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Sexism in Silicon Slopes: Religion and Gendered Organizational Structures in the New Economy

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This study investigates the role of religion in perpetuating gender inequality within contemporary workplaces, focusing on Silicon Slopes. Applying gendered organizational theory, I show how religious beliefs sustain discriminatory organizational norms and practices because religion is built into the gendered logic employed by company founders and their employees. Through 94 in-depth interviews and 147 hours of ethnographic fieldwork, I use an innovative social network strategy to examine the impact of Mormon religious beliefs on gender and labor dynamics in Utah's emerging tech space. This study reveals three key insights: (1) Religion shapes educational and professional norms, leading to the structural disenfranchisement of women within organizations, irrespective of women's religious affiliation. (2) Religious teachings continue to influence corporate norms and language, even when divorced from their original source, thereby perpetuating gender biases in the workplace. (3) Despite shifts in religious dedication among company founders, religiously influenced gendered logics persist, impacting organizational dynamics of a growing company with employees from around the world.

These findings underscore the profound and direct impact of religion on women's economic precarity, particularly when they are closely associated with LDS male professional gatekeepers who adhere to gender complementarian beliefs. Furthermore, religious leaders wield significant influence over the global economy through the creation of structuring documents on gender, labor, and family dynamics.

Christian religiosity in the United States has dropped significantly in the last 30 years; according to the Pew Research Center, the number of American Christians is projected to fall below 50% of the population within the next 50 years (Pew 2022). What might these trends mean for the influence of religion on American lives, education, and careers? How do religion and gendered organizations interact, and what are the outcomes for women entering the workforce? To explore these questions, I trace legacies of religious beliefs

on gender and labor over the life course of Mormon women, from Sunday school lessons to business school ethics debates and from sacrament tables to corporate boardroom tables.

I extend Acker's 1990 gendered organization theory and Williams et al.'s 2012 application in the "new economy" by showing how religion functions as a gender inequality reproduction mechanism in the 21st-century economy. I show how religion sustains the tenacious hold gender inequality has in the workforce because religion is built into the gendered logic that 1) influences childhood aspirations and career choices; 2) shapes the educational institutions that develop labor talent pipelines; and 3) structures work organizations and the decision-making of the gatekeepers they employ. I demonstrate how religion sustains these gender inequality mechanisms across the same four characteristics defined by Williams et al. in the 21st-century economy (job security, teamwork, career maps, and networking), in this case, within a religious MBA program and a Utah-based tech company started by Mormon men.

I also extend knowledge about traditional gender-based roles/relationships among the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly referred to as Mormons), including what is unique to the decision-making of Mormon women entering higher education and professional spaces, the logic and biases of Mormon men who perpetuate specific patterns of gender inequality within professional business settings, and the high level of influence the Church's current leaders inadvertently have on the gender policies instituted by global Mormon-led companies and the subsequent experiences of women employees therein, regardless of those women's faith and geographic proximity to the leaders of the Church or company.

Literature Review

Gendered Organizational Theory. Joan Acker developed the theory of gendered organizations to explain persistent gender disparities in the workplace (Acker 1990). Acker shows how jobs, work rules, evaluation systems, and organizational logic are built on a foundation that systematically disenfranchises women through the division of labor, cultural symbols, workplace interactions, individual identities, and organizational logic. Acker's framework has since been applied across diverse industries, reinforcing how workplace structures privilege men (Pierce 1996; Williams 1992; Britton 1995; Holmberg and Alvinius 2023; Tanquerel and Santistevan 2022; Chakraborty 2023; Rumpf 2023; Brewer et al. 2020; Quadlin 2023; Rahilly 2020).

In 2012, Williams et al. published an interaction of Acker's work but applied it to what they called "the new economy" (Williams et al. 2012). Focusing specifically on Acker's emphasis on organizing logic, Williams et al. showed how the basic gendered organizational logic had been transformed over the previous decades to further rationalize and legitimize organizational hierarchies. Their application identified gendered mechanisms actively disenfranchising non-men in the 21st-century workforce. That workforce has now accepted the following as the norm: job precarity with frequent downsizing, mergers, and lay-offs; employment on "teams" evaluated by results and outcomes by peers rather than hands-on managers; individualized and vague career development maps; and networking as an essential element for career advancement within and outside one's organization.

No research has yet explored how secular gendered organizations in the 21st century are influenced and sustained by religiosity using William et al.'s 2012 iteration of Acker's 1990 theory. To do so, I draw upon scholars from religious, organizational, gender, geography, and childhood socialization studies.

Religion and Organizations. Current literature on the intersection of religion and organizations in the 21st-century for-profit sector is limited. Most applications focus on the organization of the religions themselves (Demerath 1998; Hall 1997) or associated non-profits (Seigler and Cadge 2023). Studies on religion in the for-profit sector focus on religious individuals or small networks within secular organizations (Ernst et al. 2024; Cadge et al. 2023; Lofti Dehkharghani et al. 2023; Apelt et al. 2023). Some examine how companies purposefully incorporate religion to increase worker profitability (de Wildt and Aupers 2023).

Religious Organizations and Gender. Only a handful of scholars have examined organizational structures through the lens of both religion and gendered organizational theory, but they do not address economic factors. For example, Whitehead (2013) and Stalp and Winders (2000) highlight how religious doctrine shapes gender roles in leadership, though their focus is not explicitly corporate.

Religion, Organizations, Gender, and Geography. A community's conservative religious demographics are related to white individuals' gender attitudes in organizations within that state (Chan-Serafin et al. 2013; Moore and Vanneman 2003). For example, businessmen in "traditional" marriages in the U.S. and U.K. have higher rates of discriminating against women coworkers (Desai et al.

2014). Religious homogeneity is related to well-being, likely in proportion to the number of coworkers with similar levels of religiosity (Diener et al. 2011; Chan-Serafin et al 2013).

As Americans are the most religious in the industrialized world (Diener et al. 2011), and the Protestant work ethic remains a potent force in shaping the U.S. economy, it makes sense to look more closely at religious organizational interactions and gendered organizational structures in a densely populated and religiously homogeneous region, where members of the dominant religion hold positions of organizational power in the local economy.

Religion, Organizations, Gender, Geography, and Childhood Socialization. Religious density and exposure shape girls' aspirations, with the degree of socialization influencing long-term educational and career planning from an early age. Horwitz et al. found that by age 13, girls' proximity to religious subcultures predicted whether they would prioritize education/careers or motherhood, aligning with later degree attainment. Social networks play a key role, with Jewish girls benefiting from same-gender role models, unlike their Christian counterparts (Horwitz et al. 2022; Henningsen et al. 2022).

