

### The Social Composition of Mormonism

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### Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores the social differences between members of the Latter-day Saint Church and the larger US population in educational attainment, frequency of church attendance, political orientation, and conservative positions on family-related issues. In some areas the gaps between Mormons and the nation are increasing, and none of the differences between the LDS and the nation appear to be converging. Nationally, education has a negative or weak relationship with social characteristics like church attendance, political conservatism, single marriage, and large ideal family size, and strong negative relationship between education and conservative family values. By contrast, for Mormons, education has a positive relationship with the other factors, and the relationship between education and church attendance is quite strong. Among Mormons, education and church attendance reinforce each other and promote political and familial conservatism. Mormonism has a religiously active, educated core that tends to be conservative in the political and family spheres.

Keywords: social characteristics, political attitudes, social issues, conservative, education, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

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TWO important events in the first decade of the twenty-first century brought great attention to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints commonly referred to as the Mormon Church or the LDS Church. The first was the 2002 Winter Olympics, which were staged in Utah, headquarters of the LDS Church. The second was the candidacy of two members of the LDS Church, Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman, Jr., for the Republican presidential nomination. Despite the publicity, many people continue to have misperceptions about the LDS Church. In this chapter we present some demographic, social, and religious characteristics of LDS Church members in the hope that the additional information will clarify misunderstandings.

Several studies have demonstrated that members of the LDS Church have interesting distinctive social characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Most of this research is based on United States samples, and our analysis refers to the US unless otherwise noted. But religious group characteristics are not static, due to internal dynamics, the changing characteristics of the US popu-

lation, and shifting membership created by conversion and disaffiliation. Our goal is to update and advance understandings of social characteristics in three important ways. First, we examine evidence from recent national surveys to assess current distinctiveness. We also provide comparative data of LDS characteristics in four countries where the national censuses include religion and where the LDS Church has a significant number of members. Second, we use the General Social Survey (GSS) to examine trends in the characteristics of members of the LDS Church in the United States. The GSS allows us to consider trends in the Mormon differences from 1972 to 2010. We categorize social life into socioeconomic status, religiosity, family life, health and happiness, and social and political attitudes. Third, we assess the salience of key differences. We define salience as the degree to which differences are greater among those who play a central role in the religious community as indexed by frequency of religious participation and educational attainment based on the assumption that those with higher education and more frequent participation have more influence in the organization.

### (p. 310) **Description of Data Sources**

We use the data from several sources to examine the social and demographic characteristics of members of the church. Much of our analysis relies on the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Organization at the University of Chicago from 1972 to 2010.<sup>2</sup> This survey is a nationally representative sample of approximately 1400 individuals, which was conducted yearly until 1978 and biannually, with a doubled sample size, since then. It includes a variety of questions about religion. Though the number of LDS in any one survey is small, we report data for each decade (1972–79, 1980–89, 1990–99, and 2000–10) to examine trends in the LDS community.

We augment this analysis with two recent national surveys that focus on religion. The first of these is the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) conducted by City University of New York in 2007.<sup>3</sup> Second, we include data from two surveys done by the Pew Research Center. The first Pew study was conducted only among members of the LDS Church from October 25 to November 16 of 2011.<sup>4</sup> It was a telephone survey of 1019 adult LDS respondents. The survey oversampled regions of the country where “Mormons are most numerous” and the sampling process involved “re-contacting Mormons identified in prior Pew surveys” to better represent LDS populations in other areas of the country. Thus, the survey may not be as representative of all LDS members as it would be if they had used a completely random sample. Nevertheless, the Pew sample is a reasonably representative sample of LDS in the United States, and it has the most recent data available nationwide. The other Pew study was a nationally representative survey of 35,556 people. This second survey, published in 2008, included 576 individuals who self-identified as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Finally, we use census data from four countries besides the United States: Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and the Philippines.<sup>5</sup> These countries are relevant because they have large LDS populations and because the country censuses ask people to identify their religion.

# 1 Demographics

The LDS Church claimed a total membership of 13.2 million members in 2007 and 13.8 million as of January 2010. These are members of record, all those alive and who have been baptized at age eight or later and children of record (those under eight who have been blessed, but not yet baptized). The Church Almanac lists 5.9 million in the United States in 2007 and 6.1 million in 2010; the other members live outside the United States in countries throughout the world. The LDS Church counts all who have ever been baptized as LDS unless their names have been removed from the records by excommunication, or by their own request. Others may no longer self-identify as LDS even though the official records of the church still list them as members. The surveys (p. 311) we rely on estimate the number of members differently; they rely on self-identification of religious affiliation. The 2007 ARIS survey extrapolated from their surveys to estimate that 3.158 million people in the United States were LDS in 2007 (1.4 percent of the population). Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and the Philippines are the only countries outside the United States with at least 500,000 members of the LDS Church. The ARIS survey also reports that 1.4 percent of the adult population in 2008 self-identified as LDS. The Pew survey found that 1.8 percent of the people in the United States say they were LDS in their childhood, but only 1.7 percent currently identified as LDS.

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Table 21.1 United States General Social Survey: sample sizes by decade

Decade	Religion		Total
	Not LDS	LDS	
1970s	10,583	69	10,652
1980s	13,992	249	14,241
1990s	13,077	146	13,223
2000s	16,769	202	16,971
Total	54,421	666	55,087

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The numbers (LDS and the national samples) from the GSS are presented in Table 21.1. Although the numbers change by decade, largely due to changes in sampling frames used, the 1.2 percent of the total sample who identify as LDS is consistent with other surveys.

Most of the members of the LDS Church living in the United States live in a corridor from Idaho (381,000 members), south through Utah (1.88 million) and Nevada (174,000) to Arizona (381,000). This distribution represents the historical settlement patterns established early in the history of the church in the West. California has 757,395 members (all numbers from *Church Almanac*, 2009–10). These states contain 59.6 percent of the members in the United States and 26 percent of all 13.8 million members in the world.<sup>6</sup> The Pew study reports that 76 percent of their LDS sample live in the “West.” According to the ARIS survey, just over half of the people living in the intermountain states are LDS (53 percent).

