

# Messages from the Manuals— Twelve Years Later

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THE YOUNG WOMEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (YWMIA) of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has played a key role in the lives of LDS young women for 125 years. Designed for LDS girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen, the program consists of first- and second-year Beehives, ages twelve and thirteen; first- and second-year Mia Maids, ages fourteen and fifteen; and first- and second-year Laurels, ages sixteen and seventeen. The goal of YWMIA is to teach young women to live in a manner pleasing to their Heavenly Father and to their immediate families, and to help them develop values which will give them strength in times of adversity.<sup>1</sup> Because the program plays an important part in the girls' lives, a content analysis of YWMIA lesson manuals can help determine if the portrayal of womanhood and motherhood are realistic and relevant to young women today and consequently how well these materials prepare girls for the future.

A similar study of Young Women's lesson manuals was done by Lavina Fielding Anderson, who analyzed the 1977 and 1978 manuals. Anderson published her findings in an article entitled, "Messages from the Manuals," in *Exponent II* in 1982. At the time of her study, the lesson manuals were being revised by the LDS church curriculum department.

This essay examines the revised editions of Young Women's lesson manuals published in 1983 and 1988 and still in use in 1992. The church curriculum department issues a separate lesson manual for each of the six years of participation in YWMIA. Because of space constraints, only the first-year manual for each group is included in this study. Selected lessons in Young Men's manuals are also examined in order to determine if the

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1. "Past 115 Years Serve as Prologue," *Church News*, 9 Dec. 1984, 5.

topics presented to young men differed from those presented to young women.<sup>2</sup>

Young Women's course materials are not written by the general Young Women's presidency, nor does the presidency have much control over the content of the manuals. According to the senior editor in the church curriculum department, the lessons are authored by a writing committee selected by the church curriculum department. The lesson manuals are not necessarily up-dated every time they are published. In fact, the lesson manuals issued in 1988 are reprints of the 1983 editions. The only difference between the two sets of manuals is that the 1983 publications contain a page in the introduction which explained how the lessons could be used to complement the Personal Progress Areas of Focus, a separate program designed to encourage girls to set goals in specific gospel-related fields. This introductory page was deleted in the 1988 version since in 1986 the Personal Progress program was replaced by a new program of Young Women Values.

According to Lavina Fielding Anderson, manuals published in 1977 and 1978 succeeded in explaining doctrinal subjects, although they were ineffective in clearly defining priesthood responsibilities and in giving realistic examples of motherhood. She also noted that the lessons contained no examples of working women; she felt the manuals side-stepped the issue of divorce, of education for women, and of the possibilities of combining motherhood and professional life. Anderson stated that the lessons portrayed modesty as a problem for girls only, and she worried that the lessons were "'herding' the girls into 'femininity'"<sup>3</sup> by placing too much emphasis on external physical traits.

In some respects, little has changed since Anderson wrote her article twelve years ago. Sadly, many of the problems Anderson described have not been rectified in the newer manuals. The current lessons have improved slightly, but they still do not discuss full-time missionary work for women, encourage education for women, cite realistic examples of motherhood, and support working women and non-traditional families. Perhaps not as much emphasis is placed on femininity in the new manuals, although they do include lessons on proper grooming.

In the revised manuals, the lessons dealing with spiritual topics such as developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, prayer, honesty,

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2. Sources used for this paper include all of the lessons in the first-year Young Women's manuals published in 1983 and 1988. Selected lessons in the 1983 Young Men's manuals on missionary work, priesthood, dating, marriage, or fatherhood were also examined.

3. Lavina F. Anderson, "Messages from the Manuals," *Exponent II* 8 (Winter 1982): 18.

Word of Wisdom, etc., are still good. For example, almost all of the lessons encourage girls to search the scriptures to find answers to their problems. They are also heavily laced with quotes and advice from modern-day prophets and general authorities. The lessons feature important topics such as setting goals, building self-esteem, avoiding drug abuse, becoming dependable, handling peer pressure, managing money, and choosing uplifting media.

The new manuals treat the lessons on priesthood somewhat better; however, the difference between "priesthood holder" and "priesthood stewardship"<sup>4</sup> is not clarified any more in the new manuals than it was in the old. Girls are encouraged to help young men honor their priesthood by being modest, setting an example, and encouraging the young men to attend their meetings and to complete their assignments.<sup>5</sup> How these actions help to honor the priesthood is not explained.

