



Mormon Social Science Association

...bringing social science to Mormonism

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President's Message

As I write this, global warming seems to be preventing the onset of spring in Michigan and much of the (Mid)west. Yet we are promised another long and hot summer... I hope to see you all again in the (hopefully balmy) fall at the upcoming SSSR meeting in Boston, November 8-10. SSSR's stated topic this year is *How Does Religion Work?* This presupposes that religion does work, which some might argue is an open question. The Glenn Vernon Lecture will be given by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich on Saturday, November 9, probably late in the morning. Professor Thatcher Ulrich, a Pulitzer Prize winning historian and professor of history at Harvard University, will discuss her forthcoming book, *A House Full of Females: Faith and Family in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Diaries*. You really can't afford to miss this.

My two-year term as MSSA president is now in its final year; president-elect David Knowlton will take over after me. The terms of our two board members, Matt Bahr and Mike Nielsen, will likewise end in December 2013. I remember that at SSSR in Phoenix last year, several people were considering putting themselves forward as candidates. Please do! And we would also like to have candidates for the next MSSA president. (Don't worry; you won't have to take over until 2015!) You can nominate yourself or somebody else. Please note that it would be nice to let them know about it before you do...

Finally, please allow me to point out that my prophecy in the spring 2012 MSSA Newsletter came true: the next pope *did* turn out to be from Latin America! A Mexican newspaper remarked that a humble pope from Argentina is a nice way to break the old stereotype (Argentines have a reputation across the continent for their arrogance). Argentina is truly a blessed country. Argentines always quipped that in the person of Maradona, God is Argentinian. With Bergoglio, the pope is Argentinian. With Messi, the best soccer player in the world is Argentinian. And with Máxima, the next Dutch Queen is also Argentinian (incidentally: her husband, Alexander, will become the next king of the Netherlands on April 30). At this rate, next year we'll all be celebrating with dulce de leche while singing the Argentine National Anthem. ¡Hasta la vista, hermanos!

Henri Gooren
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Media, Mormonism, and Mormon Media Studies

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Introduction

Bosco Bae has asked me to write a reflection about the Mormon Media Studies Symposia that were held at Brigham Young University in 2010 and 2012, and to provide some “general thoughts” about the relationship between media, Mormonism, and Mormons. I also will address the topic of Mormon Media Studies as an emerging discipline, and will conclude with some thoughts about Mormons, the media, and the Mormon Moment. My comments are meant only to be conversational in tone. They certainly do not purport to be definitive or comprehensive statements about the topics discussed.

Media Focus on Mormons and Mormonism in the 21st Century

When Mitt Romney ran for the U.S. presidency the first time (January 2007-February 2008), many Mormons were surprised (and often distressed) by the media coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereinafter the LDS Church or the Church) that his candidacy prompted. (See Baker and Campbell, 2010). This took place five years after the Winter Olympics 2002 that were held in Salt Lake City—an event that also garnered unprecedented worldwide media coverage of Mormonism (although arguably perhaps more positive for Mormons than the coverage during the primary election period, despite the Olympics bribery scandal). (See Chen, 2003.)

Big Love, a TV series that aired on HBO between March 2006 and March 2011, also brought attention to the LDS Church because of its depiction of what was described as a fictional fundamentalist Mormon family that practiced polygamy. The headline news stories about the raid in Eldorado, Texas by Child Protective Services and law enforcement officials of the Yearning for Zion ranch in 2008 also included mention of the LDS Church because of the historical ties of members of the Texas group with the Mormons headquartered in Salt Lake City, and because of the confusion among media outlets and members of the public (domestic and international) about the differences between them.

"This intense media activity by and about Mormons and Mormonism begged for study."

Baker: Media continued:

Ponder

These events were taking place during the same time frame in which the LDS Church was rapidly embracing new communications technologies, and producing media content in multiple formats for internal applications, as well as for external messaging. Many of the Church's stepped up efforts to produce communications for media and public consumption clearly were related to the ways in which Mormons and Mormonism were being represented and discussed by the traditional media, and in on-line venues.

In December 2007, the Church made a call for Mormons to join the conversation about Mormonism by producing media content of their own, especially on the Internet, and by responding to what was being said about Mormons. This call was articulated by Elder M. Russell Ballard, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the LDS Church, who urged members to share their beliefs on the Internet, saying in part:

"The emergence of New Media is facilitating a world-wide conversation on almost every subject including religion, and nearly everyone can participate. ... Conversations will continue whether or not we choose to participate in them. But we cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches. ... The challenge is that there are too many people participating in conversation about the Church for our Church personnel to converse with and respond to individually. We cannot answer every question, satisfy every inquiry, and respond to every inaccuracy that exists. ...some who seek answers want them to come directly from a member of the Church, like each one of you. ... May I ask that you join the conversation by participating on the Internet, particularly the New Media, to share the gospel and to explain in simple and clear terms the message of the Restoration." (See Ballard, 2007 & 2008.)

This call for rank and file members to create media messages about the Church (media content that was not produced or distributed by the Church itself, or pre-approved through the Church's correlation system) was a real sea change for an organization that for so long had been vigilant about controlling its own message and image.

