

MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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Ryan T. Cragun, Editor

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President's Message

The phrase, "Everything's up to date in Kansas City" couldn't be more correct. Our Fall meetings are close upon us. We look forward to seeing you in Kansas City on October 22-24 for our MSSA meetings in conjunction with SSSR and RRA. The final program is set and is located on-line at the following site:

<http://las.alfred.edu/~soc/SSSR>.

As you review the final program you will find some interesting sessions on the topic of Mormonism. As you come to the meetings make certain that you arrive in time to participate in "Big Friday." That is, there will be four sessions in a row (three sponsored by MSSA) covering topics on Mormonism, all in the Southmoreland Room. Starting at 8am, Session A-3 will have four presenters including Mike Nielsen, Ryan Cragun, Amy Gomez and David Howlett. Session B-3 will begin at 10am. Jan Shipps will present the bi-annual Glenn M. Vernon Lecture. Her topic, Current Research on the Renewal of External Adverse Opinion Toward the LDS Church, looks to be very interesting and engaging. The MSSA Business Meeting will be held at noon and we invite all to attend and help shape the direction of our group. Finally, Armand Mauss will convene Session C-3 at 1pm. Those scheduled to present include Rick Phillips, Henri Gooren and Erik Sengers, and Jesse Embry. You can access the titles of each presentation and the affiliation of each presenter from the website above.

As in the past, Friday night has been a time for friends to meet together for dinner. We can discuss those details during the MSSA Business Meeting.

Many thanks to Armand Mauss, Mike Nielsen and Ryan Cragun for organizing MSSA's first student paper competition. Ferdi Geleijnse, University of Groningen, was awarded First Place and Amy Gomez, Idaho State University took Second Place. Amy will be presenting her paper in Session A-3 in Kansas City.

Elections for MSSA Officers and Council Members were held in the spring of this year. John Hoffmann is the President-Elect, and Cardell Jacobson was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Council Members for the next two years will be Nike Nielsen, Gordon Shepherd and Ken White.

Dues for 2004 are now payable to Cardell Jacobson, Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 84602. Dues are \$5 per year. Also, ideas of content and material for future MSSA newsletters can be forwarded to Ryan Cragun, Editor, at: ryan@genesoc.com

See you in a few weeks.

Lynn Payne

MSSA Sessions at SSSR

Session 1: The Glenn M. Vernon Lecture

Current Research on the Renewal of External Adverse Opinion Towards the LDS Church
Jan Shipps
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Focusing on growth, development, conflict and

change in religious organizations, Jan will use Mormonism as a case study to explore to what extent there is a renewal of external adverse opinions towards the LDS Church. She will reflect the perspective of outsiders, some who have recently written influential books in the national media concerning the LDS Church.

Session 2: MSSA sponsored paper session

Peace Psychology and Religion: The Example of Mormonism

Michael Nielsen

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Georgia Southern University

Religions historically have taken pains to be involved in society, at times in ways that exacerbated conflicts or violence and at other times easing them. In this paper I analyze religion's role in peace using Mormonism as a case study. Peace psychology focuses on violence in two ways. Direct violence emphasizes immediate, pressing concerns that may result in injury or death directly, whereas structural violence arises from societal inequities and causes injury or death over long periods of exposure to the inequality. Direct violence is addressed by peace-making, interventions intended to reduce the conflict between parties. Structural violence is reduced by peace-building interventions that reduce disparities among groups of people. Mormon Church involvement in society illustrates each of these concepts, as well as the competing demands religions face in engaging society while meeting organizational needs for distinctiveness within society.

A Re-examination of Stark's LDS Church Growth Projections by Individual Countries

Ryan Cragun

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In 1984, Rodney Stark made some bold predictions about the growth rates of Mormonism (Review of Religious Research, 25, 1, 18-27). A follow-up publication on these predictions (Stark 2001:13-23, in Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives) illustrated that the straight-line growth projections had been surpassed by the actual growth of the LDS

religion during the 1980s. However, Stark did not examine the growth rates of Mormonism within individual countries in light of the characteristics of those countries. Using current growth data of the Mormon Church, I re-examine Stark's predictions in individual countries and propose several revisions to his hypotheses.

