

NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MORMON LIFE

Volume 2, Number 2

July, 1980

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL MEETING

August 28, 1980
Hilton Hotel, Room
513 New York City

6:15pm - 7:00pm: Business Meeting
{All SSSML members and prospective members should attend}

7:00pm - 8:30pm: Scholarly Session
Devoted to the Work of NELS ANDERSON

Paper: NELS ANDERSON AND THE CHICAGO TRADITION: THE HOBO AND
RELATED STUDIES

Ronald J. Miller Chadron State College Chadron, Nebraska

Paper: NELS ANDERSON AND MORMON STUDIES: DESERT SAINTS

Michael S. Raber
Raber Associates
New Haven, Connecticut

Craig L. Infanger
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY

Response: NELS ANDERSON Department of Sociology
University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Chairman and Moderator: Armand L. Mauss
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

A special note of thanks is due to our outgoing officers for the excellent work they have done in organizing and establishing the Society as a network of support and communication among sociologists of Mormonism. Our new officers, who will take over at our annual meeting in New York, are anxious to continue the development and growth of the Society, and look forward to an exciting year. Our new officers are:

PRESIDENT: Armand L. Mauss, Washington State University

VICE-PRESIDENT: Wilford E. Smith, Brigham Young University

SECRETARY-TREASURER: Julie C. Wolfe-Petrusky, University of Utah

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Marie Cornwall, University of Minnesota

James T. Richardson, University of Nevada, Reno

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WESTERN SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

The WSSA meetings held last April in Albuquerque, New Mexico, included an official section on the Sociology of Mormonism- The session, chaired by Wilford E. Smith of Brigham Young University, was one of the best attended, and included the following papers:

Mormon Campus Religious Group Participation as a Factor in Stability and Change
Gary E. Madsen, Utah State University

Influence of Parents on Youth Religiosity

Stan Weed, Director of Evaluation Division, Correlation Department, LDS Church

Incidence of Mental Disorders and Self-Inflicted Death in Utah and its Relationship to Religious Definitions of the Situation: A Grounded Social Psychological Approach
Mark W. Weigand, University of Utah

The Dilemma of Pluralism in the Mormon Conversion Process Arturo De Hoyos and Genevieve De Hoyos, Brigham Young University

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PACIFIC SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The Sociology of Mormonism session of the PSA meetings in San Francisco last April, chaired by Armand L. Mauss of Washington State University, was also well attended. The papers presented and the discussion by Jim Richardson provided a stimulating and exciting meeting for those who attended. The following papers were presented in that session:

Faithful to the Truth or True to the Faith? Two Models for the Use of Values in Mormon

Studies Donald B. Lindsay, California State University, San Bernadino

Race, Religion, and Region: A Comparison of Some Religious and Secular Race Attitudes of Southern, Utah, and California Mormons Charles H. Ainsworth, Washington State University

Mormon Ritualists and Death Fears: Limited Correlates
Thomas Kemp, University of Utah

A FRIENDLY REMINDER

Don't forget, it's dues time again: The Society needs your continuing support for its growth and development. Annual dues are only *2.00, so why not send yours today, to help defray the costs of our exciting New York meetings.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE WSSA MEETINGS

The Dilemma of Pluralism in the Mormon Conversion Process Arturo De Hoyos and Genevieve De Hoyos, Brigham Young University

When a social movement becomes international in scope, that is, when it transcends the cultural boundaries within which it developed, it is usually confronted with the problem of cultural conflict. The Mormon Church, considered for the purposes of this study a social movement, has entered the international stage and it is being confronted by actual and potential cultural conflict.

The present study is an attempt to delineate {1} the characteristics of this cultural confrontation, {2} the response of the Mormon Church to the challenge of cultural diversity, and {3} some of the implications of such a response in terms of adjustments, if any, in the belief systems, the social structure and the functional dynamics of the Church. To facilitate the discussion, an analytical model of three different responses to cultural confrontation will be used. Cultural confrontation is usually resolved in one of the three following ways: Integration, Pluralism, or Separatism.

