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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS  
IN NATIONAL PERIODICALS: 1991-2000

by  
Casey W. Olson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Religious Education  
Brigham Young University  
November 2007



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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Casey W. Olson

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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Date

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Richard O. Cowan, Chair

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Date

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Mary Jane Woodger

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Guy L. Dorius

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Casey W. Olson in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN NATIONAL PERIODICALS: 1991-2000

Casey W. Olson

Religious Education

Master of Arts

From 1991 through 2000, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints experienced a greater volume of national periodical attention than ever before in its history. This thesis surveys what was written about the Church in national magazines during that time and provides analysis of the effect of those writings on the Church's public image.

National periodicals may serve as an important gauge of the Church's public image because they address topics of national interest and also help to formulate public opinion on those topics. This study thus provides a basis for determining how the Church fared in terms of public perception by indicating which Latter-day Saint topics received the greatest attention. It also shows how magazine coverage of these topics may have reflected favorably or unfavorably on the Church.

This thesis is preceded by four similar studies. Richard O. Cowan completed a doctoral dissertation using national periodicals to analyze the Church's image from 1850 through 1961. Thereafter, Dale P. Pelo, Adam H. Nielson and Matthew E. Morrison respectively completed theses covering the three decades from 1961 to 1990. This thesis is a continuation of those studies, and implements the same research methodology.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I extend sincere appreciation to Brigham Young University for having provided a graduate degree in Religious Education which has so abundantly enriched my life.

I am thankful for Dr. Richard Cowan's guidance as my committee chair. As a scholar and as a person he is an exceptional mentor. Thanks also to Dr. Mary Jane Woodger and Dr. Guy Dorius who, as committee members, offered valuable suggestions which have improved the quality of this thesis.

Dr. Eric Hintze provided significant help in producing the tables and figures contained in this study, for which I am grateful.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to survey and evaluate periodical coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1991 through 2000. This thesis serves as a gauge for both advances and setbacks incurred by the Church from 1991 through 2000 in the arena of public perception. It is also an extension of past projects. Dr. Richard O. Cowan wrote his doctoral dissertation at Stanford University on “Mormonism in National Periodicals.”<sup>1</sup> His research spanned the years 1850-1961. Additionally, Dale P. Pelo,<sup>2</sup> Adam H. Nielson<sup>3</sup> and Matthew E. Morrison<sup>4</sup> respectively completed Master's theses in Religious Education at Brigham Young University, each extending the research begun by Cowan. Morrison’s thesis advanced the study through 1990. This thesis complements those previous works.

### Methodology

This thesis is limited in scope both by time period (1991-2000) and by sources consulted. It surveys only major popular national U.S. periodicals printed in English. It excludes all regional, scholarly, specialized, and exclusively electronic publications. It also excludes all religious periodicals, both those published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as those published by other denominations or faiths.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard O. Cowan, “Mormonism in National Periodicals” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> Dale P. Pelo, “Mormonism in National Periodicals 1961-1970” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> Adam H. Nielson, “Latter-day Saints in Popular National Periodicals 1970-1981” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Matthew E. Morrison, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in National Periodicals 1981-1990” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 2005).

This thesis also excludes articles containing only negligible reference to the Church; a substantive report of fact, opinion, or impression relative to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints must be offered in an article to qualify its inclusion in this research. These parameters limit the scope of this thesis to only those periodicals included in and comparable to those surveyed in the preceding studies by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson, and Morrison. This will maintain continuity between the studies.

Popular national periodicals were chosen as a source of study by Cowan because of his assertion that they reflect “prevailing points of view” and at the same time help “formulate public opinion” throughout the nation.<sup>5</sup> For this thesis, indexes providing the full text of periodical articles such as Academic Search Premier and Lexus-Nexus Academic were used to produce a list of sources from popular national periodicals addressing Latter-day Saint topics. This approach served to produce research stemming only from sources of general national interest, which, in turn, helped to more accurately document general public perception of Latter-day Saint topics.

Pertinent articles were categorized according to a methodology employed by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson, and Morrison. The following categories were established in order to measure bias relative to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

- obviously biased "anti-Latter-day Saint" writing
- unfavorable
- o neutral approach
- + favorable description
- ++ "pro-Latter-day Saint" biased writing

In addition to rating whole articles, specific topics within the articles (such as

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<sup>5</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 3.

LDS family values, Church leadership, etc.) were also rated according to these same categories. This approach provided helpful information on how the Church fared in public perception on specific topics throughout the decade. It revealed trends in bias, criticism, or praise of the Church as events transpired and different issues emerged.

This thesis also measures the amount of coverage Latter-day Saint topics received by year from 1991 through 2000, both by topic and in total. This reflects evidence of increasing or decreasing public interest in the Church annually throughout the decade.

### **Review of Previous Studies**

In his doctoral dissertation, “Mormonism in National Periodicals,” Cowan sought to present the image of Mormonism as reflected in nationally circulated American periodicals from 1850 through 1961.<sup>6</sup> One reason he chose national periodicals as his source of study is because of their ability to mold public attitudes “by presenting facts and views on issues in exactly the same way at the same time throughout the entire country.”<sup>7</sup>

Cowan found that between the years 1850 and 1890, magazine coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focused almost exclusively on two topics: the Mormon hierarchy and polygamy. During the period surrounding the American Civil War, general interest waned in Mormonism, but it revived again during the 1870s and 1880s. This was due in large measure to the two anti-polygamy bills passed by Congress during the latter decade. Cowan noted that during this time, national periodical writers “described the Mormon religion as barbarous; its founder, Joseph Smith, as a conscious

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<sup>6</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 2.

<sup>7</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 2.

fraud . . . ; and they portrayed the Mormon people as fanatic, ignorant, immoral, and foreign.”<sup>8</sup>

After 1890, when Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto ending Church-sanctioned plural marriages, national periodical coverage on Mormonism significantly decreased. This changed, however, with the election of polygamist Brigham H. Roberts to Congress in 1898. Interest in both the Mormon hierarchy and polygamy was thus revived, and was again renewed from 1904 through 1907 as Apostle Reed Smoot faced political opposition while seeking to take his place in the United States Senate. During this time, the nature of coverage on polygamy changed. Articles focused less on “the evils of that marital system as such,” emphasizing instead a claim that Latter-day Saints had reinstated polygamy and “thereby had broken their solemn pledge to the nation.”<sup>9</sup> Interest in Mormonism waned during the next two decades with the exception of two occurrences in 1911. Negative sentiment rose that year due to the publishing of a series of articles by an ex-Mormon and to rising charges that plural marriages were yet being solemnized in Utah.<sup>10</sup>

After decades of largely negative coverage, the Church began to receive a measure of favorable attention in national periodicals. Latter-day Saints received some positive press in 1930 as it celebrated the centennial of its founding, and then saw an even greater increase of favorable coverage throughout that decade for its successful welfare program. During the next three decades, the Church continued to receive less attention for its theology while receiving greater notoriety for its programs and the

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<sup>8</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 190.

<sup>9</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 190-191.

<sup>10</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 81; Harvey O. Higgins, “A Reply to Colonel Roosevelt,” *Collier's* (June 10, 1911): 35; Fisher, “Methodist Minister's View,” *Outlook* (July 29, 1911): 728; Joseph F. Smith, “The Mormons Today,” *Collier's* (August 12, 1911): 26-27.

accomplishments of individual Church members. “With emphasis placed on these new areas, magazine writers have almost completely neglected the old sources of attack,” Cowan observed.<sup>11</sup> By 1961, national periodicals were more likely to focus on positive aspects of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its similarities to other Christian organizations than on differences and peculiarities.<sup>12</sup>

In “Mormonism in National Periodicals 1961-1970,” Dale P. Pelo continued the study where Cowan left off. Whereas Cowan noted a change of emphasis from hierarchy and polygamy in periodical coverage to positive aspects of Latter-day Saint people and programs, Pelo observed the emergence of a new topic of controversy: race. Before 1962, Pelo explained, the issue of race in relation to the Church was not addressed in national periodicals. That changed, however, as George Romney, a Latter-day Saint, entered national politics.<sup>13</sup> As a presidential candidate, Romney initially brought a measure of prestige and positive attention to the Church. This trend reversed, however, as the decade progressed and the Civil Rights movement gained public favor and momentum.

Once racial discrimination became a leading national issue, both George Romney and the Church received almost exclusively negative national press for the Church’s practice of withholding priesthood from men of African descent.<sup>14</sup> The topic of race seemed to affect every aspect of Mormon periodical coverage. For example, *Sports Illustrated* featured an article on Brigham Young University, which is owned and operated by the Church. The article highlighted “the problems encountered in racial

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<sup>11</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 192.

<sup>12</sup> Cowan, “1850-1961,” 193.

<sup>13</sup> Pelo, “1961-1970,” 81.

<sup>14</sup> Pelo, “1961-1970,” 83.

strife when the ‘Y’ teams played away from home.”<sup>15</sup> Pelo concluded that after having received mostly positive coverage during the opening years of the decade, Latter-day Saints were portrayed in an increasingly unfavorably light during the years 1966-1970.<sup>16</sup>

In “Latter-day Saints in Popular National Periodicals 1970-1981,” Adam H. Nielson documented the continued negative coverage of Latter-day Saints because of their views on race and priesthood. However, after the Church’s First Presidency announced in 1978 that the priesthood would be extended to all worthy Latter-day Saint males regardless of race, national interest steeply declined on this subject. “The reason for this,” Nielson explained, “may be that once the issue was resolved by a change in the Church’s policy, magazines lost interest due to the lack of controversy.” He further noted that periodicals which reported on the 1978 revelation “were pleased with the Church’s willingness to change.”<sup>17</sup>

The perceived power of the Church’s hierarchy was the most commonly addressed Latter-day Saint topic from 1970 through 1981, and the most negatively portrayed. “This theme involved the supposed control Church leadership had over people, politics, and business.”<sup>18</sup> The perceived influence of Church leaders on political matters repeatedly surfaced as a topic in periodicals between the years 1976 and 1980. During this time, the Church received attention for its public opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, its refusal to use Title IX funds, and its excommunication of Church member and political activist Sonia Johnson.<sup>19</sup> “Magazines typically represented the view that since the Church was willing to make a change in 1978 on a policy concerning

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<sup>15</sup> Pelo, “1961-1970,” 81.

<sup>16</sup> Pelo, “1961-1970,” 83.

<sup>17</sup> Nielson, “1970-1981,” 126.

<sup>18</sup> Nielson, “1970-1981,” 128.

<sup>19</sup> Nielson, “1970-1981,” 124, 128.

blacks and the priesthood, they should also consider lessening their opposition to what the public viewed as women's rights."<sup>20</sup>

The Church's theology was another source of negative exposure during this time. Typical reports on Latter-day Saint beliefs were harmful to the Church's image.<sup>21</sup> For example, magazines commonly asserted that Latter-day Saints view "blacks [as] the cursed descendents of Cain." Moreover, articles relating the Church's beliefs generally explained that "Mormons did not believe in the grace of Christ or in his Atonement."<sup>22</sup> Such assessments of Latter-day Saint beliefs reflected a substantially unfavorable perception of both the Church's theology and its hierarchy of leadership.<sup>23</sup>

The Church also received some favorable coverage in national periodicals during the years 1970-1981. The greatest source of positive attention for the Church stemmed from its social-oriented programs, including welfare, missionary work, and family home evening. Church rites and practices such as temple building, ordinances, genealogy, and healthy living also received favorable reviews. The dedication of the Latter-day Saint temple in the Washington, D.C. area in 1974 generated increased awareness of these practices.<sup>24</sup> Latter-day Saints in general, and J. Willard Marriott in particular, received praise for demonstrating business success and "financial stability." Nielson observed that "the Church's economic holdings were consistently discussed and admired by articles."<sup>25</sup> The Mormon Tabernacle Choir likewise received positive commentary.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the variety of Latter-day Saint topics receiving favorable coverage from

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<sup>20</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 126.

<sup>21</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 130.

<sup>22</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 132.

<sup>23</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 130.

<sup>24</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 128.

<sup>25</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 126.

<sup>26</sup> Nielson, "1970-1981," 122.



1970 through 1981, Nielson concluded that periodical articles addressing the Church were more likely to be critical during this period.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the generally negative trend in periodical reporting on the Church continued into the 1980s.

In “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in National Periodicals 1982-1990,” Matthew E. Morrison found that hierarchy continued to receive more negative coverage than any other Latter-day Saint topic. Articles during this period tended to present Church leaders as “dictators with absolute authority.” Negative ratings in this category came from reports on how the Church’s male leadership deprived women of priesthood authority and exercised excessive influence over public affairs in the state of Utah.<sup>28</sup>

The most frequently mentioned Latter-day Saint topic in national periodicals during the years 1982-1990 was theology. The doctrines addressed, and the ways in which they were portrayed, served to harm the Church’s image. Some articles, for example, reported on reasons why Latter-day Saints tended to have large families, including the need to bring pre-existent spirits to earth and to save them from being born into “Gentile families.”<sup>29</sup> Church origins also received frequent attention in periodicals during this time. The most negative coverage on this topic came during the middle years of the decade when forged documents by Mark Hoffman aroused general interest and controversy relating to key issues in early Mormon history.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, socio-economic topics received very positive ratings throughout this period. “Articles highlighted some of the businesses owned by the

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<sup>27</sup> Nielson, “1970-1981,” 142.

<sup>28</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 105.

<sup>29</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 112.

<sup>30</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 106.

Church,” noted Morrison, “as well as how the Church used its abundant resources worldwide.”<sup>31</sup> Church programs and rites also continued to garner favorable attention in periodicals. Welfare and humanitarian aid were especially praised, as were the practices of healthy living and genealogy.<sup>32</sup>

Polygamy and race, two topics which generated much negative publicity for the Church in past decades, received relatively little coverage from 1982 through 1990. Articles tended to be neutral on both polygamy and race, treating them more like historical topics than current theological issues.<sup>33</sup> Because of the declining interest in these two formerly negative topics, the Church received more favorable coverage from 1982-1990 than it had from 1970-1981. However, portrayals of Latter-day Saint topics remained generally more negative than positive during this period.<sup>34</sup>

The studies preceding this thesis demonstrate that national periodical coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1850 through 1990 was largely unfavorable. These studies also show that public perception of the Church has evolved. Periodical writers have emphasized various aspects of the Church, its people, practices, leadership, origins and theology in different ways over time.

From 1991 through 2000, the Church continued to receive attention in national periodicals. This thesis extends the research begun by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson, and Morrison through the year 2000. The bulk of this thesis provides analysis of the most frequently treated Latter-day Saint topics in magazine articles from 1991-2000. Chapter 2, for example, addresses reporting on the Church’s position concerning family-related

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<sup>31</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 111.

<sup>32</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 109, 111.

<sup>33</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 107, 109.

<sup>34</sup> Morrison, “1982-1990,” 115.

issues. Chapter 3 focuses on various programs and practices of the Church which received periodical coverage. Chapter 4 treats magazine writings on Latter-day Saint history and theology. Chapter 5 discusses LDS people and culture as represented in national periodicals. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes this study by providing comparative ratings and analysis of each of these topics. It also compares the results of this study with those of the previous studies by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson and Morrison. The consequent data from these comparisons reflects changes over time in both the quantity and nature of periodical reporting on the Church. This thesis thus provides evidence of how national magazines portrayed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1991 through 2000 relative to past decades.

## CHAPTER 2

### FAMILY ISSUES

From 1991 to 2000, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints received attention in national periodicals for its position on a variety of family-related issues. This chapter identifies six prominent family-related topics that garnered the most periodical coverage. First among these was the attention Latter-day Saints received for their emphasis on traditional family values. Second, the Church was recognized for performing temple marriages—ceremonies which accompany its doctrine that marriages and family relationships may endure beyond death. Third, Latter-day Saints were recognized as having comparatively higher birth rates and larger families than other Americans. A fourth area of interest concerned the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women within a religious culture that sustains both a hierarchy of male leadership and gender roles. The fifth theme treats the comments of magazine writers on Latter-day Saint women as homemakers and working mothers. The final topic addresses the Latter-day Saint position on homosexuality and gay marriage. This chapter summarizes what was written about the Church respecting each of these topics and reports how those writings affected the Church’s image.