### Race

The LDS Church does not keep records by race or ethnicity, nor has it throughout its history. Researchers have made some estimates of race and ethnicity from the surveys. For example, 86 percent of the LDS respondents in the Pew survey were White; three percent self-identified as Black, 7 percent as Hispanic, and 7 percent were listed as “other” in the survey. The “other” category would include Asian and Polynesian. These categories (p. 312) add to more than 100 percent because Hispanic identity is asked separately from the race question. Thus, respondents could be both Hispanic and Black or White and Hispanic. The ARIS data show an even higher proportion of Whites among Mormons, 91 percent. Only 3 percent of the ARIS LDS sample report their race as Black and 3 percent were listed as Hispanic. In other countries, LDS members are also not likely to belong to ethnic or racial minority groups (see Table 21.2).

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Table 21.2 Race and ethnicity of LDS members in the four countries, estimated by percentage that speak other languages

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	Mexico		Brazil		Chile		Philippines	
	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country
<b>% who speak an indigenous language or member of Indigenous group</b>								
	4.4	10.3			4.2	4.5		
<i>% who speak</i>								
English							79.4	72.3
Philip- pino							93.4	91.1
<b>Race (Brazil)</b>								
White			61.2	55.0				
Black			6.3	6.7				
Indige- nous			.5	.4				
Asian			.3	.5				
Brown			31.1	36.8				

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Unknown			.5	.6				
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## 2 Socioeconomic Status

### Education

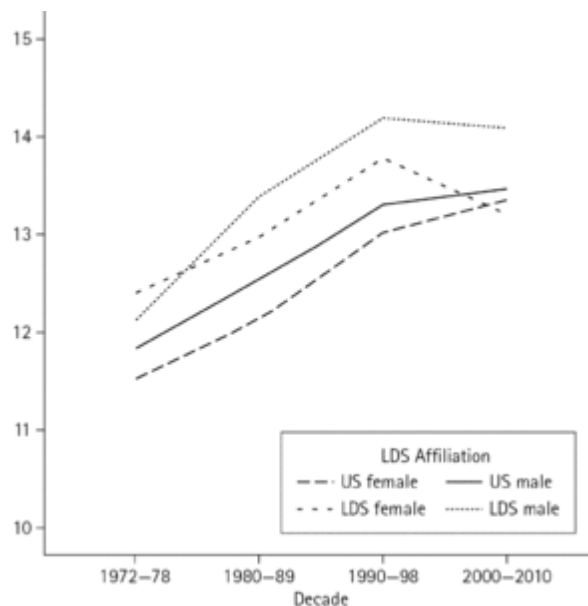


Figure 21.1 Trends in educational attainment (education measured on a scale from 0 to 20 years completed)

Mormons have an educational advantage compared with the national population. This difference has persisted in recent surveys. Figure 21.1 shows the trend. The graph shows that Mormons have somewhat higher educational levels than the population as a whole, and the trends in educational attainment between the LDS and others in the GSS data are parallel. The dip in the 2000s, however, is greater for Mormons. Moreover, the gap between LDS men and women appears to be growing, while the national gender gap is narrowing. Some of these recent changes may reflect variations in the sampling frames used. Overall, a multiple regression analyses of the GSS data indicates that LDS have nearly one more year of schooling than the rest of the nation. But the increase in education is less dramatic for Mormons even after controlling for Mountain Region. Statistical tests for interaction terms indicate that the gender difference in education is no greater (p. 313) for Mormons than for the national population of females and that the trend in education is similar for LDS males and females. The failure of these statistical tests to confirm the widening gap apparent in the graph highlights the need for larger samples to detect this trend.

The two surveys (ARIS and Pew) have slightly different numbers on the education of the LDS sample, but all are within the margin of error for surveys. Those with a high school education or less in the ARIS and Pew survey are 37 percent and 39 percent. Those who attended some college in the two surveys are (34 percent vs. 32 percent), and those who

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have graduated from college are (20 percent and 18 percent). Similar numbers have professional or graduate degrees (8 percent and 10 percent). In other words, about 30 percent of the LDS in the two US samples had graduated from college or had advanced degrees. This figure is roughly the same as the general population in the United States. In 2010, 87 percent of the total American population had graduated from high school and 30 percent had graduated from college or had an advanced degree.<sup>7</sup>

For the LDS women the story is somewhat different. The LDS women in Utah have less education than the non-LDS women in Utah. They are slightly more likely to be only a high school graduate (24.1 vs. 18.8 percent) and less likely to have completed a graduate education (8.3 vs. 17.5 percent). For LDS women living outside of Utah, the pattern is reversed (25.6 vs. 30) for non-LDS completed high school only. But the pattern is similar at the graduate level (7.0 vs. 12.9). Phillips and Cragun also note that, overall, the (p. 314) educational differences between LDS and non-LDS women outside of Utah are not statistically significant (note: the total sample size of LDS women living outside of Utah in the Pew study is only 285).

Table 21.3 Education and literacy of LDS members outside the US (aged 18+)

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	Mexico		Brazil		Chile		Philippines	
	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country
<b>Educational attainment (percent)</b>								
No schooling	4.0	11.6	3.6	13.2	2.5	4.7	2.1	3.3
Some primary	11.5	24.3	9.0	19.2	8.1	12.9	13.0	16.0
Primary completed	18.7	24.4	40.7	41.2	33.1	35.1	29.8	33.6
Lower secondary completed	27.6	20.4	8.5	4.0	8.3	6.2	—	—
Secondary completed	19.0	9.3	26.9	14.8	24.5	19.4	17.4	18.6

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Some college	7.3	3.2	6.1	3.1	8.9	8.4	22.2	16.9
Post-secondary technical	.6	.3	—	—	11.3	8.3	5.0	4.0
University completed	11.3	6.5	5.3	4.6	3.2	4.9	10.5	7.6
<b>Literacy</b>								
% literate	96.3	86.0	96.7	84.7	98.0	95.5	95.1	92.3

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In sum, both the ARIS data and the Pew data show few large differences between the LDS and the national averages on educational attainment. The GSS data show some difference, but it is modest. LDS in the United States have about the same education as others in the United States. Where there are differences, the LDS tend to have slightly higher educational attainment.

In other countries, the educational attainment of Mormons is somewhat higher than the national average. In each country, LDS members are more likely to go beyond primary schooling. They are also more likely to have college experience in each country except Chile (see Table 21.3). One explanation for these outcomes is that the LDS missionaries in each of these countries are often assigned to urban areas where the population is more likely to have higher education, occupational, and employment levels. And the members may be heeding the church's emphasis on obtaining higher levels of education.