Psychosocial Predictors of Attitudes toward Gay Men and Lesbians: Gender, Social Contact, and Religion

Amy Gomez

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The present investigation examined predictors of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Participants (N=204) completed measures assessing demographics, social contact, religious orientation and affiliation, and attitudes and beliefs toward gay men and lesbians. Gender, social contact, intrinsic religious orientation, LDS affiliation and the belief that being gay is a sin were significant predictors of attitudes toward gay men and lesbians ($R^2 = .72$ and $R^2 = .67$, respectively). Path analyses showed that the underlying belief that being gay is a sin was an important mediator of the relationships between intrinsic religious orientation, LDS affiliation and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Belief fully mediated the association between intrinsic religious orientation and attitudes toward gay men and partially mediated all other associations between religious variables and attitudes toward gay men and lesbians.

Remembering Polygamy: The RLDS Church and Late Twentieth-Century American Spiritualities

David J. Howlett

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"Polygamy: How the Latter Day Saints Were Betrayed by the Men Nearest the Prophet." In bold print, these words headlined a full page advertisement taken out in the Independence, Missouri *Examiner* on October 22, 1983. Fundamentalist members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) paid \$812.00 for the advertisement in the small town newspaper to protest the innocence of the Latter Day Saint prophet

Joseph Smith, Jr.'s involvement in polygamy. One month before the advertisement graced the *Examiner's* pages, RLDS church historian Richard Howard had delivered a paper at a historical conference implicating Smith in the origins of the doctrine of polygamy. While outsiders marveled that anyone could believe that Joseph Smith had not been involved in polygamy, the small *Examiner* became a battleground for RLDS church members who saw a cherished belief become openly questioned by the weight of historical evidence.

More than simply an issue of a dusty historical past, the argument over polygamy became a flashpoint in a two-decade old feud between liberals and conservatives within the RLDS church. Such a feud, though, was indicative of a larger social transition occurring in America in the same era. Through the proxy of the issue of polygamy, RLDS members were experiencing the discontinuity and disorientation of the American movement from what sociologist Robert Wuthnow calls "dweller" spirituality to "seeker" spirituality. Framed within this larger model, this paper seeks to document how RLDS members renegotiated the confusing world of history and faith in the last half of the twentieth century. In the process of this discussion on RLDS memory, polygamy, and new spiritualities, this paper will also highlight the strategies RLDS members have used to reconnect themselves to a sense of transcendence in a changing religious world.

Book Review:

Cardell K. Jacobson ed. 2004. *All God's Children: Racial and Ethnic Voices in the LDS Church*. Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort Press. 186 pp. \$14.95 paper

It has been over a quarter century since the June 1978 revelation extending the Priesthood to every worthy male member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—arguably the most important theological change to occur within Mormonism since the 1890 Manifesto. A great deal has been written by historians, theologians and social scientists about how this revelation has impacted the church, but few have examined how the legacy of this erstwhile policy affects rank-and-file Latter-day Saints. Sociologist Cardell Jacobson addresses this deficiency with his new book, *All God's Children:*

Racial and Ethnic Voices in the LDS Church. The book is infused with sociological insights, but it is meant primarily for an educated lay audience. It serves to introduce interested Latter-day Saints to the burgeoning diversity within their church—something that many members, particularly those living along the Wasatch Front, have never experienced first hand.

Jacobson begins his work with a sociological introduction to the issues surrounding race relations in the church. He states that the goal of the book is to examine changing attitudes toward race and ethnicity in the church, and to take a candid look at the successes and failures that some Latter-day Saint congregations have experienced while dealing with racial diversity. His method for investigating these themes is to present a collection of short, biographical essays written by members of the church who are either members of minority groups, or who have significant experience in some of the nation's most diverse wards.

