and toward what are termed more “eternal” signifiers. An example of this task at work appears in a 2007 article by LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland. Holland recounted a conversation with a young man in his early twenties who was not sure he should remain a member of the Church. He did not think he was “worthy” because he was “gay.” Holland queried: “And?” noting for his readers the surprise on the young man’s face. Holland asked the young man whether he had violated the “law of chastity” (no sex outside of marriage), to which the young man answered that he had not. The apostle thanked him for “remaining clean” and then told him that knowing “the cause of your feelings” is not as important as knowing that he has “not transgressed.” Holland then told the young man: “You serve yourself poorly when you identify yourself primarily by your sexual feelings, [as] that isn’t your only characteristic, so don’t give it disproportionate attention. You are first and foremost a son of God, and He loves you.” Although the phrase “son of God” does not explicitly mean a “heterosexual son of God,” if the young man were to remain unmarried and celibate as a result of his struggle (or for whatever other reasons), he will become, to a large extent, a cultural outsider by midlife. Holland makes this fate clear at the end of the article when he says: “I weep with admiration and respect at the faith” of a second man who, now in his thirties, remains chaste, “struggling,” and “has not yet married.”<sup>69</sup>

Holland’s weeping for those who struggle with desire is intertwined with an opposing disciplinarian stance: “All human beings struggle, so you are no different than I am,” as expressed through his request that the young man not identify himself by his sexual

feelings. This weeping-disciplinary dyad is dialectical; it resembles the God-like faces of mercy and wrath. This duality overlays Sedgwick's discussion of the contradictory minoritizing/universalizing tendency that occurs when sexuality is linked to gender. The "merciful" stance taken by Holland—that of weeping for those who struggle with desire—demonstrates an acknowledgment of a minority for whom desire is considered an issue. Holland does not cite studies that give percentages of how many Americans are gay, but he does state that there are "thousands like him [the thirtysomething man], male or female, who 'fight the good fight' . . . who struggle with . . . same-gender attraction."<sup>70</sup> Apostle Oaks made the "merciful" gesture as well when he said in the 2006 co-interview with Wickman: "Perhaps there is an inclination or susceptibility to such feelings that is a reality for some and not a reality for others."<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the "wrathful" or universalizing stance is always taken in the same frame and given greater credence. For Holland, being "gay" is the result of a series of choices, acts, and reflections through which anyone might choose to be gay. For Oaks, the same is true: "Out of such susceptibilities come feelings, and feelings are controllable. If we cater to the feelings, they increase the power of the temptation. If we yield to the temptation, we have committed sinful behavior."<sup>72</sup> In brief, the minoritizing/universalizing dialectic takes the following outline: "Same-gender attraction" becomes just like any other "affliction" (such as a disability or a propensity toward anger) and is therefore framed as not-unique, even though it is also paradoxically talked about as uniquely afflicting some people.

This binary thinking is important to explicate because it forecloses a livable middle ground for many Mormons today. On one end of the mercy/wrath binary are success stories to be emulated in which desire has been conquered or is sufficiently controlled and in which one has aligned himself or herself to find ultimate joy in the LDS life sequence (gender dyadic marriage and parenthood). On the other end are the Stuart Matises<sup>73</sup> of Mormonism whose "last desperate act[s] . . . [are] forgiven by the mercy of the Atonement."<sup>74</sup> When it comes to suicides in Mormon culture over the issue of homosexuality, Holland remarked "mercifully" upon meeting with the parents of Stuart Matis: "We must find ever-better ways to help the Stuart Matises of the Church . . . while they

‘fight the good fight’ in the gender-attraction they face.” He then “wrathfully” added: “I am only heartbroken that [Stuart] felt that he could not keep on fighting.”<sup>75</sup> As with Oaks and the question of the pariah, this approach defers blame. Either (1) we will give more love to the next one, and/or (2) it is the mysterious affliction that causes a kind of selfishness (read: weakness) that took our child from us. The disconnect here is that these suicides are not of an anomic variety in which the person lacked love in his or her life or lacked a worldly niche in the community. Often such suicides are acts of altruism in which the person feels that killing himself or herself is for the good of the community. In other words, selflessness, not selfishness, motivates the decision to die. Mormon scholar Hugo Olaiz has referred to the situation as one of “spiritual codependency” in which, “when bad things happen [namely, suicides by queer church members], they are guiltless tragedies.” Because the “theological puzzle of homosexuality” is described as “resolved in the afterlife,” Olaiz finds that Mormonism today leans toward a “culture of death” for many of its members.<sup>76</sup> Church leaders might describe suicide as never the answer, and individual wards may try to ensure that it welcomes those with this “struggle”; still, the framing of a life as one of “struggle” to be resolved by mysterious means after death is ultimately what is unwelcoming.