Methods

Williams et al. (2014) used a case study of geoscientists in the oil and gas industry to show four new organizing logics that reproduce gender inequality in the 21st-century workplace (Williams et al. 2012; Williams et al. 2014). I extend this conversation by showing how religion in the 21st century also functions as a mechanism that reproduces gender inequality in the modern economy. To investigate how religion upholds these new organizing logics, I draw upon my research on the life course of Mormon women with MBAs, global corporations influenced by the LDS church, and the people affected by those institutions.

Using snowball sampling and social media recruitment flyers, I began with a cohort of 37 Mormon women with MBAs from 10 universities across the U.S. and U.K. After being introduced to the rich social and professional networks these women interact with over their life course, this initial pool expanded to include a total of 94 participants. All interviews were either performed in person or over video calls.

Using feminist in-depth interviews and relational ethnography methods (Small and Cook 2023; Desmond 2014; DeVault and Gross 2012; Hard-

ing 1987), I conducted interviews with classmates, professors, recruiters, and coworkers, uncovering interconnected relationships among most of the 94 participants. They often knew one another and, unwittingly, were able to add insight, nuance, and triangulated validity to my findings by recounting the same event and interaction from multiple angles. These methods allowed me to map relationships among participants and vicariously experience the networks and divisions within their social circles (Saldaña 2013). Deep exposure to these enmeshed networks was essential for me to locate the religious beliefs and relationships that guide my analysis. These results informed and supported my choice to include a tight geographical boundary for the tech company I chose to explore.

At the invitation of my participants, I also conducted 147 hours of ethnographic participant observation in 2023 and 2024. I attended classes, conferences, and networking and social events across four campuses, with both in-person (139 hours) and virtual (8 hours) participation.

I was initially interested in understanding Mormon women's networks and how they use them in the business world, including mentors and role models. I quickly found that not only an unproductive line of questioning (most did not have networks or mentors), but most participants immediately turned the topic of conversation to matters of religion, gender, and the barriers they faced in business because of their identity, upbringings, and beliefs. Following their lead, I changed my line of inquiry to investigate religious socialization and gender tension to better understand what these women face. I asked about their motives for getting into an MBA program, their plan to obtain an MBA, previous work experience, why they chose their university, how others responded to their educational and career choices, and how their Mormon religious affiliation (whether upbringing, current attendance, or relationship with the church) had affected their choices and experiences.

Interviews lasted 30 minutes to two hours, averaging 60 minutes. I did follow-up interviews with a handful of subjects and continued to accept new participants until I reached result saturation; even then, I pursued more participants until I reached the limits of the various networks I had been connected to. There are likely more Mormon women with MBAs out there, but, as I will show in my analysis, they are often disconnected from the networks that otherwise would connect them to my study.

Using grounded theory, inductive coding techniques, and thematic analysis (Charmaz 2006), I created process and chronological maps to help me

analyze the relationships between people, events, and ideas. I used MAXQDA qualitative coding software to confirm and refine the relationships I found between sites, beliefs, structures, and people through the use of process, emotion, verses, and evaluative coding techniques.

By combining the previous research at the intersections of religion, organizations, gender, geography, and childhood socialization, I propose that organizations with a high density of homogenous religious white male organizational leaders will enact policies and procedures informed by their religious context that disenfranchise women. Research has demonstrated the strength of influence that religion has on the development of an individual's morality and opinions (Finke and Adamczyk 2008; Du Mez 2020; Nie 2023), and especially executive decisions made concerning company policy and culture (Ananthram 2019). Finke and Adamczyk's (2008) analysis was done at the national scale. However, I position my study on the logic that a similar finding can be found within smaller population segments when the homogeneous religion holds enough power to enact corporate structures and policies.

Thus, in order to extend Acker's 1990 gendered organizational theory and Williams et al.'s 2012 application to show how religion functions as a gender inequality reproduction mechanism in the 21st-century economy, I locate my study in Utah's people, organizations, and geography, ending with a deep analysis of the relationships between the LDS church and one global tech firm started and run by Mormon founders.

Positionality

As a Mormon woman, BYU graduate, and University of Chicago graduate student, my background provided unique access to this study. I navigated MBA spaces with familiarity, shared socio-religious experiences with participants, and had the academic foundation to analyze religion's role in shaping gendered career trajectories. My positionality fostered deep trust and rapport, allowing fluid conversations without the need for constant explanation. This shared language enabled participants to conserve energy for more substantive discussions. However, I periodically asked them to explain concepts as if I were an outsider, ensuring accuracy and uncovering nuances (DeVault and Gross, 2012, 179).

By integrating relational ethnography and feminist methodologies, I not only mapped interactions and networks but also examined my own position within the system (Olson 1998, 448; May et al. 2014).

I chose to use the term "Mormon" to identify members of this church because it is how my participants refer to themselves. This nickname persists despite recent church leadership's strong discouragement of the moniker and recent publication standards. Confusion over the different names is reflective of larger identity politics in the church culture; it also helps differentiate between the structural organization of the religion and what its people do and say as they interpret church teachings.

Background

Utah's Economy

Utah's economy is ranked highest for job growth in the U.S. and is predicted to be the state with the most tech job growth over the next decade (Utah: State Economic Profile, n.d.). However, it is also consistently one of the worst states in the nation for women's equality, if not the worst (McCann 2025). Utah is ranked 50th out of 50 states in the nation for women's rights (McCann 2025) and is home to the eighth-largest gender pay gap in tech; women make 76% of the salaries of their male counterparts (Salt Lake Tribune 2024).

As a state with significant gender disparities in professional settings (McCann 2025), benevolent sexism is common in Utah (Stevenson 2014). Utah has the geographic and religious homogeneity needed for my approach, combined with the force of a growing tech company presence that positions Utah's tech company founders to have a profound influence on emerging companies across the globe.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The LDS church is a global organization with 17.5 million members, 6.9 million of whom reside in the U.S (CJCLDS 2025). More than half of those members are women (Pew 2014), yet women are restricted from the highest church offices and all positions of ultimate authority. This patriarchal structure, run by fifteen elderly men, is headquartered in Utah. One of the densest Mormon populations (82% in U.S. Religious Census 2020) is found in Utah County. It is home to the church's flagship university, Brigham Young University, and to Silicon Slopes (a nickname coined to promote Utah's growing technology community).

The LDS church is unusual in its top-down approach to managing and teaching members; it has an official correlation department that manages all

church messages, manuals, and programs to ensure they comply with official church policy and practices (CJCLDS 2022). In addition to these libraries of texts and media, members spend many hours a week at structured church events. Specific messages and quotes are reiterated to drive home particular messages and instructions. The messages in these texts range from typical Christian teachings about Christ, service, and scripture to more specifically LDS doctrines. A 1995 document called "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (hereafter referred to as the Proclamation) structures the church's teachings on men's and women's gendered relationships, labor, and assignments as parents (CJCLDS 1995). In its first 25 years of publication, this document was cited more than 150 times in the twice-annual global church conferences (Walker 2020).