#### **Latter-day Saint Family Values**

In 1994, *Time* magazine described The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as “the epitome of family values.”<sup>35</sup> *Forbes* noted in 1991 that the Church “places

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<sup>35</sup> Sophronia Scot Gregory and Anne Palmer Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” *Time* (June 13, 1994): 65.

a high premium” on the family, and *The Economist* subsequently explained that Latter-day Saint missionaries teach, among other things, “the sanctity of the family.”<sup>36</sup>

An assortment of other national magazines similarly recognized the Church for its teachings regarding traditional family values and for its position on certain family-related issues. *Vital Speeches of the Day*, a national periodical dedicated to publishing the important addresses of American leaders, reproduced the remarks of LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley given at the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Salt Lake City, Utah in September of 1998.<sup>37</sup> After citing a host of problems facing municipal governments, President Hinckley suggested society would greatly benefit by placing “father back as head of the family” and by reinstating “the practice of prayer,” something he said America had largely forsaken. “Regardless of religious affiliation,” stated the Church President, “a father who will kneel with his wife and children will do wonders for them.” President Hinckley also invited his audience to read the Church’s Proclamation on the Family, a document which outlines official Latter-day Saint beliefs and positions regarding a number of family issues.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to this coverage by *Vital Speeches of the Day*, several articles recognized the Church for sponsoring programs meant to strengthen family relationships. *U.S. News and World Report*, for example, mentioned that local LDS congregations “sponsor Scout troops, recreation programs and other family activities” in an effort to

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<sup>36</sup> “Latter-day Saints and Martyrs,” *The Economist* (November 16, 1991): 50; Richard L. Stern and Toddi Gutner, “A Helluva Place to Have a Business,” *Forbes* (December 21, 1992): 117.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Teaching of Values,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (November 15, 1998): 75. The publisher of *Vital Speeches* believes that “the important addresses of the recognized leaders of public opinion constitute the best expression of contemporary thought in America, and that it is extremely important for the welfare of the nation that these speeches be permanently recorded and disseminated. The publisher has no axe to grind. *Vital Speeches* will be found authentic and constructive.” “Policy of Vital Speeches,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (May 2006): 418.

<sup>38</sup> Hinckley, “The Teaching of Values,” 75.

foster “strong families.”<sup>39</sup> A *Fortune* writer noted that in Latter-day Saint culture, “family meetings are a tradition.”<sup>40</sup> Specifically, it mentioned that the Church taught families to “conduct once-a-week ‘family home evenings’ during which parents and children play, pray, and study scripture together.”<sup>41</sup> One article reported that “an observant Mormon family” may spend upwards of fourteen hours a week participating in “church-related activities.”<sup>42</sup> A Church member told *U.S. News and World Report* that these activities brought his family “tremendous order and peace and blessings” by providing opportunities to “spend more time together.”<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, a different Church member who was “raised in a strict Mormon family” described her family culture in *Time* as personally stifling and manipulative.<sup>44</sup> Thus, LDS family life was depicted both favorably and unfavorably in national magazines.

Periodicals also recognized the family life of several prominent Church members in conjunction with Latter-day Saint family values. For instance, *Money* described Mitt Romney as “a Mormon family man” during his 1994 U.S. Senate race against Ted Kennedy, while *Newsweek* called him “a devout Mormon and an unabashed family man.”<sup>45</sup> In a different example, Stephen Covey attributed his business success and values to the “tight-knit Mormon family” in which he was raised. Covey told *Fortune*

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<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey L. Sheler and Betsy Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” *U.S. News and World Report* (September 28, 1992): 76.

<sup>40</sup> Shaifali Puri, “Father Knows Best,” *Fortune* (February 5, 1996): 143.

<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey L. Sheler, Peter Hadfield and Rena Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” *U.S. News and World Report* (November 13, 2000): 62.

<sup>42</sup> Malise Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 39. *The Wilson Quarterly* was founded in 1976 in order to provide “a nonpartisan and nonideological window on the world of ideas” to a broad, nation-wide audience.” See [www.wilsoncenter.org](http://www.wilsoncenter.org)

<sup>43</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 62.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher John Farley and Ginia Bellafante, “Latter-day Grunge,” *Time* (July 12, 1993): 17.

<sup>45</sup> Will Saletan, “Ten Races to Watch,” *Mother Jones* (September/October 1994): 32; Debra Rosenberg, “See Teddy Run Scared,” *Newsweek* (August 1, 1994): 25. *Mother Jones* implements “first rate investigative reporting” in its coverage of American politics and social justice. See [www.Motherjones.com](http://www.Motherjones.com).

magazine: “My parents were just constantly affirming me in everything that I did.”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, *Sports Illustrated* wrote a glowing report on Danny Ainge, “a devout Mormon,” who in 1999 quit a successful job as head coach of the National Basketball Association’s Phoenix Suns in order to spend more time with his family. The article, which lauded Ainge for putting his children’s needs ahead of his own professional success, stated that his decision was not “an easy one. It was just the right one.”<sup>47</sup> Another article which favorably reflected LDS family values featured Amy Osmond, winner of the 1994 national Junior Miss pageant and niece to performers Donny and Marie Osmond. The article positively depicted Amy’s family-oriented goals, stating that “her Mormon faith is the driving force in her life.”<sup>48</sup>

In addition to such coverage on Latter-day Saint family values, magazines noted the teachings of Church leaders regarding the importance of marriage. A telling example of this occurred in 1996, when *Vital Speeches of the Day* carried an address by Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Church’s First Quorum of the Seventy given to other Church leaders. In his remarks, Elder Hafen declared that “marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and always has been,” and then identified the Church’s aim to “restore the concept of marriage as a covenant.”<sup>49</sup> The following year *Vital Speeches of the Day* published an address given by Hafen to the World Congress of Families in Prague, Czech Republic.<sup>50</sup> In his speech, Hafen encouraged civic leaders and family-values activists to promote laws which would “reenthron[e] lifelong, familistic,

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<sup>46</sup> Timothy K. Smith and Ani Hadjian, “What’s So Effective About Stephen Covey?,” *Fortune* (December 12, 1994): 119.

<sup>47</sup> Jackie MacMullan, “Eyes Wide Open,” *Sports Illustrated* (December 27, 1999): 134.

<sup>48</sup> Susan Schindehette and Toby Kahn, “A Hit as a Miss,” *People* (August 8, 1994): 32.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce C. Hafen, “Marriage,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (December 1, 1996): 127.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce C. Hafen, “Bridle Your Passions,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (August 8, 1997): 635.

heterosexual marriage as a crucial element for both personal development and social stability.”<sup>51</sup>

Besides reporting directly on the teachings of Church leaders regarding marriage, several magazines demonstrated the importance of marriage in Latter-day Saint culture by citing pertinent statistical information. *The Wilson Quarterly*, for example, reported that 64 percent of Latter-day Saint men “marry within three years of completing their mission,” which they typically do at age 21, and “nearly one-third within 12 months.” It also asserted that 45 percent of female students at Church-owned Brigham Young University ceased their collegiate studies after one year “because they have married and begun having children.”<sup>52</sup> *Sports Illustrated* similarly reported that “the average Mormon woman” married at age 21.<sup>53</sup> However, some of these figures may be disputable. A scholarly study analyzing the average marriage age of LDS men and women in comparison with their non-LDS peers concluded that “LDS men marry about one and one-half years earlier than their non-Mormon counterparts, but LDS females marry at about the same age as other females.”<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps stemming from popular notions concerning the perceived early marrying age of Latter-day Saints, Steve Young, a prominent player in the National Football League, received some notoriety in the mid 1990’s for his status as an unmarried Church member. In 1995, he told *People* magazine, “I’m the Eighth Wonder of the World: a 32-year-old single Mormon.”<sup>55</sup> Two years later, a *Sports Illustrated* writer described Young

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<sup>51</sup> Hafen, “Bridle Your Passions, 635.

<sup>52</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 37.

<sup>53</sup> Peter King, “Chief Worry,” *Sports Illustrated* (August 8, 1997): 53.

<sup>54</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Marriage: Marital Formation,” by Thomas B. Holman, 856.

<sup>55</sup> “The 50 Most Beautiful People in the World,” *People* (May 8, 1995): 114.



as an anomaly in his faith, and quoted the football star saying, “If I’m honest with myself, yea, I want to be married and have kids. I want it a lot.”<sup>56</sup>

In summary, the reporting by national periodicals on Latter-day Saint family values, including the Church’s teachings on traditional marriage, tended to be favorable overall. Fifty-three articles treated this theme from 1991 through 2000. Five of those were rated unfavorable toward the Church, and 25 were neutral. Nineteen articles, meanwhile, were rated favorable, and four were highly favorable in their reporting. Notably, Latter-day Saint family values received increasingly favorable periodical coverage throughout the decade. From 1991 to 1993, for example, magazine writings on this theme tended to be neutral, and then became more favorable later in the decade. By 2000, every magazine reference to Latter-day Saint family values was favorable.

### **Temple Marriage**

National periodicals recognized Latter-day Saints not only for their stance on traditional marriage and family values, but also for the distinctiveness of some of their related beliefs. For example, *U.S. News and World Report* explained that the Latter-day Saint doctrine of marriage goes “one step beyond most other faiths” because Church members who marry in Latter-day Saint temples “are considered bound together ‘for time and eternity.’”<sup>57</sup> A *Sports Illustrated* article explained that these temple marriages are “eternal,” and therefore are “not broken by death.”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the “special ‘sealing’ ritual” performed in Latter-day Saint temples not only marries couples, but also allows

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<sup>56</sup> King, “Chief Worry,” 57.

<sup>57</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 76.

<sup>58</sup> S.L. Price, “Anson Dorrance...,” *Sports Illustrated* (December 27, 1998): 96.

whole families to be “bound together” forever.<sup>59</sup> One article noted the attractiveness of such a doctrine, stating that “the prospect of eternal family togetherness gives Mormonism a special appeal” in winning new converts.<sup>60</sup> Another quoted a Church member who explained that the idea of marriage for eternity simply places the challenges of daily life “in perspective.”<sup>61</sup>

In addition to such reporting explaining the theology of eternal marriage, a number of articles commented on Latter-day Saint temple marriages in relation to divorce rates. *The Economist* stated plainly that “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints abhors divorce.”<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, *The Wilson Quarterly* indicated that the rate of divorce “among couples who married ‘for time and eternity’ in a Mormon temple” was significantly lower than for those who were married in a civil ceremony outside a temple. The magazine also highlighted the comparatively low overall divorce rate among Latter-day Saints, stating that “about one-third of all Mormon marriages will end in divorce,” in contrast to the national average of 50 percent.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, *Sports Illustrated* placed the divorce rate of “temple-married Mormons at one fifth the normal U.S. divorce rate of one in every two marriages.”<sup>64</sup> A number of scholarly studies affirm these statistics, supporting the conclusion published in national magazines that LDS temple marriages are less likely to end in divorce than other marriages.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 62.

<sup>60</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 76.

<sup>61</sup> Price, “Anson Dorrance...,” 96.

<sup>62</sup> “More Than Mormons,” *The Economist* (May 25, 1991): 34.

<sup>63</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” 37.

<sup>64</sup> King, “Chief Worry,” 53.

<sup>65</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Divorce,” by Kristen L. Goodman, 392-393; “Marital Formation,” by Thomas B. Holman, 856-857.

Periodical reporting on Latter-day Saint temple marriages tended to be neutral in terms of favorability toward the Church. Six articles addressed this topic from 1991 through 2000, and all were neutral but one, which was rated favorable.

### **Large Latter-day Saint Families**

Several periodicals focused on the size of Latter-day Saint families. Some writers reinforced or even augmented stereotypes of Latter-day Saint families as being abnormally large. For example, a *Money* article entitled “The Best Places to Live Now” described the Provo/Orem region of Utah as “an area known for its un-abashed fertility—of its farmland [and] its Mormon inhabitants.”<sup>66</sup> Three years later, *Money* indicated simply that Latter-day Saints “favor families—the bigger, the better.”<sup>67</sup> Another article commented on the “prodigious output” of Latter-day Saint mothers, something a writer for *The Progressive* termed as “procreative extravagance.”<sup>68</sup> In his description of the Latter-day Saints in Utah, one writer for *Time* declared that “all they do there is breed, pray, and make money.”<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, a 1994 article in *U.S. News and World Report* claimed that “many” Latter-day Saint families “bear as many as 10 to 12 children.”<sup>70</sup> This statement, however, appears to overstate statistical data available on LDS fertility.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> M.T. Smith and D.W. Englander, “The Best Places to Live Now,” *Money* (September 1991): 130.

<sup>67</sup> Marguerite T. Smith and Sheryl Nance-Nash, “The Best Places to Live in America,” *Money* (September 1994): 138.

<sup>68</sup> “More Than Mormons,” 34; Will Durst, “I’m with Stupid,” *The Progressive* (May 1995): 12. *The Progressive* has covered American politics since 1929 while “campaigning for social and economic justice.” See [www.progressive.org](http://www.progressive.org).

<sup>69</sup> S.B. Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” *Time* (July 29, 1991): 22.

<sup>70</sup> Shannon Brownlee and Gareth G. Cook, “Tinkering with Destiny,” *U.S. News and World Report* (August 22, 1994): 60-61.

<sup>71</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Vital Statistics: Sources of Population Change,” by Tim B. Heaton, 1524. According to this source, a typical active LDS family in 1981 produced 3.5 children on average.

Other writers reported more objectively on the size of Latter-day Saint families. Several articles noted a connection between the church's influence on families in the state of Utah and statistical data on the state's demographics. For example, an article called "More Than Mormons" noted that Utah "has the highest fertility rate in the country, and the biggest and youngest households."<sup>72</sup> "Naturally," stated another writer, "most of the state's" more than 37,000 new babies in 1994 were "born into" Latter-day Saint households.<sup>73</sup> Utah was also recognized as the state with "the highest proportion of teenagers, due to the typically large families of its Mormon residents."<sup>74</sup> *American Demographics*, while detailing America's overall declining birthrate, stated that children were heavily concentrated in areas of the nation which were "dominated by young adults who are married, minority, and/or Mormon."<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, *The Wilson Quarterly* reported in 1991 that during the past decade, Utah had experienced a "dramatic decline in fertility," dropping from an average of 3.2 to 2.3 births per woman. However, the "average Mormon family size" of 4.61 yet remained "more than twice the national average."<sup>76</sup>

Some writers explained that large Latter-day Saint families were a product of the Church's theology. *The Economist*, for example, reported simply that "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints encourages its followers to have large families."<sup>77</sup> According to one writer, Latter-day Saints believe that "siring more children and bringing more spirit children into this world" will earn them a "greater 'exaltation' in the afterlife.

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<sup>72</sup> "More Than Mormons," 34.

<sup>73</sup> "Utah, Only More So," *The Economist* (October 21, 1995): 33.

<sup>74</sup> W. Dunn, "Hanging Out With American Youth," *American Demographics* (February 1992): 27.

<sup>75</sup> Brad Edmondson, "Children in 2001," *American Demographics* (March 1997): 14.

<sup>76</sup> "Portraits of Zion," 36.

<sup>77</sup> "Software Valley," *The Economist* (April 23, 1994): 69.

In so doing, Latter-day Saints prepare themselves to organize “new planets” and procreate new “spirit children of their own” hereafter—which explains “the heavy Mormon emphasis on traditional family values today.”<sup>78</sup> Another writer claimed that Latter-day Saints measure their religious standing according to the size of their families.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, *The Wilson Quarterly* stated that the “pressure” placed on Church members “to procreate and bring ‘spirit children’ into the world places economic burdens on home life,” and *People* cited the pressure Latter-day Saints face to have children as a likely source of marital tension.<sup>80</sup>

In conjunction with its teachings on procreation, the Church received attention throughout the 1990s for its position on abortion. Two articles in 1991 mentioned that the Utah state legislature, which they stated consisted almost entirely of Latter-day Saints,<sup>81</sup> had passed one of the most severe anti-abortion laws in the country.<sup>82</sup> *The Economist* later reported that the sanctity of life “is central to Mormonism,” while *U.S. News and World Report* declared that “Mormon leaders are outspoken in opposing” abortion—as well as other “negative influences on families.”<sup>83</sup> Latter-day Saints were

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<sup>78</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 32.