The “merciful” or minoritizing aspect of the binary has permitted the rise of queer voices that are considered legitimately Mormon and who, with their families, have worked to create livable middle grounds. Evergreen International was founded in 1989; and like its evangelical counterpart, Exodus International, changing orientation was its focus throughout the 1990s. Today, both organizations focus on the universalizing realm of acts.<sup>77</sup> Ty Mansfield, a Mormon thirtysomething who has spoken at Evergreen conferences and is a director of another queer Mormon organization called North Star (2006), stated in *In Quiet Desperation*, a popular 2004 book co-authored with Stuart Matis’s parents, “Just as we do not worship heterosexuality, so our salvation is not based upon the mortal realization of it.”<sup>78</sup> Such a declaration is common in evangelical ex-gay culture, where the opposite of gay is often described as “holy” and not as “straight.”<sup>79</sup> This kind of thinking can open up discursive space to question the privileging

of marriage over singleness; it can also lead one to question the comparative leniency afforded heterosexual transgressions over homosexual ones.<sup>80</sup>

Mansfield has not questioned Mormonism's doctrine of eternal marriage. In fact, he asserts that it is "idolatrous" for those who "experience same-gender attraction" to use it as a "catch-all rationalization for failing to . . . prepare" for eternal marriage.<sup>81</sup> However, he stated in a 2009 essay, "Clinically Single," that the importance his faith places on marriage has the unfortunate effect of equating singleness with loneliness.<sup>82</sup> A kind of faithful activism has arisen in the last decade, which can be summarized as follows: Instead of maintaining a closet for everyone to "come in" as heterosexual, many believe they should "come out" as "same-gender attracted" for their Church's well-being (to raise awareness of homophobia) and their own well-being (so long as they choose to act in accordance with their "eternal heterogenders"). In another 2009 essay, "A New Conversation for a New Generation," Mansfield quoted a friend who had decided to be "out" within his Mormon community: "When I made the final decision to use my real name, knowing the potential for backlash, I decided that there is a war being waged and our side is losing while the gay rights organizations are winning. We are losing because people like me feel the need to hide and pretend. I pretend not out of fear of the gay rights organizations; I pretend out of fear of the negative reaction I will get from people in the Church."<sup>83</sup>

The effect that such thinking will have on the culture will continue to be seen in coming years. Therapist Dean Byrd fears that "from acceptance [of same-gender attraction as normative], there is only a short distance to celebration."<sup>84</sup> His sentiment finds some validation in Mansfield's "merciful" prose in *In Quiet Desperation*: "Even love expressed in ways contrary to the Father's eternal purposes for His children still retains elements of love's grandeur."<sup>85</sup> In official Mormon discourse, actual same-sex intimacy always receives the brunt of "wrath" and wrath alone.

The faithful activism of these Mormons and their families is encumbered by "wrathful" statements in recent Church literature, such as those in a 2007 pamphlet titled *God Loveth His Children*: "An adverse influence [to one's spirituality] is obsession with or concentration on same-gender thoughts and feelings. It is

not helpful to flaunt homosexual tendencies or make them the subject of unnecessary observation or discussion. It is better to choose as friends those who do not publicly display their homosexual feelings.”<sup>86</sup> Statements like these reveal the precarious position in which the Church has put itself. Should *In Quiet Desperation* never have been published because the book puts Stuart Matis’s and Ty Mansfield’s homosexual feelings on public display? Should Evergreen and North Star disband because “same-gender attraction” is their focus? Such statements create concern among those who try to stay faithful to the Church by supporting and associating with others they view as like themselves.<sup>87</sup>