The document starts by declaring the centrality of the family to God's plan and that "gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose." It defines the eternal responsibilities of men and women as husbands/fathers and wives/mothers. According to Mormon teachings, even those not blessed with a spouse or children in this life will have the opportunity to have them in the next. Thus, all women and girls are spoken to as if they are already or are destined to be mothers (interestingly, the same logic is not consistently applied to men). After declaring that parents are tasked with a solemn, divine responsibility to love and provide for their children's physical and spiritual needs, the Proclamation divides who does what:

> By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.

The explicit gendered assignments in the Proclamation are one example of the gender complementarianism that many conservative Christian churches use to justify binary gender "roles," abilities, and access to power (Ross and Finnigan 2020). Although the Proclamation allows for adaptation in the case of disability, death, or other unforeseen circumstances, it warns that "the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets."

Members report that this text has been used in weekly religious services to push women to be stay-at-home mothers to avoid the dire calamity described in the document. When a woman does choose a career to "provide"

for her family, church leaders depicted her as going against the divine measure of her creation (Benson 1987). Unsurprisingly, young girls have been taught to primarily prepare themselves for motherhood, not financial stability. This directly leads them down paths that result in economic precarity and dependence that is compounded by the church's high value of avoiding debt (Blackburn and Madsen 2025).

Orienting girls toward childcare is embedded within a deeply ingrained expectation that influences life planning: to be economically dependent on an imagined future husband who will be solely responsible for providing her economic stability. By devaluing economic independence, education, and long-term career planning at a tender age, girls are encouraged to dream about a future husband and children. This is a future they have very little ability to control, unlike creating an educational and career plan. Other studies show that American girls are already prone to this phenomenon, but religion and social proximity increase that narrowed vision of what is possible (Horwitz et al. 2022).

The tension between the church's high value for education and its high value for "traditional gender roles" in marriage comes to a head at Brigham Young University (BYU), specifically in its MBA school. Doctrinally, members of the LDS faith are taught that formal education is a gift from God that will only enhance their lives in the next world. BYU embodies this belief in its mission statement, which declares it "a university dedicated to education for eternity."

As a private religious school, BYU extends the religious socialization of childhood into adulthood. Approximately 99% of the students are members of the LDS church, and some of the university's board members are general authorities or general officers of the church. Two of the current fifteen top men in church leadership are former BYU presidents (Holland and Oaks), while another is a former president of BYU-Idaho (Bednar).

MBA

Master's in Business Administration (MBA) programs are often used to change career fields and speed up one's professional role attainment; they serve as an interesting socializing space for those new to particular business industries (Haski-Leventhal et al. 2020). They are at the forefront of preparing graduates for the "new economy" and have to grapple with each of the four areas that Williams et al. explore (Williams et al. 2012).

Studies show that in the U.S., post-MBA pay trajectories diverge for men and women (Patterson et al. 2017; Thamrin et al. 2023). Upon graduation and controlling for years of work experience, men are paid 8% more on average in their first role out of MBA school; after 9+ years of experience, that gap widens to 34%.

Women's graduate education attainment rates have increased rapidly in the last few decades, doubling previous generations and outpacing men (Eagly et al. 2020). However, this is not as true for Mormon women. While Mormon women graduate high school at about the same rates as Mormon men and have achieved college degrees at a higher rate than Mormon men (67% versus 59%), Mormon women only achieve graduate degrees at half the rate of Mormon men (7% versus 14%) (Religious Landscape Study 2014).

While many top-ranking MBA programs have developed a 50% acceptance rate for women students, BYU's Marriott School of Business administrators admit that they have struggled to maintain 20% of their students as women over the last ten years (Financial Times 2025). Female admission peaked in 2023 at 26% (Brigham Young University Marriott School of Business 2025) but has since dropped to 16% in 2025 (Financial Times 2025). Low participation rates among women are even more dramatically reflected in the number of people hired as faculty at the university. According to former employees and students, and confirmed in school records, in the last 15 years, the Marriott school has had at most two women professors on staff at one given time, including professors on leave. The Financial Times places female faculty rates in 2025 at 14% (Financial Times 2025). In an interview, a former recruiter for the BYU MBA program told me that for the six years they worked specifically to recruit more women students at the direction of their boss, no women professors were actually on the admissions committee.

Global Tech

To extend my exploration of gendered job insecurity and the influence of religion in organizations, I explore the lived experiences of women working for a global Utah County technology company that, for anonymity, I call "Global Tech." This is a real tech company located in Silicon Slopes with all-male Mormon founders with BYU degrees. Several of these founders are rumored to no longer be affiliated with the LDS church, but their ties to BYU remain strong. Global Tech is a late-stage startup with an annual revenue of over $1 billion and over 5,000 employees across North and Central America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

The social education literature highlights that education is a mechanism for mobility or socioeconomic advancement. However, in the case of Mormon women seeking MBAs, women say that their religion has more influence on their ability to be mobile and to have choices than the actual MBA school itself. Therefore, I am examining religion's ability and relationship to the MBA program because they are interconnected. BYU's MBA program is not just any MBA program, but one within a religious institution. The interrelated institutions of religion and education work with and for each other to organize Mormon women's place in the 21st-century labor market.

Findings

I extend Acker's 1990 gendered organization theory and Williams et al.'s application in the "new economy" by showing how religion functions as a mechanism that reproduces gender inequality in the 21st-century economy. Using gendered organizational theory, I show how religion sustains the tenacious hold gender inequality has in the workforce because religion is built into the gendered logic that 1) influences childhood aspirations and career choices, 2) shapes the educational institutions that develop labor talent pipelines, and 3) structures work organizations and the decision making of the gatekeepers they employ.

The general trends of Mormon women's disadvantage in the workplace and reasons for choosing particular educational routes are not unique; Protestant girls likewise learn they should prioritize family over career, resulting in younger marriage, younger childbearing, and staying out of educational institutions and the labor force (Glass and Jacobs 2005; Sherkat and Darnell 1999; Uecker and Pearce 2017). Yet Mormons are unique in the sources they cite for these choices (i.e., not the Bible), the degree of anxiety and risk they read into their decisions, the young age at which they create future plans, the structuring documents they use to make choices, the lack of space they give for individual differentiation, the feelings of isolation and betrayal they experience when they perceive themselves as deviating from God's ideal family, and the constraints they face when making educational and professional choices concerning their current or imagined futures.

Failed Life Plans, "Mom Jobs," and Financial Insecurity

Conservative Protestants cite the Bible as their source for complementarian gender assignments and divisions of labor (Horwitz et al. 2022). Mormons do

not cite it when explaining gender complementarianism, as they read the Bible with a less rigid and prescriptive lens (CJCLDS n.d.). However, Mormons achieve similar labor division outcomes by using documents and speeches given by current and recent church leaders. I share study participant quotes in italics below to illustrate how religious beliefs based on structuring documents shape early life planning and pivotal decision-making. These decisions include the level of education pursued, the selection of higher education institutions, and the choice of career paths, and even specific job opportunities post-graduation and throughout the life course.