The response to Ballard's call was immediate. As Kellner (2013) recently has written, "Since then, Mormon testimonies have exploded over the Internet, with the LDS Church joining in by posting hundreds of videos on its own YouTube channel. Public perceptions of the Church may well change because of the digital outreach." (See Mormon Blogs and YouTube channel.)

This intense media activity by and about Mormons and Mormonism begged for study.

Baker: Media continued:

Mormon Media Studies as an Emerging Discipline

There is a rich academic literature about Mormons and the media that has arisen from several disciplines over the years – especially having to do with representations of Mormons in print media throughout the Church’s history. For a bibliography (1898-2003) and discussion of academic studies about this topic, see Baker and Stout, 2003 (currently being updated). See also a comprehensive timeline of Mormon media history (1827-2007) in Baker, 2008 (currently being updated) which also contains numerous bibliographic references to scholarship about Mormons and the media.

Despite this academic production by scholars over the decades, and despite the development of Mormon Studies in recent years, a discipline or an academic venue specifically devoted to the topic of Mormons and the media did not exist during the first decade of the 21st century (and still does not, other than the symposia discussed herein).

The mid- 20th century saw the emergence of several Mormon Studies groups or publications, such as the Mormon History Association, *Dialogue*, and *Sunstone*. There now are many more including (this is not a complete list): the Association for Mormon Letters; the European Mormon Studies Association; the Mormon Social Science Association; the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR); the John Whitmer Historical Association; the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation; the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology; and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, including its recently announced Mormon Studies Review (see BHodges, March 25 & 27, 2013).

Members of these groups often produce scholarship with reference to media coverage of particular Mormon issues during various periods, but none of them go specifically and directly to the study of Mormons and the media as a focused discipline. They are devoted to other purposes.

In the 21st Century, Mormon Studies began to develop in academe: in 2007, the Arrington Chair of Mormon History and Culture was established at Utah State University; in 2008, the Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies was established at Claremont Graduate School in Southern California. Mormon Studies programs also were launched at the University of Utah and at Utah Valley University during this period of time. (I will not wade here into the current discussions and debates about what does or should constitute Mormon Studies as a discipline.)

Within the context of the historical moment, including the development of Mormon Studies on several different fronts, the intense media coverage of Mormon-related issues, the extensive efforts by the LDS Church to produce and respond to media, the presence on the Internet of wide-ranging user-produced content and discussion about all things Mormon (from its history to

"An argument could be made that the LDS religion owes its success in part to its history of adapting to and making use of emerging media technologies."

Baker: Media continued:

its theology to its 'magic underwear'), and with Mormons responding to the call to make their voices heard on the Internet - the time was ripe to articulate a specific academic focus for Mormon *Media Studies* as an emerging sub-discipline beneath the broader umbrellas of Mormon Studies, Religious Studies, and Media and Religion Studies. (See Stout and Buddenbaum (2002) for the recent development of this latter field.)

Religion and Media

The LDS Church and its members and beliefs, have been spotlighted in the media throughout the Church's history, and have been highly visible in recent years, as discussed above. The institutional Church and individual Mormons also have been proactive since the religion's inception in the production of media content, and in the use of new communications technologies as they were developed. (See Baker, 2008, and Baker & Mott, 2011.) While circumstances and technologies have changed over time, the media have been central to the Mormon experience, and to the interface of Mormonism and its adherents with societies, governments, institutions, and individuals.

An argument could be made that the LDS religion owes its success in part to its history of adapting to and making use of emerging media technologies. Some scholars have suggested this cause and effect for other religions, as discussed in the following passages from Baker & Mott, 2011.

"In the book *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, Leonard I. Sweet discusses the "interplay in American history between the emergence of new communication forms and religious and social change" (Sweet, 1993, p. 1). He cites scholars such as Averil Cameron, Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark, who concluded that "those religious leaders who have made the biggest advances have been those who worked out of their tradition to express their faith through innovative ways and means, idioms and technologies accessible and adapted to the times in which they lived" (Sweet, 1993, p. 2).

"Sweet also cites Colin Morris's book on Christian communications, which suggests that "many of the exciting new twists in the Christian story over the centuries have occurred because advocates for Christianity have exploited developments in communications technology" (Sweet, 1993, p. 2 citing Morris, 1990).

"Further, Sweet refers to historian Nathan Hatch, who has written that success in America's religious marketplace is explained by "the ability of religious groups to adopt and adapt to the democratic and populist impulses of American culture, and to use popular forms of communication to reach the widest possible audience" (Sweet, 1993, p. 2, citing Hatch, 1989). Conversely, mainline Protestantism, which made excellent use of print technology throughout its history, did not successfully adapt to and exploit broadcast technologies. (Sweet, 1993, p. 61.)

Baker: Media continued:

“While there is no well-developed theory of media and religion, this observation of the relationship between the successful use of communications technologies and the success of organized religions is worth consideration. This relationship is consistent with the views of communications theorists like Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong. They held, according to Sweet, that “communications structures are more than mediums of transmission” in that they affect “every nook and cranny of society, including the intellectual and social girders that underpin that society” (Sweet, 1993, p. 50).

“This view is summarized by Marshall McLuhan’s well-known statement that “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 7). This means essentially that “communications media themselves, apart from their content and programming, are dynamic and even determinative forces. The medium changes and shapes history and culture; it creates and alters perceptions of reality and truth” (Baker, 2008, p. 118).