### Concluding Thoughts, Future Directions

Some gay Mormons who grew up before the 1980s have noted that their pain of growing up in a homophobic environment that insisted they be cured has been invalidated by the Church’s movement toward a more merciful, “love the sinner, hate the sin” stance.<sup>88</sup> In the previous section, I demonstrated how this “mercy” provides only an aura of inclusivity, as it is always tempered with exclusionary “wrath.” This mercy/wrath binary is indicative of the minoritizing/universalizing dialectic described by queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. The binary plays out in Mormonism through the notion of “same-gender attraction” whereby desire is both minoritized and dismissed through a universalizing framework of “eternal gender.” The minoritizing element helps explain why the Church supported the Salt Lake City nondiscrimination ordinances in 2009 while the universalizing element explains its continued position against same-sex marriage.

With regard to accounts of American sexual history, Mormonism disrupts the understanding of this history as a singular emergence of the homosexual/heterosexual dyad at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>89</sup> While the Church engaged with the dyad as early as the 1950s, it really subscribed to it only when sex within marriage was seen as having the important function of sexual happiness as well as reproduction and when gender roles were interpreted as essential to one’s eternal identity.

The Church’s involvement in the California same-sex marriage campaigns in 2000 and 2008 may have helped slow the tide, but Americans in many cities are leaning more and more toward

acceptance of same-sex desire and intimacy as normative and morally neutral. That is, gays and lesbians are increasingly not viewed as separatists, regardless of whether their sexual feelings are thought of as “innate.” In terms of debates that compare race with sexuality (miscegenation with same-sex marriage), the 1978 LDS policy change to allow ordination of black men has sometimes been framed as late-coming, such that the Church is consequently presented as “behind the times” in terms of sexuality discourses, too.<sup>90</sup> This reasoning tends to rest problematically on a minoritizing-only framework in which sexuality is like race because of aspects of “immutability.” Rather, how might the Church change using its own universalizing logics as it did in 1978?

Today’s Mormon youth are in a position in which, even if they do not use the concept of sexual orientation to define themselves (and concentrate only on sexual behavior), by the time they are in their twenties, they must still grapple with the workings of the closet, due to the universalized expectation of marriage. How do they interpret “same-gender attraction” and “eternal gender” as models of self-definition? My sense is that they neither assimilate to nor strictly oppose these concepts but transform them in creative ways online and with their families and friends. These youth often do not “struggle” with sexuality, so Mormonism must struggle to find a place for them as they grow up. The relative absence of the closet in many gay-affirming locales where people no longer need to “come out” or “stay in” to be “in” has led many non-Mormon American queer youth to not define themselves by their sexuality, either.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the debate among the next generation is likely to move away from the specific modality of sexuality to questions of how the Mormon “family” can continue to make sense soteriologically when it does not represent the diversity of American families.

### Notes

1. Matt Canham, Derek Jensen, and Rosemary Winters, “Salt Lake City Adopts Pro-Gay Statutes—with LDS Church Support,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2009, [http://www.sltrib.com/ci\\_13758070](http://www.sltrib.com/ci_13758070) (accessed March 1, 2010).

2. “Common Ground Initiative,” Equality Utah website, <http://www.equalityutah.org/action/common.html>; “Church Responds to

Same-Sex Marriage Votes,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-responds-to-same-sex-marriage-votes>, November 5, 2008 (both accessed October 20, 2010).

3. “The Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-supports-nondiscrimination-ordinances> (accessed October 20, 2010).

4. Canham, Jensen, and Winters, “Salt Lake City Adopts Pro-Gay Statutes.”

5. “Sutherland’s Statement on LDS Response to Nondiscrimination Ordinances,” November 10, 2009, [http://www.sutherlandinstitute.org/news/news\\_details.asp?id=631](http://www.sutherlandinstitute.org/news/news_details.asp?id=631) (accessed October 20, 2010).

6. Ibid.

7. “The Church Supports Nondiscrimination Ordinances.”

8. The wife of God (or Heavenly Mother) is hardly mentioned officially. See Margaret Toscano, “Is There a Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology?: An Investigation into Discourses of Power,” *Sunstone Magazine* 133 (July 2004): 14–22.

9. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 1995). Regarding spiritual gender identity or the question of transgenderism in Mormonism, Apostle Boyd K. Packer, “To Young Men Only,” October 2, 1976, pamphlet (N.p.: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), <http://mentalhealthlibrary.info/library/sex/sexlds/sexldsmag/links/foryoungmen/foryoungmen.htm> (accessed October 20, 2010), stated in 1976: “There is no mismatching of bodies and spirits.” He made this statement in the context of conflating homosexuality and transgenderism, discussed below.

10. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” sustains the LDS view that women/mothers are “primarily responsible for the nurture of their children” and men/fathers are “responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families.” Children were said to be “entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother.”

11. “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” 23-page insert in *Ensign*, March 1980.

12. Boyd K. Packer, “Talk to the All-Church Coordinating Council,” May 18, 1993, <http://www.zionsbest.com/face.html> (accessed October 20, 2010). Although this speech was never published, a transcript of it was leaked onto the internet in 1993. Packer was highly perceived as instrumental behind the singling out of scholars, many of whom wrote on feminist topics, for excommunication later that year. The media dubbed the exiled scholars “the September Six.” In 2007, in an interview for the Public Broadcasting Service documentary, *The Mormons*, interviewer

Helen Whitney inquired why “those particular groups [gays, feminists, intellectuals] . . . were of special concern.” Packer stated: “We . . . feel and think and know that the ultimate end of all activity in the Church is that a man and his wife and their children can be happy at home. . . . Down some of those paths you have a right to go, but in the Church, you don’t have a right to teach and take others there.” Apostle Dallin H. Oaks was also asked the question in his interview. Oaks stated that “in any day the watchmen on the tower are going to say intellectualism is a danger to the Church.” He also said that he has “felt the benefits of feminism,” but believes it has some “troublesome aspects” such as leading women to think “I don’t want a family, I want a career,” which “goes against eternal values.” Neither man spoke of the LGBT movement. “President Packer Interview Transcript from PBS documentary,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>; “Elder Oaks Interview Transcript from PBS documentary,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-oaks-interview-transcript-from-pbs-documentary>, July 20, 2007 (both accessed October 20, 2010).

13. Mormon demographics have shifted. By 2009, less than 45% of the Church’s membership lived in America; the proportion is not currently reflected in the leadership. “Facts & Statistics,” <http://newsroom.lds.org/facts-and-stats>, October 18, 2010 (accessed October 20, 2010). Therefore, non-American and American immigrant Mormons should be included when I say “Mormon.” Unfortunately, these perspectives are beyond the scope of this essay.

14. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1–2.

15. Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn also uses “homosocial” in his *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

16. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 44–48. Sedgwick states that it was French philosopher Michel Foucault, who in an “act of bravado,” labeled the year “1870” as the “birth of modern homosexuality.” Sedgwick reminds us, though, that any monolithic historical narrative can obscure the nuanced conditions of the present.

17. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 43.

18. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 2.

19. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 40–41.

20. *Ibid.*, 43. By “Cartesian,” Sedgwick is referring to the idea that the mind is somehow separate from the body, a trope for which sixteenth-century philosopher René Descartes is usually blamed.

21. Dallin H. Oaks, "Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 1995, 7.

22. *Ibid.*

23. In October 2010, in response to a petition from the Human Rights Campaign, Church spokesman Michael Otterson reiterated that the Church "distinguishes between feelings or inclinations on the one hand and behavior on the other." "Church Responds to HRC Petition," <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/church-mormon-responds-to-human-rights-campaign-petition-same-sex-attraction>, October 12, 2010 (accessed October 20, 2010).

24. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.

25. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

26. See, for example, Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 85: "Many have been misinformed that they are powerless in the matter, not responsible for the tendency, and that God 'made them that way.' . . . Does the pervert think God to be 'that way'?"

27. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 225.

28. Official policy did not reflect this cultural change until the 1990s. The *General Handbook of Instructions*, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 1999), 157, cautioned members against judging each other on their family planning decisions. Sexuality was described as not just for procreation, but as also a "divinely approved . . . means of expressing love and strengthening emotional and spiritual bonds between husband and wife." See Melissa Proctor, "Bodies, Babies, Birth Control," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 175.

29. See B. Carmon Hardy and Dan Erickson, "'Regeneration—Now and Evermore!' Mormon Polygamy and the Physical Rehabilitation of Humankind," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 1 (2001): 40–61.