Kelly, a BYU MBA graduate now in her mid-40s, shared her original life plan; she expected to attend college, marry, and start bearing children all in her early 20s. She expected her education and earning potential to be used only for a short time and only in emergencies.

> I never planned or wanted to work; I was a rule-following Mormon girl. The Proclamation says I should be home with my kids and that it was my husband's job to provide for us. That was always my plan. So, in college, I picked my major because it was a good "mom career" just in case something really bad happened, like my husband dying, and I had to work.

After staying single into her 30s and having to provide for herself as a music teacher, Kelly later found she needed to pivot her career in order to build a financially stable future. She returned to school to get an MBA, later married, and eventually became a mother. By then, she had established a substantial business career with benefits and fulfilling personal growth. Since her children were born, she has wrestled with guilt over continuing to work, returning again and again to the Proclamation, seeking to reconcile her personal calling to be a working mother with the general guidelines given by her church.

A vast majority of study participants like this one never planned to work. They articulated the heightened degree of anxiety and risk they felt in going against the assigned labor roles prescribed in the Proclamation. The risk to their families goes beyond this life and extends to eternal consequences, based on the LDS doctrinal belief of eternal family structures. Therefore, these women's angst is heightened to an almost existential level while also pitting them against the economic needs of providing for a family.

Alison, a BYU MBA first-year student in her mid-30s, shared her frustration over her husband's failure to provide, the choice she felt forced to make to be a working parent, and the shock of unmet expectations:

I am actually really pissed that I've been forced to work. Growing up, I was taught that making money would be my husband's job. However, he has never made enough, so I've always had to work. And then, a few years ago, we realized we needed to bring in more money. We were both teachers then, but my husband wasn't willing to give up his job, so I had to. I didn't want to work in the first place, and then I had to give up my teaching job, and I didn't want to do that either. So now I am here getting an MBA, something I never expected to do and never planned on. This all has been super stressful; I'm worried about our marriage, my kids, and what this will mean for our family's future to have me out of the home even more.

Cassidy, a top MBA school graduate in her early 30s, explained how hard it was for her to decide if she would continue to work after her kids were born, despite always planning since she was nine years old to have a career in addition to being a mother. Despite this strongly articulated dream and vision of her future life, scenes from her childhood echoed in her mind as she struggled to decide how to use her time and talents. She paints a picture of how the Proclamation functioned as a structuring document in creating social expectations in childhood. Her resulting choices directly led to her current job insecurity and inability to map her career, network with coworkers and other professionals, and interact with her management and team.

I reread the Proclamation for the hundredth time and kept thinking about all those Sunday school lessons and stuff my mom would say about women having careers—my mom is very anti-career for women—how it was terrible for marriage and my kids, and how all of that matters for all eternity in heaven. I worried about all that stuff—the eternal trajectory of my kids, marriage, family, and all that. So I decided to quit.

I was working at Global Tech then, so I felt like I could never return. I walked away from thousands of dollars' worth of unvested stock. However, my time away as a full-time stay-at-home mom did not even last a year and a half.

At first, it was great. I enjoyed my pregnancy and baked, and was just really content. But at about the six-month mark, I got really antsy and started signing up for all kinds of volunteer work that used all the business skills I'd worked so hard to develop. At a certain point, I decided I might as well return to my job and get paid to do what I was doing for free!

I returned to Global Tech and tried to pitch doing my previous people management role part-time, but they wouldn't go for it. Instead, a

manager referred me to a different role without a team to manage. It's not the people management role I wanted—not the one I went to [top five business school] for—but that is the price I have to pay for a 30-hour week flex schedule.

Cassidy went on to share how unique her position was, not realizing that I was aware of a few long-term flex positions similar to her own at Global Tech and that Global Tech actually *did* allow for people management with a flex schedule if you had the right boss. Like her arrangement, this was a "unique" setup negotiated privately between an individual woman and her manager according to the willingness of her manager. She continued:

I do worry, though, that if my manager leaves or I get put into a different department, I'll just get fired. I'm really lucky my manager is willing to put up with this arrangement. The other org leaders I have to work with are always super weird about my schedule, and I can tell they think less of me as a worker until they get to know me. But that takes a long time!

I asked her about her career plans, especially after her kids need her less.

Well, I really don't know. I constantly perform at the top of my sector despite only working two-thirds of the time as my peers. My paycheck reflects the portion of my time in the office, not my team's deliverables or spheres of influence. So it's actually really hard to see how I would negotiate for more money even if I moved into a full-time position; I'm already negotiating with lower pay despite my deliverables.

I don't really want to advertise my unique setup, so I never talk about it with anyone. That makes it hard to even know if another manager might be willing to do something similar in a different role, but I don't want to ask and get branded as less committed or difficult to work with.

Now that I think about it, it's actually a big barrier for me in networking and inside and outside of Global Tech; my flex schedule is extremely important to me, but I can't risk losing it. I know they are underpaying me for what I do, but I can't risk asking for better compensation because they could just take it all away, and I'd lose everything all over again.

Cassidy's childhood religious socialization, reinforced by her mother's stories and worries, established a value system for stay-at-home parenting embodied by the church's Proclamation document. Despite setting extremely early childhood ambitions (the few participants who did plan to work likewise

claimed they "always" planned to do so and cited specific memories of that orientation from ages 9 to 11), the strength of her childhood experiences and lack of working mother role models led her down a complicated path of job insecurity, opaque career mapping, limited networking opportunities, and complex management and teamwork interactions. These were likewise shaped by the same religious belief in gender complementarianism, formalized, shaped, and standardized in the Proclamation.

45-year-old Heather shared a similar story about the Proclamation's influence on her childhood and educational choices as an adult. She was struggling to choose her major and future career, so she came home from her university studies during break to consider her options. Before she could even begin to seek guidance, her mother returned from her new job (one she secured after her children were living out of the house and then only due to her husband's inability to earn enough money) and painted a vivid picture of the dangers of being a working mother:

> My mom was talking about a coworker whose daughter was struggling and making poor choices. My mom said, "I just wonder if it's because the mom worked her whole life and didn't have time to have a relationship with her daughter."
>
> Comments like that throughout my childhood just made it clear: If you're a working mom, your relationship with your children suffers, and your children don't turn out as well. That was the very, very clear message in church and in my home. Being a stay-at-home mom is the right thing to do.
>
> So, I chose a "mom job" that I could do until I got married and had kids.

