

Newsletter

SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MORMON LIFE (SSSML)

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Much of this year's SSSML activities are now complete. Although there was not a SSSML session at the PSA meetings last April, we did have three papers on the Sociology of Mormonism presented there. SSSML sponsored a session at the ASR meetings in Washing-ton, D.C., and four excellent papers were presented there. We also sponsored our yearly session at Sunstone--thanks to Joe Olsen for all he did to arrange it. We were also pleased to see that Rodney Stark spoke at one of the plenary sessions at Sunstone. It was one more sign that more and more attention is being given to studying the Sociology of Mormonism.

My careful reading of the SSSR and RRA program to be held in Savannah, Georgia this fall indicates that no less than seven different papers are being presented at that meeting in the various sessions. This too suggests that the sociological study of Mormonism is on the increase.

Plans for a lecture series on the Sociology of Mormonism, as announced in the last newsletter, are progressing. Remember the November 1 deadline for abstracts. The first lecture will be given at Brigham Young University in the spring of 1986. Work is underway to organize another lecture at Utah State University.

B. Y. Card has suggested we consider the University of Alberta in 1987 because it is the Centennial of the Church in that area. We are waiting to hear from any other members of SSSML about other institutions which could sponsor a lecture.

When SSSML was first organized, it was the dream of its organizers that the society would encourage people to study Mormons and their social system. Since that time we have made great strides. Sessions have been sponsored at PSA and ASR on a continuing basis. However, it appears to me that we need to move ahead in new directions. The lecture series idea is just one attempt to do so. Here are some other suggestions that I have gleaned from others in my conversations with them:

1. Broaden the scope of the society. As most of you are aware, SSSML stands for The Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life. However, many of our members are psychologists, historians, and anthropologists. It has been suggested that we encourage a broader social and behavioral science membership. This may include sponsoring sessions on Mormon Life at meetings like the SSSR and other non-sociological associations. Any suggestions?

2. Encourage further research by establishing a clearinghouse system to identify available

data sets on Mormons. The news-letter attempts to keep everyone up to date with the latest research and publication activities of its members. However, SSSML could also compile a list of data sets which could be made available to interested parties for further data analysis. For example, many interested scholars may not realize that the Canadian census information includes religious affiliation. A great deal of information is available about Mormons and their "Gentile" neighbors in this data set.

3. Sponsor an edited volume of readings. SSSML has already sponsored a special edition of the Review of Religious Research. Enough good research may now be available for us to start thinking even bigger--a book. I have already talked with some publishers who are very interested in the project.

4. Help with the funding problem. Aside from the problems everyone talks about with regards to doing research on Mormons, probably the greatest problem is the lack of funds to support the kind of research many of us would like to do. SSSML could collect information and ideas about funding sources and how to get funds.

Each one of these ideas is time consuming, but they are all viable alternatives for SSSML. As president of your society, I would appreciate some feedback about the direction SSSML should go in the future. We are entering a new era in the study of Mormon Life. I suspect that if Rodney Stark continues to preach that Mormonism is a new world movement and needs to be studied, we will see a lot more interest in this area. Thanks, Rodney.

Please, send me your ideas, concerns, and interests.

Marie Cornwall, Ph.D. President, SSSML

SUNSTONE THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

As part of the annual Sunstone Theological Symposium in late August, the SSSML sponsored a session entitled "Social Science and Mormonism: Current Empirical and Theoretical Directions." The session included a preview and discussion of Howard Bahr's paper "Toward a Social Science of Contemporary Mormondom" which will be forthcoming in BYU Studies. Bahr's comments concerning the current status and stature of the social scientific study of Mormonism were discussed by panel members Armand Mauss, Rex Cooper, and Joe Olsen. Rex pointed to the potential value of studying existing variation in Mormon life and culture through direct and explicit reference to the normative patterns of behavior, belief, and organizational structure specified by the Church. Armand summarized current and recent research in the area. He introduced and acknowledged the presence of many social scientists in the audience and posed the question: "Why don't more Mormon social scientists study Mormonism (or Mormondom)?" The ensuing discussion brought to light many of the personal and professional challenges of such inquiry.

In addition to the SSSML's sessions at PSA and ASR, the papers presented by members at other professional meetings, the Sunstone Symposium sessions provide an important opportunity for exploring and considering topics of interest to members of the SSSML. Those with ideas for next year's meetings should contact Marie Cornwall or Joe Olsen at the Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University.

PAPERS SCHEDULED FOR SSSR AND RRA MEETINGS IN SAVANAH, GEORGIA

"Becoming a 'True' Believer: A Case Study of Mormon Conversion,"
M. Jean Hariot, University of California, Los Angeles..

"Mormonism and the Equal Rights Amendment," O. Kendall White, Washington and Lee University.

"The Mormons in the Emerging Religious Economy of Latin America," K. W. Perry, University of Lethbridge.

"Mormon Polity and Politics," Armand Mauss, Washington State University and M. Gerald Bradford, University of California, Santa Barbara.

"Empiricism and Inspiration: The Case of the Mormons," Stan Weed, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Religious Faith and Victimization: The Case of Mormon Scams," Anson Shupe, The University of Texas, Arlington and John Heinerman, Anthropological Research Center, Salt Lake City.

"Missionizing and Political Adventurism: The Institutionalization of the Mormon Church in Communist Societies," Ansan Shupe, University of Texas, Arlington and John Heinerman, Anthropological Research Center, Salt Lake City.