30. Amy Hoyt, "Beyond the Victim/Empowerment Paradigm: The Gendered Cosmology of Mormon Women," *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 1 (2007): 89–100.

31. See, for example, the writings of therapist A. Dean Byrd. For a critique of Byrd, see William S. Bradshaw, "Short Shrift to the Facts," a review of Douglas A. Abbott and A. Dean Byrd, *Encouraging Heterosexuality: Helping Children Develop a Traditional Sexual Orientation*, this issue. See also Apostle Boyd K. Packer, "To the One" (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 7–8, in which he again conflates homosexuality and transgenderism, framing both in terms of inappropriate "masculine" and "feminine" attributes and relations.

32. As Dallin Oaks summarized "same-gender attraction" in 2006: "The line of sin is between the feelings and the behavior. The line of pru-

dence is between the susceptibility and the feelings. We need to lay hold on the feelings and try to control them to keep us from getting into a circumstance that leads to sinful behavior." "Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman," posted August 2006, <http://newsroom.lds.org/official-statement/same-gender-attraction> (accessed October 20, 2010). According to the official pamphlet, *God Loveth His Children*, 11 pp. (N.p.: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 6: "Attractions alone do not make you unworthy. If you avoid immoral thoughts and actions, you have not transgressed even if you feel such an attraction."

33. An example of this logic can be found in Elder Bruce Hafen's speech to Evergreen International in 2009: "Come resurrection morning—and maybe even before then—you [addressing the Evergreen audience] will rise with normal attractions for the opposite sex." "Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction," September 19, 2009, <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/elder-bruce-c-hafen-speaks-on-same-sex-attraction> (accessed October 20, 2010). The doctrine that "afflictions" will be removed after death after enduring them with "patience" comes from Alma 34:39–41. Still, Alma 34:34 indicates that the "same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have the power to possess your body in that eternal world." In my ethnographic research for this essay, I have found that Mormons who identify with the phrase "same-gender attraction" are divided on the issue of whether they believe they are broken and need/will receive repair. For an analysis of this address, see James F. Cartwright, "Dialogue with Elder Hafen: Part 1—Doctrine" and Part 2—"Research Issues," *By Common Consent* (Newsletter of the Mormon Alliance) 16, no. 1 (January 2010) and 16, no. 2 (March 2010).

34. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 2007, 42–45.

35. As an example, sexual historian Bruce Burgett, "On the Mormon Question: Race, Sex, and Polygamy in the 1850s and the 1990s," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2005): 83, recounts how nineteenth-century Mormons were criticized by their contemporaries as acting like "Africans" and "Asians" due to their polygamous family structures. At the heart of these racial metaphors was the question of the proper "American" way of acquiring capital and progeny.

36. Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans*, chap. 4.

37. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reverence and Morality," *Ensign*, June 1987, 45. Hinckley's statement was also published in "First Presidency Statement on AIDS," *Ensign*, July 1988, 79.

38. Rick Phillips, *Conservative Christian Identity and Same-Sex Orientation: The Case of Gay Mormons* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 39–41.

39. *Ibid.*, 40.

40. *Ibid.*, 39.

41. Oaks, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

42. In 1986, Carol Lynn Pearson published *Good-bye, I Love You* (New York: Random House) about her experiences with her ex-husband who died of AIDS, one of the first books to speak to the issue of homosexuality in a Mormon context.

43. Ann Pritt and Thomas Pritt, “Homosexuality: Getting Beyond the Therapeutic Impasse,” *AMCAP [Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists] Journal* 13, no. 1 (1987): 37–66.

44. *Ibid.*, 58.

45. *Ibid.*, 58, 59.

46. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 87.

47. Pritt and Pritt, “Homosexuality,” 55, suggest that therapists “encourage . . . individuals to affirm the truth about themselves, that they indeed are heterosexual and always have been. Such would not be ‘passing,’ or deceptively presenting a false front for purposes of temporarily fitting in. Rather, it would entail an exercise of faith in one’s own self and a determination to make ‘the unseen seen.’”