According to Anderson, the previous lesson manuals made almost no mention of women serving full-time missions. This continues to be the case in the new manuals. The apparent lack of encouragement for women missionaries is curious because more and more young women are serving missions today.

According to statistics compiled by the *Deseret News*, at the end of 1981 more than 3,000 young single women were serving missions.<sup>6</sup> That number doubled by the end of 1988 and has continued to rise.<sup>7</sup> As a response, one or two lessons on missions should be included in the manuals. Lessons which pertain specifically to full-time missionary work could help encourage young women to prepare to serve missions and could prepare them for the trials they may encounter as missionaries. As would be expected, manuals written for young men contained one or two lessons for each age group on preparing to serve a full-time mission.

Young Women's manuals did contain lessons on missionary work; however, the emphasis was on fellowshiping and member-missionary work. Nearly every story in the lessons involving missionaries or missionary work referred to elders; even the picture of missionaries included in the Laurel lesson manual portrayed two young men.<sup>8</sup>

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4. Ibid., 5.

5. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Beehive Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 52.

6. *Deseret News 1983 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1982), 1.

7. *Deseret News 1989-1990 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1988), 1.

8. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Laurel Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), Appen. 1.

In fact, one Laurel lesson, designed to help girls become involved in missionary work, reads as follows: "when a missionary begins *his* mission, *he* is given several rules . . . . The missionary must commit *himself* to these in order to serve the Lord and have the Spirit to guide *him* [italics mine]."<sup>9</sup> A little later, the lesson continues, "how can an LDS girl help a missionary meet *his* responsibilities in *his* work for the Lord? [italics mine]"<sup>10</sup> Part of the objective of this lesson is to discourage young women from flirting with or encouraging a romantic relationship with elders who may be serving in their area. Nevertheless, referring to missionaries in general as male could discourage young women from considering serving missions. Certainly, if young women saw more pictures of sister missionaries and heard success stories of sister missionaries, they would feel more comfortable and confident about the possibilities of serving a full-time mission.

One lesson in the Laurel manual does refer to a woman's decision to go on a mission. However, the lesson topic is on consecration and sacrifice, not missionary work. The woman in question had just graduated from college and was planning to travel when she was called by her bishop to serve a mission.<sup>11</sup> In this case, serving a mission is not portrayed as a desirable opportunity, but as an obligation for which something more pleasant must be sacrificed.

Not surprisingly, the lesson manuals place a heavy emphasis on preparing girls for marriage and motherhood. Consequently, the lessons seem to under-emphasize education and vocational training for young women. Anderson noted the same problem in the 1977 and 1978 lesson manuals.

The revised Beehive manual contains a lesson on setting goals and progressing. A list of suggested long-term and short-term goals for girls is provided. Neither list proposes continuing education as a possible goal.<sup>12</sup>

A Mia Maid lesson entitled, "The Purpose and Value of Education," describes the importance of learning and explains that education can help with future employment. While this is a good point, the lesson contains some quotes which seem to undermine this advice. For example, Howard W. Hunter remarked, "If a woman does not marry, she has every right to engage in a profession that allows her to magnify her talents and gifts."<sup>13</sup> Are girls to assume that married women do not have the right to engage

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9. Ibid., 89.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 125.

12. *Beehive Manual 1*, 191.

13. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Mia Maid Manual 1* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 180-81.

in a profession? Since all the girls are probably planning to marry, will they assume it unnecessary for them to plan and prepare for a career?

This lesson also quotes George Q. Cannon who, in an 1868 address, said: "The proper education of a man decides his welfare, but the interests of a whole family are secured by the correct education of a woman."<sup>14</sup> While Cannon seems to be encouraging education, what he means by "correct" education for a woman is not explained. This quote is plainly out-dated. The education of a woman decides her welfare as much as does the education of a man, and the interests of a family are surely affected by the education of the father as well as by the education of the mother.

The Cannon quote could easily be replaced by a more contemporary statement. For example, President Spencer W. Kimball frequently encouraged women to "pursue and achieve that education, therefore, which will fit you for eternity as well as for full service in mortality."<sup>15</sup>

The Laurel manual devotes one entire lesson to the importance of choosing a vocation. This is a positive step, since the old manuals made no mention of preparing for a vocation. The lesson encourages Laurels to prepare for a job even if they are planning to marry and become a homemaker, and offers practical advice about choosing a career. Girls are reminded that even if they do marry it could be necessary for them to work to supplement their husband's salary, or in case of divorce or death of a husband, as the sole support of the family. Young women are then urged to choose a job that they will enjoy and one that will provide them with financial security.