Just a few years later, Heather had to grapple with the fact that her plan for marriage and motherhood was not going to happen anytime soon. Not only that, but her career had hit a plateau, so she decided to get an MBA and start a business career. Years later, when she was a married mother at the peak of her career, this religious socialization returned to haunt her. Rather than focusing on growing and mapping her career and family, she dealt with massive guilt for working when her husband finally made enough money to support their family on his income. Heather described spending months reading church publications about motherhood and working women from the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. After reading and rereading the Proclamation for four months, she said, "The message I got was very clear." She quit the job she loved, leaving

behind tens of thousands of dollars in unvested stock options, considering it a "closed door."

> Everyone in my life was SO happy for me. I got so much approval for quitting, like moral approval. Especially my mom. It was like she was so relieved. Everyone was so relieved. I had no idea they were so stressed about the future of my marriage and kids and eternal salvation until I quit, and then I suddenly got the message from friends and family like, "Oh, finally you have repented and made the right choice! Now your family won't end up destroyed and lost to God."
>
> But then I was home with my kids for six months, and I hated it. So, I pored over the document [the Proclamation] again to see if I could justify returning. I felt like I was born wrong. Motherhood is supposed to be my eternal calling, right? I felt like I was broken for not enjoying being a stay-at-home mom. I knew this wasn't a good fit.

She spent another year trying to conform to the "rule" of being a stay-at-home mom before finally allowing herself to be an exception to the rule. Even after making that choice for herself and returning to her same place of work, she continued to listen to weekly sermons hosted at BYU's campus on the topic and podcasts by other Mormon women seeking social approval. For now, she decided that she is some kind of deviation from the norm, and to shelve her confusion, and carry on, shouldering the anxieties of her extended family.

Pivots and Competing Priorities

One recruiter summarized the challenges for recruiting Mormon women to MBA programs this way: While their undergraduate graduation rates are high, many, like Kelly, Alison and Heather do not plan for graduate school because they expect to get married to Mormon men in their early twenties, have children within a year or two, and stop working once they have children (Horwitz et al. 2022).

> When this plan (or its timing) fails (which happens more frequently in this generation than in the past), many Mormon women find themselves in precarious financial situations. Some women find themselves single long after they expected to be married and hit a career plateau in a career they had only expected to stay in for a year or two; many are recently divorced and need to support themselves and their children for the first time; some are wrestling with resentment for a husband who is not

making enough money to support the family on his income alone and mourning the reality of a shattered homemaker dream.

Participants who turned to an MBA to increase their earning potential reported working on a truncated timetable necessitated by a quick life change. However, without the forethought needed, many struggled to complete competitive applications. Recruiters emphasized that these women were almost universally highly educated, fantastic interviewers, and would make exceptional students and employees if they had only prepared even a few months earlier. However, many women only consider an MBA for a few weeks and accept the first program that still accepts applications for the fall cycle. One recruiter compared this to many of the men in the program who had been preparing and planning for an MBA for five or more years.

> For some of these women, it was like, "I decided to do an MBA, I took the GMAT, I applied, and I was in," start to finish, four weeks. And most of those men have been planning on it since they were juniors in college! They've been prepping for that for six years! So the preparation for someone who's been planning on that for six years versus someone who decided a month ago is going to be different, you know? I think it goes back to the fact that there are not a lot of models, and you know, it's not expected.

BYU MBA recruiters report that women who would be competitive candidates do not even complete their applications because they have yet to save up enough money to take the GMAT. Even with funds available for the test and free test prep sessions, many women only recently decided to pursue an MBA due to a sudden life crisis, and do not have enough time to sufficiently study in order to apply to the current cycle. Instead, many take lower-paying jobs that will get them money now and never return to school.

When single women leave the BYU MBA program, they report feeling extreme pressure to choose a job located in an area near other Mormon men. They make these career-altering choices at the crucial launching pad moment of their future business careers, based on the rumors about which geographic locations hold the most Mormon men.

In one case, a woman used a six-month study abroad program to delay her official graduation. She feared graduating without a significant other or job offer and used the extra time trying to locate a city with many single Mormon men where she could try to find employment. She believed that it was more

important for her future to move to a location with a high population of Mormon men rather than capitalize on the career potential she was now in debt to secure. At the time of our interview, she was six months post-graduation, still hunting for a city to settle in and struggling to explain her delayed graduation to potential employers. Even after years of seeking the same goal, her methods continued to rely on gossip from other single and newlywed Mormons she encountered at conferences and online.

In another case, a participant chose economic uncertainty over a solid job offer. This woman had initially chosen to become a medical doctor in a feminized field because she thought it would be a "good mom job" later down the line when she had a family and children. After a decade of working, and still without a family or spouse she desired, she found that her field of medicine did not offer her any way to advance in her career or generate more income. She had economic dreams of house ownership and early retirement that she could not achieve on her current, static income. Her story is a classic example of Williams et al.'s 2012 version of gendered organizational theory in the 21st-century economy, except that the gendered, feminized career path choice was again based on beliefs cultivated in childhood, deeply influenced by the Proclamation.

Despite her squarely economic reasons for returning to school, this woman could not find a job that would give her the life she wanted at the time of our last interview. Her primary goal at that point was based on geography; she believed she had the best chance of finding a future spouse of her same religion if she stayed in Utah. However, as she entered the job market, she was met with the reality of the economic environment of Utah; she could not find a role that would pay her enough to have the life she returned to school to obtain. The kicker was that she had had a great job offer from her summer internship—one she turned down because it was out of state.

In both these cases and those like them, single Mormon women are making career choices based on a future that has not yet come into reality. Despite the money they invested in an MBA program and two years of lost income, at the most crucial moment for their economic security, they feel stuck, at the mercy of rumors of possibilities of meeting mates based on geographical density. This example shows the extreme depth of commitment these women have to the ideal of marriage and family, and the value they place on finding a spouse with the same religious belief system. Thus, religion constrains their educational and professional choices concerning their current or imagined fu-

tures before they even have the chance to experience job insecurity, teamwork, career maps, and networking complications in the workplace that characterize the 21st-century economy.

Questioning Promotion and Career Mapping:
Are Women Really Allowed to Work?

The Proclamation and complementarian beliefs about gender roles in the LDS church complicate women's experiences in BYU's MBA program, too. As a church-run organization, BYU serves as a bridge for Mormon women who cross their assigned gender roles and work for pay outside the home in the business world. It provides them with a logical framework for navigating gender role transversal, women role models to follow, and a religiously (theoretically) safe place to exercise new professional muscles. While mothers who enter the program report it taking months for them to accept that they are no longer full-time stay-at-home mothers, their male classmates are also confronted with a version of church-sanctioned "gender role" deviation that clashes with what they were taught as children. Historically, this has caused tension that required the business school to officially address each new student's MBA education at the start.

Participants recounted several versions of this scenario: It is the first week of the BYU MBA program, and all students attend the orientation in August. One of the program leaders, a man, gets up at the very start of the first session to set the record straight: the women are here because they deserve to be, not because of some quota. He then cites the Proclamation, pointedly calling out the language of the document, and explaining how, just as business managers are ultimately responsible for the work of their team despite not physically doing every single step themselves, so too can mothers still oversee the care and nurture of their children through outsourcing child care to daycares and babysitters. Thus, he goes on, men should never question the women here, and he does not want to hear anything about it.