### Employment Status, Occupation, and Income

The LDS Church has long placed an emphasis on the family, and leaders have often encouraged women to stay home with their children. Thus, it is not surprising that the number of LDS women in the workforce is somewhat lower than the nation as a whole. The ARIS data show that only 25 percent of LDS women in the United States (p. 315) work full-time, compared to 39 percent of all US women. The percent of the LDS women who work part-time, on the other hand, is higher than women nationally (23 percent compared to 14 percent). LDS women in the ARIS sample are also more likely to describe themselves as housewives (26 percent compared to 13 percent in the nation).

Comparable data from the GSS by decade are illustrated in Figure 21.2. The data show that LDS women are less likely than other women to work full-time. Multivariate analysis adjusting for age and region indicates that LDS women are only 60 percent as likely to work full-time as women nationally.

Lower full-time employment by LDS women is also observed in the last ten years of the GSS, and the gap between LDS women and women nationally appears to have widened in the most recent decade. This difference in the rate of decline is not statistically significant, however. We find that the association between frequency of church attendance and full-time employment is more negative for LDS women than is the case nationally. Full-time employment is especially low among the LDS women who regularly attend church. LDS men are less likely than other men to be employed full-time in recent decades. This could be a function of age, as LDS men are somewhat more likely to report working part-time or being in school. The LDS also tend to be slightly younger. The difference in full-time work is also not statistically significant.

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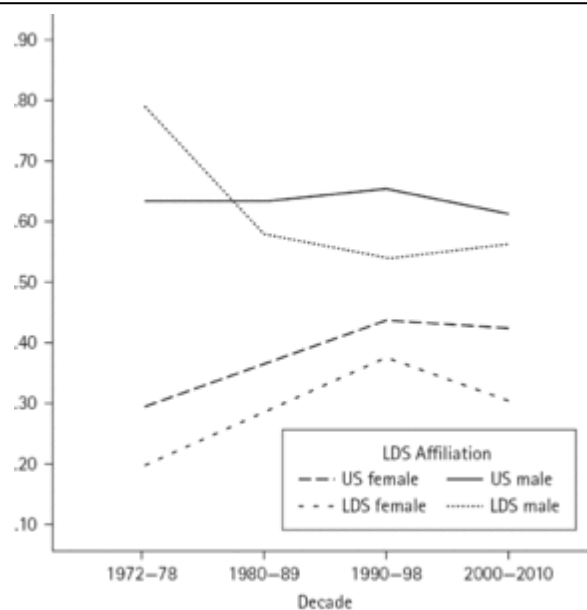


Figure 21.2 Full-time employment in the United States by LDS status and gender

The data from the four other countries tell a somewhat different story. Compared to their national populations, LDS members are a little more likely to be in the labor [\(p. 316\)](#) force in Mexico and Brazil, but not in Chile. Corresponding to higher levels of educational attainment and urban residence, LDS members are more likely to be in white collar occupations, and less likely to be farmers (see Table 21.4). These results likely reflect where LDS missionary efforts are directed—in the more urban areas. The emphasis on education in the LDS Church also may attract those who have higher educational levels.

Since LDS members in the four countries (where data are available) are more likely to be employed, more likely to be in white-collar occupations, and less likely to be farmers, their average income and wealth are somewhat higher in Mexico and Brazil. Measures of income and wealth indicate that Mormons are better off than the average person in Mexico and Brazil, but comparable to the national average person in Chile and the Philippines (see Table 21.5). The census data in these countries also present a wealth index based on household possessions.

The income of the LDS members in the United States, however, is roughly comparable to other Americans. The Pew study showed that roughly a quarter (26 percent) of the LDS members in the United States has incomes less than \$30,000. Just over a fifth has incomes between \$30,000 and \$50,000, and between \$50,000 and \$75,000 (21 percent and 22 percent respectively). Finally, a sixth (16 percent) has incomes from \$75,000 to \$100,000, and over \$100,000. The sample of all Americans has slightly more people at [\(p. 317\)](#) the top income levels, over \$150,000, whereas the LDS sample has more in the middle income groups.

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Table 21.4 Employment and occupational data on LDS members in four selected countries



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	Mexico		Brazil		Chile		Philippines	
	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country
<b>Employment status (percent)</b>								
Em- ployed	58.7	54.8	57.7	56.9	45.2	48.1	—	—
Unem- ployed	.8	.6	14.1	8.5	9.6	7.4	—	—
Inactive	40.5	44.6	28.1	34.7	45.2	44.5	—	—
<b>Occupation (percent)</b>								
Senior of- ficials	2.9	1.9	4.7	4.3	4.4	5.8	2.9	2.4
Profes- sional	13.0	7.6	8.6	5.5	6.7	9.5	10.3	6.8
Techni- cians	5.4	2.7	12.4	7.8	15.4	13.9	4.7	3.1
Clerks	13.0	7.5	12.4	7.5	9.9	8.5	4.8	4.3

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Service/ sales	20.2	14.9	26.5	21.5	18.0	12.6	7.4	6.5
Skilled agricul- ture	6.0	24.5	1.6	21.5	2.2	5.2	25.8	35.3
Crafts	18.6	17.3	14.9	15.0	14.4	12.8	12.1	10.6
Opera- tors	7.6	8.7	9.0	8.9	7.8	8.7	8.9	8.8
Elemen- tary oc- cupations	11.7	12.8	8.2	7.3	20.2	21.9	22.4	21.6
Armed forces	.2	.2	1.6	.8	1.0	1.0	.8	.7
Other	1.4	1.8	—	—	—	—	—	—

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Table 21.5 Income and wealth of LDS members in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and the Philippines

	<b>Mexico</b>		<b>Brazil</b>		<b>Chile</b>		<b>Philippines</b>	
	<b>LDS</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>LDS</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>LDS</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>LDS</b>	<b>Country</b>
Average wealth index	3.36	2.99	3.62	2.98	3.93	3.98	1.84	1.85
Average earnings	3970	3343	694	633	—	—	—	—
Average total income	3815	2968	466	425	—	—	—	—

### 3 Religious Beliefs and Practices

#### Beliefs

Mormons are a believing people. The Pew data show that 100 percent of their LDS sample believe in “God or a universal spirit.” This compares to 92 percent in their national sample. Further, 90 percent of the LDS say they are absolutely certain that God exists, and an additional 8 percent say they are fairly certain (compared to 71 percent and 17 percent nationally). Evangelicals’ beliefs in God are comparable to the LDS respondents. Ninety-one percent of the LDS view God as a “personal God,” compared to 60 percent of the United States and 79 percent of those who identify as Evangelical. Almost all (98 percent) LDS believe in a life after death and 88 percent of them are “absolutely certain” of a life after death (compared to 50 percent of the total sample). Ninety-five percent of the LDS profess a belief in a heaven, compared to 74 percent of the full sample.