Jacobson points out that the LDS church's current attitudes toward diversity are substantially different from those that prevailed in the early 20th century. At that time, Mormonism was still largely a regional subculture centered along the Wasatch Front. This dense concentration of Saints led to the development of ethnocentric beliefs about the superiority of "born in the covenant" Mormons, and to folk theologies about the origins of racial differences, and their ramifications for membership in the Kingdom. The biographies in this book show that overcoming this past has been painful and slow, and that the process is not yet complete.

The biographies make for fascinating reading, but Jacobson does not use them as one would use interviews in a typical ethnographic study. The essays are presented in full and without interpolated comments or analysis. Analytical comments are reserved for the introduction to the work, and in a conclusion by the author that outlines a number of themes and patterns that emerge from the essays. Jacobson is careful about making generalizations in his comments because, as he readily admits, he is using a convenience sample. (He does not specify his sampling strategy, and states only that the

essayists were “invited.”) Those selected to produce biographies are all active Latter-day Saints, and most are better educated than the average church member. Indeed, of the 14 listed contributors (not including Jacobson himself), seven are college professors or Ph.D. students, and a sizeable minority have some connection to Brigham Young University (either as faculty, students, or former students). Moreover, all of the essays deal with Mormonism in the United States. However, criticizing the book’s methods is beside the point, because this work is not designed to conform to the rules of social science research, but rather to inform a more general audience. Hence, relying on educated, well-spoken essayists who can effectively communicate their experiences is probably a good choice for reaching the book’s target market. In this respect, the book succeeds admirably, and makes up for the limitations of the sample by presenting essays that are eminently readable and entertaining. The selected essayists are insightful and pithy, and together they paint a portrait of a church that is fast becoming a multi-ethnic one, but that still suffers from growing pains.

As the title asserts, *All God’s Children* deals with many aspects of racial and ethnic diversity within the LDS church, but the lion’s share of the book is devoted to the stories of African and African American Saints. Jacobson introduces the biographical essays by noting that religion in the United States is a very segregated enterprise, and that a large majority of African Americans still worship in all Black congregations. Thus, the current ideal of Mormonism to aggressively reach out to any and all who want to join the faith makes the church rather exceptional among American religions. Indeed, many churches probably avoid the problems with racial integration that presently vex the LDS church because they are content to remain *de facto* segregated.

The biographical essays are remarkably candid, and some of the admissions and anecdotes they contain may make active Latter-day Saints wince. The most striking thing about them is the consensus among the African and African American Saints on how the lingering effects of the priesthood policy have affected their church membership, and their interaction with Caucasian Saints. For example, several mention

that they did not find out about the priesthood ban until *after* they had joined the church. This discovery led to a great deal of cognitive dissonance and internal conflict, as one can well imagine. Still others write about how they dealt with the common folk doctrine that people of African origin were “fence-sitters” in the pre-mortal life—a tenet espoused by some church leaders, and commonly held among Latter-day Saints before the 1978 revelation. One essayist writes at length about his reaction to being taught this folk doctrine, and his struggle to accept himself as a “fence-sitter.” Still others recount stories of blatant racism and bigoted comments in church meetings and social gatherings.

One comes away from the essays with the notion that these stalwart Latter-day Saints have overcome much for their faith. This is born out by the comments of several essayists who note that many of their family members and friends within the church have been unable to deal with the legacy of Mormonism’s past, and have since lapsed into inactivity.

For those who stay the course, many find themselves marginalized not only in their new church, but also within the Black community. A number of essayists write of being accused of “selling out” by joining a white church, or being ridiculed for joining a racist church by their former friends and associates in the Black community. Those who are single also face the daunting challenges of the Mormon marriage market. The biographies are replete with stories that illustrate that while most church members are prepared to accept Black converts into their wards, they are not always so keen on the idea of interracial marriage. Several write that church members constantly tried to set them up with other Black members of the church, but rarely suggested a white dating partner. One even notes that her friends in the ward tried to set her up with a Black man who was not a member of the church, assuming that she would rather date within her race than within her religion! Finally, those writing about their experiences at BYU note that many of their peers assumed that African American students had more in common with African immigrants than with their own countrymen, and this led to a number of uncomfortable situations at meetings and social gatherings.