“In a related view, Neil Postman has argued that “technological change is not additive; it is ecological,” adding, “What happens if we place a drop of red dye into a beaker of clear water? Do we have clear water plus a spot of red dye? Obviously not. We have a new coloration to every molecule of water. That is what I mean by ecological” (Postman, 1998, p. 5). Postman had argued earlier: “One significant change generates total change. . . . A new technology does not add or subtract something. It changes everything. . . . After television, the United States was not America plus television; television gave a new coloration to every political campaign, to every home, to every school, to every church, to every industry” (Postman, 1993, p. 18). Consistent with this ecological view is James B. Allen’s observation that older Latter-day Saints living in the year 2000 experienced “a different Church than they had known 50 years earlier” (Allen, 2007, p. 120)—not the same church plus new technologies but a different church.

“The assumption of the centrality of communications media to the success of religions is a useful backdrop to any narrative about use of the media, and about the progress of the LDS Church.” (Baker & Mott, 2011, pp. 340-342.)

Mormon Media Studies Symposium

Early in 2009, as a humble beginning by which to form community around these and other issues within the Mormon context, a few of my departmental colleagues and I met to begin a listserv of scholars from across the country who might have an interest in Mormon Media Studies. It was only a short time before list members began suggesting that we should hold a conference. Things came together quite quickly, and the first-ever Mormon Media Studies Symposium was held on November 11-12, 2010 at the BYU Harman Conference Center. (See Mormon Media Studies Symposium 2010.) It was sponsored by the Department of Communications and the College of Fine Arts and Communications at BYU, and co-sponsored by BYU Broadcasting

Baker: Media continued:

(which was celebrating in 2010 its 50th anniversary, as well as the 10th anniversary of BYU-TV), and by *BYU Studies*. The theme of the conference was “Mormon Media Studies: Across Time, Space, and Disciplines.”

For a first conference, it was surprisingly successful. There were about 1,000 seats filled on each of the two days of the event. The keynote speaker was Terryl Givens speaking on the topic “Fraud, Philanderers, and Football: Negotiating the Mormon Image.” (See Israelsen-Hartley, 2010; and Givens, 2011.) The Symposium 2010 featured more than 30 academic paper presentations; multiple panel discussions on a wide variety of topics including Mormon bloggers, Church public relations, film screenings, and documentaries. (See Symposium 2010 Schedule.)

Several of the papers presented later became journal articles and book chapters, thus resulting in the symposium having fostered a real contribution to the field. The positive outcomes and responses to the conference by scholars and attendees confirmed the need for, and an interest in, the topic of Mormon media studies--so it was decided to do it again in two years.

The Mormon Media Studies Symposium 2012 was held November 8-9, 2012, again at the BYU Harman Conference center, and was sponsored by the BYU Department of Communications, and the College of Fine Arts and Communications. (See Mormon Media Studies Symposium 2012.) Attendance was again high. The theme of the 2012 conference was “Mormon Moments(s) and the Media.” Dr. David Campbell of Notre Dame was the keynoter, speaking on the topic “The Mormon Dilemma: The Pros and Cons of Being a Peculiar People.” His presentation was based upon the research gathered for his co-authored book *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (2012) by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell. (See Jones, 2012; also see Guibert, 2012, for related data about Mormons.)

Highlights of the Symposium 2012 included a roundtable discussion, with Dr. Campbell and other nationally recognized experts on religion and politics, sponsored by the BYU Charles Redd Center for Western Studies. There were approximately 100 named participants on the program (which included panelists and paper co-authors); 34 academic paper presentations on Mormons and the media (including several in the Young Scholars session); 9 panel discussions; 3 documentaries and 2 movies by and/or about Mormons and the media; and a special session on publishing Mormon-related scholarship. (See Symposium 2012 Schedule.)

The conference schedule was planned during the 2012 election season in which Mormons were covered extensively in political news (the conference began just two days after the election), and also during the period in which both the *Book of Mormon* musical and the “I’m a Mormon” advertising campaign were in full swing. The sessions related to these issues had the highest interest and attendance.

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Baker: Media continued:

The Symposium 2012 had a publishing arrangement with the *Journal of Media and Religion (JMR)* which had expressed an interest in publishing select symposium papers in a first special edition in a planned series on media and various faith traditions. As a result, 16 symposium papers were submitted to JMR for consideration. (As of this writing, no word has yet been received as to which or how many of these papers will be accepted.) The Symposium 2012, like the one before it in 2010, was successful in promoting scholarly production. This was especially important to the organizers because scholarly production was a key element in the vision for the conference. (See Symposium 2012 Vision.)

Feedback about the conference was again positive, and discussions are now underway about the possibility of holding another in 2014.

Mormons, Media, and the Mormon Moment

The 21st Century launched the LDS Church and its members (together with the rest of the world) into a new era caused by the explosion of on-line electronic communications.

The Church and its members came into the public spotlight with increased intensity during the decade from 2002-2012, due to this technological revolution combined with various societal events such as the Winter Olympics of 2002 which were held in Salt Lake City; political events, such as the two Romney campaigns for the presidency and the Church's involvement in California's Proposition 8 ballot initiative; and Mormon individuals or depictions of Mormons appearing in popular culture, such as Stephanie Meyer and her top selling Twilight book series and the movies based upon them, and the Tony and Grammy award-winning *The Book of Mormon* musical.