A high percentage of LDS members express strong beliefs in basic Christian doctrines. For example, 80 percent completely agree that “miracles still occur today,” compared to 47 percent of the national sample. Nearly 6 in 10 (59 percent) say they believe “angels and demons are active in the world” compared to 40 percent of the total sample (and 61 percent of Evangelicals) who say this. Mormons do not take the Bible as literally as Evangelicals, however. When asked if the “Bible is the Word of God taken literally word for word,” only 35 percent of the LDS respond in the affirmative; most (50 percent) say it is not taken literally.

**(p. 318)** The LDS are more likely than all other groups to describe their religion as the one, true faith leading to eternal life (80 percent compared to 24 percent of the national population and 36 percent of the Evangelicals). Finally, they are far more likely (69 percent) to say they have “witnessed or experienced a divine healing” than the 36 percent of the Pew national sample.

#### Religious Practices

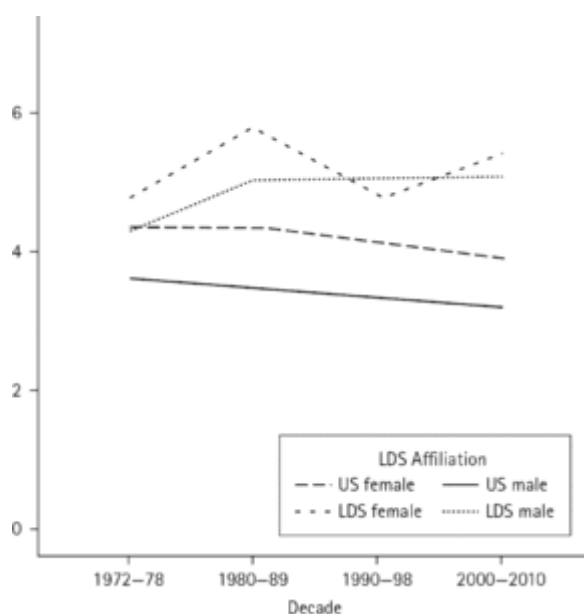
Mormons are also more active in religious practices than their national counterparts. Ninety-two percent of the LDS in the Pew sample say they are an official member of a local church compared to 61 percent of the national sample. Further, 75 percent say they attend religious services once a week or more (compared to 39 percent of the national sample and 58 percent of the Evangelicals). Mormons say they pray several times a day (66 percent compared to 38 percent of the national sample), participate in prayer groups (64 percent compared to 23 percent), read scriptures outside of religious services (76 percent compared to 35 percent), and work more with children or youth (45 percent compared to 17 percent of the national sample). At least part of the explanation for these results is that LDS congregations have no professional ministry, and so most positions are filled by lay members.

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The LDS also say they participate regularly in social activities of the church (25 percent say at least once a week), and they say they do community volunteer work through their place of worship (21 percent say at least once a week). The respondent's positive response to this question likely includes working with youth and young children.

The trends in religious attendance of the LDS vary from the national trends as well. Whereas the national trend is toward less frequent church attendance, the Mormon trend is relatively flat. Additionally, whereas the national data show that females, more than males, report frequent church attendance, the difference between male and female attendance of the LDS members is not large and appears to be quite stable for the past three decades (Figure 21.3).

### Religious Identification



*Figure 21.3* Frequency of attendance at religious services (scale is from 0 for never to 8 for more than once a week)

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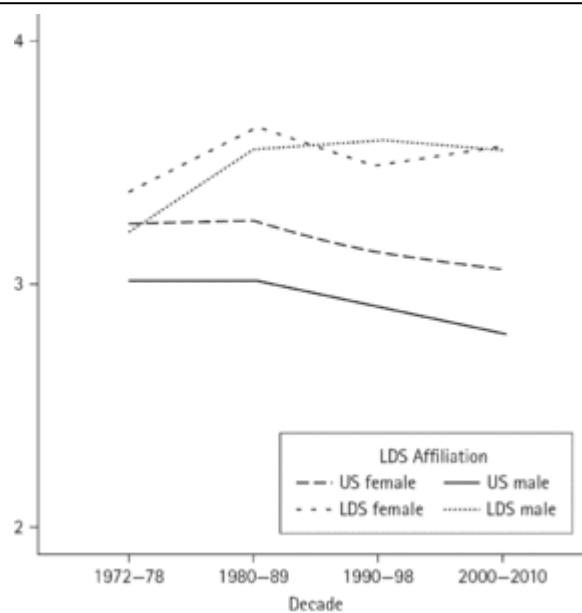


Figure 21.4 Strength of religious identification by sex and by LDS and non-LDS affiliation

Mormons also report greater strength of religious identification (on a scale from 1 to 4) than other Americans, and the trend in strength of identification is positive for Mormons, but negative for the country as a whole (Figure 21.4). The Pew surveys found that 83 percent of the LDS said religion was “very important” to them. Nationally, only 56 percent said it was very important to them. Considering both frequency of attendance and identification with religion, religion in the United States appears to be declining. The LDS, on the other hand, appear to have slightly stronger religious attendance and identification over the past forty years. The trend for the LDS from the 1970s to the 1980s increased, then remained strong. (p. 319)

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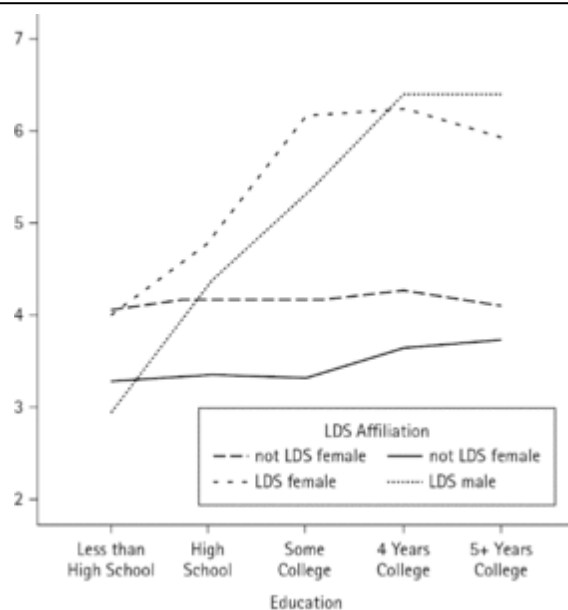


Figure 21.5 Church attendance by education

(p. 320) Whereas church attendance is essentially unrelated to education for the United States as a whole, education is strongly and positively related to church attendance for Mormons (Figure 21.5). This is a strong relationship for Mormons and this relationship plays an important role.