What emerges most clearly from the essays, however, is that the majority of the problems that minority members of the church face do not stem from overt bigotry, but rather from the fact that many Caucasian Latter-day Saints simply do not have experience interacting with people of other ethnicities, and are sometimes inadvertently rude or insensitive. Hence, church members who belong to minority groups deal with ignorance far more often than they encounter actual racism. Certainly, as several biographies attest, it is maddening for Black church members to be asked if they can rap, or if they know how to prepare collard greens, but when Caucasian church members offer up such things in conversation, they do so not because they are bigots, but because they are oblivious. This conclusion is supported by data showing that while Mormons tend to have less contact with members of other ethnic groups than members of other conservative churches, they also tend to be more progressive on race issues. Jacobson uses recent GSS data to demonstrate this, but Armand Mauss has shown that this pattern existed even before the 1978 revelation. Unfortunately these progressive attitudes are sometimes offset by an ignorance that stems from the relative homogeneity of many Mormon wards, particularly in the Intermountain West—something that is expressed by many of the essayists in this book.

In addition, some of the problems that minority church members face do not stem from their ethnicity, but rather from the fact that they are much more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to be 1st generation converts to the faith. The cultural gap between converts and Saints with pioneer heritage is well-known and documented, and much of the condescension and elitism that the essayists endured is also experienced by white converts to the church. In my own studies of “mission field” wards, I have noticed that expatriate Utahns sometimes form cliques or refer to their pioneer heritage in ways that implicitly express to 1st generation converts that they are somehow less Mormon because they were not “born in the covenant” or raised in Zion. This irks converts everywhere regardless of their ethnicity. Indeed, many of the essayists write that their church lives were relatively smooth and trouble free until, for whatever reason, they landed in Utah. There, as one

writer puts it, “the wards were cold and unwelcoming.” Given the dynamics of Utah Mormon culture, it is not surprising that a Black convert to the church would find Utah wards less hospitable than mission field wards. But white converts to the church have similar difficulties as well, and make nearly identical complaints about Utah culture.

In addition to problems with race relations, the essays also give examples of success stories. One describes the incredibly diverse environment of the BYU Hawaii campus, and notes that since there is no clear ethnic majority in the school’s student wards, the kinds of problems that affect the small percentage of minority students in Provo do not exist. Another essayist paints a portrait of an inner-city ward that succeeds for similar reasons.

Jacobson closes the book with a number of suggestions to improve race relations in the church, and to ameliorate the ignorance that sometimes troubles minority church members. He calls for greater contact among church members of different backgrounds, and for moving members of racial and ethnic minority groups into leadership positions within their wards.

The essays in *All God's Children* portray a church that is well on its way to having a true multicultural membership base in the United States. However, the fact that the book focuses exclusively on the United States is one of its most glaring weaknesses. Anecdotal evidence suggests, for instance, that immigrants from developing nations are a principal source of new converts in European missions. Do the same dynamics that affect multicultural wards in the United States operate in places like Germany and France? The book also fails to consider the importance of Africa to the future of Mormonism. Rapid growth in Africa will likely have a powerful influence on the church in the years to come, since sex ratios and church participation rates in African wards suggest high levels of convert retention and activity.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, *All God's Children* is a fascinating study of race relations in the LDS church, and provides an important glimpse of a vital religious movement in the midst of a momentous transition. Social

scientists interested in Mormonism will find much to ponder in this book, but those interested in a more traditional sociological approach should probably supplement their reading with Jacobson's scholarly articles on this subject. Interested lay readers will find the book to be informative as well as inspirational.

Rick Phillips

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Announcements

Summer Seminar on Mormonism:

Last week Richard Bushman and I received official word that the National Endowment for the Humanities had accepted our proposal to offer one of its "Summer Seminars for College Teachers and University Professors."