Much has been written about the Mormon Moment, a term which refers primarily to the heightened visibility, participation, and representation of Mormons and the LDS Church in society and in media. (However, see Walker, 2012, for a report of Michael Otterson's views about the Mormon Moment.) This Moment will provide fodder for scholarship for years to come.

Perhaps among the most enduring outcomes of this moment are not the ways in which Mormons and Mormonism were represented, but the ways in which the Church and its members embraced and made use of the new media environment, and developed skills and philosophies for participating in public discourse and responding to public scrutiny. While the concept of the term Mormon Moment refers primarily to the coverage of Mormons and Mormonism from an external viewpoint, this period of time also marks an internal Mormon moment with regard to LDS media activities. This includes the ways in which the Church implemented new technologies; encountered media representatives and organizations; produced content that the media

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Baker: Media continued:

could use; managed its image; designed and disseminated its messaging; and responded to the ways in which it was represented.

The Church put in place a comprehensive media strategy for the Olympics, for example; created and attended to its on-line Newsroom (www.Mormonnewsroom.org); produced its "I'm a Mormon" advertising campaign; initiated an on-line missionary program; and fostered the development of a number of blogs, including the one by Michael Otterson (managing director of Public Affairs for the Church) on WashingtonPost.com. Additionally, the Church stayed attuned to and (sometimes) responded to the concerns of various aggrieved or discontented groups including members of other Christian religions, Jews, African-Americans, the LGBT community, feminists, and various heterodox- and anti-Mormon Internet communities.

One result of the Church's media activities during the Mormon Moment was that the message and tone of its strategies for responding to ridicule or depictions that Mormons found offensive, became deliberately and fully developed, and publicly recognized.

In response to an upcoming Big Love episode depicting Mormon temple ceremonies, the Church issued a statement in March 2009 stating in part that "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as an institution does not call for boycotts," that "when expressing themselves in the public arena, Latter-day Saints should conduct themselves with dignity and thoughtfulness," and that:

"Not only is this the model that Jesus Christ taught and demonstrated in his own life, but it also reflects the reality of the strength and maturity of Church members today . . . with a global membership of thirteen and a half million there is no need to feel defensive when the Church is moving forward so rapidly. The Church's strength is in its faithful members in 170-plus countries, and there is no evidence that extreme misrepresentations in the media that appeal only to a narrow audience have any long-term negative effect on the Church." (See *The Publicity Dilemma*, 2009.)

This statement served as a guiding principle for responses from both the institutional Church and its members two years later when *The Book of Mormon* musical took to the stage. The official statement from the Church about the musical said: "The production may attempt to entertain audiences for an evening, but the *Book of Mormon* as a volume of scripture will change people's lives forever by bringing them closer to Christ." It then made reference to its earlier statement about *Big Love* to communicate its philosophy. (See *Book of Mormon Musical: Church's Official Statement*, February 7, 2011.)

This statement about *The Book of Mormon* musical was quoted repeatedly in news coverage about the play, and it has come to be seen as a signature response from the LDS Church—one which defines the Church, in a sense.

"There is now a clamor of voices, opinions, and perspectives by and about Mormons available in an instant by simply entering a few search terms into one's computer, tablet, or smart phone."

Baker: Media continued:

The Church's response strategy reached what many saw as an even more surprising new level when it began buying 3-page ads in the musical's programs with pictures of people one presumes to be Mormons stating: "You've seen the play...Now read the book," "I've read the book," and "The book is always better." (See photos of these ads in Biesenback, 2013.)

This ad campaign in the playbills has been referred to in the media as "turning the other cheek," "taking the high road," "rising above the fray," or "taking a passive approach" to a play in which Mormons are not favorably represented. (See for example: Biesenback, 2013; Goodstein, 2011; Hicks, 2011; Larmondin, 2013; Morain, 2013; Ng, 2012; and Nollen, 2013. See also Walker, 2013.)

Church personnel reportedly operated at a fevered pitch to keep up with everything that was happening during the Mormon Moment, and it seems to be generally agreed that the Church did a good job in its interactions with the press and in applying effective public relations strategies. Its efforts and initiatives should be studied, especially with a focus on their effects and outcomes. While a Pew Forum study concluded that "America's 'Mormon Moment' is over, and public opinion appears to be little changed," it also reported that "some attitudes have softened." (See Pew Forum, 2012.)

The development of email, the Internet, blogs, and YouTube have allowed the media and the general public to discuss and circulate information and opinions about Mormons and Mormonism in ways that were not previously possible, and for the organizational church, and individual members as well, to join the conversation by producing and circulating their own messaging. There is now a clamor of voices, opinions, and perspectives by and about Mormons available in an instant by simply entering a few search terms into one's computer, tablet, or smart phone.

The Church in 2013 is a different church than it was in 2000. The very experience of being a Mormon also has changed—largely as a result of new communications technologies.

Now it's up to scholars to document and ruminate about it all.

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Mormon Blogs and YouTube Channel: For Mormon blogs, see: www.ldsblogs.org/; www.mormonblogs.org/; www.mormonmomswhoblog.blogspot.com/. For Mormon YouTube channel see: www.youtube.com/user/LDSPublicAffairs.