<sup>79</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” 36.

<sup>80</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” 36; Alex Tresniowski et al., “Troubled Sleep,” *People* (July 12, 1999): 58.

<sup>81</sup> “While the Church by no means inevitably has its way in Utah politics, it is a pervasive influence in the state. Latter-day Saints help shape the political agenda of Utah, in large part determining the issues that are or are not live, and dictating the terms in which issues accepted as live are debated. Generally, the over-whelming majority of all office-holders, both Republican and Democratic, are LDS.” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Politics: Political History,” by Roger M. Barrus, 1103. However, “contrary to some popular characterizations, Latter-day Saints do not all think or vote alike on political matters and do not share a distinctive political subculture.” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Political Culture,” by Wm. Clayton Kimball, 1106.

<sup>82</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 43; Richard Sherlock, “Supreme Court Challenge,” *Policy Review* (Spring 1991): 85. The Utah law permitted abortion only in cases of rape or incest or when the pregnancy threatened “grave damage to the pregnant woman’s medical health.” The law was struck down in federal court. MaryAnn Dadisman et al., “Utah Joins Challenge to Roe v. Wade,” *Human Rights: Journal of the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities*, (Spring 1991): 6.

<sup>83</sup> “In a Glass House,” *The Economist* (June 26, 1993): 27; Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 76.

linked with Catholics and Southern Baptists as denominations “officially opposed to abortion.”<sup>84</sup> Additionally, in 1998, Latter-day Saints were praised in *Vital Speeches of the Day* for joining a coalition of churches devoted to protecting children, “born and unborn.”<sup>85</sup>

While periodical reporting on large Latter-day Saint families was generally neutral throughout the 1990s and in 2000, this topic received an overall unfavorable rating. Of the 27 articles which treated this topic, 3 were unfavorable, 23 were neutral, and one article was favorable in its reporting.

### **Perceived Oppression of Latter-day Saint Women**

Some writers viewed certain aspects of Latter-day Saint theology, particularly its emphasis on patriarchal leadership in both the Church and the family, as a form of male oppression of female Church members. One article frankly stated that the Church was “male-centered,” while another suggested that Latter-day Saint theology taught women to be passive and overly submissive.<sup>86</sup> Statements in national periodicals regarding the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women during the 1990s focused primarily on the apparent lack of female authority within the Church and how that may have affected the lives of Latter-day Saint women.

An example of periodical reporting on the matter of female authority within the Church appeared in 1991, when *U.S. News and World Report* stated that a “small but

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<sup>84</sup> Jeffrey L. Sheler, “The Theology of Abortion,” *U.S. News and World Report* (March 9, 1992): 54.

<sup>85</sup> Allan Carlson, “Twenty-five Years into the Culture of Death,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (March 15, 1998): 348.

<sup>86</sup> David Van Biema and S.C. Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” *Time* (August 4, 1997): 57; David Pace, “‘Angels’ in Utah,” *American Theatre* (March 1996): 50.

growing feminist movement” was seeking to make “headway” against the Church’s “patriarchal power structure.” The article reported that a number of Latter-day Saint women felt “disenfranchised” because they were excluded from the priesthood and from the “top posts in the church hierarchy.”<sup>87</sup> A different article, authored by a Church member, alleged that when the Church announced in 1978 that priesthood ordination had become available to all males regardless of race or nationality, some Latter-day Saint “women began to ask the next logical question: Why not us?”<sup>88</sup>

Furthermore, according to a 1991 article in *The Wilson Quarterly*, “Mormon theology takes female subordination” beyond the teachings of other denominations by specifically excluding women from “the priesthood of all believers.”<sup>89</sup> Two articles in *Time* later affirmed that sentiment. One noted that “in the Mormon religion, with its unique doctrines, the lay priesthood is limited to men;” another reported simply that the Church “still bars women from the clergy.”<sup>90</sup> *Essence*, however, interviewed a female convert in 2000 who explained that men and women “are assigned different places” in the Church because “the priesthood and sisterhood are different”—yet “one isn’t better than the other.” She continued, “The women, as far as I can see, are not put down.”<sup>91</sup>

The Church, however, received overwhelmingly unfavorable periodical attention from 1991 through 2000 for allegedly propagating what one writer called “the subservient role of Mormon women.”<sup>92</sup> A Latter-day Saint author writing in *The Wilson Quarterly* claimed that the Church’s male leadership increasingly emphasized “an eternal

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<sup>87</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 77.

<sup>88</sup> Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormonism and Feminism?,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 31.

<sup>89</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 39.

<sup>90</sup> Richard N. Ostling and Jordan Bonfante, “The Second Reformation,” *Time* (November 23, 1992): 55; Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” 23.

<sup>91</sup> Tamara Jeffries, “Leaps of Faith,” *Essence* (December 2000): 171.

<sup>92</sup> Jan Shipp, “The Mormons’ Progress,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 49.

division of roles” between the sexes. She observed that during the twentieth century, male Church leaders “began reducing all independent operations of female church members” and encouraged Latter-day Saint women to “retreat into the domestic sphere.” Specifically, LDS women were “encouraged to marry young, to honor husbands and fathers as the head of the household, [and] to devote [their] lives primarily to the task of childbearing and childrearing.”<sup>93</sup> A different author, who also identified herself as a Latter-day Saint, denounced the “proscribed role” of LDS women as an archaic “script” dictated by “patriarchal church leaders.”<sup>94</sup> Moreover, a writer in *The Progressive* explained her divergence from Latter-day Saint expectations by stating that she “was not going to grow up to be one more Mormon house-wife and mother.”<sup>95</sup>

A *Forbes* article appearing in 2000 conveyed a similar perspective by another Latter-day Saint woman. She stated that Church President Gordon B. Hinckley “has insisted in public forums that Mormon women ‘are happy’ in their God-ordained separate roles,” yet this writer, in her experience, claimed to know “many who are not happy.”<sup>96</sup> A different article reported that “the stress on homemaking” experienced by Latter-day Saint women is “compounded” by a theological culture of “perfectionism.” In this culture, “homes must be super-clean, meals must always be wholesome and regular, [and] children well-behaved and perfectly turned out.” The author concluded that “for some Mormon women the stresses endured at home finally become intolerable.”<sup>97</sup>

Several writers likewise reported unfavorably on the Church’s counsel regarding working mothers. While commenting on the death of Church President Ezra Taft Benson

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<sup>93</sup> Stack, “Mormonism and Feminism?,” 30.

<sup>94</sup> Jillyn Stevens, “Investing in the Future,” *Women’s Review of Books* (February 1997): 15.

<sup>95</sup> Anne-Marie Cusac, “Profile of a Sex Radical,” *The Progressive* (October 1996): 37.

<sup>96</sup> Karen Southwick, “Circling Faith,” *Forbes* (October 2, 2000): 239.

<sup>97</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 39.



in 1994, the authors of a *Time* article described as “chauvinism” his statement that “a mother’s calling is in the home, not in the marketplace.”<sup>98</sup> Another writer asserted that Latter-day Saint women are taught to work only when such a course is “absolutely necessary,” and then “it should be limited to providing essentials only.”<sup>99</sup> According to a different author, women in the church “are not encouraged to develop a career (except as a safety net against widowhood) and are positively discouraged from working outside the home.”<sup>100</sup> Yet “simple economics,” she noted, were requiring many Latter-day Saint women to work outside the home “just to survive.”<sup>101</sup>

One article cited various aspects of Church policy which were creating “economic imperatives” for Latter-day Saint mothers to work. These included the payment of tithing, “10 percent of pretax income,” as well as financing the two-year missionary service of children, which would cost “about \$350 monthly per child.” Due in part to these policies, “about half of all married Mormon women” in 1991 were working “at least part-time outside the home,” which was approaching the national average of 57 percent.<sup>102</sup> A scholarly study concurred with this figure, indicating that the percentage of American LDS women in the labor force was “virtually identical to the national averages.”<sup>103</sup>

Several articles suggested that the Church’s male-dominated power structure affected LDS women in other aspects of life as well. One article, focusing on the Church’s influence in Utah, stated that “for women in particular,” life there “can be

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<sup>98</sup> Gregory, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>99</sup> Stevens, “Investing in the Future,” 15.

<sup>100</sup> Stack, “Mormonism and Feminism?,” 30.

<sup>101</sup> Stack, “Mormonism and Feminism?,” 31.

<sup>102</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” 36.

<sup>103</sup> *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., s.v. “Vital Statistics: Demographic Characteristics,” by Tim B. Heaton, 1534.

hard.” As an example, the article mentioned Utah’s working women who, despite outnumbering the men, earned “only 54 cents for every dollar a man [earned],” which was considerably less than the national ratio of 72 cents. It also described the state’s legislature as 90 percent “male and Mormon,” which, according to the article, made it less likely to support women’s issues and rights.<sup>104</sup> In its exposition of the LDS religion as “the church that defeated the Equal Rights Amendment,” a different article also implied a subordinate role exists for Latter-day Saint women.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, an article entitled “Salt Lake City Breaks Several Barriers” claimed that the city had elected its first female mayor in 1991 by necessarily “bucking its Mormon, conservative traditions”—something which allowed “women of Salt Lake City [to] feel a foot taller.”<sup>106</sup>

In summary, magazine coverage addressing the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women was solidly unfavorable toward the Church. Twenty articles treated this topic, and nine of them were unfavorable. The remaining eleven articles were rated neutral.

### **Latter-day Saint Position on Homosexuality and Gay Marriage**

The position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on homosexuality was well documented in national periodicals throughout the 1990s and in 2000. Besides receiving attention for its teachings against homosexual behavior, the Church was also spotlighted for its leadership against both the legalization of gay marriage and the incorporation of gays within the Boy Scouts.

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<sup>104</sup> Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” 23.

<sup>105</sup> Stack, “Mormonism and Feminism?,” 30.

<sup>106</sup> “Salt Lake City Breaks Several Barriers,” *Time* (November 18, 1991): 24.

The year 1993 was especially significant for the Church in relation to its position on homosexuality. During that year, four articles appeared in national periodicals reporting on the “Mormon” aspects of Tony Kushner’s “Angels in America,” a Broadway play described as a “gay fantasia on national themes.”<sup>107</sup> The play was hailed for its “uncommon characters” such as “a repressed Mormon Republican giving way to his homosexual yearnings” as well as a “Mormon mother . . . coming to terms with a son’s homosexuality.”<sup>108</sup> In explaining why Latter-day Saints were chosen as characters in the play, a writer in *American Theatre* reported “the fact that the Mormon Church is one of the most homophobic institutions in America.”<sup>109</sup>

Several articles also reported on the treatment of homosexuals within the Church. One article told of a mother who was “ostracized by the Mormon church for coming out as a lesbian.”<sup>110</sup> Another reported inaccurately that “gay Mormons” can be “excommunicated for their sexual orientation.”<sup>111</sup> In reality, Latter-day Saints may be excommunicated for homosexual behavior, but not for orientation. A writer who identified herself as a Church member noted an exception to the stereotypical hard-line Latter-day Saint leaders took against homosexual behavior. She described living in San Francisco in the late 1980s and early 1990s where she witnessed “a few courageous bishops”—Latter-day Saint congregational leaders—who “reached out to gay Mormons to gather them into the fold.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> William A. Henry III and Daniel S. Levy, “Angels of No Mercy,” *Time* (December 6, 1993): 75.

<sup>108</sup> Miriam Horn, “A Broadway Gamble,” *U.S. News and World Report* (May 10, 1993): 20; Henry, “Angels of No Mercy,” 76.

<sup>109</sup> Pace, “‘Angels’ in Utah,” 50.

<sup>110</sup> Steve Lopez, “The Mutant Brady Bunch,” *Time* (August 30, 1999): 37.

<sup>111</sup> Shawn Zeller, “Finding Their Religion,” *National Journal* (January 1, 2000): 52.

<sup>112</sup> Southwick, “Circling Faith,” 239.

Two articles appearing in *Rolling Stone* commented on the possible effects of the Church's teachings regarding homosexuality upon the social conditions of gays living in Utah. The first article, written by a contributor who identified himself as a gay Catholic, claimed that in "Mormon theology," homosexuality is "second in sin only to murder." As a result, the author's pronouncement of homosexuality while a student at Utah State University was met with his Latter-day Saint classmates' disbelief—"they thought it was a joke, because nobody would dare declare himself gay in Utah."<sup>113</sup> The other article described Salt Lake City as home to "the Mormon Church," where it is "easier to believe in angels than in the existence of gay teenagers."<sup>114</sup> This article discussed at length "the bravery it would require to be openly gay in a city like Salt Lake."<sup>115</sup>

Several politicians affiliated with the Church also received attention for their perceived anti-homosexual fervor. For instance, *The New Republic* reported in 1994 that U.S. Senate candidate Mitt Romney, "a Mormon official" and stake president, shared "the church's opposition to homosexuality."<sup>116</sup> Additionally, *Newsweek* indicated that Romney "condemned homosexuality as 'perverse' and 'reprehensible' at a local Mormon gathering," although he publicly claimed to support legislation "outlawing workplace discrimination against gays."<sup>117</sup> Moreover, Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, a Republican and "Mormon lay minister," was quoted in 1995 for disdaining Democrats as "the party of homosexuals."<sup>118</sup> A year later, when a Salt Lake City teenager organized a gay/straight alliance club at her high school, *The Economist* compared the reaction of the Utah state

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<sup>113</sup> "Our Lives, Our Times," *Rolling Stone* (October 29, 1992): 61.

<sup>114</sup> David Lipsky, "To Be Young and Gay," *Rolling Stone* (August 6, 1998): 57.

<sup>115</sup> David Lipsky, "To Be Young and Gay," *Rolling Stone* (August 6, 1998): 60.

<sup>116</sup> John B. Judis, "Stormin' Mormon," *The New Republic* (November 7, 1994): 20. Founded in 1913, *The New Republic* describes itself as "a journal of politics and the arts." See [www.tnr.com](http://www.tnr.com).

<sup>117</sup> Rosenberg, "See Teddy Run Scared," 25.

<sup>118</sup> "Welcome to Your Newt Congress," *Mother Jones* (January/February 1995): 42.

legislature, which was primarily composed of Latter-day Saints, to an “anti-gay revival meeting.” The article depicted legislators as being utterly paranoid of homosexuals. One lawmaker reportedly exclaimed: “They’re out there, and they’re after our children.”<sup>119</sup>

Three articles appearing in national periodicals in 1999 and 2000 reported on the Church’s efforts to ban the legalization of gay marriage. *Time*, for example, described Latter-day Saints as having been “instrumental” in the defeat of “pro-gay initiatives” in Alaska, Hawaii, and California, while *U.S. News and World Report* similarly mentioned the impact of “Mormon voters” upon the propositions.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, *Newsweek* reported in 1999 that certain groups had requested the Internal Revenue Service to reconsider the tax-exempt status of the Church for encouraging its members to be involved in political contests concerning the legalization of gay marriage.<sup>121</sup>

The Church also received attention in national periodicals for strongly influencing the Boy Scouts’ policy of banning homosexuals. *Rolling Stone* reported that the Church, the largest sponsor of Boy Scout troops in the United States, was “fiercely opposed to admitting homosexuals” and would “end its nine-decade-long affiliation” if gays were allowed to join.<sup>122</sup> *Time* similarly stated that the Church would withdraw its charter membership, along with crucial financial support, “if scouting were required to admit gays.”<sup>123</sup> A writer also commented that because of its intimate connection with “the Mormon church,” Boy Scout culture “could become increasingly right-wing.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> “Gay Alert, Drop Everything,” *The Economist* (April 27, 1996): 31.

<sup>120</sup> John Cloud et al, “Can a Scout Be Gay?,” *Time* (May 1, 2000): 32; Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 64.

<sup>121</sup> “Mormon Money,” *Newsweek* (August 8, 1999): 6.

<sup>122</sup> Chuck Sudetic, “The Struggle for the Soul of the Boy Scouts,” *Rolling Stone* (July 6, 2000): 101.

<sup>123</sup> Cloud, “Can a Scout Be Gay?,” 32.

<sup>124</sup> Chuck Sudetic, “Boy Scouts vs. Gays,” *Rolling Stone* (August 17, 2000): 45.