Unfortunately, the lesson then suggests that girls ask themselves if the vocation they have chosen is one which will "help me fulfill my roles as wife, mother and teacher."<sup>16</sup> This statement could unintentionally cause some young women to confine their career choices to traditional female-dominated jobs such as teaching, nursing, or day-care. While these are honorable professions, a girl may feel pressured to choose one of these over another vocation for which she may have equal talent or interest. Why encourage women to pursue education and then limit their career choices?

If statistics are an indicator of future trends, most of these young women will find themselves in the work-force at some time in their lives. According to a study by sociologists Tim B. Heaton and Ben Parkinson, 64 percent of married Mormon women with preschoolers were employed in 1981.<sup>17</sup> If girls prepare for work while they are young, they are more likely

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14. Ibid., 181.

15. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Role of Righteous Women," *Ensign* 9 (Nov. 1979): 103.

16. *Laurel Manual* 1, 209.

17. Tim B. Heaton, "Four Characteristics of the Mormon Family: Contemporary Research on Chastity, Conjuality, Children, and Chauvinism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Summer 1987): 108.

to be employed in jobs which they find enjoyable, fulfilling, and financially rewarding.

Anderson noted that the old manuals contained no stories or case studies that mentioned a mother at work outside the home. The same holds true for the revised manuals. Once or twice a lesson refers to a mother who is "away during the day"<sup>18</sup>; this could be interpreted to mean that she was working or only that she was running errands or attending meetings that day.

The Mia Maid manual contains a lesson that encourages girls to get to know their mother. Girls are to complete a questionnaire about their mother's life. One question is "Did she work outside the home before her marriage?"<sup>19</sup> This same wording appeared in the lesson manual analyzed by Anderson. The question assumes that all mothers have not worked since they married. This is clearly not the case. In many cases, a girl's mother is currently working outside the home.

The church still promotes the traditional family. Church leaders encourage women to remain at home to care for their children while their husband provides for the family financially. Anderson noted that the church promotes families, but that unfortunately "it supports only one kind of family, and that support comes at the price of condemnation for other kinds of families. Sadly, it may be these other families who need the emotional support even more than traditional families."<sup>20</sup>

The new lesson manuals indicate the same trend. The manuals are filled with lessons that encourage girls to prepare for marriage and children, and to be eager to fulfill these roles. While this is an honorable pursuit, one might question the emphasis placed on this topic at the expense of other equally important topics such as education, a profession, and missionary work.

The lesson manuals acknowledge that women play many different roles; however, they stress that the most important role for women is the "divine role of women as wife and helpmeet, mother, and teacher."<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis on domestic topics in the women's manuals is surprising when compared with the lesson topics in the Young Men's manuals. Apparently church leaders are not as concerned about preparing young men for their future roles as husbands and fathers.

The Beehive manual, written for twelve-year-old girls, contains thirty-five lessons, seven of which are on dating, preparing for marriage, or developing homemaking skills. Homemaking is defined as "a woman

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18. *Laurel Manual* 1, 40.

19. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 34.

20. Anderson, 6.

21. *Beehive Manual* 1, 14.

taking care of her family."<sup>22</sup> By contrast, the Deacons' manual, for boys the same age, does not include any lessons dealing with dating, marriage, or fatherhood. There is one Deacon lesson entitled, "Respect for Mothers and their Divine Role"<sup>23</sup>; the objective of this lesson is to instill in boys a respect for their mothers. It does not mention respect for their future wife, the mother of their children.

In the *Mia Maid* manual, for fourteen-year-old girls, four of forty-four lessons directly relate to dating, marriage, and homemaking. The fourteen-year-old boys' Teachers' manual contains nothing on dating, marriage, or fatherhood. Although Teachers have one lesson on honoring womanhood, this is illustrated by encouraging the boys to help their sisters with chores, and to be polite to girls with whom they associate.<sup>24</sup>

Laurels, at age sixteen, have possibly begun to date and are getting closer to adulthood. Their manual contains seven of forty-nine lessons on dating, marriage, and homemaking. Sixteen-year-old Priests have two of thirty-five lessons on dating and marriage. Those lessons, though, do not contain any guidance on preparing for fatherhood or family life.

Based on this information, one might assume that church officials feel women need to be taught to become good wives and mothers and to develop homemaking skills, but men either already have the skills necessary to become supportive husbands and fathers or they are not expected to help their wives rear their children.