48. See, for example, psychologist Lisa Diamond, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women’s Love and Desire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 257, 138, who states that arguments concerning the in-nateness of homosexuality might have short-term political use, but in the long run may “systematically disenfranchise” women. “Perhaps instead of arguing that gay/lesbian/bisexual individuals deserve civil rights because they are powerless to change their behavior, we should affirm the fundamental rights of all people to determine their own emotional and sexual lives.” Byrd can find no ally in Diamond since freedom of choice for him is unidirectional: toward heterosexuality. Byrd states in “Interview: An LDS Reparative Therapy Approach for Male Homosexuality,” *AMCAP Journal* 19, no. 1 (1993): 91, that he “acknowledge[s] the right of individuals with same-sex attraction to choose a gay lifestyle,” but he is not in the business of helping clients who make that particular choice. NARTH distorted as “change by choice” Diamond’s work on sexual fluidity—which consisted of interviews of women who experienced sexual variation not by choice. Diamond protested this misrepresentation in Brian Maffly, “U. Psychologist Says Sex Research Distorted,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 2008, [http://www.sltrib.com/ci\\_10958958](http://www.sltrib.com/ci_10958958) (accessed October 20, 2010). Byrd’s statement on Diamond’s work was:

“If it says ‘fluidity’ it says ‘fluidity.’ How you interpret it is something else.” Ibid. In other words, for Byrd and for NARTH, if the goal is heterosexuality, then the fact that it is reached spontaneously is beside the point, so long as people “choose” to maintain it.

49. “Elder Bruce C. Hafen Speaks on Same-Sex Attraction.”

50. Byrd’s *Mormons and Homosexuality* (Orem, Utah: Millennial Press, 2008) bears the publisher’s advertisement on the back cover that it is “the best LDS analysis of the issue of homosexuality available.” Yet much of the interior suggests material written in an earlier era when homosexuality was equated with child molestation, pedophilia, dysfunctional parent-child relationships, and disease. I find it difficult to take Byrd seriously as a scholar, but I also worry that his clout is substantial in the Mormon therapy community. Mormon scholar Ron Schow stated in 2007 that the Church has “abandoned” Byrd’s paradigms as laid out in the 1990s, but he may have been too optimistic in his appraisal, since the idea of homosexuality as a kind of gender dysphoria is still popular with many Mormons. Ron Schow, “LDS Resources Blog,” October 15, 2007, <http://ldsresourcesinfo.blogspot.com/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

51. Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107.

52. Oaks, “Same-Gender Attraction.”

53. Ibid.

54. Herman, *The Antigay Agenda*, 109.

55. Gordon B. Hinckley, “What Are People Asking about Us?,” *Ensign*, November 1998, 70.

56. Nadine Hansen on Panel: Kaimipono Wenger, Clark Pingree, and Nadine Hansen, “California’s Continuing Battle over Same-Sex Marriage,” August 6, 2008, Salt Lake Symposium, video, <http://ldshomosexuality.com/?p=166> (accessed May 1, 2010).

57. Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 4–5.

58. Packer, “To the One,” 10, made this point explicitly: “Have you explored the possibility that the cause [of homosexuality], when found, will turn out to be a very typical form of selfishness—selfishness in a very subtle form?”

59. There is a popular, but sexist, line of reasoning that can be summarized as follows: Gay men are promiscuous (read: selfish) because women naturally tame men through marriage. Besides the fact that many men (gay or otherwise) are monogamously minded, it is also the case that men have historically had power over women’s bodies, so much so that a woman had no legal recourse even if her husband raped her or brought disease into the relationship. Many women responded to this situation by *necessarily* taming their husbands, reinforcing the idea that

women “naturally” do this. One can see how Packer’s 1978 link between homosexuality as selfishness might be related to assumptions about the “nature” of sex and gender inside and outside of marriage. The absence of the lesbian in this discourse is also highly visible.

60. Herman, *The Antigay Agenda*, 51–54.

61. *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, 2010 US Dist (N CA), p. 128, <http://www.equalrightsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Prop8Decision.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2010).

62. *Ibid.*, 120–21.

63. Packer, “To the One,” 2, 3; he further stated that “it is easy—very easy—to cause the very things we are trying to avoid.”

64. For example, Church spokesman Michael Otterson in October 2010 used the words “gay” and “sexual orientation” when addressing the public after a string of public suicides by queer youth: “This past week we have all witnessed tragic deaths across the country as a result of bullying or intimidation of gay young men. We join our voice with others in unreserved condemnation of acts of cruelty or attempts to belittle or mock any group or individual that is different—whether those differences arise from race, religion, mental challenges, social status, sexual orientation or for any other reason.” “Church Responds to HRC Petition.”