ABSTRACTS FROM PAPERS GIVEN IN THE SSSML SESSION, AT ASR MEETINGS

"Marital happiness in Mormon Couples: The Effect of Wife's Employment Status, Religiosity, and Age of Children," Barry L. Johnson, James T. Duke, Susan Eberley, and Deborah H. Sartain, Brigham Young University.

According to a national sample of active Mormons, married Mormon women with children in the home are as likely to be employed as other women. This paper examines the differences in the marital happiness of 313 Mormon couples when the wife is either a traditional homemaker (not employed), employed part-time, or employed full-time. Five

dimensions of marital happiness were used: global marital happiness, marital cohesion, marital consensus, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. Analysis of wives' responses indicated very few significant differences across the employment categories. Global marital happiness was the only dimension with a significant difference between the groups, with traditional homemakers being the most happy, followed by full-time employed wives, and the part-time wives, who were the least happy. When the degree to which they identified themselves as Mormons was controlled and the age of children was added as a variable, results favored traditional homemakers with preschool children for global marital happiness, consensus, and sexual satisfaction. Analysis of the husbands' responses across the categories produced significant differences for three of the dimensions: global marital happiness, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. For all three, husbands were most happy when their wives were working full-time and least happy when they were working part-time. When the degree to which husbands identified themselves as Mormons was controlled and age of the children was added as a variable, the results produced significant differences for only one of the dimensions--sexual satisfaction. The effect of age of the children did not change the original finding. Husbands whose wives worked full-time were still the happiest and those whose wives worked part-time were the least happy. Mormon teachings prescribe traditional role division as the formula for marital happiness. Considering the high religiosity of this sample, and the number of couples deviating from this formula, these findings are very interesting.

"Husband's and Wife's Church Attendance: Cross Cultural Comparisons," Tim B. Heaton, Brigham Young University, and Kristen L. Goodman, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) is family centered in theology and practice. One important aspect of this family orientation is the joint participation of husband and wife. In this paper we examine the relationship between husband's and wife's church attendance in four different countries. Three general patterns will be considered. First, consistent couples are those where husband and wife have the same frequency of church attendance. A second pattern occurs if the wife attends more often than the husband. In the third pattern, the husband attends more than the wife. The relative frequency of these patterns informs us of the degree to which individual behavior is actually family based. Comparisons across countries will provide insight into the impact of cultural differences on the degree of family participation. As an elaboration of the basic analysis, models will be developed to explain attendance with strength of personal belief and spouse's attendance. Independence occurs if spouse's attendance has no independent effect in these models. Beneficial spouses raise attendance above what it would be on the basis of belief, and detrimental spouses depress attendance below what it would be on the basis of belief. Models will be evaluated for husbands and wives to determine which has more influence on the other's behavior. Again, cultural differences should be reflected in cross-country comparisons. Data will come from the Demographic Study of Church Members conducted by the Correlation Department of the LDS Church. The study includes information on households in the U.S., Great Britain, Mexico, and Japan.

"The Normative Bases of Religion: A Study of Factors Influencing Religious Behavior," Marie Cornwall, Brigham Young University.

This paper examines four sets of variables hypothesized to influence religious behavior: (1) religious socialization (the influence of family, peer, and the church institution is examined), (2) religious belief and commitment (four measures of religious belief and commitment are included), (3) personal community relationships (the personal networks of family and friends which each individual has), and (4) demographic and background characteristics (i.e., age, gender, education, marital status, and region). Data for the analysis were collected from a sample of Mormons in the United States. The results indicate each variable set is important in explaining some portion of the variance in religious behavior, but that religious belief and commitment have the strongest influence on religious behavior. In addition, personal community relationships (both the number and strength of network ties) are found to have an important influence on religious behavior.

"Ancestors and Origins: A Comparative Study of Knowledge of Ones Roots," Phillip R. Kunz, Brigham Young University.

Part of the religious heritage of Mormons stresses ones ancestors. Indeed, the Mormons not only talk about the importance of ancestors, but are organized to determine who those people are. This paper compares a sample of Mormons from Utah with samples of others from Calgary and from the Midwest to ascertain whether the stress in theology and the organization implemented among the Mormons increases the knowledge one has concerning origins and ancestors. Clear differences are found among the groups, and within the groups. The names of ancestors were known more by Utah university students followed by those from the midwest and then by those from Canada. Mormons, and women also knew more of the ancestors. There was no clear difference in the knowing of where ancestors came from.

PACIFIC SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Jim Duke, of the Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University, has been asked to chair the section on Sociology of Religion at the PSA meetings in the spring. Anyone wishing to submit papers on the Sociology of Mormonism should send them to him. If there are enough papers on Mormonism another session will be created in addition to the Sociology of Religion session.

REUBEN HILL

We were all saddened to hear of the death of Reuben Hill. Reuben retired from the University of Minnesota in 1983. This year he was a Fulbright visiting professor at the Institute of Sociology and Psychology at the University of Oslo. He and his wife Marion

had been living in Norway since late August and were enjoying time with their daughter Susan and her family. He died peacefully in his sleep of a heart attack September 21. Reuben made a great impact on sociology and especially on family sociology. His scholarly works were required reading at many universities. His contribution to the study of the family was very significant, and he was an important mentor for many sociologists. We shall all miss him.

NEW EDITOR

If there is someone who would like to take his or her turn as editor, now is your chance. Will you please contact Marie Cornwall with your interests or your suggestions? Someone who is deeply involved in empirical work with the LDS would be ideal. However, anyone who can type will be considered. ETP