Many women cite this initial speech as valuable for legitimizing their place in school, but also express frustration that if it's really true, why is that message not shared with the rest of the church? Many report the disappointment their parents, friends, in-laws, and community express upon learning these women have enrolled in school with the intent to work full-time. They cite the director's explanation above as bringing them some consolation after they have struggled with their choice. The school's repeated use of this logical

workaround to justify enrolling women MBA students validates the extent to which women's presence elicits cognitive dissonance for both men and women. It also points to the fact that the church, by running the school, is also aware of the confusion that binary labor assignment causes in its most faithful members.

After women graduate from BYU's MBA program and move on to the workplace, they sometimes discover that Mormon religious teachings are operative there as well. Work organization managers likewise use the Proclamation to justify gendered labor practices, both directly and indirectly, at places like Global Tech. For example, mid-20-year-old Ashley explained her experience going up for a promotion at Global Tech just as she was becoming visibly pregnant. She had tried to keep the news private because she knew that the five women in her previous position had all quit once they got pregnant; she needed health insurance for her delivery in just two months. But at seven months pregnant, rumors were spreading, and she could not hide it any longer. A few weeks before her scheduled promotion, one her boss had been enthusiastic about in every one-on-one weekly meeting in the 12 months leading up to the promotional cycle, she "came clean."

> Every day at lunch, my boss talks "off the record" about his life and makes it really, really clear that he is Mormon and believes women's proper place is to stay home once they have children. It's super awkward, too, because my team is pretty much all women. Some are even mothers. But he blabs away about politics and religion and his stay-at-home wife and everything, so we know exactly where he stands . . .. He will gossip and complain about women leaving the company after maternity leave, too. We (the women on my team) all just have to sit there and take it.
>
> So, I wanted to try and control the narrative around my rumored pregnancy—I am absolutely coming back to work after the baby is born. I didn't want there to be any questions about that. I announced all of this to my team, and my boss's demeanor immediately shifted. He stopped answering my emails, he stopped giving me updates on my promotion applications, and avoided me at all costs. Finally, I pinned him down to get an update on my promotion, but it went even worse than I expected.
>
> I walked in and made my case for promotion. My metrics are great, and I'd been in this one role for a long time. But my manager just sat back and straight up told me he didn't believe that I would return to my work after the baby was born, and couldn't promote me. He asked me over and over again if I was going to come back and wouldn't take my answers seriously.

> And I DO plan to come back to work. I love working. This is the one company that is located in a place where I can actually see myself as both a mom and employee. He really abused me in that meeting, but there's nothing I can do about it. He reports directly to the CFO, who is even worse in the way he treats and thinks about women, even though he's not even Mormon anymore. No one in HR is remotely empowered to do a single thing. I do not have the bandwidth or knowledge on how to begin to hold the company accountable. The whole thing makes me sick.
>
> I don't know what I am going to do now. There really is no other way for me to progress in my career; I guess I'm just going to have to keep working for this guy and figure out what to do once the baby comes.

Ashley shared that she felt that her boss's knowledge of their shared religious affiliation only strengthened his disbelief in her future plans to return to work. Instead of speaking as equals or investing in understanding the system that discourages mothers from returning to work, he assumed a rigid interpretation of the outcome of their shared value of family. He used that common ground to enforce gender norms from the religion's leadership.

Other participants reported similar experiences and gendered policies in specific work sectors of Global Tech. Dana, a former employee of Global Tech, explained what she felt all the women at the company "knew":

> We (women and non-Mormon coworkers) all know that leadership really doesn't think women should be working at all, let alone mothers.

Dana used this understanding to explain why Global Tech Executives recently fired a bunch of women and has not changed policies and procedures that contribute to the turnover of women at their company.

> I know management looks at the employee engagement metrics, and I was the one to present it to them alongside a female manager. Employee intent to leave is at an all-time high among women of all ages at Global Tech, and a whole bunch of women were recently laid off, and a bunch more quit. We lose women employees like crazy at the one- to two-year mark once the "honeymoon phase" of the job has worn off. Our attrition rates are atrocious for mothers after maternity leave.
>
> During maternity leave, women's books of business metrics are not adjusted. We get ratings scores that are supposed to affect our promotions directly, but when they aren't weighted for an excused leave of absence, it throws off the number for up to two quarters! Those metrics determine promotions for the next several YEARS.

> Managers are supposed to maintain a woman's book of business while she is on maternity leave, but in Sales, they never do. Those who would stay there after maternity leave with a giant black mark on their employee stats that marks them as a mother willing to take leave. A similar thing happens for fathers taking paternity leave, too, but since the time allotment is shorter and they can space out their leave, they can still manage their customers and numbers and everything, so there's no black mark on their company file.

While I cannot access the employee engagement results referenced by this participant, a simple Glassdoor.com search provided evidence that this opinion is not unique to the women I interviewed (Glassdoor, n.d.). As far back as 2017, anonymous employees at Global Tech have been saying that women have no room to grow, and that they have seen blatant sexism and borderline sexual harassment. They cite the consistent lack of women in leadership roles. Each complaint relates to the "blurred line" between religion and work and a particular brand of "bro-y" culture unique to white Mormon men. Of the twenty reviews that cite women, the culture, and the structure of Global Tech and its leadership, only one from several years ago identifies it as a good place for parents to work, citing changes in schedule due to sick kids and their particular team of understanding coworkers. Overall, though, the messages duplicate the general message from my participants; as one Glassdoor poster said, "Don't work here unless you are a man or a Mormon: This place is hell on earth." This general interpretation of company policies and norms as being sexist and informed by the executives' religion is shared across Global Tech's employees, even beyond Utah and those familiar with Mormonism.

Mixed-Gender Networking and the Appearance of Evil

Significantly, the norms created in this tight crucible of religion and culture extend beyond the site of creation, beyond conscious religious maintenance. They have an afterlife that far outlives the religious dedication of the company's founders, despite their continued involvement in running the company. One example of what this looks like comes from another Global Tech employee, Rosa. Rosa is not Mormon and has never lived in Utah or around Mormons, but this religiously informed and enforced culture has affected her career. She has worked at many companies in the U.S. and taught at top MBA programs. She describes a unique brand of Mormon sexism she has only experienced while working at Global Tech.

> It's different from any other company I've ever worked for. I have multiple higher degrees in business, I've been a professor at [top business school], and I know lots of Christian businessmen who don't act this way. And the Global Tech execs I work with really closely here don't even seem to really believe in the Mormon church anymore, and have not for like ten years. But the sexism and patriarchy in the LDS church still hold so much power in our organization. I have a high-profile role and am a top performer. But at the end of the day, that doesn't matter.
>
> There's this natural, back-door, Mormon men network bro culture at Global Tech. They golf, go to the gym, and the bar, drink eggnog, and have all these informal mentorships and networks that the women aren't a part of. And we know its sexism is from the LDS church.