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Future SSSR/RRA Meetings

2013
Boston, Massachusetts
Boston Westin
Waterfront
November 8-10

2014
Indianapolis, Indiana
JW Marriott Indianapolis
Oct. 31-Nov. 2

2015
Newport Beach,
California
Newport Beach Marriott
Hotel and Spa
October 23-25

For information about registration for the 2013 SSSR/RRA annual meeting, please visit www.sssrweb.org. Here, you will find details on location, cost, special events, and instructions for registering online.

Each year, the MSSA participates in the SSSR/RRA conference and sponsors various sessions throughout the weekend.

Plan

Upcoming Conferences

APRIL

- 26- Kirtland Sunstone Symposium: "Mormons in the Middle"
28 -Kirtland, Ohio
[-www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/)

JUNE

- 6-9 Mormon History Association: "The Crowded Landscape of the Mormon West(s): Agency and Action from the Wasatch Front to the Pacific Rim"
-Layton, Utah
[-www.mormonhistoryassociation.org/conferences](http://www.mormonhistoryassociation.org/conferences)
- 21- Center for Studies on New Religions: "Changing Religious Movements in a Changing World"
24 -Dalarna University, Falun, Sweden
[-www.cesnur.org/2013/swe-prg.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2013/swe-prg.htm)

JULY

- 31- Sunstone Symposium: "Mormon Bodies: Literal, Metaphorical, Doctrinal"
Aug -Salt Lake City, Utah
3 [-www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/)

SEPTEMBER

- 26- John Whitmer Historical Association: "Sojourn in Iowa"
29 -Council Bluffs, Iowa
[-www.jwha.info](http://www.jwha.info)

OCTOBER

- 3-5 Communal Studies Association: "Transitions in Leadership"
-Harmony and Old Economy Village, Pennsylvania
[-www.communalstudies.org/annualconference](http://www.communalstudies.org/annualconference)
- 9- Western History Association: "Vital Signs: Earth, Power, Lives"
12 -Tuscon, Arizona
[-www.westernhistoryassociation.org/conference/](http://www.westernhistoryassociation.org/conference/)

NOVEMBER

- 8- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/Religious Research Association Annual Meeting
10 -Boston, Massachusetts
[-www.sssrweb.org](http://www.sssrweb.org)
- 23- American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting
26 -Baltimore, Maryland
[-www.aarweb.org](http://www.aarweb.org)

Upcoming Calls for Papers Deadlines

Submit proposals by:

SEPTEMBER 1

for

Western History Association: "Vital Signs: Earth, Power, Lives"

to be held October 9-12, 2013
in Tuscon, Arizona

The 2013 program committee invites proposals on the theme of checking the "vital signs," those indicators of health and illness that societies as well as individuals need. They include such measures of well being as energy supplies and consumption, ecological and cultural diversity, the distribution of wealth and power, the ups and downs of climate, and the resilience of ecosystems and human communities.

The program committee strongly encourages full panel submissions and will consider single papers only when they can be reasonably matched with other panels or papers. When submitting an entire session or panel, include a brief abstract (250 words) that outlines the purpose of the session. Your designated contact person should submit the proposal. Each paper proposal, whether individual or part of a session, should include a one- paragraph abstract and a one-page c.v., with address, phone, and email for each participant. Indicate equipment needs, if any. The committee assumes that all listed individuals have agreed to participate. Electronic submissions are required and should be sent, with supporting materials, as a single document (PDF) to wha2013call@gmail.com.

For more information, visit: www.westernhistoryassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013-Call-for-Papers.pdf

Because of limited space, this is not an exhaustive list of upcoming conferences and calls for papers. We offer our apologies for any omissions.

More about the MSSA

The Mormon Social Science Association (MSSA) exists for the purpose of promoting and sharing the scholarly study of Mormon life.

Any person with an interest in the study of the social, cultural, or religious life of Mormons is eligible to join. MSSA provides contact and associations among researchers and educators working in both academic and applied settings. It is interdisciplinary and international in scope and purpose. The association participates in annual joint meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and the Religious Research Association (RRA). MSSA also publishes and distributes a semi-annual newsletter to its members.

For additional information, contact:
Mormon Social Science Association, c/o Ryan Cragun
401 W. Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33606
ryancragun@gmail.com

Visit us online at:
www.mormonsocialscience.org

New and Recent Publications of Interest

BOOKS

John G. Turner, [Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet](#) (Belknap Press, August 13, 2012).

Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, [The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life](#) (Ensign Peak, October 15, 2012).

Armand Mauss, [Shifting Borders and a Tattered Passport: Intellectual Journeys of a Mormon Academic](#) (Univ. of Utah Press, November 30, 2012).

Claudia L. Bushman and Caroline Kline (Editors), [Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection](#), (Greg Kofford Books, March 12, 2013).

Quincy D. Newell and Eric F. Mason (Editors), [New Perspectives in Mormon Studies: Creating and Crossing Boundaries](#) (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, March 18, 2013).

Philip L. Barlow, [Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion](#) (Oxford University Press, May, 2013).