## 4 Marriage, Family, and Gender

LDS doctrine and culture emphasize the importance of marriage and the marriage practices of the LDS reflect these beliefs and values. Figure 21.6 shows the proportion of adults currently married. Although marriage is declining in the United States and for LDS as well, men are more likely to be married than women, and Mormons are 1.77 times more likely to be married than other Americans. These comparisons occur even after adjusting for age, region, and time period. The Pew study shows similar results; it found that 71 percent of the LDS sample were married; only 9 percent were divorced or separated. Twelve percent had never married and 5 percent were widowed. The 71 percent was the second highest percentage of all the groups. Hindus were higher (78 percent) but that figure likely reflects the immigration of Hindu families together.

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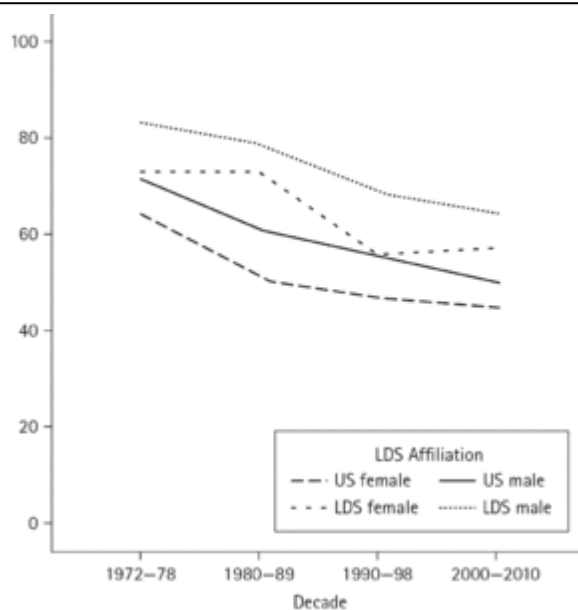


Figure 21.6 Percentage of LDS and Americans married by decade

(p. 321) The Pew study also shows that LDS members are highly likely to be married to someone of the same faith (83 percent). The next highest endogamy rates are for Catholics (78 percent), Jews (69 percent), and Historically Black Churches (69 percent). The endogamy rates for other groups such as most Protestant groups are much lower. Members of those faiths are likely to be married to other Protestants, however. Marriage is particularly salient among more educated Mormons: the relationship between education and being married is positive in the United States, and even more positive among Mormons.

The proportions of the ever married population currently divorced, separated, or ever divorced are increasing (Figure 21.7). The proportions of both the nation and the LDS who have been divorced have increased quite dramatically over the four decades covered by the GSS. The proportion of the LDS who have ever been married and divorced has remained lower than the national average, particularly for LDS males. If there is good news here, it is that the rate of divorce appears to have leveled off for the LDS in the last decade. Divorce is less likely among the more educated and among frequent church attenders, and these two patterns are accentuated among Mormons. This figure does not distinguish between “active” LDS and those who do not attend. Other studies have shown large differences in divorce between active and inactive LDS.



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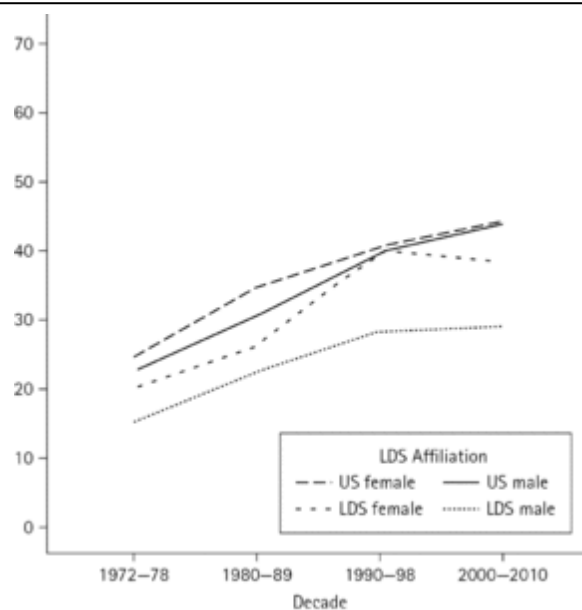


Figure 21.7 Proportion of those ever married who are currently divorced by decade

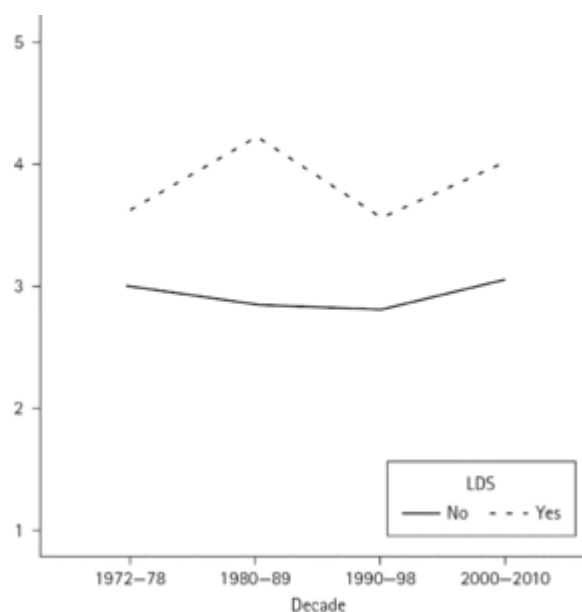


Figure 21.8 Ideal family size of LDS and non-LDS in the United States by decade

The LDS cultural and religious emphasis on marriage and families is also reflected in reported ideal family size (Figure 21.8). Mormons report having a larger ideal family size (the number of children they would like to have) than the US average. The average (p. 322) (p. 323) difference is one child more for Mormons. The trend line is not statistically different for Mormons than for the national population, but the positive relationship between church attendance and ideal family size is larger for Mormons than for the national population. The general tendency in the United States is for more educated people to report having a somewhat smaller ideal family size. The reverse is the case for Mormons,

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however (Figure 21.9). For the LDS, the ideal family size increases with education. The Pew study also found that the LDS tend to have more children than the national sample. Twenty percent of the LDS families reported having three or more children compared to only 9 percent of the national sample, and 9 percent report having four or more children. These percentages of the LDS subsample are the highest of any of the groups examined in the Pew data.