She went on to explain that an unspoken sort of Billy Graham/Mike Pence rule applied in the workplace, in which no men were permitted to be alone with any female coworkers for fear of sexual temptation. This has been a longstanding cultural norm in the LDS Church since at least 1987, when, in an address given at BYU to the student body, President Ezra Taft Benson said that "Many of the tragedies of immorality begin when a man and woman are alone in the office or at church or driving in a car" (Mahler 2017). A decade later, the then-current-day prophet Gordon Hinckley reiterated this idea in his annual global address to women, "You work alongside men. More and more, there are invitations to go to lunch, ostensibly to talk about business. You travel together. You stay in the same hotel. You work together. Perhaps you cannot avoid some of this, but you can avoid getting into compromising situations. Do your job, but keep your distance. Don't become a factor in the breakup of another woman's home" (Hinckley 1998). Two decades after Hinckley's address the culture continued to hold onto these fears and practices. In a 2017 poll, 70 percent of "very active" Utah Mormons said it is inappropriate for a man and woman who are not married to have dinner together, while 47 percent felt the same way about lunch (Mahler 2017). Even as the church acknowledged the necessity of men and women working together, they advise employees to "avoid the appearance of impropriety" as much as possible (Mahler 2017). Global Tech leadership appears to be following these guidance points with great fear and anxiety, according to Rosa.

> Even our bosses, the C-suite leaders themselves, are scared to go to lunch with us or be alone with us in a public setting. They are worried about being seen with us. It puts a ton of pressure on us women. It's like they

> have to have a reason to talk to us. And it's still not enough to justify spending time together. Not once in 5.5 years has anyone reached out— my formal, C-suite exec level formally assigned mentor included—for a casual interaction outside of work. They are worried about the optics of eating a meal with me.

I want to point out the prevalence of not only the fear surrounding associating with women in social networks but also the specific mechanism of social oversight at work in this religiously and culturally homogenous community in a geographically dense population of Mormons. Participants repeatedly brought up the social consequences of appearing to be crossing a line in their social interactions with Momon men. As graduates of BYU's undergraduate and master's level business classes, Global Tech's leaders' behavior can be traced back to BYU ethics class discussions around lunch with a woman coworker.

Because professors at BYU are church employees whose employment depends on their belief and activity in the church (Fletcher Stack 2025), they hold unique power akin to religious authority in the classroom. Compared to faculty members at other Christian universities, Mormon professors are much more likely to comply with the teachings of their religion (Lyon et al. 2002, 339). BYU ethics professors, therefore, have an opportunity to guide discussions on sexism, misogyny, and discrimination in the workplace and set standards of conduct that are associated with the church-sanctioned "correct" way to do Mormon business. However, despite professors insisting the reverse is true (Fletcher Stack 2017), participants from BYU MBA cohorts spanning the last 15 years reported that this opportunity is repeatedly used to solidify gender discrimination in the workplace. Students described nearly the same incident regarding a discussion in an ethics class about the prospect of a man going to lunch with a woman coworker. Sitting in stadium-style, U-shaped desks, the ethics professor posed the following question, per usual, framed from a man's perspective: "Would you go to lunch with a female coworker?" 36-year-old Jill reported:

> So many of my classmates (mostly all men) were like, "Absolutely not. Avoid the appearance of evil. Nothing would happen, of course, but, oh my gosh, it would just look bad!" I just remember sitting there, and I was like, "Does anyone see me? Like, I'm right here. And you are telling me that you will network with everyone except me? Do you realize how left out women will be from so many meaningful conversations? Like, do you even?" And it didn't even occur to them. Didn't even occur to them.

She went on to explain that she directly attributed this behavior to proximity to the church:

> There's this level of like sin, right? "The appearance of evil." I remember just being red in the face and like, "We're right here. Do you not see the five women sitting around you and what you were saying and what you were doing to us?"

Even when the conversation had gotten too sexist for the professors, they refused to step in and say anything to the contrary.

> The professor is maybe uncomfortable with what the guys said, but he's not standing up to the students or standing up for us. He didn't come out with a stance of like, "But what about women? And, like, what opportunities they're losing, and how is this fair?" Probably because they don't care, they don't think women should be working anyway.

Women described their fear of speaking up in these settings; they were worried about being labeled as "dramatic" or "feminist" based on interactions they had seen in the program previously. The social forces that kept these women quiet serve as a prime example of how their interaction in this space was bounded by their gender, regulated by religiously informed and enforced social norms. Those normative cultural and religious expectations continued to impact their ability to network later in their careers.

The limitations of social networks are bounded by fear of sinning, the appearance of sinning, and the social consequences for each, which hold very real professional consequences for women at Global Tech. Thus, church teachings on gender relationships reproduce a social and spiritual precarity that results in women's disadvantage in professional and educational spaces. Women participants in top executive roles with formal mentor/mentee relationships to C-suite level executives report being left off emails and being avoided for in-person one-on-one meetings. They have watched men from each level and branch of the company exclude women from networking, mentorship, and career advancement opportunities.

Trisha gave a particularly telling example of how her lack of access damaged her career and the careers of those she managed. She said this is about more than just lunch. The company culture of restricted gender interactions extends to "any kind of social interaction. Informal social interaction does not happen for me with my male superiors." She volunteered an example of the impact of this from her first job at Global Tech. Fresh from her MBA at a top

university, her initial role at the company was to manage a large team of entry-level employees. One of the most significant parts of her job was helping these rising stars find their next position within the company. "Part of your effectiveness as a manager depends on your ability to network throughout the company, but there are no tools in place to help you do this," she said.

She went on to explain that in regular surveys of her team, she "always" got one piece of negative feedback that harmed her career progression; her team complained that her fellow peer manager (a man) always got the best subsequent roles for his teammates. His reputation was so compelling that her own teammates went to him for mentoring and support, even though she was their assigned manager.

> I thought, "Wow! How's he doing that?" So, I scheduled a meeting with him, and he told me his social schedule. It included nightly activities with the company's high-ranking male leaders: guys' poker night, basketball, and meals. And I just thought, "Wow. I'm not invited to any of these. That would feel so inappropriate for me to attend the guys' poker night."

Here, Trisha mirrors the men's anxiety over mixed-gender social events. Her feeling of her presence being "inappropriate" indicates her familiarity with the norm of not mixing genders in employees' social interactions. Women at BYU explained this discomfort as a product of what they saw in childhood. They attributed their networks of almost entirely Mormon women to a mutual "comfort" that was achieved between women because the "cultural bias" allowed for it. Amanda, a late-thirties BYU MBA student, explained how she developed comfort with only socializing with other women.