Overall, magazine writings concerning the Church's position on homosexuality and gay marriage were largely unfavorable. Thirty-six articles mentioned this topic during the decade; one was highly unfavorable toward the Church, and ten others were rated unfavorable. Additionally, 24 articles treated this topic in a neutral manner, and one was favorable in its approach.

### **Effects of Family Issues on Image**

In conclusion, periodical coverage regarding the Church's position on family issues was generally unfavorable. Only the topic of LDS family values, the first theme addressed in this chapter, received solidly favorable attention in national magazines. Because of the interest shown by periodicals regarding Latter-day Saint practices such as Family Home Evening and family prayer, data concerning LDS family values is represented visually in Chapter 6, Figure 10 about Church programs.

Additionally, national periodicals addressed the Latter-day Saint practice of temple marriage and discussed its attendant doctrine that families may be united beyond death. Several writers also mentioned that Latter-day Saint temple marriages were less likely to end in divorce than other marriages. Magazine coverage of this theme tended to be neutral throughout the decade. This is illustrated in Chapter 6, Figure 12, which pertains to Church rites.

Moreover, a number of magazines mentioned large Latter-day Saint families, and these comments were slightly unfavorable overall. Magazine articles concerning the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women, however, were solidly unfavorable

throughout the 1990s and in 2000. These two themes are reflected in Chapter 6, Figure 8 about Latter-day Saint people.

A new topic emerged in national periodicals during the 1990s which centered on the Latter-day Saint position on homosexuality and gay marriage. The Church received attention for its teachings condemning homosexual behavior, for its efforts against the legalization of gay marriage in America, and for its influence in maintaining a ban on homosexual leaders within the Boy Scouts. Ratings on this theme were also solidly unfavorable, and this is indicated in Chapter 6, Figure 6, with other data regarding Church hierarchy.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHURCH PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

Various programs and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints received attention in national periodicals from 1991 through 2000. This chapter presents seven topics representing the most frequently mentioned LDS programs and practices. It begins with a summary of articles that addressed the Church's missionary program. Second, it discusses the closely related topic of Church growth as reported in magazines. The third topic concerns the Church's genealogical or family history program. Fourth, Latter-day Saints were recognized for their practice of performing temple ordinances and for the acceleration of the Church's temple building program. The fifth topic shows what was written about Latter-day Saints' adherence to a religious health code called the Word of Wisdom. The sixth area of interest concerns the payment of tithing to the Church. The final topic discusses periodicals' commentary on the Church's Welfare Program. Ultimately, this chapter reports how these writings concerning Latter-day Saint programs and practices affected the Church's image.

#### **Missionary Work**

Ninety-seven articles mentioned the proselytizing efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, demonstrating the Church's widely recognized approach and commitment to missionary work. "No group works harder at proselytizing than the Mormons," according to one article.<sup>125</sup> Many periodicals throughout the decade focused on the enormous scope of the Church's missionary program. *U.S. News and World*

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<sup>125</sup> Sheler and Wagner, "Latter-day Struggles," 76.



*Report*, for example, indicated that in 1999 the Church dispatched some 58,600 missionaries to 120 countries, resulting in over 306,000 converts.<sup>126</sup>

“They ride bicycles in pairs, sporting short haircuts, white shirts and ties. They knock on doors, shake hands and politely address people.”<sup>127</sup> Many articles similarly offered characterizations of full-time Latter-day Saint missionaries. *The Economist* described them as the “most upright and globe trotting of modern Americans.”<sup>128</sup> One article related the conversion experience of a woman after she met two Latter-day Saint missionaries: “I knew they were God-sent. It was how I felt in my heart—there was a kind of joy and love that I felt. They had a very sweet spirit about them.”<sup>129</sup>

Other articles characterized Latter-day Saint missionaries in a much less positive light. The author of a *Forbes* article related a personal anecdote involving a young LDS missionary, depicting him as an inexperienced, naïve drone, thoughtlessly regurgitating the dogma of his Church leaders.<sup>130</sup> Another article similarly berated Latter-day Saints as “paradoxically cloistered yet aggressively proselytizing.”<sup>131</sup> *Time* erroneously described LDS missionary service as “compulsory.”<sup>132</sup> Another author was somewhat critical of the missionaries’ intentions: “their remit is conversion, not the elimination of suffering.”<sup>133</sup>

A number of articles highlighted the variety of benefits engendered through the Church’s missionary program—both for the Church at large and for the missionaries

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<sup>126</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 62-63.

<sup>127</sup> “Latter-day Saints and Martyrs,” 50.

<sup>128</sup> “A Richer Dust, Concealed,” *The Economist* (December 26, 1992): 87.

<sup>129</sup> Jeffries, “Leaps of Faith,” 170.

<sup>130</sup> Southwick, “Circling Faith,” 239.

<sup>131</sup> Pace, “‘Angels’ in Utah,” 49.

<sup>132</sup> Christopher Hallowell and Andrea Dorfman, “The Plant Hunter,” *Time* (Fall 1997 Special Issue): 16.

<sup>133</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 46.

themselves. One article, for example, stated that missionary work may have even more “impact on Latter-day Saint commitment than it does on LDS conversion.” The article cited, as evidence of this, the experience of a recently returned missionary who stated: “when I started out on my mission, I really believed that the Church was true. I came back knowing it was true.”<sup>134</sup>

Another example of how LDS missionary service was shown in magazines to benefit Church members focused on the business careers of certain Latter-day Saints. In an interview with *Forbes*, Clayton Christianson, a professor at the Harvard Business School, said his LDS mission provided him the desire to “use what God has given [him] to help other people.”<sup>135</sup> A *Business Week* profile on Mitt Romney explained how his mission experience may have prepared him well for the challenge of successfully operating the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. The article stated that Romney’s two years in France taught him humility, frugality, and persistence.<sup>136</sup> Mark Wattles, CEO of Hollywood Video, told *Inc.* that his business success sprang from certain skills and attributes he developed as a Latter-day Saint missionary. “It taught me self-motivation and perseverance in a challenging, unstructured environment. It also taught me how to hear ‘no’ and stay positive.”<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, Franklin Quest cofounder Hyrum Smith was fiercely criticized in *Forbes* for infecting his company with “pretentious humbug” and “evangelism”—traits he allegedly inherited as a “onetime Mormon missionary.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 63.

<sup>135</sup> Susan Lee and Christine Foster, “Loosen Up a Bit, Folks,” *Forbes* (December 15, 1997): 78.

<sup>136</sup> Steven V. Brull, “Mr. Clean Scrubs Up the Games,” *Business Week* (April 5, 1999): 114.

<sup>137</sup> Ilan Mochari, “In a Former Life,” *Inc.* (August 1999): 110. Founded in 1979, *Inc.* is a monthly magazine which provides ideas and tips for entrepreneurs and small businesses. See [www.Inc.com](http://www.Inc.com).

<sup>138</sup> Amy Feldman and Fleming Meeks, “We’ll Make You Scary,” *Forbes* (February 14, 1994): 96.

Not only did magazines recognize LDS missionary service as a factor in business practices, but in athletics as well. Forty different articles appearing in *Sports Illustrated* from 1991 to 2000 mentioned The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the majority of these addressed the missionary service of particular athletes. Several articles demonstrated how LDS missionary service contributed to the personal development of certain athletes. One article focused on a Brigham Young University football player, Rob Morris, who had “earned a reputation” among NFL scouts for hard work and sacrifice. These attributes were linked to his missionary service “in a depressed mining town” in Canada where Morris lived without television, radio or phone while proselytizing and serving at food banks.<sup>139</sup> A different article highlighted the selfless contributions of Alex Jensen to his basketball team at the University of Utah. The article said of Jensen: “When you devote two years to a Mormon mission, you understand sacrifice.”<sup>140</sup> Sean Bradley, a professional basketball player in the NBA, received favorable attention for his LDS missionary service in Australia. *Sports Illustrated* quoted him saying, “The work I’ve been doing is the most humbling experience anyone could have in his life,” and it “helps you find out who you are.”<sup>141</sup> Another article related the experience of Dale Murphy, who as an LDS mission president was asked to spend three years training and supervising missionaries in Boston, Massachusetts. Murphy, a two-time major league baseball MVP, described the experience as “a great honor.”<sup>142</sup>

Articles also reported on the difficulties and dangers experienced by LDS missionaries throughout the world. *Sports Illustrated* depicted missionary service as

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<sup>139</sup> Peter King, “Blind Optimism,” *Sports Illustrated* (August 14, 2000): 46.

<sup>140</sup> Alexander Wolff, “Glue Guys,” *Sports Illustrated* (March 20, 2000): 61.

<sup>141</sup> Hank Hersch, “Shawn Bradley,” *Sports Illustrated* (April 12, 1993): 70.

<sup>142</sup> John O’Keefe “Dale Murphy, Braves Double MVP,” *Sports Illustrated* (October 18, 1999): 20.

consisting of “long days” spent “knocking doors,” evading rottweilers, and providing various types of humanitarian service.<sup>143</sup> *The Economist* reported on the risks of LDS missionary service—in 1990, three Latter-day Saint missionaries were murdered; two in Peru and one in Ireland. That same year, another was kidnapped in Argentina while a variety of other “incidents” occurred in Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, Haiti, Colombia and Ecuador.”<sup>144</sup> In 1998, *U.S. News and World Report* provided information on the abduction and release of two American LDS missionaries serving in Russia.<sup>145</sup>

Periodicals thus provided a variety of coverage and commentary on Latter-day Saint missionary service. Of the 96 articles which addressed LDS missionary work, eight were rated unfavorable toward the Church in their reporting, 76 were neutral, 11 were favorable, and one was highly favorable in its reporting.

## Church Growth

Coinciding with the attention the Church received for its missionary program was the coverage given to its rapid growth rate. *Time*, for example, asserted in 1994 that the Church’s “sedulous missionary work has made what seemed to be a quintessentially American faith extraordinarily successful both at home and overseas.”<sup>146</sup> Three years later, *Time* affirmed that “the Mormon Church is by far the most numerically successful creed born on American soil and one of the fastest growing anywhere.”<sup>147</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* similarly noted that since the Church’s founding in 1830, it “has

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<sup>143</sup> Austin Murphy “Back in fashion,” *Sports Illustrated* (October 25, 1993): 42; Hersch, “Shawn Bradley,” 70.

<sup>144</sup> “Latter-day Saints and Martyrs,” 50.

<sup>145</sup> Kenneth T. Walsh et al., “World in Brief,” *U.S. News and World Report* (April 6, 1998): 49.

<sup>146</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>147</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 52.

sustained the most rapid growth rate of any new faith group in American history.”<sup>148</sup> *The Economist*, meanwhile, characterized the Church as a “growing religious empire.”<sup>149</sup>

In addition to addressing the Church’s past and current growth trends, magazines also commented on projections of its future growth. A 1996 article in *Harper’s Magazine*, for instance, included a conjecture that by 2012, “the Mormon majority will be Spanish-speaking.”<sup>150</sup> Between 1994 and 2000, *The Economist*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* each cited a study by Rodney Stark, a sociologist at the University of Washington, who predicted the Church’s membership would number 265 million by the year 2080.<sup>151</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* quoted Stark’s conclusion that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “stands on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on Earth since the prophet Mohammed rode out of the desert.”<sup>152</sup> Several articles also discussed potential challenges for the Church in trying to sustain its rapid growth.<sup>153</sup>

In discussing the Church’s expansion, periodicals were overwhelmingly neutral in their reporting. Twenty-seven of the thirty articles which addressed Church growth received a neutral rating. Two articles were rated unfavorable, and one was deemed to have anti-LDS bias because it characterized the Church’s growth as exclusively imperialistic, negative and harmful.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 59.

<sup>149</sup> “Calendars of Doom,” *The Economist* (December 12, 1992): 28.

<sup>150</sup> Richard Rodriguez, “True West,” *Harper’s Magazine* (September 1996): 46.

<sup>151</sup> “At Day’s End,” *The Economist* (April 9, 1994): 30; Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 52; Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 60.

<sup>152</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 60.

<sup>153</sup> “Portraits of Zion,” 37; Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 76-77; “The Prophet’s Mantle,” *The Economist* (June 11, 1994): 24.

<sup>154</sup> Simon Winchester, “Saving the Samoans,” *Mother Jones* (January/February 1994): 13.

## Genealogy

The Church's genealogy program was another topic which received attention in national magazines. The Family History Library in Salt Lake City was aptly described in 1999 as "the pride of the Mormon Church."<sup>155</sup> A different article which otherwise disparaged Latter-day Saint culture called the Church's genealogical records "phenomenal."<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the Church's efforts at collecting and disseminating family history data proved to be a leading source of favorable coverage in periodicals throughout the 1990s and into 2000.

Much of the reporting on the Church's family history resources reads almost like advertising. For example, *Newsweek* announced that the Latter-day Saints "have amassed records (open to everyone) on more than 2 billion people of all faiths." It calls the Church's 1,540 local family history libraries "arguably the best one-stop shopping for amateur genealogists." The article explained that the local libraries supply the general public with "computer links to the world's largest genealogical database, The Family History Library in Salt Lake City," and then provided the center's phone number.<sup>157</sup> *American Heritage* likewise encouraged its readers to "visit your local LDS Family History Center to explore its vast resources."<sup>158</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* glowingly described the Church's collection of family history records as "a gold mine for historians."<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Joseph L. Galloway, "Shooting in the Stacks," *U.S. News and World Report* (April 26, 1999): 44.

<sup>156</sup> Charles Hirshberg and Robert Sullivan, "The Magic Beyond Salt Lake," *Life* (April 1995): 91.

<sup>157</sup> Marc Peyser and Claudia Kalb, "Roots Network," *Newsweek* (February 24, 1997): 33.

<sup>158</sup> Cyndi Howells, "Tracking Your Family Through Time and Technology," *American Heritage* (February/March 1999): 90.

<sup>159</sup> Marissa Melton, Margaret Mannix and Joannie M. Schrof, "News You Can Use in Brief," *U.S. News and World Report* (May 31, 1999): 79.

Several articles praised not only the Church's vast collection of records, but also the skillfulness and magnanimity of Church members who assist in making that information available to the public. *Compute!* described the Family History Library staff as a "terrific resource" who are "helping hundreds of people every day."<sup>160</sup> *American History* similarly praised Latter-day Saint volunteers who, over a five year period, spent over two million hours assisting with records on 17 million U.S. immigrants to be made available at the American Family Immigration History Center on Ellis Island.<sup>161</sup> Latter-day Saint genealogists were also praised for helping to identify the names of black Civil War soldiers to be included in a memorial.<sup>162</sup>

Several magazines recognized Latter-day Saint genealogical records for contributing to scientific research. One article reported that DNA analysis of "large Mormon families [with] detailed genealogical records" proved effective in identifying a new gene linked to prostate cancer.<sup>163</sup> LDS genealogies were also cited for their help in testing for genes involved in inherited breast cancer and for possible causes of colon cancer.<sup>164</sup>

Periodicals also frequently recognized the Church for its use of technology in relation to its genealogical work. An article noted that "the church created one of the first and most widely recognized genealogy database programs, Personal Ancestral File." The Church was also recognized for its development of the GEDCOM standard, which allows family members to share research data from differing software programs. These

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<sup>160</sup> Richard O. Mann and David English, "12 Great Online Places," *Compute!* (August 1994): 59.

<sup>161</sup> "History Today," *American History* (June 1999): 8.

<sup>162</sup> Linda M. Rancourt, "Fighting for Freedom," *National Parks* (September/October 1996): 25.

<sup>163</sup> J. Travis, "Teams Implicate New Gene in Prostate Cancer," *Science News* (October 7, 2000): 230.