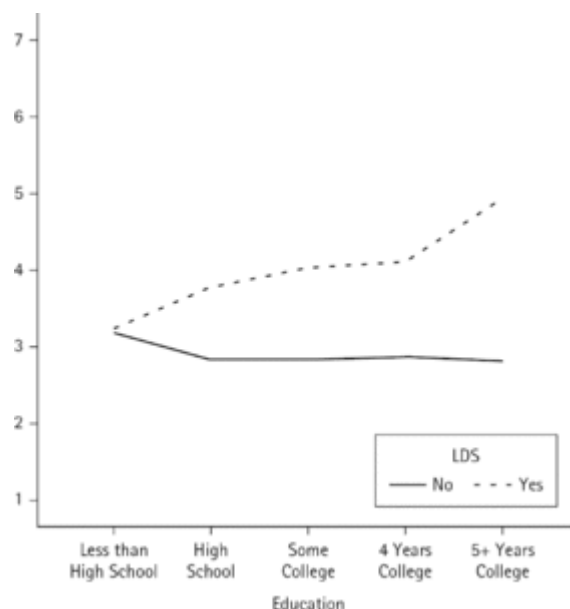


Figure 21.9 Ideal family size of LDS and non-LDS in the United States by education

The family characteristics of the LDS in the four other countries are reported in Table 21.6. Members of the LDS faith are slightly more likely to have never married compared to national averages in these other countries. They are also less likely to be in consensual unions; the LDS Church emphasizes the importance of marriage and discourages living together. Lower rates of widowhood among the LDS are likely due to the smaller size of the elderly population among the LDS. LDS members are less likely than others to report having only a religious marriage (in Mexico and Brazil). Rates of separation and divorce are higher among LDS members in each country except the Philippines. It is not clear whether this is because the divorced and separated are (p. 324) more inclined to join or because conversion to the LDS faith may be disruptive in some households. The LDS women in these countries have noticeably fewer children (15 to 20 percent) in Mexico and Brazil. Their family sizes are comparable to the national average in Chile. The apparent low fertility of Mormons in Mexico, Brazil, and Chile occurs because these Mormons are more educated than the national averages and are more likely to be in mixed-faith marriages where fertility is lower.

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Table 21.6 Family characteristics of LDS members (aged 18 and over)

	Mexico		Brazil		Chile		Philippines	
	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country	LDS	Country
<b>Marital status (percent)</b>								
Never married	25.1	22.6	32.7	27.7	31.6	30.0	27.7	27.1
Civil marriage	25.0	14.9	15.7	11.6	49.0	49.5	61.3	60.7
Religious marriage	.7	3.6	.4	3.0				
Civil and religious marriage	33.0	36.6	36.4	32.7				
Consensual union	5.6	12.7	5.6	15.0	8.2	9.4	4.4	5.3
Separated	4.0	3.0	2.2	2.3	6.1	5.1	1.4	1.4

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Divorced	2.2	1.0	2.8	2.0	.7	.5		
Widowed	4.4	5.7	4.2	5.6	4.5	5.6	5.2	5.5
<b>Average number of children ever born (females)</b>								
	2.39	2.78	2.17	2.75	2.43	2.38	—	—

## The Social Composition of Mormonism

In sum, the emphasis on family life is marked among Mormons in the United States, as evidenced by higher rates of marriage, lower rates of divorce, and larger ideal family sizes. These family characteristics are particularly salient for the most educated Mormons and those who attend church regularly. Emphasis on marriage is also seen in some other countries with large LDS populations, but it is less clear in the cases of divorce and family size. When education and marriage type are taken into account, Mormons have larger families, and the association between education and family size is less negative for Mormons than for the national populations.

## 5 Social and Political Attitudes

### Attitudes about Abortion

In this section we examine the social and political attitudes of the LDS samples. We begin with attitudes about abortion, one of the most controversial topics both in the United States and in the LDS community. The Pew research study asks simply whether abortion should be legal in all cases, most cases, illegal in most cases, and illegal in all (p. 325) cases. Only 8 percent of the LDS in the Pew Survey say that abortion should be legal in all cases (compared to 18 percent of the national sample). Conversely, 70 percent of the LDS in the Pew survey say that abortion should be illegal in most or all cases (compared to 43 percent of the national sample and 61 percent of the Evangelicals).

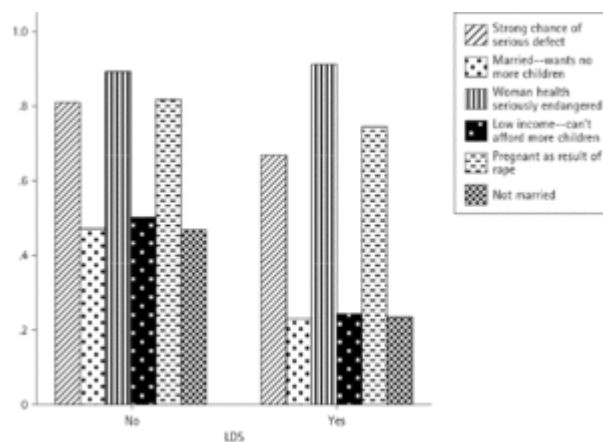


Figure 21.10 Attitudes of LDS and the Americans about abortion

The GSS also asks more specific questions about when abortion should be available. LDS attitudes toward abortion depend on motivations for the abortion, as is the case nationally. In the case of the mother's health being seriously endangered there is wide acceptance of abortion, and Mormons are similar to the national population (Figure 21.10). In cases of serious health defects for the baby or rape, somewhat fewer people think abortion is acceptable and Mormons have lower approval than the national population. In cases of unwanted pregnancies, poverty, or single motherhood, there is even less acceptance of abortion, and Mormons are even less accepting than the nation at large. The trend has

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been a gradual decline in the acceptance of abortion and this can be observed among the LDS population as well, but the test for the difference in trends between Mormons and the nation is not statistically significant. Moreover, church attendance is negatively associated with acceptance of abortion, and this association is similar for Mormons and the national population. However, the relationship between education and acceptability of abortion is positive in the nation, but negative for Mormons and the difference is statistically significant.