MSSA Website

www.mormonsocialscience.org

The MSSA website is a wonderful resource for students, academics, and anyone interested in the social sciences and Mormonism. You'll find the latest news and announcements about job openings and upcoming conferences, downloadable copies of previous issues of the newsletter, an extensive bibliography, and convenient links to other academic journals and organizations. Also available: contact information, "Ask an Expert" archives, online due-paying, and MSSA leadership information.

We have done our best to include the most relevant recent book and article publications. We apologize if any significant contributions have been overlooked. You're always invited to email any announcements regarding new publications to Rene (reneromig@gmail.com) or Bosco (boscoocsob@gmail.com).

New and Recent Publications of Interest

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Roger Biles, 'A Mormon in Babylon: George Romney as Secretary of HUD', *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol 38, Issue 2 (Fall 2012): 63-89

Elizabeth E. Gordon and William L. Gillespie, 'The Culture of Obedience and the Politics of Stealth: Mormon Mobilization against ERA and Same-Sex Marriage', *Politics and Religion*, Vol 5, Issue 2 (August, 2012): 343-366

Wenshu Lee, 'For the Love of Love: Neoliberal Governmentality, Neoliberal Melancholy, Critical Intersectionality, and the Advent of Solidarity with the Other Mormons' *Journal of Homosexuality*, Vol 59, Issue 7 (August, 2012): 912-937

Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, 'The Doctrinal and Commitment Functions of Patriarchal Blessings in Early Mormon Development, 1834-45' *Journal for the American Academy of Religion*, Vol 80, Issue 3 (Sept. 2012): 718-749

Kathleen Flake, 'Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail: A Study in Canonization', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol 92, No 4 (October, 2012): 515-526

Joe P. Dunn, 'A Mission on the Frontier: Edward P. Tenney, Colorado College, the New West Education Commission, and the School Movement for Mormons and "Mexicans"', *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol 52, Issue 4 (November, 2012): 535-558

Rick Phillips and Ryan Cragun, 'Contemporary Religiosity and the Legacy of "Gathering"', *Nova Religio-Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol 16, Issue 3 (February 2013): 77-94

Joseph B. Stanford and Ken R. Smith, 'Marital Fertility and Income: Moderating Effects of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Religion in Utah', *Journal of Biosocial Science*, Vol 45, Issue 2 (March 2013): 239-248

Fenella Cannell, 'The Blood of Abraham: Mormon redemptive physicality and American idioms of kinship', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol 19, Issue Supplement S1 (May, 2013): S77-S94

Terryl L. Givens, Kathryn Lofton, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Patrick Q. Mason, 'Forum', *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol 23, No 1 (Winter 2013): 1-29

MSSA Dues

Please send your dues for
2013 to:

Ryan T. Cragun
University of Tampa
401 W Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33606

Dues are \$10.00
annually. Checks should
be made payable to
"Mormon Social Science
Association" or "MSSA."

Dues are also payable on
the MSSA website via
Paypal (which accepts
credit cards). If you
would like to receive this
newsletter by email, and
don't already, save the
MSSA some money by
sending your email
address to:
ryantcragun@gmail.com

Book Review

*Shifting Borders and a Tattered Passport:
Intellectual Journeys of a Mormon Academic*
(University of Utah Press, 2012)
by Armand Mauss

Review by Gordon Shepherd

Armand is not only a good scholar; he's also a good writer. These two qualities, of course, are not always commensurate. In Armand's case, however, solid scholarship and good writing strongly complement each other and are characteristic of his substantial body of published work.

As a good writer, Armand is adept at using metaphors. Take, for example, his earlier book on Mormonism entitled *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. As two iconic LDS symbols, the beehive and the angel signify Mormonism's worldly and otherworldly orientations in tension with one another; and they concisely embody Armand's thesis regarding the dialectical relationship between Mormonism's distinctive religious fundamentals and the dominant religious traditions and secular institutions of American society. Likewise, for the title of his intellectual memoir that we are reviewing today, Armand skillfully deploys the language of borders and passports as metaphors for rendering an exposition of his joint careers in academia and the Mormon faith community—parallel careers that have mutually shaped Armand's intellectual development and contributions to both academic scholarship and the LDS Church.

Whether they have good writing skills or not, most people do not write and publish their personal memoirs. We should therefore ask why some people do so and why anybody else should read them. In his forthcoming book, *Justifiable Conduct*, sociologist Erich Goode argues that memoir writing is primarily a rhetorical vehicle for self-vindication. All of us routinely attempt to justify ourselves in daily life by offering verbal accounts of our conduct in conversations with other people. Those who formulate more complex, vindicating accounts of their life's most prominent endeavors in written form offer prospective readers a memoir. To a greater or lesser degree, memoirs may be candid, honest, revealing—even confessional—but ultimately are always written from a self-vindicating perspective. This, Goode argues, is the author's primary motive for writing a memoir.

While this may explain why people write memoirs, it does not explain why other people read them. People read memoirs to learn something. By this I don't mean merely learning details about the personal lives of the rich and

Shepherd: *Shifting Borders* Review continued:

famous (let alone about people with more modest lives like Armand Mauss). We read memoirs for information that is potentially instructive, that reveals insights for a richer understanding of issues and events pertinent to our own lives and concerns, even when we must take with a grain of salt the author's personal representations of them. A memoir typically includes an insider's account of behind the scenes activities that are not widely known, including personal perceptions of other relevant actors who are necessarily involved in the author's narrative. Of course an author's accounts are biased, but a good memoir also constructs a meaningful historical context; it informs readers of the author's time and place and of the cultural surroundings, so that we learn something more about the world than the author's mere moral judgments of himself and his peers.