<sup>164</sup> "A Little Knowledge," *The Economist* (February 25, 1995): 14; Brownlee, "Tinkering with Destiny," 60.

innovations helped take “the drudgery out of record keeping,” which in turn contributed to a widespread and growing interest in family history.<sup>165</sup> In 1998, *Newsweek* reported that Salt Lake City “ranks first in the nation in the proportion of households with personal computers—nearly 65 percent—partly because PCs are ideal for the genealogical recordkeeping important to Mormons.”<sup>166</sup> *The New Republic* similarly concluded that high computer literacy among Latter-day Saints resulted from their efforts in “electronic record-keeping as a spiritual pursuit and community obligation.”<sup>167</sup>

The Church’s decision in 1999 to make its genealogy database available online resulted in glowing commendation. *Newsweek* described FamilySearch.org as the world’s largest genealogical database and highlighted its accessibility: “the service is free, and you don’t have to be Mormon to use it.”<sup>168</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* similarly mentioned that the website was a “free service” which allowed users to research a variety of “census, legal, military, and even religious records” without having to visit a family history library in person.<sup>169</sup> *Time* called the launch of FamilySearch.org “a major contribution to the field” of genealogy. The article quoted a reference librarian from the New England Historic Genealogy Society in Boston who praised FamilySearch.org as a “wonderful site” which was “giving the most widespread access ever to the world’s largest genealogical repository.”<sup>170</sup> *PC Magazine* also reported that through

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<sup>165</sup> Howells, “Tracking Your Family Through Time and Technology,” 90.

<sup>166</sup> Trent T. Gegax et al., “When Wired is a Way of Life,” *Newsweek* (November 9, 1998): 55.

<sup>167</sup> Katherine Eban Finkelstein, “The Computer Cure,” *The New Republic* (September 14, 1998): 30.

<sup>168</sup> Jennifer Tanaka and Beth Kwon, “Cyberscope,” *Newsweek* (June 7, 1999): 16.

<sup>169</sup> Melton et al., “News You Can Use in Brief,” 79.

<sup>170</sup> Hornblower, “Roots Mania,” *Time* (April 19, 1999): 55-56.



FamilySearch.org the Church offered Personal Ancestral File—“a good, basic genealogy program”—as a free download for anyone.<sup>171</sup>

Of all the topics for which the Church was recognized in national periodicals from 1991 through 2000, genealogy was one of the few which consistently garnered favorable attention. Of the 43 articles which mentioned the Church’s family history program, 25 were neutral, 16 were favorable, and two were highly favorable.

### **Temples and temple worship**

Closely related to the Church’s emphasis on genealogy is its practice of building temples and performing sacred ordinances therein. National periodicals recognized temples and temple worship as distinguishing features of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to *Time*, for example, the most prominent differences between Latter-day Saints and Catholics or Protestants “revolve around rituals of the [LDS] temples,” which include endowments, temple sealings, and proxy baptisms.<sup>172</sup> Another article concurred, explaining that Latter-day Saints primarily differentiate themselves from other faiths “within the sacred space of [their] temple rituals.”<sup>173</sup> *Newsweek* showed the importance of temples in Latter-day Saint theology and culture by quoting temple president Floyd Packard: “It is the dream of every Mormon to live in the shadow of a temple.”<sup>174</sup>

*U.S. News and World Report* elaborated on the distinguishing nature of LDS temples by quoting Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926-2004), one of “the church’s quorum of

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<sup>171</sup> Sally Wiener Grotta et al., “After Hours,” *PC Magazine* (June 27, 2000): 242.

<sup>172</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

<sup>173</sup> Shipps, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 50.

<sup>174</sup> Gregory Cerio and Lucy Howard, “San Diego is Talking...,” *Newsweek* (January 25, 1993): 6.

the twelve apostles.”<sup>175</sup> Elder Maxwell asserted that Latter-day Saints comprise “the only church that has a safety net. Anybody who didn’t hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ in life will, before Judgment Day, be given a chance in Paradise to hear it, and they get equal blessings if they accept it.” The author then explained that Latter-day Saints perform proxy baptisms in temples on behalf of their “relatives who died as nonbelievers.”<sup>176</sup> A different article further noted that while these baptisms “allow the dead to enter the religion,” the ordinance does not necessarily “guarantee that will happen” because “the dead decide for themselves if Mormonism is for them.”<sup>177</sup> *The Wilson Quarterly*, *U.S. News and World Report* (three times), *American Heritage*, *American Demographics*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* each explained that the Church’s genealogical efforts are carried out for the purpose of performing these temple ordinances.<sup>178</sup> “Temples are typically busy six days a week,” one article explained, because of the high volume “of members taking part in the ritual.”<sup>179</sup>

Several articles highlighted the Church’s perceived sensitivity regarding its temple ordinances. One claimed that the Church had “amended the temple ceremonies” in an effort “to gain more ecumenical acceptance from other Protestant churches.”<sup>180</sup> Others emphasized the secretive or non-public nature of the temple ordinances. For instance, one article related that “deep inside the air-conditioned chambers” of their temples, “white-clothed Mormons pad about in luxuriously decorated rooms” where they

<sup>175</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 74.

<sup>176</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 74.

<sup>177</sup> Jennifer Fulkerson, “Climbing the Family Tree,” *American Demographics* (December 1995): 43.

<sup>178</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 45; Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 74; Galloway, “Shooting in the Stacks,” 44; Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 62; Michael S. Durham, “This is the Place,” *American Heritage* (April 1993): 66; Fulkerson, “Climbing the Family Tree,” 43; Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55; Peyser and Kalb, “Roots Network,” 33.

<sup>179</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 74.

<sup>180</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormon’s Progress,” 45.

perform “secret rituals” in order to secure “eternal rewards for themselves, their families, and their ancestors.”<sup>181</sup> *The Economist* reported that “harsh punishments are reserved for people who . . . perform church rituals outside the temple.”<sup>182</sup> *Time* frankly noted that Latter-day Saint temples “are barred to outsiders,” and *American Heritage* commented that temples are “open only to Mormons in good standing with their church.”<sup>183</sup> *Essence* explained that because “only card-carrying Mormons” can enter the temples, a “temple recommend” must be “earned” through a member’s “faith and work” in the Church.<sup>184</sup> These temple recommends allow Church members to enter the temples and participate in temple ceremonies.<sup>185</sup>

In the late 1990s, the Church accelerated its temple building program, which *Time* described in 1997 as “prodigious.”<sup>186</sup> This, in turn, aroused the attention of several periodicals which reported on both the cost and proliferation of LDS temples. An article appearing in 1993, for example, reported on the construction of a temple in San Diego, California adjacent to a major freeway. It mentioned that local residents experienced “trouble adjusting to the temple’s scale.” One architectural reviewer called the building “magnificent” while another wondered if Latter-day Saints “believe in the separation of church and interstate.”<sup>187</sup> The writer of a different article described a Latter-day Saint temple as “grandiose.”<sup>188</sup> An article entitled “Invasion of the Latter-day Saints” related the Church’s plans to build a \$25 million replica of its original temple in Nauvoo,

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<sup>181</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 59.

<sup>182</sup> “Calendars of Doom,” 28.

<sup>183</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55; Durham, “This is the Place,” 66.

<sup>184</sup> Jeffries, “Leaps of Faith,” 171.

<sup>185</sup> “Temples,” *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2004): 172.

<sup>186</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>187</sup> Cerio and Howard, “San Diego is Talking . . .,” 6.

<sup>188</sup> Elizabeth Schleichert, “The Object at Hand,” *Smithsonian* (August 1994): 14.

Illinois. The article cited concerns over the temple's construction, suggesting that it "may erase the identity of the community of 1,200 people that grew up" during the Church's prolonged absence from the city. Latter-day Saints "want to take back Nauvoo," according to one resident, "and since they can't do it with guns, they are doing it with money."<sup>189</sup> In 2000, *U.S. News and World Report* referred to the new temple being built in Houston, Texas, as a "massive \$17 million dollar edifice." The article explained that this temple was just one of thirty-one being constructed that year, which would raise the world-wide total of Latter-day Saint temples to 100.<sup>190</sup>

In summary, while the Church received attention for its temple ordinances and the accelerated construction of its temples during the 1990s, this topic was not a source of favorable coverage. In total, twenty-one articles appearing in national magazines from 1991 through 2000 mentioned Latter-day Saint temples or temple worship. Six of these articles were unfavorable toward the Church in their coverage, and the remaining 15 were neutral.

### **Word of Wisdom Health Practices**

Unlike the topic of temples and temple worship, magazine coverage of the Word of Wisdom, a religious health code which bans certain substances, produced favorable coverage for the Church. Many articles explained that adherence to the Word of Wisdom is a unique aspect of the Latter-day Saint lifestyle. One in particular declared that "the formal boundaries between Mormon and Gentile are drawn by the Word of Wisdom."<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> David Van Biema and Julie Grace, "The Invasion of the Latter-day Saints," *Time* (July 10, 2000): 64.

<sup>190</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, "The Mormon Moment," 59.

<sup>191</sup> Ruthven, "The Mormons' Progress," 41.

An example of how the Word of Wisdom garnered periodical attention occurred in 1999 when Church member Jane Clayson was named as an anchor on ABC News' The Early Show. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* noted that Clayson would be performing her job without the aid of coffee because of her Latter-day Saint beliefs.<sup>192</sup> Another example occurred in 1995 when *People* magazine named Steve Young to its list of the world's most beautiful people. The article mentioned that he, "in keeping with his faith . . . doesn't drink or smoke."<sup>193</sup> *Sports Illustrated* also alluded to Young's adherence to the Word of Wisdom in its description of the "Mormon quarterback" who "sneaks a Dr Pepper now and then (beware, demon caffeine!)."<sup>194</sup> An article in *U.S. News and World Report* made a similar wry comment about Mormon teenagers, stating that when they want to rebel "they sneak off and drink a Pepsi."<sup>195</sup>

Several articles mentioned the benefits of the Latter-day Saint health code. One article noted that the Word of Wisdom "contains strictures against alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine that clearly improve quality of life. Studies show that the average Mormon male lives six years longer, and the average Mormon female three years longer, than their Gentile counterparts." The article continued its praise of this practice by relating that "the state of Utah (which is at least 70 percent Mormon) ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in rates of death from cancer and heart disease and dead last in deaths due to cirrhosis of the liver."<sup>196</sup> Another article similarly noted that "as a group of people, Mormons have a lower rate of cancer."<sup>197</sup> And after describing the restrictions of the Word of Wisdom, a *Forbes* writer

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<sup>192</sup> James Poniewozik, "Battle of the Morning People," *Time* (November 1, 1999): 102; Marc Peyser and Alisha Davis, "Newsmakers," *Newsweek* (September 20, 1999): 80.

<sup>193</sup> "The 50 Most Beautiful People in the World," *People* (May 8, 1995): 114.

<sup>194</sup> Rick Telander, "Beaten Deep," *Sports Illustrated* (January 23, 1995): 29.

<sup>195</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, "The Mormon Moment," 62.

<sup>196</sup> "Portraits of Zion," 36.

<sup>197</sup> "Clippings," *Health* (October 1992): 89.

frankly suggested: “given the Mormon lifestyle, it would be amazing if they did not live longer than other people.”<sup>198</sup>

Articles mentioned a variety of other effects stemming from the Word of Wisdom. One stated that the Word of Wisdom “allows Mormon communities to flourish in the most unlikely places” and suggests this is the reason that “a substantial community of Saints thrives in the midst of the Babylonian glitter of Las Vegas.”<sup>199</sup> Another article cited the Word of Wisdom as a reason why LDS leadership is so old. Latter-day Saint presidents “do not retire,” reported *The Economist* while describing the frail condition of Church President Ezra Taft Benson, “and because Mormons tend to have good health—eschewing alcohol, tobacco and coffee—their leaders can live a long time.”<sup>200</sup>

Other articles recognized the Word of Wisdom for its cultural effects in communities where Latter-day Saints maintain a strong influence. *Life* described Salt Lake City as “a famously sleepy place since Mormon prophet Brigham Young brought his teetotaling style to town in 1847.” The article lamented that “low-alcohol beer” was “the only kind served in the saloons” of Salt Lake City.<sup>201</sup> Another article reported on an economic model which indicated that Madison County, Idaho, because of demographics, “should be the top-ranked county in the U.S. for per-adult spending on beer drunk at home.” In reality, the county had only one liquor store, and “the reason is the Mormon church, which dominates life in much of the rural West.”<sup>202</sup> In 1997, when an anti-

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<sup>198</sup> Thomas Sowell, “Memo to Medical Reformers,” *Forbes* (June 21, 1993): 140.

<sup>199</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 41.

<sup>200</sup> “At Day’s End,” 30.

<sup>201</sup> Hirshberg and Sullivan, “The Magic Beyond Salt Lake,” 91.

<sup>202</sup> Brad Edmondson, “The Line Between Beer and Wine,” *American Demographics* (March 1998): 19.

tobacco initiative was passed in Mesa, Arizona, *American Spectator* reported on the feeling there that “Mormons had carried the day.”<sup>203</sup>

The Word of Wisdom thus received periodical attention for a variety of reasons. A total of 45 articles mentioned the Word of Wisdom from 1991 through 2000. Two were unfavorable in their coverage, 37 were neutral, and six received favorable ratings, producing in sum a slightly positive source of periodical attention for the Church.

### **Tithing**

Meanwhile, twenty-four articles reported on the practice of tithing—whereby faithful Latter-day Saints donate ten percent of their annual income to the Church.

Tithing was often mentioned in connection with the wealth of the Church. *The Economist* reported in 1991 that “most of the church’s income comes from a spiritual commandment to its members to contribute 10% of their gross salary to the church. Receipts from tithing probably range from \$2.5 billion to \$4.3 billion each year, based on Utah tax returns and comparisons with other church incomes.” This article also included a fairly cynical caption which read: “Heaven, in exchange for 10% of salary.”<sup>204</sup>

*Time* reported that in 1996 “\$5.2 billion in tithes flowed into Salt Lake City.” The article described tithing as a “divergence between Mormon economics and other denominations.” While other churches receive donations, “very few . . . impose a compulsory 10% income tax on their members.” *Time* contrasted the tithing income of the LDS church with the income of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which

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<sup>203</sup> John Corry, “A Freedom Lover in Mesa, Arizona,” *The American Spectator* (January 1997): 27. *The American Spectator* was established in 1967 and provides conservative commentary on national news and politics. See [www.spectator.org](http://www.spectator.org).

<sup>204</sup> “Render unto Smith,” *The Economist* (July 13, 1991): 28-29.

had “a comparable U.S. membership” yet received “\$1.7 billion a year in contributions.”<sup>205</sup>

Several magazines reported on the desire of individual Church members to pay tithing. *Money* described a California family “with six boys to feed” who donated twelve percent of its annual pretax income to the Church, causing the family to “live as frugally as ants at a Weight Watchers’ picnic.”<sup>206</sup> *Sports Illustrated* alluded to the practice of tithing as a motive for Sean Bradley to join the National Basketball Association because “the more money he made, the more he could give to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”<sup>207</sup> A *Forbes* article entitled “Nice Guys Finish First” lauded Steve Young for generously giving part of his multi-million dollar salary to “the Mormon church.”<sup>208</sup> Another article credited tithing with planting the seeds of generosity in the life of Jon Huntsman, who charitably gives “between \$30 million and \$50 million a year, not including his 10% tithe to the Mormon church.”<sup>209</sup> *Fortune* noted that Church member Stephen Covey, author of the internationally popular book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, also paid tithing to “the Mormon faith.”<sup>210</sup>

A number of articles explained how the Church uses its tithing income. *U.S. News and World Report* indicated that tithing contributed to the Church’s ownership and operation of over 12,000 church buildings throughout the world—including both meetinghouses and temples—and added that the Church’s “real estate holdings are valued in the billions.”<sup>211</sup> An article on the growth of the Church in Samoa demonstrated

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<sup>205</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>206</sup> Anthony Cook, “When Your Home is the Classroom,” *Money*, (September 1991): 105.

<sup>207</sup> Michael Bamberger, “A Too-tall Order,” *Sports Illustrated* (December 11, 1995): 92.

<sup>208</sup> Randall Lane, “Nice Guys Finish First,” *Forbes* (December 16, 1996): 241.

<sup>209</sup> Ann Marsh, “They Don’t Expect to Take it With Them,” *Forbes* (October 13, 1997): 130.

<sup>210</sup> Smith and Hadjian, “What’s So Effective About Stephen Covey?,” 122.

<sup>211</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 61.



that tithing was also used to operate the Church in areas where LDS congregations are not financially self-sufficient. The article quoted a Church leader in Samoa who stated, “We must spend at least a hundred times more here than we earn from tithing . . . but we think it is worth it.”<sup>212</sup>

Of the twenty-four articles which mentioned tithing, three were rated unfavorable, 18 were neutral, and three were favorable. Tithing thus proved to be a source of overall neutral periodical coverage for the Church.