> There's a cultural bias in the LDS church, in particular, that teaches that men and women do not associate as friends in the church. There's a weird barrier. And women are the people I like talking with more because it's more comfortable, right? The church doesn't teach men and women to be friends. We are divided by gender at church so early. Certainly, by the time they are 11 and entering the youth program, but possibly even earlier if there are a lot of kids in a Sunday school class. And then, growing up, I never saw my parents hang out with members of the opposite sex. Ever.

She explained how the clash between the LDS social norms and business networking demands harmed all students at BYU, especially women. Due to the small number of female students, socializing with just females was particularly limiting.

But a lot of networking is based on working lunches, right? So I have to do it anyway to progress my career, but these guys don't have to because they have enough men to interact with. Their future career is not nearly as limited by the church's standards about not being alone with a member of the opposite sex. So I just miss out.

And I am in this MBA program, right? I'm a mommy-blogger-turned-entrepreneur; I've never had to network before. And they are telling me this is an essential skill for my career progression and advancement, and the school is allowing these men to think they can't go to lunch with me! In a freaking public place! How am I supposed to learn this skill if I only practice with other women who are, like me, unskilled at networking? BYU isn't solving this problem; instead, it is enabling it in those ethics class discussions.

Left Out of Leadership

In addition to being shut out of social interactions that can determine success and access to promotions at work, women at Global Tech see the company's male founders and male-dominated executive teams play out the same pattern of excluding the (very few) executive women from team meetings. Laura reflected on an important reorganizational call earlier that week; Global Tech announced massive layoffs for various company sectors. The one woman executive—the one actually in charge of people ops—seemed to have been entirely left out of all decision-making conversations.

It seemed like the agenda had already been laid out by the men in the C-suite, so she was just kind of listening as everything transpired. And I thought, "I wonder how much of the conversation occurred at these informal events where the decisions were actually being made as opposed to in that meeting room."

Global Tech has attempted some structural changes to support women and respond to feedback, but with limited results. The HR department created structured mentorship programs to give a formal stamp of approval on cross-gender networking. However, based on participants' reports, even a formalized mentor/mentee relationship does not appear to be enough to justify a male C-suite executive taking the time to meet in person with the women they were officially assigned to mentor.

In response to a request for more women leaders on global weekly meetings, they assigned one of the few women executives to help run meetings.

However, instead of asking her to lead, she was given "an emcee role," which participants described as "a flop." Jessica said:

> It just seemed like another way to appease our requests for more female representation. It was kind of embarrassing, actually, because she is an executive-level employee, but she wasn't empowered to actually run the meeting, just facilitate it. And besides, they chose the one woman on their level who doesn't manage a large team and has no influence on the overarching strategy of what people are doing. It just made her role seem not quite as important.

I found out that within just a few weeks of this incident, the mceeing woman executive quit her job, leaving Global Tech leadership even more heavily weighted with men.

Women at Global Tech shared with me that when their male co-workers needed something from them during the typical work day, the men often asked in an apologetic way, citing their guilt for taking the women away from their children. This same belief was used as a reason to keep women off essential emails and meetings. Lisa, a non-Mormon working virtually for Global Tech, inadvertently quoted the Poclaimation while quoting the reasons her coworkers gave for leaving her off of meetings and emails:

> They said they didn't want to take me away from my "primary responsibility." They did not even let me decide; they decided for me!

Note that this language is lifted directly from the Proclamation, which states, "Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children."

While male coworkers verbally claim to support working mothers and families, Global Tech provides no formal on- or off-ramping structures for parents to roll in and out of paid work. Individual managers and teams have to shoulder the added workloads that come when some take parental leave. Although part-time and flexible work does exist and is possible, this option is kept private, almost secret, and is not formally guided or structured by HR, leaving individuals to negotiate with their managers and teams on their own. Those who do arrange for flexible schedules (mostly women) report being initially viewed with suspicion by managers, being held back from promotion despite no decline in outcomes, and facing increased job-mapping ambiguity. They are always one managerial change away from being out of a job. The work-from-home policies during and following the COVID-19 pandemic that created more flexibility for parents were subsequently swiftly and rigidly re-

tracted, and participants agreed that past rounds of lay-offs disproportionately harmed women who had established flexible schedules. Mormon women employees at Global Tech, facing these circumstances once again, report turning to the Proclamation to help them decide what to do with their careers.

Because the Proclamation has not been formally accepted as LDS church doctrine by its members, church leaders could theoretically update or change its language at any time. One study on active Mormon populations indicated that if revised teachings on gender came through church channels as "revelation," a majority of even the most conservative U.S. Mormons would accept the doctrine (Nielsen et al. 2015). Given the historically close relationship between Mormonism and Utah's population, LDS leadership has the unique potential power to directly shape Utah's tech industry.

Conclusion

Religion can function to uphold gendered organization in the new economy in ways that further structurally disenfranchise women. Mormon women face a double bind of precarity in the modern era's job market because they are socialized to depend on a future spouse to finance their future; they have not been taught to plan for a future career and must overcome professional, social, and religious barriers when confronted with unforeseen economic realities. At Global Tech, Mormon religious teachings structure corporate norms and language even when divorced from their original source and despite organizational leaders' or members' current religious activity or beliefs.

One of my most significant findings, especially since my sample population for religiously informed gendered organization creation is so dense and geographically dependent, is that the norms created in that tight crucible of religion and culture extend beyond their site of origin. This occurs beyond conscious religious maintenance, as gender socialization has an afterlife that far outlives the religious dedication of the founders, despite their continued involvement in running the company.

These findings indicate that 1. Women's economic precarity increases in relation to their degree of childhood socialization in conservative religious gender norms; and 2. Religion has the power to structure gendered organizations around the globe in ways that are difficult to trace without a unique language and shared religion that allows for the use of that unique language in the workplace. Religious leaders influence the global economy when they create structuring documents on topics of gender, labor, and family.

Further analysis might use the 24-item scale developed by Miller et al. (2019) to assess an array of faith manifestations in the for-profit work sector at the individual level. This tool would be especially interesting to use on the decision makers of various companies and compare with their company's cultural norms and instituted practices. Future studies might also use van Hoorn's (2019) scale to calculate the generational value shifts taking place across different cohorts of Mormon professionals.

This study is limited in its application to a single religious group and those it influences. Other religions without a central leadership team and religious press may be less effective and influential in supporting gendered organizations. The Mormon population in this study is also almost entirely white women. Thus, the same study conducted on a population of BIPOC Mormon women would likely bring forward even more systematic issues that harm BIPOC members but would be even harder to locate in the homogenous religion. Many critiques of Global Tech were made alongside critiques of the company's lack of racial and ethnic diversity. Further research into the religious elements of sustained gendered organizations should explore intersectional identities and the influence of religious proximity on organizational structures (Cho et al. 2013).

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