

MORMONS, SEXUAL MINORITIES, AND THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Individuals who identify as Mormon—adherents to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (“Church”) a distinct and peculiar form of Christianity—and also identify as gay or lesbian face a unique challenge to their mental health as they wrestle with the integration of their faith and their sexuality. Compounding this matter is the commonly held belief that one cannot authentically be gay and Mormon nor can one be a practicing Mormon and gay. As academics and professionals gain a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of (a) those who identify as both Mormon and a sexual/gender minority, and (b) of the Church itself, they will begin to deconstruct their own biases and increase their multicultural competence thus becoming better equipped to address the mental health concerns of this particular sexual minority group.

Cultural competence in this context involves an awareness that, under the modern gay rights movement, a troubling dominant discourse has emerged that—if taken to an extreme—is oppressive to the co-existing narrative of the LDS Church. For example, the LDS Church’s doctrinal view on same-sex marriage contrasts sharply from the dominant, gay-affirming discourse and as a result has been stigmatized and marginalized. To examine this marginalization, I employ critical discourse analysis (“CDA”) in order to uncover the LDS Church’s co-existing subordinate narrative and further enable academics and professionals to deconstruct their own possible biases towards the Mormon religious minority group.

Important to this deconstruction of bias is a realization that although cultural and societal values regarding sexuality, marriage, and family have rapidly evolved over this past decade, the fundamental doctrine of monogamous, heterosexual marriage espoused by LDS Church has not. Questions arise as to how orthodox Mormon families come to terms with their child coming out in light of the LDS Church's policy on same-sex marriage and families. To answer that question I employ a case study method to explore the experience of one such orthodox Mormon family whose child came out as gay. The findings from my case study suggest that it is possible for families and individuals in these circumstances to develop and maintain loving and supportive relationships in spite of religious differences.