65. See, as examples, Byrd, *Mormons and Homosexuality* (2008) and, the next year, a text for therapists by Dennis Dahle et al., *Where to Turn and How to Help: Understanding Same-Sex Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Foundation for Attraction Research, Millennial Press, 2009).

66. Wickman, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

67. Chosen singleness for a life course is frowned upon in Mormonism, having negative soteriological consequences. D&C 132:16–17. Those who are involuntarily single are consoled by the promise of marriage and children in the next life.

68. Schow, “LDS Resources Blog.”

69. Holland, “Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction,” 42, 45.

70. *Ibid.*, 45.

71. Oaks, in “Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman.”

72. *Ibid.*

73. In 2000, Matis committed suicide at age thirty-two during the Proposition 22 campaign in California.

74. Fred and Marilyn Matis and Ty Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*:

*Understanding the Challenge of Same-Gender Attraction* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 40.

75. Ibid.

76. Robert A. Rees, Hugo Olaiz, Ron Schow, and William S. Bradshaw, "Steps in the Right Direction? Evaluating New LDS Publications on Homosexuality," Sunstone Symposium, Session 336, Salt Lake City, July 30, 2005, MP3 audio file, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/shop/products/symposium-sessions-free/steps-in-the-right-direction-evaluating-new-lds-publications-on-homosexuality/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

77. Evergreen's stated mission is to help people who "want to diminish same-sex attractions and overcome homosexual behavior." [http://www.evergreeninternational.org/about\\_us.htm](http://www.evergreeninternational.org/about_us.htm) (accessed October 20, 2010).

78. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 181.

79. Lynne Gerber, "The Opposite of Gay: Nature, Creation, and Queerish Ex-Gay Experiments," *Nova Religio* 11, no. 4 (2008): 24.

80. Ibid., 21.

81. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 181–82.

82. Ty Mansfield, "Clinically Single," North Star website, July 2009, [http://northstarlds.org/directors\\_2009-07.php](http://northstarlds.org/directors_2009-07.php) (accessed October 20, 2010). In May of 2010, Mansfield married his wife at the Salt Lake Temple, demonstrating his belief that "men are that they might have joy"—including joyful bachelorhood—"but 'in this world your joy is not full.'" Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 182.

83. Anonymously quoted in Ty Mansfield, "A New Conversation for a New Generation," November 2009, [http://northstarlds.org/directors\\_2009-11.php](http://northstarlds.org/directors_2009-11.php) (accessed October 20, 2010). That the friend remains anonymous in Mansfield's essay, despite the fact that he is quoted as "coming out," creates an interesting double message.

84. A. Dean Byrd et al., "A Slippery Slope that Limits the Atonement," review of *In Quiet Desperation*, The Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research (FAIR) website, <http://www.fairlds.org/Reviews/Rvw200505.html> (accessed October 20, 2010).

85. Matis, Matis, and Mansfield, *In Quiet Desperation*, 179.

86. *God Loveth His Children*, 9. In his 2006 interview with Wickman, Oaks stated: "In a nutshell . . . if you are trying to live with and maintain ascendancy over same-gender attractions, the best way to do that is to have groups that define their members in terms other than same-gender attractions." "Same-Gender Attraction: An Interview with Elders Oaks and Wickman."

87. Schow, "LDS Resources Blog."

88. Buckley Jeppson and Jeff Nielsen, "Gays in the Mormon Uni-

verse,” Sunstone Symposium, Session 316, Salt Lake City, August 12, 2006, MP3 audio file, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/shop/products/symposium-sessions-free/gays-in-the-mormon-universe/> (accessed October 20, 2010).

89. My thanks to Bruce Burgett for this insight.

90. D. Michael Quinn, “Prelude to the National ‘Defense of Marriage’ Campaign: Civil Discrimination against Feared or Despised Minorities,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 1–52, analogized race and sexuality in this political analysis.

91. See Bertram Cohler and Phillip L. Hammack, “The Psychological World of the Gay Teenager: Social Change, Narrative, and ‘Normality,’” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36, no. 1 (2007): 47–59.