Many Young Men's lessons pertain to priesthood responsibilities and attempt to prepare the boys for future priesthood duties they will eventually assume. Since women do not hold the priesthood, their lessons emphasize their future roles as mothers, implying that priesthood responsibility is analogous to motherhood. This approach neglects the important role of a man as a father. If the family is the most important organization in the church, why are the young men not also instructed in the essentials of becoming supportive husbands and fathers?

Since the writers of Young Women's lessons assume that mothers will be homemakers, many of the stories about family life depict the traditional definition of men's and women's household chores and responsibilities.

The Beehive manual includes a lesson on developing home skills. This lesson has girls take a quiz on their abilities to perform simple household

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22. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 22.

23. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Deacon Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 38.

24. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Teachers Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 47.

chores. The list was fairly well balanced. Besides asking if girls could perform tasks such as defrost a refrigerator and clean an oven, it also included questions about their ability to drain a water heater, change a tire, replace a lawn sprinkler, or repair a frayed cord or plug.<sup>25</sup> This lesson goes on to state: "Some think women are responsible only to learn to bake bread, clean houses and take care of children. But women can and should develop abilities and skills in many other areas, even those often thought of as men's areas."<sup>26</sup> This is a good point; however, the fact that a similar lesson is not included in the Deacons' lesson manual suggests that men do not need to learn home skills or other tasks often thought of as women's work.

A lesson entitled "Love, Harmony, and Homemaking" in the Beehive manual stresses the importance of women as homemakers who "serve their family with love and harmony."<sup>27</sup> Included in this lesson is a story of a twelve-year-old girl whose mother is away. In her mother's absence, she cooks dinner, irons her father's shirts, and helps her younger brothers and sisters.<sup>28</sup> This story leaves one with the feeling that only a woman can perform homemaking duties, or why else would the father not assume some of the responsibilities of his wife in her absence?

The Mia Maid manual contains a story of a woman who had a busy week and consequently fell behind in the housework. Once again the daughter assumes the duty of cleaning the house, doing the laundry, and caring for younger siblings.<sup>29</sup> Again, the story does not show the father helping with the chores.

These kinds of stories indicate that a woman should take full responsibility for household work. Would it not be better to portray the whole family pulling together in times of trial with husbands and brothers and daughters and sisters all dividing up the chores?

The Beehive and Mia Maid manuals report that a woman receives rewards from being a homemaker. One reward is that the work becomes pleasant because the "personal satisfaction that comes to a homemaker in knowing that she is contributing to her family's happiness sustains her through the daily activities."<sup>30</sup> The Beehive manual reassures the girls that they will develop "special feelings about our duties and chores. As we do this, they are not duties or chores anymore, because we are doing them to make our surroundings lovely and pleasant and doing them for those we

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25. *Beehive Manual* 1, 177.

26. *Ibid.*, 178.

27. *Ibid.*, 28.

28. *Ibid.*, 25.

29. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 24.

30. *Ibid.*, 23.



love.”<sup>31</sup> Although homemakers probably do feel satisfaction in knowing they are helping their loved ones, can these “rewards” truly compensate for all of the difficulties involved in caring for a home and children?

A Laurel lesson entitled “Preparing to Become an Eternal Companion”<sup>32</sup> states that it is “especially important for a wife to put many of her husband’s interests and desires first.”<sup>33</sup> Compromise and sacrifice are essential characteristics for a successful marriage; however, the fact that young men are not also advised to be willing to put their wife’s desires ahead of their own is disconcerting. The Priests’ manual includes a lesson on “Choosing an Eternal Companion,”<sup>34</sup> but this lesson concentrates mostly on timing for marriage, not on preparing to become a supportive husband.

Including lessons to prepare young women for their roles as wives and mothers is valuable, but concentrating these lessons in women’s manuals and not even broaching the subject in Young Men’s manuals is unrealistic and ineffective. Surely men must be able to care for a home and children if they are to one day become fathers.

The proportion of lessons in Young Women’s manuals that refers to dating, marriage and motherhood could inadvertently encourage young women to seek marriage at a young age, before many are mature enough, especially since the lesson manuals concentrate heavily on the positive aspects of marriage and motherhood. The young women are told that homemaking is an “important and sacred responsibility”<sup>35</sup> and that it is one of the greatest honors a young woman can experience.

In the Priests’ lesson on marriage, proper timing is discussed and early marriage is discouraged. The lesson contains an excellent story about a seventeen-year-old boy and a fifteen-year-old girl who marry and soon have a baby. The new baby has medical problems, and the couple’s finances are strained. The couple soon becomes frustrated with their situation; they feel they are missing out on activities with their friends and soon regret their decision to marry so young.<sup>36</sup>

This story is not in the Young Women’s manual, but perhaps it should be included. The young women would equally benefit from learning of the

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31. *Beehive Manual* 1, 27.