Consequently, a six-week seminar entitled "Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormonism: Bicentennial Perspectives" will be held at BYU from 20 June to 30 July 2005. From what we understand, this is the first time the NEH has funded a summer seminar on a Mormon topic.

First and foremost, this strikes me as a significant statement about attitudes toward BYU and the Church. That the study of Joseph Smith and Mormonism would be considered, by the non-Mormon scholars and public officials associated with the NEH and charged with fostering the humanities in this country, worthy of a nationally sponsored seminar says much about how far the Church has come forth "out of obscurity and out of darkness." The NEH seminar grant also highlights the degree to which BYU itself has achieved a national reputation for academic excellence and scholarly integrity without, in the words of President Samuelson, repudiating its religious roots. To be trusted by the premier humanities sponsor in the United States that its faculty can conduct a seminar on the life and thought of the Church's founding prophet with sufficient care and objectivity that federal funds (over \$100,000) might appropriately be spent and that professors from diverse religious backgrounds might participate without fear of encountering undue ideological bias or covert proselytism is no small achievement. It is pleasing to reflect on the

contributions of numerous colleagues past and present that have helped bring BYU to this milestone in national recognition.

The seminar grant also draws attention to how fully Mormon history has come of age in the academic arena. An abundance of superb, balanced scholarship made selecting the proposed seminar readings a challenge of sifting and narrowing rather than searching for the sound and the substantial. To the many who have devoted a portion of their lives to researching and writing the history of Mormonism, a debt of gratitude is owed. Without their efforts the quantity, quality, and credibility of Mormon historical scholarship would be such that an NEH seminar on Joseph Smith and the origins of Mormonism would be neither feasible nor palatable. In particular, thanks go to seminar co-director Richard Bushman for the probity and profundity of his decades-long work on Joseph Smith and Mormon origins.

In the end, this NEH grant is an event to which many have contributed and in which many can take pride. Here's to all who have helped make it possible!

Grant Underwood

News Items

All Abraham's Children Wins Award

The 2003 book by Armand Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (U. of Illinois Press), was chosen for the Best Book Award at the May, 2004, conference of the Mormon History Association. The award carries a stipend of \$1,500. The same book was recently reviewed favorably by Rick Phillips in the pages of *Contemporary Sociology*, the official book review journal of the American Sociological Association.

LDS Service Book Contest Winner is Member of MSSA

German MSSA member Ralf Gruenke won his country's first LDS writers' contest staged by the privately-owned LDS Service. Ralf provided the following description of his book:

"My award-winning book "Die Koriher-Impfung" ("The Koriher Vaccination") is an attempt to counter Koriher's arguments against hope and faith. My basic thesis is that Koriher's sermon found in Alma 30 was included in the Book of Mormon on purpose because it could function as a kind of vaccine for the faithful as they critically consider his points. The book primarily focuses on theological aspects. However, there are plenty of comparisons to today's German society, illustrating that Koriher's thoughts are still visible and alive."

For more information: www.lds-service.de.

Mormon Studies in Secular Academia

Some MSSA members have probably heard about the tentative introduction of Mormon Studies as a legitimate academic pursuit at the Utah Valley State College about five years ago, largely on the initiative of the late Eugene England, who even succeeded in getting a small grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to start such a focus as part of a broader program in Religious Studies at UVSC. He and the UVSC Administration took some political heat from "both sides" – that is, both from non-Mormons or anti-Mormons worried about a Mormon "camel's nose" under the secular academic tent, as well as from orthodox Mormons convinced that any such academic program would undermine the faith of students by debunking the basis for their testimonies. Partly for that reason, the Mormon Studies program there has never been very visible; another reason was the untimely death of Gene, its main promoter. More recently, a much more visible development has taken place at Utah State University, in two phases, first with the establishment of a new program and an endowed chair in Religious Studies, and then next year with the establishment of a Mormon Studies track and an endowed "Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture." For the foreseeable future, both of these Utah programs will, I believe, yield only undergraduate degrees. This much, however, is quite remarkable, for reasons that are ironically almost countervailing – namely that (1) such a development is so late in coming to Utah, and that (2) it is happening at all in Utah, considering the political climate there!