{1} Integration: Integration, which may eventually involve assimilation and amalgamation, is the fusion of conflicting cultural systems into one functional system. Conflict is resolved by one cultural system absorbing another, or two cultural systems producing a third one by adaptation and innovation.

{2} Pluralism: Pluralism involves a cultural compromise. It usually consists of partial adaptation on the part of the opposing cultural systems. There is a gentlemen's agreement to live and let live. It is an attempt to resolve confrontation by agreeing to tolerate the cultural idiosyncracies of others and hoping for reciprocal toleration.

{3} Separatism: Separatism is the resolution of cultural confrontation by avoiding contact. It is the attempt to exclusiveness. It is the acknowledgement that compatibility is not functional and that integration is neither desirable nor pluralism possible.

The present study will describe the way chosen by the Mormon Church to resolve cultural confrontation. It will consider some of the dilemmas the church faces in cultural confrontation, and it will attempt to explain why pluralism cannot be considered a viable alternative.

Incidence of Mental Disorders and Self-Inflicted Death in Utah
and its Relationship to Religious Definitions of the Situation:
A Grounded Social Psychological Approach
Mark W. Weigand, University of Utah

An empirically grounded interactionist approach in the Sociology of Religion is utilized in this study of aggregate state and national statistics for mental depression and suicide among Utahns, noting that approximately 75% of Utahns are members of the Mormon Church, and represent a relatively homogeneous racial population {97.4% white}. In addition, the church as an organization is outspoken in its commitment to traditional social values which emphasize maintaining a strong sense of community integration and active participation in daily religious activities.

Major theoretical sensitizing concepts employed in the analysis include {1} religious definitions of the situation; {2} religious vocabularies of motive; and {3} abstract {absolute} and applied values.

Preliminary data analysis indicates with reasonable certainty that since 197 the Utah suicide rate has exceeded that for the U.S., especially among teenagers. Possible relationships between depression, suicide, and religion are also discussed. It is suggested that especially among teenagers, a specific set of religious definitions of the situation may have the unanticipated consequence of increasing the likelihood of stress, mental depression and potential suicide for some religious affiliates. On the other hand, religious affiliation may also provide means for overcoming such personal difficulties.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SOCIOLOGY OF MORMONISM SECTION AT SSSR MEETINGS

The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion annual meeting in Cincinnati, October 31 to November 1, includes a session on the Sociology of Mormonism, with papers to be presented by Jim Richardson and Jon Alston {both members of our Society}. The session is chaired by Glenn Vernon.

ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE PSA MEETINGS

Mormon Ritualists and Death Fears: Limited Correlates
Thomas Kemp, University of Utah

The purpose of the paper was twofold: {1} to suggest why some Mormons develop a more ritualistic perspective while others develop a more humanistic perspective and {2} from a content analysis of the Ensign Magazine, contrast the potential death fears associated with each perspective.

It was found that the development of a ritualistic perspective is related to the perception that Mormon doctrine places greater emphasis upon ritualistic behavior than upon humanistic behavior. Rituals, more than humanistic behavior, involve overt observable behavior which is easy to enact and to count.

It was suggested that ritualistic doctrine creates a high potential for a rigid, circumscribed repertoire of acceptable behavior for Mormons and those who might be typified as ritualistic may be rather rigid, conservative and unaccepting of a broader more humanistic interpretation of doctrine or behavior. Such ritualists may have a greater propensity toward higher death fears than humanists because they would be more prone to feel guilt and inadequacy in compliance with acceptable areas of behavior since those areas are so narrow and limited. It was suggested that those individuals who only moderately comply or perceive themselves in only moderate compliance with the religious dictates of their church, would have the tendency toward greater fear of death. This is because it follows that people understand where they are failing to comply and further understand that less than full perceived compliance may result in death as punishment.