### **Welfare and Humanitarian Aid**

In contrast to the generally neutral reporting on tithing, the Latter-day Saint practices of welfare and humanitarian aid received only favorable coverage in national periodicals from 1991 through 2000. Several articles positively described the operational process of the Church’s welfare system. *Time* explained that the program is administered by local bishops and is organized so that each congregation “can care for its own disadvantaged members.” Continuing, the article stated that perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Latter-day Saint welfare system was its method of funding. “Once a month, church members are asked to go without two meals and contribute their value to the welfare system.”<sup>213</sup> *Policy Review* noted that members also volunteer to work on Church farms to supply food for the needy.<sup>214</sup> *Good Housekeeping* demonstrated how Latter-day Saints were taught to minister to each others’ needs. The article told of a Church member who, after being hit by a car, received tender help from “a steady stream of neighbors and

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<sup>212</sup> Winchester, “Saving the Samoans,” 13.

<sup>213</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 57.

<sup>214</sup> “Mormon Charity,” *Policy Review* (January/February 1996): 60. *Policy Review* covers social, political and economic issues in America. See [www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview](http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview).

friends from [her] . . . tight-knit Mormon town.” Church members came regularly to mow the lawn, clean house, and help care for the children.<sup>215</sup>

Other articles mentioned the philanthropy of Church member Jon Huntsman. In 1997, for example, a writer in *Forbes* praised Huntsman, “a Mormon,” for allocating between \$500 million and a billion dollars toward a foundation to fight cancer.<sup>216</sup> A different article similarly tied Huntsman’s generosity to his LDS faith and added that long before he was wealthy, he “subsidized a needy family every month with \$50 from his \$350 paycheck.”<sup>217</sup>

Two magazines recognized the institutional humanitarian practices of the Church. A *Billboard* article praised the charitable efforts of the “Mormon-owned” Bonneville International Corporation. The article reported that in 1994 alone, Bonneville raised \$100 million for arts, education, and other organizations and would contribute another \$38 million of its own toward various community services.<sup>218</sup> *Wilderness*, meanwhile, lauded the Latter-day Saint women’s Relief Society, describing it as an ideal humanitarian organization.<sup>219</sup>

Writers from *Policy Review*, *American History*, and *Time* each identified the Latter-day Saint Welfare Program as a model worthy of national emulation. *Policy Review*, for example, stated that “Mormon welfare [provides] the basis for genuine welfare reform in America.”<sup>220</sup> It particularly commended the practice of having LDS welfare recipients work to the extent possible for what they receive. In this way, the

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215 Jere Longman, “How Love is Healing an Injured Runner,” *Good Housekeeping* (May 1997): 32.

216 Marsh, “They Don’t Expect to Take it With Them,” 130.

217 Caroline Bollinger, “America’s Most Generous,” *Fortune* (January 13, 1997): 98.

218 Carrie Borzillo, “Moral Values are Bottom Line at Bonneville,” *Billboard* (February 5, 1994): 86.

219 Terry Tempest Williams, “The Wild Card,” *Wilderness* (Summer 1993): 27.

220 Tucker Carlson, “Holy Dolers,” *Policy Review* (Winter 1992): 31.

Church's Welfare Program provides for "all" the needs of its recipients, including the need for "self respect."<sup>221</sup> LDS welfare, according to *American Heritage*, thus diverges from certain aspects of other welfare systems which create a "culture of dependence."<sup>222</sup> *Time* reported that recipients of Latter-day Saint welfare services generally stay "on the dole . . . between 10 and 12 weeks, at an average total cash value of \$300."<sup>223</sup> Thus, "the explicit aim" of LDS welfare is "to wean people from it." Its success in doing so is "its greatest accomplishment."<sup>224</sup> For such success, the Latter-day Saints are generally recognized as having "one of the most effective and compassionate welfare systems in the world."<sup>225</sup>

The Latter-day Saint Welfare Program, with its emphasis on sustaining families, spreading compassion, and fostering self-worth, was thus convincingly described as the Church's "most effective form of public relations."<sup>226</sup> Indeed, this assessment mirrored the perception at large of LDS welfare in national periodicals. Of the thirteen articles which mentioned this topic from 1991 through 2000, nine were rated as favorable, and the remaining four reported on welfare in a positively pro-Latter-day Saint manner.

### **Effects of Programs and Practices on Image**

In conclusion, the programs and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints garnered a variety of periodical coverage from 1991 through 2000, ranging from generally unfavorable to completely favorable. On one hand, the magazine

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<sup>221</sup> Carlson, "Holy Dolors," 25.

<sup>222</sup> "History Today," 8.

<sup>223</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, "Kingdom Come," 57.

<sup>224</sup> Carlson, "Holy Dolors," 31.

<sup>225</sup> Carlson, "Holy Dolors," 25-26.

<sup>226</sup> Carlson, "Holy Dolors," 31.

attention given to Latter-day Saint temples and temple worship received an overall unfavorable rating, and the coverage on Church growth was just slightly unfavorable overall. In the middle was the topic of tithing, which averaged a neutral rating. On the other hand, the topics of missionary work and the Word of Wisdom received slightly favorable overall ratings, while the topic of genealogy was solidly favorable. The Church's welfare and humanitarian aid practices, meanwhile, received an entirely favorable rating.

This information is represented visually in the figures contained in Chapter 6. Figure 10, which concerns Church programs, reflects periodical coverage on the topics of missionary work, Church growth, and welfare. The topics of temples and temple worship, genealogy and the Word of Wisdom, meanwhile, are reflected in Chapter 6, Figure 12, which contains data on Church rites. Finally, the topic of tithing is represented in Chapter 6, Figure 13 about socio-economic themes.

## CHAPTER 4

### LATTER-DAY SAINT HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

Periodical coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1991 through 2000 included commentary on the Church's unique history and theology. With regard to Latter-day Saint history, magazines focused on the Church's beginnings and the persecution it endured for many years. Periodicals also noted the accomplishments and historical significance of Latter-day Saint pioneers. Reporting on this topic included articles on the Church's sesquicentennial celebration of the pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847. National magazines likewise discussed the bygone Latter-day Saint practice of polygamy. Another source of interest included the Church's former policy of denying priesthood ordination to men of African descent. Finally, a number of periodicals examined several aspects of Latter-day Saint theology. This chapter conveys the reporting of national periodicals on each of these topics and indicates how that reporting affected the Church's image.

#### Beginnings

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded in Fayette, New York, on April 6, 1830.<sup>227</sup> "In its early years," according to *U.S. News and World Report*, "the LDS church was widely regarded by outsiders with suspicion and outright disdain."<sup>228</sup> The controversy surrounding the new religion largely centered on the personality and teachings of its founder, Joseph Smith. In evidence of this, *Smithsonian*

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<sup>227</sup> Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 1:75-77; hereafter cited as *HC*.

<sup>228</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, "The Mormon Moment," 61.

magazine asserted that “few men in recent history were to be more deified or more despised than Joseph Smith.” Continuing, the article mentioned that “one of his detractors described him as ‘one of the grossest and most infamous imposters that ever appeared on the face of the earth.’” Moreover, the article related the same detractor’s bitter harangue characterizing Joseph Smith’s followers as a “‘fanatical tribe,’ preachers of ‘contemptible gibberish’ who had ‘openly blasphemed the Most High God.’”<sup>229</sup>

Yet *Smithsonian* also proffered an alternate view of Joseph Smith—as he was perceived by believers. The magazine quoted an early Latter-day Saint convert, Emmeline Wells, who recorded her first meeting with Joseph Smith: “When he took my hand, I was simply electrified. The one thought that filled my soul was, ‘I have seen the Prophet of God.’” After citing these two opposing views of Joseph Smith, *Smithsonian* simply concluded that “from the first, Smith possessed a charismatic mix of presence and personal magnetism.”<sup>230</sup> Meanwhile, a different article accurately summarized: “From the beginning, there were opposing Mormon and anti-Mormon views about the founding of the church and the career of the founding prophet, Joseph Smith.”<sup>231</sup>

Much of the criticism Joseph Smith initially encountered stemmed from his testimony that, beginning in 1823, he was visited and instructed by an angel named Moroni.<sup>232</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* indicated that “from the beginning, critics have disputed and ridiculed Smith's claim that an angel led him to a set of golden plates hidden in a woods near his home in Palmyra, N.Y.” The magazine further explained: “The plates were said to contain the sacred history of an ancient Israelite civilization in North

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<sup>229</sup> Schleichert, “The Object at Hand,” 14.

<sup>230</sup> Schleichert, “The Object at Hand,” 14.

<sup>231</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 24.

<sup>232</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 9.

America, along with teachings said to have come from Jesus during a post-Resurrection visit to America. Smith published his translation as the Book of Mormon.”<sup>233</sup>

A different article in *U.S. News and World Report* contained Joseph Smith’s own assessment of the Book of Mormon as “the most correct of any book on Earth and the keystone of our religion.” The magazine also provided a dissenting view of the Book of Mormon: “Detractors through the years have dismissed Smith's story as religious fantasy and the book itself as a clumsy reworking of the King James Version of the Bible.” The 1992 article further mentioned that “attacks on Mormon Scriptures by outsiders are not unusual;” however, “some Mormon scholars...have noted that there is no archaeological evidence to support the Book of Mormon's account of an ancient Israelite civilization in North America.”<sup>234</sup> Conversely, the article failed to mention the growing quantity of intrinsic evidence discovered by Latter-day Saint scholars which lent credence to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and buttressed Joseph Smith’s testimony concerning its origins.

In a 1997 cover-story article on the Church, *Time* also commented on Latter-day Saint beginnings, including the emergence of the Book of Mormon: “God restored his ‘latter-day’ religion by dispatching the angel Moroni to reveal new Scriptures to a simple farm boy named Joseph Smith near Palmyra, N.Y. Although the original tablets, written in what is called Reformed Egyptian, were taken up again to heaven, Smith...translated and published the Book of Mormon in 1830.”<sup>235</sup> *Time* also included Joseph Smith’s

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<sup>233</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 61.

<sup>234</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 77.

<sup>235</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

testimony that “he continued to receive divine Scripture and revelations,” including “visits from God the father, Jesus, John the Baptist and saints Peter, James and John.”<sup>236</sup>

Several periodicals reported that Joseph Smith’s bold claims regarding his personal contact both with Deity and with diverse angelic messengers engendered, even through the end of the Twentieth Century, various reactions, viewpoints and interpretations regarding the Church’s origins. For example, in the year 2000—170 years after the Church’s founding—*U.S. News and World Report* announced that “the church has continued to face almost unrelenting controversy over its origins.”<sup>237</sup> *The Wilson Quarterly* likewise affirmed that “in the case of the Mormons, the problems of origins are unusually acute,” and indicated that because the LDS religion was relatively new, “the controversies surrounding its origins therefore are not safely lost in the myths of antiquity.”<sup>238</sup> The same article asserted in a moderately critical tone that the Church, in educating its membership on LDS history, “overlooks the more complex historical facts.” Instead, the author implied, the Church presented a superficial view of its history: “Visitors to Hill Cumorah, where Joseph claimed to have found the gold plates, are treated to the ‘world’s largest pageant’ where a thousand Mormon volunteers re-enact a Disneyland version of the Joseph Smith story using a battery of special effects.”<sup>239</sup>

Periodical reporting on early Latter-day Saint history thus varied substantially in terms of favorability toward the Church. In summary, 26 of the 41 articles that mentioned the Church’s origins did so in a neutral manner. One article was highly unfavorable in its reporting, and eight others were rated unfavorable. Conversely, six

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<sup>236</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

<sup>237</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 61.

<sup>238</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 24.

<sup>239</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 44.



articles which treated Latter-day Saint origins were favorable. Overall, the topic of Church origins received an unfavorable rating.

## **Persecution**

The controversy aroused by Joseph Smith's teachings and testimony resulted in years of persecution for himself and his followers. Many periodicals related various aspects of the resultant struggles experienced by early Church members. *Smithsonian*, for instance, explained that "intolerance and open hatred [of Latter-day Saints] were fueled by fears of their commercial aggressiveness and their increasing political power. Outrage was also stirred by the teachings of their prophet, a tall, blue-eyed young man named Joseph Smith." Continuing, the article recounted struggles of early Church members as they "tried to carve out a holy city in the wilderness, first in Ohio and Missouri, then in Illinois. Repeatedly they were driven out by non-Mormon neighbors."<sup>240</sup> A different *Smithsonian* article similarly noted that "some 20,000 Mormons [were] savagely driven out of Nauvoo, Illinois, a city they built as a New Jerusalem."<sup>241</sup>

*American Heritage* likewise related some of the hardships endured by early Church members: "The Mormons wandered in the wilderness, so to speak, all the time gaining in numbers and resolve in the face of constant harassment and persecution." Continuing, the article mentioned the Church's relocation from New York "to Ohio, where Smith was tarred and feathered, and Missouri, where he was jailed and whence they were driven to Illinois." There, the Saints encountered "more hostility, and in 1844,

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<sup>240</sup> Schleichtert, "The Object at Hand," 14.

<sup>241</sup> Timothy Foote, "1846," *Smithsonian* (April 1996): 38.

the same year he declared himself a candidate for the U.S. Presidency, Joseph Smith, in jail again, was killed by an armed mob in Carthage, Illinois.”<sup>242</sup>

In addition to these accounts of persecution, *Time* offered a more comprehensive view of the hardships Latter-day Saints endured, which continued well beyond Joseph Smith’s death. The magazine affirmed: “For more than a century, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints suffered because their vision of themselves and the universe was different from those of the people around them.” Continuing, *Time* explained that the Saints’ “tormentors portrayed them...as radical communalists [and] polygamists out to destroy the American family,” attacking them both “in print, and physically by mobs.”<sup>243</sup>

This article in *Time*, however, also noted that the “circumstances” of Latter-day Saints living in the 1990s “could not be more changed.” In explanation, *Time* cited the “copious and burnished national media attention” focused on “200 exultant and sunburned Latter-day Saints” who, while reenacting the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their pioneer forebears’ arrival in Salt Lake City, were “cheered in person by a crowd of 50,000—and observed approvingly by millions.” Moreover, *Time* stated that America had “come to accept—no, to lionize—[Latter-day Saints] as paragons of the national spirit.” In essence, the Church “went from being ‘vilified’ to being ‘venerated.’”<sup>244</sup>

Both *The Wilson Quarterly* and *The New Republic* also commented on the Church’s remarkable change in American public perception. *The Wilson Quarterly* described Latter-day Saints as “pariahs of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” who, “steadily and by

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<sup>242</sup> Durham, “This is the Place,” 66.

<sup>243</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 52.

<sup>244</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 52.

degrees,” transformed themselves into “the super-Americans of today.”<sup>245</sup> *The New Republic* similarly recognized the striking contrast between the young, persecuted “Mormon cult” and the late-Twentieth Century “Mormon church,” which it called “a pillar of establishment respectability.”<sup>246</sup> On the other hand, *U.S. News and World Report* indicated in 1996 that the Latter-day Saints’ apparent change in public perception was not yet universal, as some Americans continued to perceive the LDS Church as a “cult.”<sup>247</sup> However, a *Parks and Recreation* article which reported on the persecution-induced trek of LDS pioneers remarked that Latter-day Saint history constitutes “a poignant reminder of the importance of religious freedom and tolerance,” and may serve to “promote greater tolerance today.”<sup>248</sup>

Reporting on the historical persecution of Latter-day Saints thus proved to be a generally favorable source of periodical coverage for the Church. Thirty articles addressed this topic between 1991 and 2000. Twenty-four of those articles were neutral, and 6 were favorable.

## Pioneers

A number of magazines also commented on the history of Latter-day Saint pioneers who, according to *Civilization* magazine, represent the American “West’s most successful settlers.”<sup>249</sup> *American Heritage* justly characterized LDS pioneers as “central

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<sup>245</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormon’s Progress,” 35.

<sup>246</sup> Paul Boyer, “A Brief History of the End of Time,” *The New Republic* (May 17, 1993): 33.

<sup>247</sup> Joseph P. Shapiro and Andrea R. Wright, “Can Churches Save America?,” *U.S. News and World Report* (September 9, 1996): 51.