Even more interesting is the new GRADUATE program in Mormon Studies being established at the Claremont University Graduate School (in

cooperation with the Claremont School of Religion) in southern California. An ad hoc committee of faculty and LDS former students of the Claremont Graduate School, in consultation with religious community representatives, have decided to raise the money and faculty resources to establish graduate programs permitting students to specialize in one or more of the "major religious traditions," including Hindu (or Indic), Buddhist, Islamic, Judaic, Catholic, Protestant and LDS (which is being treated separately, like Protestant and Catholic)! For each of those traditions, an Advisory Council has been selected to offer guidance to the development of the program and to help identify funding sources for an endowed chair.

The goal for the Mormon Studies chair and program is \$5 million. The Advisory Council for the LDS consists of fifteen people who are active LDS and are drawn from the ranks of prominent southern California citizens (the chairman of the Council is a judge), and including an LDS Area Authority, some LDS Public Affairs people, a few academics, lawyers, businessmen, and others. The remarkable things about this development are (1) that it originated at the University; (2) the Advisory Council of "prominent" LDS citizens is enthusiastic about it; and (3) the plan apparently has the full backing of the Church leadership, and (I am guessing) its influence in helping to raise the money for the Chair. What remains to be seen, of course, is how much influence Claremont will permit the Church to have in designing the curriculum and in selecting the occupant(s) of the endowed Chair. It will be an interesting quandary on both sides.

I have encountered courses and programs in Mormon Studies both in western Canada and in England, but never in the U. S. – until now. The programs that I have described above tend to be understood as part of the humanities disciplines (especially history), rather than social sciences, so we should try to be sure that the contributions that the social sciences can make to religious studies are well advertised and well understood by our colleagues in the humanities.

Armand Mauss

Mormon News Site

Michael Nielsen brought to the Newsletter's attention a new Mormon news website: <http://www.mormon-news.com/>. According to the site:

"This website is intended to provide a central depository for news articles concerning the secular happenings of the Mormon Church, including its business activities, political activism, purported sexual abuse, and other issues."

Additions and Changes to the Website

The first change to the website is an important one for anyone that uses it, as the 'members only' area now, truly is, a members only area. It has been password protected, which means access to the newsletters, the list of members, and the bibliography now requires a password. Since you wouldn't be receiving this newsletter unless you are/were a member, here is what you need to know to access these resources:

User: **Glenn**
Password: **Vernon**

There has been another addition made to the MSSA website. Past editions of the newsletter dating back to before the existence of the MSSA (Committee on Mormon Society and Culture) are now posted. You can see them at:

<http://www.genesoc.com/mssa/newsletter.htm>

However, the site is still missing newsletters from 1998-2000. I'm not sure how many newsletters were published during that time, but if you happen to have copies of them and would be willing to either copy them or send them to Ryan Cragun for scanning in as electronic copies, please let him know:

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Conference on Mormonism

Positioning Mormonism in Religious Studies and American History

School of Religion

Claremont Graduate University

24-26 October 2004

www.cgu.edu for registration information and details of the program

(click on Faculty, Religion, Calendar of Events, Conference on Positioning Mormonism)

Registration is free

Newly published (look for review in a future issue, and if interested in reviewing it, contact Ryan Cragun):

Newell G. Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith (eds.) 2004. *Black and Mormon*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 184 pp. hardcover. \$34.95.

Forthcoming:

Tim B. Heaton, Stephen J. Bahr, and Cardell K. Jacobson, *A Statistical Profile of Mormons—Health, Wealth, and Social Life*. Forthcoming, New York: Edwin Mellen Press. 233 pps. hardcover. \$109.95

FUTURE SSSR MEETINGS

2005: November 4-6, Rochester, New York

2006: October 20-22, Portland, Oregon

Remember to return dues to:

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