### (p. 326) Attitudes about Family Roles

Mormon men, compared to other men in the United States, express stronger preferences for mothers to be in the home with children. GSS respondents were asked three questions on this issue: whether children suffer if the mother works, whether preschoolers suffer if the mother works, and whether it's better for the man to work and the wife to take care of the home. Responses were combined and coded on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) with these statements to 4 (strongly agreed). The results are shown in Figure 21.11. Men are higher on this scale than women and Mormons are higher than the nation as a whole. Statistical analysis suggests that the trend is downward (less traditional) for all groups and that people who attend church more frequently are more likely to say mother's roles should be at home. Tests for interactions between religion and gender and religion and trend, are not statistically significant, however. In other words, Mormon men and women tend to favor more traditional familial roles for women, but they follow the national trend over time and their religious participation has a similar influence to that observed among other Americans. On the other hand, the relationship between education and favoring familial roles for women is negative in the national population, but nearly flat for Mormons.

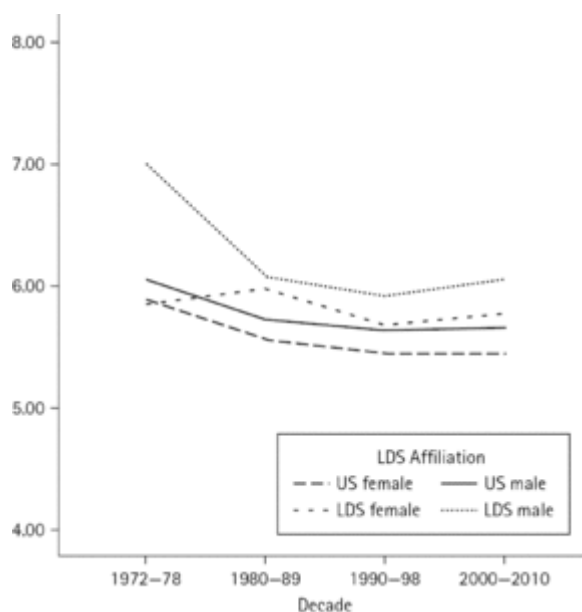


Figure 21.11 LDS and national attitudes about traditional family roles

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Mormons also tend to be more conservative on other family-related issues. Specifically they are less likely to favor sex education in public schools, relaxing divorce (p. 327) laws, sex before marriage, extramarital sex, or homosexual relations (Figure 21.12). If these items are combined into a scale, there is an indication that the national trend is to become more favorable toward these issues, but the LDS trend is to become less favorable. This is an area where the gap between LDS and national attitudes is increasing. Not surprisingly, people who attend church more frequently are more conservative on family values, and Mormons are no different in this regard. However, higher educational attainment is associated with more liberal family values in the nation, but the reverse is the case among Mormons.

Analysis not reported here indicates that Mormons are not very different from the national population with regard to attitudes regarding race. The GSS also includes a few measures of wellbeing and Mormons have somewhat higher averages on these measures, but the differences are not great.

### Political Identification

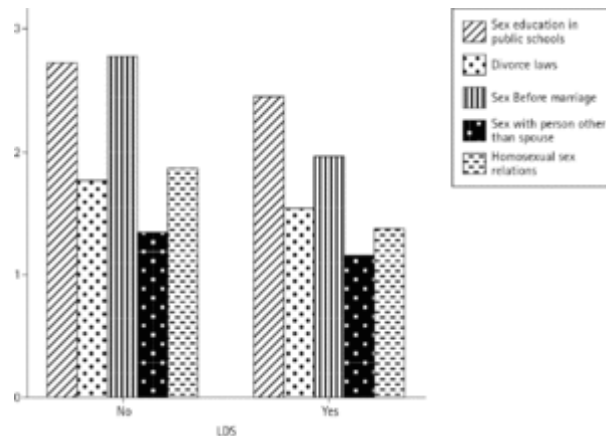


Figure 21.12 LDS and national attitudes about sexual issues

## The Social Composition of Mormonism

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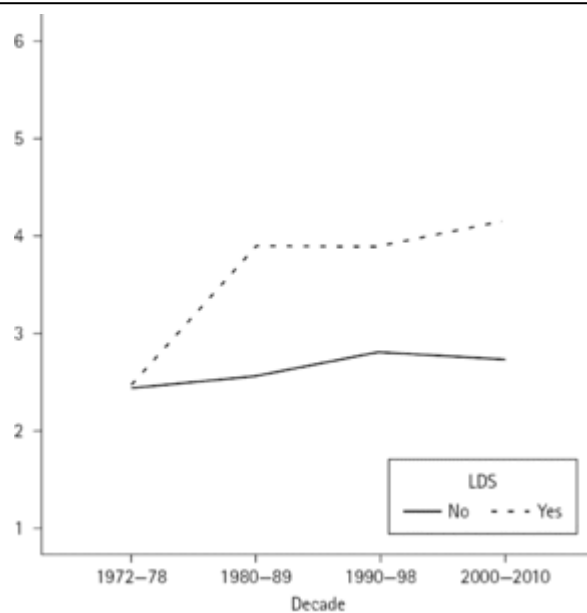


Figure 21.13 Political party identification (higher is Republican on scale 0-6)

Mormons tend to be Republican and conservative. On a seven-point scale ranging from 0 for strong Democrat to 6 for strong Republican, with independents scoring in the middle Mormons are 4.5 above the national average of about 4 (Figure 21.13). The results from the Pew study are somewhat stronger; 65 percent of Mormons say they are [\(p. 328\)](#) Republicans. Only 22 percent identified themselves as Democrats. The LDS in the ARIS data also show a strong identification with the Republican Party. Only 14 percent say they are Democrats, 59 percent say they are Republicans, and 27 percent are independents. In Utah two-thirds (66 percent) of the LDS identify with the Republican Party, whereas 56 percent of those outside the state of Utah identify as Republicans. The differences are not as great when considering political orientation. When the LDS respondents in the GSS were asked to rate themselves on a scale ranging from 1 for extremely liberal to 7 for extremely conservative, Mormons are above 4 compared to a national average below 3. There was also a noticeable shift to the right among Mormons in the 1980s (Figure 21.14). This was the decade in which the LDS Church took a strong stance against the Equal Rights Amendment for women. Since that time the LDS Church has also been active on conservative issues such as the Defense of Marriage Act and Proposition 8 in California, which overturned the California Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage. The church has justified its positions on these issues saying that they are theological or moral issues.

In general, those who attend church tend more often to be more Republican and conservative, and this tendency is even greater for Mormons. Sixty percent of the LDS in the Pew survey identified themselves as conservative; only 10 percent said they were liberal.