What is instructive in Armand's memoir? In the most general terms, Armand's memoir demonstrates how people may acquire and manage two central identities in frequent tension while maintaining an essential integrity to both. More specifically, we see in his memoir an earnest, maturational struggle to reconcile the timeless tension between religious faith and secular learning in such a way that he honors both the LDS tradition and academic social science—two often contending communities in which his religious and professional identities remain steadfastly rooted. Neither one of these identities can, in Armand's case, be fully understood apart from the other.

Needless to say, this is not the only pathway followed by budding, scholar-intellectuals raised (or as Armand puts it, "steeped") in the religious traditions of the LDS faith. Many others in Armand's shoes have ended up making very different choices, either distancing themselves from their hereditary faith or subordinating their scholarly preoccupations to Mormonism's lay demands and intellectual constraints. Armand has done neither. He has bridged these two worlds. He has managed to influentially negotiate his way back and forth through the halls of academe and the councils of the church in such a way as to make respected contributions to both.

What are Armand's contributions and how do they demonstrate the intimate connections between his religious and scholarly commitments? To answer these questions we must turn to the substantive contents of his memoir.

In Chapter One Armand narrates a summary overview of the major forming connections and events in his life. He was raised in California (rather than the Utah- Mormon heartland) by devout Mormon parents struggling to make ends meet during the Great Depression. Armand was always a good student in school. We can infer that he was bright, socially active, and increasingly confident in his own abilities and opinions. This included youthful, uncritical confidence in his religious faith, which he did not shy away from explaining or defending to his non-LDS peers. Armand's post-World War II experience as a youthful Mormon missionary in New England strongly reinforced his

Shepherd: *Shifting Borders* Review continued:

adolescent religious identity and self-confidence, but included at least one important new lesson that he internalized for the rest of his life. And that was the need to support one's beliefs with credible forms of evidence and documentation. Armand learned that simply asserting truth claims (religious or otherwise) in dialogue with educated detractors was not only ineffectual, it was personally humiliating and irresponsible. This lesson was strengthened later through Armand's undergraduate education at Sophia University, a venerable Jesuit school in Japan. The Jesuits were models of sophisticated erudition in defense of Catholic teachings while also being highly conversant in secular subjects. They were philosophically credible and they influenced Armand's aspirations toward becoming an articulate and scholastically well prepared defender of his own LDS faith.

There is not time to review in detail all of the shaping connections and events relative to Armand's intellectual maturation. Suffice it to say that while still an undergraduate student he got married to a very patient and supportive wife, commenced having a big Mormon family (eventually totaling eight children), served in the U.S air force, accepted and served in various lay LDS callings including counselor in a ward bishopric, worked an assortment of jobs to support his growing family, and eventually started taking graduate courses at Berkeley to earn a Master's degree and secondary teaching credential. Consequently, Armand began teaching in the public school system and eventually hired on as an instructor at a California state junior college. All of this is to say that Armand's family obligations and religious duties were at the forefront of his early adult concerns, retarding for over a dozen years his full immersion into academia. This lengthy interregnum also meant that before commencing his PhD studies in sociology (also at Berkeley), Armand was a mature adult, with a world view formed by his Mormon faith, middle class working values, and conservative political opinions that were sharply at variance with the emerging youth movements and radicalism of the 1960s.

It's also fair to say that, intellectually, Armand was profoundly influenced by his graduate education in sociology, studying with and encouraged by some of the prominent scholars in the discipline, including several with national standing in the sociology of religion. It was at this time that Armand began thinking seriously about the possibilities of studying his Mormon faith tradition through the academic lens of empirical sociology. This was not motivated by a loss of religious faith; to the contrary, Armand saw the prospects of satisfying his dormant intellectualism with regard to contested issues of Mormon history, theology, and cultural practices—and, we may also infer, the prospect of becoming a more credible and effective defender of the faith.

It should be noted, however, that at this point Armand was not interested in gaining a position at BYU, the LDS Church's flagship university, where he surmised his intellectual inquisitiveness and academic interest in the sociology of Mormonism would not be rewarded. Instead, after his graduate studies at

Shepherd: *Shifting Borders* Review continued:

Berkeley, Armand accepted a junior faculty position at Utah State, where he remained only two years before actively seeking a more prestigious academic appointment at Washington State University. There he successfully pursued his professional career until retirement in 1999. Since the turn of the new century, Armand has enjoyed a post-retirement career as adjunct faculty and a member of the LDS Council for Mormon studies at Claremont Graduate University.

Such is the skimpiest outline of the mobility of Armand's academic life. In forwarding his professional career, we see Armand's ambition at play as he pursued full integration and advancement in academia. This meant postponing his interest in Mormon studies to concentrate on more conventional social science research topics in the areas of social problems, deviance, alcohol studies, and social movements, for which he was able to win grants, cultivate a stable of graduate students, publish articles in reputable journals, and gain a national reputation in the field of social problems. During this time Armand contributed an occasional article on Mormon topics to *Dialogue*, but did not really shift his full attention to Mormon studies until achieving tenure and academic rank at Washington State.