<sup>248</sup> Brian J. Hill, “Reflections on an Outdoor Recreation Experience,” *Parks and Recreation* (August 1998): 58.

<sup>249</sup> Phyllis Rose, “Pioneers on a Mission,” *Civilization* (February/March 1997): 57. The magazine’s full title is *Civilization: The Magazine of the Library of Congress*. The periodical seeks to

figures in the Mormon story.” In recounting the Church’s history, *American Heritage* mentioned that early Latter-day Saints, led by “the remarkable Brigham Young,” commenced a westward trek in 1846 in order to “find their Mormon Zion, a place that nobody else wanted, where they would be left in peace.” Elaborating, the magazine described the approximately “eighty thousand” pioneers who, over “twenty-odd years,” made their way to Utah: “They were a hardy lot who came... by wagon train and foot, with some of the walkers pulling handcarts across the plains and mountains.”<sup>250</sup>

Examples of reporting on LDS pioneers included an article in *Earth* which admirably depicted “the saga of the Mormon settlers” as well as an affable *Sports Illustrated* reference to Brigham Young as “the Mormon leader who was as tough as a desert lizard.”<sup>251</sup> Additionally, *History Today* proffered this favorable assessment of LDS pioneers: “By the time of Brigham Young's death in 1877 the Mormons had over 300 settlements and 140,000 followers spread across the Utah territory, with their capital, Salt Lake City, as a monument to their survival skills and one of the most extraordinary products of religious revivalism in nineteenth-century America.”<sup>252</sup>

Not all commentary on Latter-day Saint pioneers was favorable, however. In particular contrast to the many positive or neutral portrayals of LDS pioneers, a *Rolling Stone* article promoting environmentalism decried “the hard determination to dominate nature” personified by “the Mormons.”<sup>253</sup> The article condescendingly described LDS

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generate broad exposure to the vast resources within the Library of Congress which are available to the public.

<sup>250</sup> Durham, “This is the Place,” 66.

<sup>251</sup> Djuna Bewely, “Hole-in-the-Rock Road,” *Earth* (September 1994): 78; Rick Telander, “Stuffed!,” *Sports Illustrated* (November 21, 1994): 29. *Earth* magazine reported on topics as diverse as weather, geology, paleontology, anthropology and human origins. The magazine was discontinued in 1998.

<sup>252</sup> “Mormons Reach the Great Salt Lake,” *History Today* (July 1, 1997): 31.

<sup>253</sup> Don Henley, “Heaven Under Our Feet,” *Rolling Stone* (October 17, 1991): 54.

pioneers as “a chosen people who believed the Lord when He told them to make the desert bloom as the rose,” and set up the following quotation by Elder John Widtsoe, a mid-twentieth century Church leader, as a foil to the cause of ecology: “There can be no full conquest of the earth, and no real satisfaction to humanity, if large portions of the earth remain beyond his highest control.”<sup>254</sup> This article, however, represented the exception to the trend of periodical reporting on LDS pioneers.

A number of magazines mentioned several positive qualities inherent within the Church or in the locale of Salt Lake City because of their common pioneer heritage. The clearest example of this occurred in a 1997 edition of *Vital Speeches of the Day* when it included Church President Gordon B. Hinckley’s General Conference address to the Church entitled “The Mormon Trail.” After recounting events pertaining to the pioneer trek, President Hinckley declared: “We stand today as the recipients of their great effort.” He then spoke of the “wonderful inheritance” bequeathed by Latter-day Saint pioneers involving “sacrifice, suffering, death, vision, faith, and knowledge and a testimony of God.”<sup>255</sup>

Likewise, an article in *Inc.* magazine affirmed that pioneer stories continued to inspire modern Latter-day Saints to confront their current challenges with optimism. According to the article, modern Church members recounted inspiring stories of pioneers who pulled handcarts to Utah and who built the “huge Mormon Tabernacle with wooden pins because nails were so scarce in the new land.”<sup>256</sup> Additionally, *Policy Review* cited positive benefits of the Church’s pioneer heritage while discussing its effective Welfare

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<sup>254</sup> Henley, “Heaven Under Our Feet,” 54.

<sup>255</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Mormon Trail,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (June 15, 1997): 543.

<sup>256</sup> Michael P. Cronin, “Paradise Lost,” *Inc.* (November 1993): 48. The article cited here featured a successful startup company with two Latter-day Saint owners.

Program—mentioning specifically that LDS Welfare incorporated the pioneer principles of industriousness and self-reliance.<sup>257</sup> In a different example, a *Parks and Recreation* article emphasized several positive features of Salt Lake City while recalling its pioneer past. The article explained that many early “European converts to Mormonism” came to Utah and “brought with them their unique culture, languages and skills, transforming Salt Lake into an eclectic, cosmopolitan city.” The article favorably concluded that “today, Salt Lake City is a hub of economic, recreational and cultural activity.”<sup>258</sup>

The Church’s pioneer past received particular emphasis on July 24, 1997, when Latter-day Saints celebrated the “150th anniversary of the arrival of the Mormon pioneers.” In its coverage of the event, *Time* quoted President Gordon B. Hinckley, who stated: “From that pioneer beginning, in this desert valley where a plow had never before broken the soil, to what you see today...this is a story of success.”<sup>259</sup>

*Newsweek* covered a different aspect of the sesquicentennial celebration by reporting on a large reenactment of the pioneer trek stretching from Iowa to Salt Lake City, Utah. The article quoted a Church member participating in the reenactment who explained, “I want my daughters to know what our ancestors did for us.” Continuing, the article indicated that “after 93 days on the trail,” this particular Church member hoped “to feel the same joy and relief her great-great-grandmother described in her journal 150 years ago: ‘My heart flows with gratitude to God that we have [arrived] all safe. Lost nothing and have been blessed in life and health.’”<sup>260</sup> Meanwhile, a *Parks and Recreation* reporter wrote a highly favorable article regarding LDS pioneers and modern

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<sup>257</sup> Carlson, “Holy Dolors,” 26.

<sup>258</sup> “Salt Lake City,” 128.

<sup>259</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 57.

<sup>260</sup> Anne Underwood, “Onward, Mormon Pilgrims,” *Newsweek* (April 28, 1997): 65.

Church members after accompanying the pioneer trek reenactment. He recalled: “In the spring and summer of 1997, I lived an adventure that changed the lives of some 10,000 people. Those lives are richer and deeper because of...the reenactment of the Mormon Trail Wagon Train.” Continuing, the writer explained that “for three months...thousands of participants donned pioneer attire and joined the wagon train for a day, a week, or a month.” As a participant, he further injected: “I have never heard laughter and singing like I did with the handcart company as we trod along mile after mile in the heat and dust and rain.”<sup>261</sup>

In summary, periodical reporting on Latter-day Saint pioneers tended to be favorable toward the Church. Forty-one articles appearing from 1991 through 2000 mentioned LDS pioneers, and only one was unfavorable. Twenty-five articles were neutral in their reporting, and 13 were favorable. One article was highly favorable in its portrayal of LDS pioneers.

## **Polygamy**

The practice of polygamy constituted another aspect of Latter-day Saint history which drew attention in national magazines. Periodical reporting on polygamy generally fell under one of three categories. These included the origin of LDS polygamy and its historical practice among Latter-day Saint pioneers, the Church’s official cessation of polygamy in 1890, and the ongoing public perception which continued to associate Latter-day Saints with polygamy throughout the 1990s and in 2000.

Several magazines unfavorably characterized the origin of Latter-day Saint polygamy in the basest of terms—as simply a manifestation of sexual exploitation or

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<sup>261</sup> Hill, “Reflections on an Outdoor Recreation Experience,” 58.

power grabbing by early Church leaders, particularly Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Speaking of Joseph Smith, for example, one magazine reported: “The recollections of Saints who later left the church, as well as of some women who became his plural wives, leave little doubt that the tall, young, good-looking, charismatic leader had a roving eye.”<sup>262</sup> With alarming historical inaccuracy, another article claimed that “by cloaking the idea [of LDS polygamy] in religious raiment, the men enjoyed fantastic success in assembling frontier harems. The doctrine became instantly popular throughout the entire Utah territory.”<sup>263</sup>

Moreover, a different article asserted that Joseph Smith, “like more recent cult leaders . . . used sexuality to bind his followers to him.” In explaining how Church leaders allegedly used polygamy to secure power, the article continued: “For the select group of leaders who took plural wives, loyalty was virtually guaranteed.”<sup>264</sup> Perhaps affirming the notion that LDS men controlled women through polygamy, *Smithsonian* magazine printed the story of an eastern woman, Miriam Leslie, who in 1877 traveled from the East to the Utah territory in order to interview Brigham Young regarding polygamy. Purportedly, she queried: “What religion can make a woman happy in seeing the husband whom she loves devoted to another wife?” According to the story, Brigham Young offered a terse reply indicating that “Mormon women were content and accepted church teachings.”<sup>265</sup>

In contrast to these unfavorable views of LDS polygamy, other articles treated this topic without imputing base motives to the Latter-day Saint men involved. One

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<sup>262</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 54.

<sup>263</sup> Guy Martin, “The Encyclopedia of Male Vanity,” *Esquire* (March 1997): 85.

<sup>264</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 29.

<sup>265</sup> Donald Dale Jackson, “Miriam Leslie, Belle of the Boardroom,” *Smithsonian* (November 1997): 156.



observed that “despite the presumed degradation of women that the practice [of polygamy] implied, there was no notable cry for rescue from female Mormons.” Continuing, the article suggested: “In actual operation the Mormons' ‘puritan polygamy’ ...was far less lurid than imagined.” The writer then dispelled notions about the rampant misuse of the doctrine of polygamy by Latter-day Saint men in order to form large harems. Specifically, the author noted, “the overall share of Utah's Mormon populace in plural marriages was around 25 percent,” and the “great majority of these polygamists had only two wives.” Additionally, “only a small number” of LDS men had more than three wives, and some of these “may have been sealings for eternity without physical contact.”<sup>266</sup>

A different writer highlighted the autonomy of early Latter-day Saint women by explaining that Utah women, many of whom were living under plural marriage, received equal suffrage in 1870 well ahead of their female counterparts in the United States.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, an article in *Civilization* appeared as a quasi-defense of the LDS pioneers who engaged in polygamy. The article specifically characterized LDS pioneer men as “hardworking farmers, toiling round the clock to support more than one family in obedience to a doctrine that held plural marriage sacred.” Continuing, the writer surmised that polygamy constituted “a tremendous burden” for LDS men who dutifully provided for their families “in a responsible fashion.” Despite these realities, however, “outsiders persisted in viewing Mormon elders as decadent hedonists who varied their wives for pleasure.”<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Bernard A. Weisberger, “What Makes a Marriage?,” *American Heritage* (November 1996): 14.

<sup>267</sup> “1896,” *American Heritage* (December 1996): 105.

<sup>268</sup> Rose, “Pioneers on a Mission,” 62.

In addition to these comments on the origin and practice of Latter-day Saint polygamy, several periodicals mentioned its discontinuance by the Church in 1890. A number of articles depicted the Church's "volte face on polygamy" as a political "accommodation."<sup>269</sup> One, for instance, reported that "Mormon leaders reluctantly acceded" to end the practice in order to secure statehood for Utah.<sup>270</sup> According to *Time*, however, "the church's official disavowal of polygamy in 1890" was largely ineffectual, because "high officials secretly continued to practice and sanction additional polygamous nuptials."<sup>271</sup> Meanwhile, a *Forbes* writer challenged the moral basis for the change by questioning: "How can polygamy be sinful for one generation and not for the next?"<sup>272</sup> Magazines which treated the topic of the Church's discontinuance of polygamy thus tended to be unfavorable in their commentary.

Despite the Church's official cessation of polygamy in 1890, periodicals continued to mention the practice throughout the 1990s as a defining historical characteristic of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, one magazine noted that "in the East Coast imagination, until this very day, polygamy has obscured just about everything else that the Mormons have done or have stood for." Continuing, the article explained: "Say 'Mormon' in New York City today and someone will say 'polygamy' within 60 seconds, more than 100 years after the church renounced the practice."<sup>273</sup>

Many articles, while recognizing the Church's official abdication of polygamy, identified modern polygamist groups as products of the former Latter-day Saint practice. An article in *Mother Jones*, for example, explained that "The Fundamentalist Church of

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<sup>269</sup> Ruthven, "The Mormons' Progress," 35.

<sup>270</sup> Martin, "The Encyclopedia of Male Vanity," 85.

<sup>271</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, "Saints Preserve Us," 65.

<sup>272</sup> Southwick, "Circling Faith," 239.

<sup>273</sup> Rose, "Pioneers on a Mission," 62.

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints separated from the Mormon church when it renounced plural marriage in 1890.”<sup>274</sup> Likewise, *Good Housekeeping* reported: “The mainstream Mormon church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, stopped advocating the practice of polygamy in 1890. Nonetheless, there are an estimated 30,000 polygamists living in the state of Utah.” The article also noted that contemporary women living under polygamy who wished to transition out of that lifestyle receive “a lot of encouragement from . . . the mainstream Mormon community.”<sup>275</sup>

*Newsweek* and *The Wilson Quarterly* also attributed the existence of modern polygamist groups to the historical LDS practice of polygamy. In 1991, *Newsweek* mentioned that “polygamy is illegal under state and church law—but Utah tolerates an estimated 10,000 polygamists, most of whom cite the now disavowed doctrine of plural marriage as their creed.”<sup>276</sup> That same year, *The Wilson Quarterly* reported: “There are now said to be at least 20,000 Mormon ‘fundamentalists’ who practice polygamy in Utah, with a smaller number in the neighboring states of Idaho, Arizona, and Montana.”<sup>277</sup> Elucidating its usage of the term “Mormon fundamentalists” in the previous statement, the article accurately explained that the Church “excommunicates [polygamists] and takes steps to ensure that plural marriages are not contracted in the temples.”<sup>278</sup>

Several articles, however, failed to make an adequate distinction between contemporary practicing polygamist groups and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As a result of this failure, these articles inevitably reflected upon the Church

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<sup>274</sup> Florence Williams, “Mojo’s August Hellraiser!,” *Mother Jones* (July/August 1994): 19.

<sup>275</sup> Carmen Thompson and Celest Fremon, “Memories of a Plural Wife,” *Good Housekeeping* (March 1999): 118.

<sup>276</sup> Wright, “A Prophet and His ‘Sisters,’” 23.

<sup>277</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 35. The sizeable difference evident in these various estimates concerning the number of polygamists in Utah simply underscores the idea that the actual quantity is unknown.

<sup>278</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 35.

unfavorably. A typical example of this occurred in 1995 in a publication describing “religious cult groups.” The article mentioned “Mormon polygamists” and “The Branch Davidians” as similar entities, but offered no explanation of how modern “Mormon polygamists” differ from the mainstream Church.<sup>279</sup>

In summary, forty-eight articles mentioned polygamy between 1991 and 2000 in conjunction with the Church. Four were highly unfavorable, and 11 were unfavorable. The unfavorable ratings stemmed from one of three causes: imputing salacious motives to early Church leaders for introducing and practicing polygamy, negatively describing the Church’s renunciation of the practice, or failing to distinguish between the Church and various break-off sects. Meanwhile, thirty-two articles reported on the Church and polygamy in a neutral fashion. Additionally, one article was rated favorable because it highlighted the integrity of early Latter-day Saints who practiced polygamy.

### **Revelation on the Priesthood**

Another avenue of Latter-day Saint history which received attention in national periodicals concerned the Church’s former practice of withholding priesthood ordination from men of African descent. This topic aroused generally unfavorable magazine coverage. *U.S. News and World Report*, for example, stated: “For most of its history, the Mormon Church relegated blacks to a position of inferiority and divine disfavor.” Continuing, the article reported that not until June of 1978, “when Spencer W. Kimball, then the church’s president, received a divine revelation did the church declare blacks eligible for the priesthood—a title bestowed upon all faithful males.”<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Mack Tanner, “Extreme Prejudice,” *Reason* (July 1995): 43.

<sup>280</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 77.