32. *Laurel Manual* 1, 16.

33. *Ibid.*, 18.

34. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Curriculum Department, *Priest Course A* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 17.

35. *Mia Maid Manual* 1, 22.

36. *Priest Course A*, 33.

problems that can accompany a marriage before either partner is mature enough.

Almost all of the Young Women's lessons on domestic topics assume that mothers will be at home with the children while their husbands are away from home at work. This is not always a realistic example of the kinds of homes girls live in currently or necessarily will be after they marry.

Because of the emphasis in the church on families and children, young women are encouraged to plan to have children once they marry. Birth control for selfish or unwarranted reasons is discouraged.<sup>37</sup> Official church counsel on the subject is that husbands should be considerate of their wives' health and strength and that the couple should seek inspiration from the Lord in all of their decisions.<sup>38</sup>

The Laurel manual contains a quote from President David O. McKay which refers to birth control. It reads, in part: "we feel that men must be considerate of their wives who bear the greater responsibility not only of bearing children, but of caring for them through childhood. To this end the mother's health and strength should be conserved and the husband's consideration for his wife is his first duty, and self-control a dominant factor in all their relationships."<sup>39</sup>

Besides the fact that this is not the most current church policy on birth control, this statement also assumes that women have little or no sexual drive, since women are not also counseled to practice self-control in their relationships. Would it not be better for the lesson manuals to contain the current church policy on birth control so that girls are informed of the church's position on this delicate subject?

There are two other comments in the Young Women's lesson manuals about birth control which could cause some confusion. The first, in a lesson on priesthood in the Beehive manual, is an exercise to help girls learn which priesthood authority performs specific duties. Girls are given an example of a priesthood responsibility and asked to guess who holds the authority for that function. Some of the questions are: who can call someone to serve as a ward bishop, who can receive revelation for the church, and who gives "church policy concerning current evils of the world, such as birth control, abortion, pornography, and drugs."<sup>40</sup>

The second example is in the Laurel manual. The objective of the lesson

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37. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign* 6 (Mar. 1976): 71.

38. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 11-4.

39. *Laurel Manual* 1, 167.

40. *Beehive Manual* 1, 134.

is to help Laurels cope with worldly influences by relying on the word of God. The lesson provides a list to be written on the chalkboard under the headings "Satanic Philosophies and Deceptions" versus "Gospel Principles and Truths." On the list under the heading "Satanic Philosophies" is the following: "Birth control, abortion, divorce," the opposites being "Parent-hood, sanctity of life and celestial marriage."<sup>41</sup>

Labeling all forms of birth control as "evil" could be harmful and confusing. If the prophet reminds members to consider the health of the mother when determining family size, then certainly some form of birth control is permissible. Furthermore, if the prophet counsels husbands to practice self-control is he referring to abstinence? Abstinence is certainly a form of birth control. Perhaps these statements should be re-defined to comply with the current policy on birth control or even omitted from the lists entirely. This complaint may seem minor; nevertheless, current word-ing could cause some frustration for a young mother who desires to limit her family size or who wants to space her children at comfortable intervals.

While the importance of marriage and bearing children should not be discounted, perhaps both the positive and negative aspects of these roles should be presented. Since lessons on motherhood rarely mention the trials or frustrations associated with this function, girls may be led to believe there are few or no problems affiliated with the role of mother.

Modesty and chastity are also important topics for young women to discuss. While the lesson manuals stress the importance of remaining morally clean and virtuous, they contain some flaws.

A lesson in the Beehive manual describes the consequences of being unchaste. The list of the physical consequences mentions only pregnancy, abortion, or rejection by others.<sup>42</sup> The lesson does not mention the possi-bility of contracting a sexually transmitted disease, which could ultimately be more devastating than pregnancy or feeling rejected.

The most significant flaw, however, is illustrated by the following examples. In the Beehive manual is a case study of a girl who approaches her school counselor for advice. Some boys at the school had been spread-ing rumors about her apparent lack of virtue. The counselor advises the girl that the fault is her own because the way she dresses gives the wrong impression to the boys.<sup>43</sup> This explanation seems to absolve the boys of gossiping and lying. The girl may be guilty of giving a false impression; however, the boys are guilty of spreading rumors at school.