Eventually, Armand's academic credentials won him editorship of *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*—the discipline's premier journal in religion—where he was able to enhance his visibility and reputation among scholars of religion, as well as enrich his own breadth of knowledge concerning religious issues that crystallized his understanding of contemporary Mormonism as a particular kind of religious movement in the modern world.

One major result of this crystallization was Armand's first book on the Mormon religion—*The Angel and the Beehive*—a landmark study published in 1994 that advanced Armand's highly influential thesis concerning the contending assimilationist and retrenchment tendencies of modern Mormonism. A decade later, Armand published another major book on Mormonism—*All of Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*—the culmination of his decades long preoccupation with racial issues confronting modern Mormonism in the 20th and 21st centuries.

In both these books Armand employed the critical, analytical methods and analysis of his scholarly training. Neither book is apologetic and both books have raised some defensive eyebrows in Latter-day Saint circles. At the same time, neither book is at all polemical and, to the discerning reader, we see in both books Armand's ultimately protective attitude toward his LDS faith in conjunction with his own scholarly integrity.

Armand, of course, has done far more for Mormon scholarship than write two major books. Over the years he has written numerous articles for *Dialogue*, the *Journal of Mormon History*, *Sunstone*, and various edited volumes of collective

Shepherd: *Shifting Borders* Review continued:

readings on Mormon topics— displaying in all of them his characteristically careful scholarship and underlying, respectful affection for the LDS Church and its rank and file members.

Of equal importance, Armand has actively supported and performed leadership roles in many of the most important organizations that have emerged over the past 40 years for providing non-official, auxiliary outlets for scholarship in the Mormon intellectual community. He was the Mormon Social Science Association's second president and remains a senior, highly influential member of that organization; he has served a term as President of the Mormon History Association as well; and, perhaps most influentially, he began serving on *Dialogue's* editorial board in 1979 and, for ten years was a member of its Board of Directors, including a stint as board chairman during a time of considerable upheaval and transition for the journal. Finally, in his retirement, Armand became and remains actively involved with the Claremont Graduate University's trend-setting experiment in developing a Mormon Studies component to its nationally renowned school of religious studies.

In all of these endeavors, both academic and church related, Armand's connections and aspirations with regard to his Mormon faith have undergone significant change. His early aspirations for advancement in LDS leadership ranks were deflected by his parallel advancement as a serious, academic scholar. His academic training in sociology sensitized him to the fact that all organizations, including the LDS Church, are socially constructed by human actors. He retains respect for ecclesiastical authority but does not view church leaders as infallible and feels free to offer what he considers to be balanced criticism when circumstances warrant. His mature, scholarly views on Mormon history and contemporary church functioning have occasioned some friction with local ecclesiastical leaders but have never produced serious ruptures in Armand's church standing. At the same time, Armand also characteristically has taken it upon himself to speak unofficially in defense of the church and its policies to media sources and his academic colleagues. And for decades as a prominent figure in the contemporary Mormon intellectual community, Armand has acted vigorously in promoting his views, both in his writing and various administrative positions. In so doing he occasionally has been involved in earnest disagreements with his fellow Mormon intellectuals, some of which are candidly recounted in his memoir.

As Armand himself says, his has not been a boring life. It is a life that reveals how one's passports granting passage across the borderlands of religious faith and secular learning may become worn and a little tattered by frequent use over time, but still remain intact. Anyone reading Armand's memoir not only will see the unfolding of his closely entwined religious and professional careers, but also will be enlightened about changing trends in the ecclesiastical culture of the LDS Church from the critical perspective of a preeminent, academic insider.

Bulletin Board

To include your own announcement or piece of news in the Bulletin Board, please send an email to Rene (reneromig@gmail.com) or Bosco (boscoocsob@gmail.com).

...a space for MSSA members to share news, announcements, and other tidbits.

"THE NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP at Brigham Young University is pleased to announce the inauguration of a new annual periodical that will address the needs of a growing community of scholars who contribute to the interdisciplinary field of Mormon studies. The *Mormon Studies Review* will publish reviews of important books and other publications relevant to the academic study of Mormonism, along with review essays that will chronicle the field and assess its development.

Later this year, a new website for the Neal A. Maxwell Institute will be launched including a portal for the Review. Blair Dee Hodges, public communications specialist for the Institute, will maintain the Review's online content, including a continually updated calendar of Mormon studies events and advance publication of selected reviews.

It is anticipated that the first print volume of the Review will be available this winter. For subscription information, contact the Maxwell Institute at maxwell_institute@byu.edu or call 800-327-6715."

-taken from 'Announcing the new Mormon Studies Review' by BHodges on the Maxwell Institute Blog; full text available at: www.maxwellinstituteblog.org/announcing-the-new-mormon-studies-review-2/

A JOB OPENING in the Research Information Division of the Correlation Department of LDS Church Headquarters has been announced. Applications should be made by Friday, April 26, 2013. For questions, please contact Dr. Gary Walton at WaltonGR@ldschurch.org or by phone at 801-240-5475.

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA has created the Richard Lyman Bushman Chair of Mormon Studies in its Department of Religious Studies. For more information, see <http://news.virginia.edu/content/uva-creates-richard-lyman-bushman-chair-mormon-studies>.