Nationally, education tends to be associated with slightly more liberal political views. With the exception of postgraduate education, however, Mormons with higher education tend to be more conservative.



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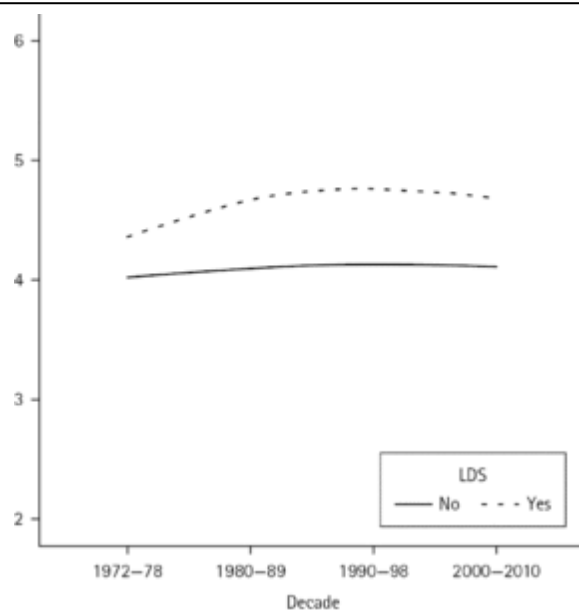


Figure 21.14 Political identification conservative vs. liberal, LDS and the nation

(p. 329) The Pew surveys show that the LDS members generally have strong views about a variety of political issues. They are more likely than the population to say the government should do more to protect morality in society (54 percent compared to 40 percent), but less likely to say that “the government should do more to help needy Americans, even if it means going deeper into debt” (49 percent compared to 62 percent). The LDS also opt for smaller government with fewer services (56 percent compared to 43 percent for the national sample).

Mormons are somewhat more likely than the national population to support the military. When asked, “What is the best way to ensure peace?,” the LDS are more likely than the national sample to say through military strength (37 percent compared to 28 percent). Conversely the national sample is more likely to say good diplomacy is the best way to ensure peace (59 percent compared to 49 percent). At the same time, the LDS are more likely to want the country to be “active in world affairs” (51 percent compared to 36 percent).

## Conclusion

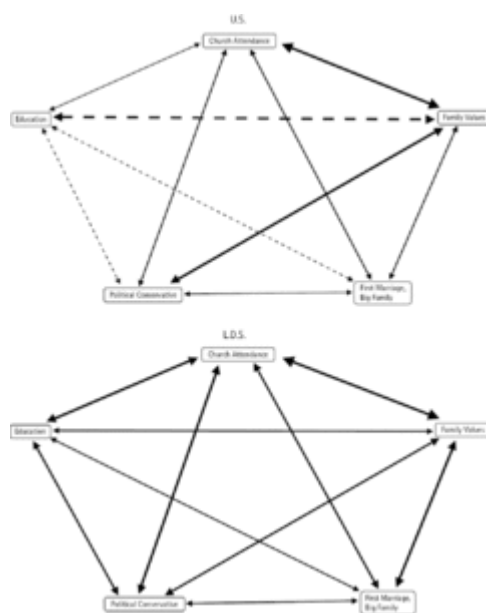


Figure 21.15 Relationships among social characteristics for the United States and Mormons

We present Figure 21.15 as a way to summarize the key results of numerous comparisons. It shows the factors that best distinguish Mormons from the national GSS samples. The important factors include educational attainment, frequency of church attendance, (p. 330) political orientation (liberal or conservative), being in a first marriage and having an ideal family size of three or more children, and taking a conservative position on family-related issues, including the role of mothers, opposition to abortion, and opposition to sex education, liberal divorce laws, and sex outside of heterosexual marriage. Mormons are higher on each of these characteristics than the population as a whole. In some areas the gaps between Mormons and the nation are increasing, (including church attendance and attitudes toward sexual behavior); none of the differences between the LDS (p. 331) and the nation appear to be converging. Arrows in the graph show the strength of the relationships—thicker lines show stronger relationships. Solid lines show positive relationships and dashed lines show negative relationships. Not surprisingly, the correlations among church attendance, family values, political conservatism, and being in a first marriage with a large ideal family size are positive for Mormons and the nation as a whole. The connection between church attendance and these other characteristics is somewhat more pronounced in the LDS population. The most striking difference in the two graphs is the role of education. In the nation, education has a negative or weak relationship with each of the other factors, and the negative relationship between education and conservative family values is particularly strong. By contrast, for Mormons, education has a positive relationship with each other factor, and the relationship between education and church attendance is quite strong. So the national pattern is for the more educated and the most religious (as measured by attendance) to tend to disagree on family and political issues. Among Mormons, education and church attendance reinforce each other and pro-

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mote political and familial conservatism. Education and regular religious participation increase a person's potential influence in the LDS Church. The LDS Church has a religiously active, educated core that tends to be conservative in both the political and family spheres.

The two other recent national surveys (ARIS and PEW) generally confirm the tendencies in the LDS membership to be religiously involved and to take a more conservative position on political and social issues. Once these data become available to researchers in an analyzable form, we expect to see the correlations with education and church attendance replicated.

Data from four other countries show the LDS to have some socioeconomic advantage that is associated with urban residence and a greater tendency to be married. Unfortunately, these data do not include any information on other social and political attitudes. They do show surprisingly small family sizes, given the LDS emphasis on marriage and family. This may be a function of higher socioeconomic status, urban residence, and a high portion of mixed-faith marriages.

In 2012 the Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States was a devout Mormon with substantial education, who espouses conservative political and family values. In many ways, Mitt Romney is the prototypical Mormon according to our analysis. We end with the caveat that overgeneralization from average tendencies can be misleading, however. The majority leader of the Senate also happens to be a Mormon Democrat. In statistical terms, our standard deviations are large and correlations are closer to zero than to one. This means that despite the correlations we report, there is substantial diversity within the LDS samples; not all are prototypical LDS members.

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### Notes:

- (1.) Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, *Contemporary Mormonism*. Heaton, Bahr, and Jacobson, *Statistical Profile of Mormons*.
- (2.) Smith et al., *General Social Surveys*.
- (3.) Phillips and Cragun. "Mormons in the United States, 1990–2008."
- (4.) Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Mormons in America"; Pew Forum, "US Religious Landscape Survey."
- (5.) IPUMS International.
- (6.) *Church Almanac* 2009 and 2010. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News.
- (7.) US Census "2012 Statistical Abstract, Table 229."

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