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Molly Mormons, Mormon Feminists and Moderates: Religious Diversity and the Latter Day Saints Church

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Abstract

Based on data from life history interviews with 28 Latter Day Saints women, this paper considers the process of boundary negotiation on two key sites. First, how do Mormon women maintain their autonomy and agency in the context of institutionalized patriarchy. Secondly, how do women make sense of church prescriptions on male authority both within the family and in the church hierarchy. The study reveals that LDS women are not monolithic in their response to these issues, and that they tend to fall into one of three groups — Molly Mormons, feminists, or moderates. The paper reviews strategies used by Mormon women to negotiate boundaries within their families, the church, and society around four issues: participation in the paid labor force, male headship, the priesthood, and the separation of their faith from decisions made by the male hierarchy of the church.

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