This same lesson has another example of a girl who is leaving the house to attend a dance. Her brother sees the way she is dressed and comments,

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41. *Laurel Manual* 1, 165.

42. *Beehive Manual* 1, 121.

43. *Ibid.*, 125.

"With that kind of an advertisement, someone might answer your ad."<sup>44</sup> This comment also suggests that if a young woman chooses to dress immodestly, she is responsible for anything that a young man might think about her or do to her.

The most alarming example along the same line is from the Laurel manual. This lesson is not on modesty or chastity, but on "Avoiding Dishonesty."<sup>45</sup> The lesson includes a story about a young girl who begins dating an attractive LDS young man named Rod. The girl soon begins to suspect that Rod has a drinking problem, but she rationalizes her fears and decides she can help him overcome this addiction. One night the girl attends a party with Rod where he begins drinking. That night when he takes her home, the story continues:

After a few kisses he began to overpower me in a very intimate way. I did not have the strength to control him. Somehow I was able to jump from the car. . . . As I ran home, my clothes were torn, I sobbed uncontrollably, and my body shook all over. I realized that the first lie to myself was Satan's invitation to take over as the Holy Spirit departed from me. I almost lost my virtue that night with Rod, and now I know it all began with a lie to myself.<sup>46</sup>

The girl in this story did not almost lose her virtue; she was almost raped. Here again the story shows the girl blaming herself instead of blaming the young man. Of course, the point the lesson is attempting to show is that the girl allowed herself to get into a compromising situation. While it is important to teach the young women to consider the consequences of their actions and to exercise good judgment, the story unfortunately shifts blame from the young man to the young woman.

If a young woman does become involved in a date-rape situation, a story like this may cause her to blame herself. She would then have to cope with unfounded feelings of guilt as well as the trauma of rape. Although the girl in the story may have misled the young man by her dress or behavior, the guilt associated with his actions is clearly his own.

The final area in which the manuals seem to be lacking is in providing realistic role models for young women. The manuals are filled with quotes and stories from the lives of prophets and general authorities, past and present. While it is important for young women to hear the words of the latter-day prophets, it is also important for them to hear from women in church leadership positions.

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44. *Ibid.*, 126.

45. *Laurel Manual* 1, 147.

46. *Ibid.*, 150.

Girls could learn from the examples of other women who have been successful in living the gospel. The heroine in many of the stories and examples in the lesson manuals is frequently some fictional mother of several children or the wife of a bishop, stake president, etc. Would it not be more beneficial for girls to learn how real Mormon women overcame real trials and went on to lead exemplary lives? Young women may find it easier to relate to the problems and trials faced by actual Mormon women.

LDS history is filled with wonderful examples of accomplished women such as Emmeline B. Wells, a successful editor and mother of six children; Eliza R. Snow, a writer and poet; Mary and Ida Ione Cook, founders of a school; Ramonia B. Pratt, the first resident physician at Deseret Hospital; Susa Young Gates, founder and editor of a college paper and mother of thirteen children; and Ellis Shipp mother of seven and the second woman in Utah to earn her M.D. degree.<sup>47</sup> There are also many examples of successful contemporary LDS women such as Camilla Kimball, wife of President Spencer W. Kimball and champion of education for women; Elaine Cannon and Ardeth Kapp, former general Young Women presidents; and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, historian and Pulitzer Prize winner.

Overall, the lesson manuals currently used in the Young Women's program are successful in teaching girls the basics of living the gospel. They fail when they insist on reinforcing the traditional cultural ideal of Mormon family life.

According to sociologist Tim Heaton, the dynamics of Mormon families have changed over the years. Heaton reveals that Mormon couples are having fewer children (three to five instead of seven to ten),<sup>48</sup> more mothers are working outside the home, a greater number of couples are divorcing—especially young couples—and 30 percent of the population of the church is comprised of single adults.<sup>49</sup>

In the face of these statistics, one would hope that the writers of the lesson manuals would take a more realistic view of the current circumstances of these young women as well as the situations they will likely encounter in the future.

That the lesson manuals used today are so similar to manuals used over ten years ago is surprising. The areas in the 1977 and 1978 lesson manuals which Lavina Fielding Anderson considered weak are still lacking. The revised manuals need further improvement in order to make them more realistic and relevant to LDS young women in the 1990s.

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47. Leonard J. Arrington, "Blessed Damozels: Women in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Summer 1971): 25-28.

48. Heaton, "Four Characteristics of the Mormon Family," 111.

49. *Ibid.*, 105.