The content analysis of the Ensign Magazine predominantly supports the proposition that Mormons would tend to be more ritualistic than humanistic. The idea that ritualists in the LDS Church may have higher fears of death than humanists was not fundamentally established in the content analysis. Further research, a more intensive content analysis and a time series regression analysis are proposed.

Faithful to the Truth or True to the Faith?
Two Models for the Use of Values in Mormon Studies
Donald B. Lindsey, California State University, San Bernadino

A renewed interest in the relationship between science and religion has been sparked in recent years. A number of American scholars and intellectuals have written new articles that deal with the controversial issue of religious vs. scientific values. Included among these are several Mormon intellectuals in the social and behavioral sciences who are found opting for a distinct brand of religious and social science to be carried out under the aegis of Mormon theology, custom and policy. This paper examines the background

factors leading to this particular movement and rejects out of hand what is shown to be a "True Believers Model" of science which is seen as being of no value to either scientific or Mormon interests. The possibilities for developing a "Conciliatory Model" for doing social and behavioral science is suggested wherein conservative Mormon values need not be rejected or compromised in order to do praiseworthy social science.

Race, Religion, and Region: A Comparison of Some Religious and Secular Attitudes of Southern, Utah, and California Mormons Charles H. Ainsworth, Washington State University

This paper is a descriptive presentation {preliminary to a much more thorough study} of the responses of certain samples of Mormons to questions about religious and secular conceptions of both Jews and Blacks. The instruments used in gathering these data were modeled after the ones used by Glock and Stark, and some of the data here are compared to corresponding figures from their work. Mainly, however, the tables here show comparisons of the responses of regional Mormon samples to each other, based upon a questionnaire developed by Mauss {from that of Glock and Stark}. Mauss collected his data in the late 1960's from samples in Salt Lake City and in San Francisco, while Ainsworth, using the same instrument, collected his data in the mid-1970's from samples of Mormons in Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, and northern Florida. In general, the sampling system reached every household of a random sample of Mormon wards and branches in the respective three locations. In addition to these three main samples {Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Southern}, some comparable data will occasionally be introduced also from an earlier pilot study by Mauss in the East Bay Area.

The chief interest of these data lies in the fact that at the time they were gathered the Mormon Church had explicit ecclesiastical doctrines and policies relating to Jews and to Blacks. The dogmas relating to Jews {which still obtain in the Church} define them quite favorably as sharing a literal, common Israelite ancestry with Mormons and a common future destiny as vanguard groups preparing for the return of the Messiah {despite some temporary waywardness on the part of Jews}. Where Blacks were concerned, however, Mormon dogma and institutionalized folklore taught {until a new revelation in June of 1978} that God had, for his own purposes, kept the lineage of Blacks separate from other lineages and withheld from that lineage, in perpetuity, any eligibility for the priesthood.

Besides the more obvious issue of religious influences on secular race attitudes, another important issue is the relative importance of religious vs regional influences on these attitudes. Put another way, the question is: Is Mormon culture "monolithic" in these matters? Do we find about the same attitudinal configurations toward racial matters among Mormons irrespective of region, or is there instead evidence for regional subcultures among even American Mormons?

Implicit in all this are the following hypotheses:

{1} Where comparisons are possible with non-Mormons, Mormons will generally display

lower levels of secular anti-Semitism.

{2} Where comparisons are possible with non-Mormons, Mormons will generally display higher levels of anti-Black prejudice and/or discrimination.

{3} In both theological and secular attitudes, subcultural influences by region will prove at least as important a determinant as religion itself, with Southerners generally the most conservative, San Franciscans the least conservative, and Utahns in between.

With occasional, but not serious, exceptions, the data would seem to sustain hypotheses {1} and {3}, but fail to sustain hypothesis {2}. Possible reasons for these outcomes are then discussed.

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