In a subsequent article, *U.S. News and World Report* also suggested the change in policy merely represented a course of expediency for the Church: “Only in 1978, as the church began making inroads into Africa and South America and amid strong pressure at home, did then LDS President Spencer W. Kimball receive a divine revelation declaring blacks eligible for the Mormon priesthood.” The article also mentioned that “in the aftermath, church leaders even revised the Book of Mormon to eliminate a passage deemed particularly offensive to blacks.”<sup>281</sup> *Time* similarly linked the policy change to the Church’s quest for worldwide expansion, reporting that “an explicit policy barring black men from holding even the lowest church offices was overturned by a new revelation in 1978, opening the way to huge missionary activity in Africa and Brazil.”<sup>282</sup>

In addition to these statements, a Church member divulged a pointedly skeptical view of the 1978 revelation in a *Forbes* article. The author indicated that “before the late 1970s, my church firmly stated that African Americans could not hold the priesthood, which is...the indisputable tool of power” within the LDS Church. Continuing, she stated: “To the church’s credit, when it finally ended the practice, under the aegis of a ‘revelation from God,’ it did so wholeheartedly.” However, the author lamented, there was “never any adequate explanation as to why black men [had been] unworthy of the priesthood one day, while the very same black men could be ordained the next day—except that, speaking through our spiritual authorities, God (defined as an ‘unchangeable being’ in Mormon scripture) had suddenly changed his mind and ordered it so.”<sup>283</sup>

In contrast to the dubious commentary some magazines offered regarding the 1978 revelation, an article in *Essence* related the faith of a black female LDS convert who

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<sup>281</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 64.

<sup>282</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 56.

<sup>283</sup> Southwick, “Circling Faith,” 239.

remained undeterred by “the church’s controversial history.” According to the article, the woman’s “friends were ‘pretty anti-Mormon,’ and they quizzed her about joining a church that’s estimated to be only 1 percent Black and [which] long had a reputation as [being] racist.” Despite such obstacles, however, the new convert affirmed that both the spiritual satisfaction and familial support she derived from the Church outweighed concerns for any alleged bygone “racist practices.”<sup>284</sup>

*Newsweek* and *Time* provided further examples of willingness to view the Church’s former priesthood policy as a thing of the past. Both of these articles appeared in 1994 when U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy ostensibly alluded to the Church’s former priesthood restriction in order to cast his LDS challenger, Mitt Romney, as a racist. According to *Newsweek*, Senator Kennedy attacked Mitt Romney by raising “questions about the Mormons’ history of denying leadership positions to blacks and women.” The article reported that “most of Boston was repulsed by the sight of a Kennedy playing the religion card, and he was forced to back down.”<sup>285</sup> Meanwhile, *Time* depicted Senator Kennedy’s challenge against Mitt Romney’s religion as an act of political desperation, while also noting that Senator Kennedy’s “brother [John F. Kennedy] had to fend off questions about his Catholicism during his run for the presidency.”<sup>286</sup>

Of the thirteen articles which addressed the 1978 revelation authorizing priesthood ordination for black Latter-day Saint men, seven were unfavorable in their reporting and six were neutral. This topic thus tended to produce generally unfavorable periodical coverage for the Church.

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<sup>284</sup> Jeffries, “Leaps of Faith,” 170.

<sup>285</sup> Howard Fineman, “Slouching toward Defeat?,” *Newsweek* (October 10, 1994): 30.

<sup>286</sup> Jill Smolowe and Sam Allis, “Tough Time for Teddy,” *Time* (October 10, 1994): 32.

## Theology

Latter-day Saint theology represented another topic which generated interest in national periodicals. Several magazines emphasized differences between LDS theology and the teachings of other Christian denominations. *Time*, for example, mentioned that “there is a long list of current Mormon practices [stemming from LDS doctrine] foreign to Catholic or Protestant believers.” Continuing, the article indicated that these differences had “led to some withering denominational sniping.” For instance, “in 1995 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued national guidelines stating that the Mormons were not ‘within the historic apostolic tradition of the Christian Church,’” while the “Presbyterians’ Utah subunit concluded that the Latter-day Saints ‘must be regarded as heretical.’” The article also reported that “the Mormons have responded to such challenges by downplaying their differences with the mainstream.”<sup>287</sup>

According to *U.S. News and World Report*, however, “Mormon leaders readily concede that LDS doctrine differs substantially from that of traditional Christianity, which, they believe, went badly astray soon after the death of Jesus’s Apostles.” As a result, the article observed, “the LDS church...continues to run up against other religious groups that challenge the Mormon claim to be a Christian church.” In 2000, *U.S. News and World Report* specifically mentioned that “the 8.4 million-member United Methodist Church declared that Mormonism ‘by self-definition, does not fit within the bounds of the historic, apostolic tradition of the Christian faith.’” The article also suggested that “LDS officials get rankled by the accusation that Mormons are not Christians.”<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

<sup>288</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 65.

Additionally, several magazines acknowledged the desire of Latter-day Saints to emphasize their Christian faith. Specifically, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Time* indicated that during the 1990s, LDS leaders labored to more effectively underscore the Church's worship of Jesus Christ. *U.S. News and World Report*, for example, revealed that in 1995 the Church "hired an international public-relations firm" which recommended "the redesign of the church's logo to emphasize the centrality of Jesus Christ in LDS theology." When asked about the Church's association with the firm, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles told the magazine: "We don't see it so much as PR as trying to define ourselves, rather than...letting others define us."<sup>289</sup> Similarly, in an interview with *Time*, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley emphasized the importance of Jesus Christ for Latter-day Saints: "'The church's message,' he explained, 'is a message of Christ. Our church is Christ-centered. He's our leader. He's our head. His name is the name of our church.'"<sup>290</sup> Moreover, an article in *Essence* likewise highlighted the centrality of Jesus Christ in LDS theology. The article quoted a new Latter-day Saint convert who specifically indicated that for her, joining the Church consisted of "learning the teachings of Christ, learning about Him and His ways."<sup>291</sup>

While the Church may have, to a degree, advanced its image as a Christian denomination during the 1990s, a different article determined that many Americans still did not identify Latter-day Saints as Christians. The article specifically mentioned the experience of U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch, a Latter-day Saint who sought unsuccessfully to become the Republican nominee for President in 2000. Senator Hatch mentioned that

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<sup>289</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, "The Mormon Moment," 62.

<sup>290</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, "Kingdom Come," 55.

<sup>291</sup> Jeffries, "Leaps of Faith," 171.



during his campaign, he found that “there was a certain amount of prejudice against Mormons” within the United States. The article referenced a Gallop Poll that indicated seventeen percent of Americans would not vote for a “Mormon,” and related Senator Hatch’s feeling that “these people think that Mormons are not Christians, when the name of the church is 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.' We're very Christian.”<sup>292</sup>

Another aspect of Latter-day Saint theology which generated interest in national magazines concerned the Church’s unique doctrine on the nature of God. *The Wilson Quarterly*, for instance, reported that “Joseph Smith spoke of God as having once been a person with ‘a body of flesh and bones as tangible as a man's.’”<sup>293</sup> The article also mentioned the LDS view that God was married “and together they had procreated ‘spirit children.’”<sup>294</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* also noted the LDS doctrine that “God has a physical body, is married, and begets children.” Continuing, the article indicated that “Mormon founder Smith even declared in 1844 that God ‘is an exalted Man’ who ‘was once as we are now.’”<sup>295</sup>

*Time* similarly related the teaching of Joseph Smith “that God was once a humanlike being who had a wife and in fact still has a body of “flesh and bones.”<sup>296</sup> *Time* also asked President Gordon B. Hinckley “whether his church still holds that God the Father was once a man.” President Hinckley responded by explaining this specific doctrine did not receive much emphasis in current Church teachings: “I don't know that we teach it. I don't know that we emphasize it... I understand the philosophical

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<sup>292</sup> Michael Posner, “Hatch Sings the Blues,” *National Journal* (April 15, 2000): 1206.

<sup>293</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 29.

<sup>294</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 29-30.

<sup>295</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 65.

<sup>296</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

background behind it, but I don't know a lot about it, and I don't think others know a lot about it.”<sup>297</sup>

*U.S. News and World Report*, meanwhile, mentioned a related doctrine that differentiated Latter-day Saint teachings from those of other denominations. The magazine explained: “While both Mormons and non-Mormon Christians accept the biblical statement that humans are created in God's image, for example, Christians traditionally have interpreted that to mean that humans, like God, are free moral agents.” The article further explained, “Mormons, on the other hand, teach...that humans, in the afterlife, may progress to become gods who create and sustain universes of their own.”<sup>298</sup> *Time* also commented on the unique Latter-day Saint doctrine regarding humankind's unlimited potential. The magazine noted that “Mormons...believe that men, in a process known as deification, may become God-like. Lorenzo Snow, an early President and Prophet, famously aphorized, ‘As man is now, God once was; as God now is, man may become.’”<sup>299</sup> *The Wilson Quarterly* similarly quoted Lorenzo Snow's couplet and described it as “the most famous Mormon aphorism.”<sup>300</sup>

Several articles also demonstrated interest in Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding both the historical and future significance of certain locations in the state of Missouri. A reporter for *Time*, for instance, described his visit to Adam-ondi-Ahman, a “Mormon shrine” located two hours driving distance from Kansas City, Missouri. The article described Adam-ondi-Ahman as “the garden of Eden,” where, according to Joseph Smith,

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<sup>297</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 56.

<sup>298</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 65.

<sup>299</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

<sup>300</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons' Progress,” 29.

“God created humankind and where Christ would return to rule the earth.”<sup>301</sup> A different article in *Time* likewise mentioned a revelation received by Joseph Smith which indicated “that Christ will return to reign on earth and have the headquarters of his kingdom in a Mormon temple in Jackson County, Mo.” According to the article, “the church has purchased 14,465 acres of land there” in preparation for the event.<sup>302</sup> *Policy Review* similarly referenced Joseph Smith’s “teaching that Jesus is scheduled to return to Jackson County, Missouri.”<sup>303</sup>

Fifty-three articles from 1991 through 2000 thus commented on some aspect of Latter-day Saint theology. One article was highly unfavorable in its coverage of the Church’s doctrine, and 16 others were rated unfavorable. Meanwhile, 30 articles treated LDS theology in a neutral manner. Another five articles were rated favorable with regard to this topic, and one was highly favorable toward the Church. Periodical reporting on LDS theology therefore received an overall unfavorable rating.

### **Effects of Latter-day Saint History and Theology on Image**

In conclusion, an array of articles in national periodicals from 1991 through 2000 addressed Latter-day Saint history and theology, producing diverse effects on the Church’s image. For example, reporting on the Church’s beginnings reflected Latter-day Saints in a slightly unfavorably manner overall. On the other hand, magazine reporting on both the persecution experienced by early Church members and the epic achievements of Latter-day Saint pioneers resulted in significant favorable periodical attention for the Church. This is shown in Chapter 6, Figure 7, regarding Church origins.

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<sup>301</sup> Walter Kirn, “Walking a Mile in Their Shoes,” *Time* (August 4, 1997): 56.

<sup>302</sup> Kingdom Come, 55.

<sup>303</sup> Carlson, “Holy Dolers,” 27.

Additionally, the Church's historical ties to polygamy resulted in solidly unfavorable periodical attention. Chapter 6, Figure 9 reflects this trend. Moreover, the Church's former policy which restricted men of African descent from holding the priesthood likewise received unfavorable coverage overall. This data is reflected in Chapter 6, Figure 11 on race. Finally, magazine interest in Latter-day Saint theology similarly generated a sum unfavorable rating, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, Figure 14.

## CHAPTER 5

### LATTER-DAY SAINT PEOPLE AND CULTURE

From 1991 through 2000, national periodicals discussed a variety of subjects related to Latter-day Saint people and culture. This chapter presents six overarching topics stemming from popular magazine articles concerning members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their common religious culture. The first section of this chapter examines a number of general characterizations regarding Church members as they appeared in national periodicals. The following section treats periodicals' reporting on LDS Church leadership at its highest levels, including Church procedures relative to presidential succession and its doctrine regarding living prophets. The third section of this chapter deals with national periodicals' interest in the Church's wealth—both its assets and the management of those assets by the Church hierarchy. The fourth section treats magazine reports on the Church's organizational structure and disciplinary procedures. The fifth topic concerns periodical reporting on the Church's public and political influence in both Utah and other areas. The final section shows what was written concerning Latter-day Saints and education, including the Church's sponsorship of Brigham Young University. Ultimately, this chapter provides analysis of how periodical writings related to LDS people and culture during the 1990s and 2000 affected the Church's image.

#### **General Characterization of Church Members**

National magazines commented extensively on characteristics of people belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In fact, this theme received

the highest volume of periodical coverage of any topic relative to the Church from 1991 through 2000. This coverage reinforced certain perceptions of Latter-day Saints in general. Five particular characteristics of Church members surfaced repeatedly throughout the decade, demonstrating the qualities with which Church members were most often identified. These included kindness, morality, industriousness, conservative values, and religious devotion.

Several national periodicals recognized individual Church members for their kindness. For instance, *Vital Speeches of the Day* published an address by the Commissioner of Major League Baseball in which he spoke of the kindness of a Latter-day Saint baseball player. The Commissioner shared an anecdote regarding a Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher, Vernon Law, “an Elder in the Mormon Church,” who refused to retaliate after he and his teammates were provoked during a game.<sup>304</sup> Meanwhile, *Sports Illustrated* hailed another Major League baseball player, Dale Murphy, as both “a devout Mormon,” and “the kindest, best-liked and most respected player of his generation.”<sup>305</sup> *Sports Illustrated* also highlighted the magnanimity of a “Mormon bishop” and his wife in Philadelphia who, along with their five small children, had “taken in all kinds.” The article mentioned specifically that the couple had opened their home to “unwed mothers, sick people, [and] folks down on their luck.”<sup>306</sup> An article which discussed the generosity of actress Rhonda Fleming, the daughter of a Church member, similarly linked her kindness with LDS culture. After describing her dedication to helping women with cerebral palsy and cancer, the article quoted Fleming: “My mother was a Mormon, and

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<sup>304</sup> Francis T. Vincent, Jr., “An Agenda for the Most Magical Game Ever Invented: Baseball in the 1990s,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* (June 15, 1992): 544.

<sup>305</sup> Tim Kurkjian, “Graceful Exit,” *Sports Illustrated* (June 6, 1993): 64.

<sup>306</sup> Rick Reilly, “Weight Watcher,” *Sports Illustrated* (September 27, 1993): 41.

her values of giving just rubbed off on me.”<sup>307</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* noted that Church members were admonished to be kind by their leaders. Specifically, “Mormon President Gordon Hinckley instructed his flock to be ‘gracious and respectful’ to their Baptist guests” in 1998 when the Southern Baptist Convention met in Salt Lake City.<sup>308</sup>

In contrast to these examples of Latter-day Saint kindness, an article in *Time* mentioned that “Mormon culture . . . can seem triumphal and even clannish to outsiders.” This article discussed the exultation of Church members after learning that a temple would be re-built in the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, an important site in LDS Church history. After the announcement, a number of “Mormon tourists” in Nauvoo allegedly “exhibited an arrogance and ownership regarding the town” that offended some of its longtime non-LDS residents.<sup>309</sup> Thus, while praise for Latter-day Saint kindness in national periodicals was general and consistent, it was neither ubiquitous nor absolute.

In addition to the attention Latter-day Saints generally received for their kindness, they were also recognized for their dedication to morality. *Time* mentioned that “Mormons . . . have a high moral standard on chastity, fidelity, honesty and hard work, and that's appealing.”<sup>310</sup> *The Progressive*, which addresses issues concerning national politics and social justice, related the LDS position on chastity while discussing a debate over “a proposed course in human sexuality for Utah high-school students.”<sup>311</sup> The article stated that during the debate, a Church member and “mother of seven” quoted “former Mormon Church President Spencer W. Kimball, who said that children need

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<sup>307</sup> James Bawden, “Rhonda Fleming,” *Films in Review* (November/December 1994): 7.

<sup>308</sup> Jeffrey L. Sheler, “Baptists in Mormon Land,” *U.S. News and World Report* (June 22, 1998): 16.

<sup>309</sup> Van Biema and Grace, “The Invasion of the Latter-day Saints,” 64.

<sup>310</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 56-57.

<sup>311</sup> “No Comment,” *The Progressive* (December 1991): 10.

only a two-word lesson in sex education: be chaste.”<sup>312</sup> *Sports Illustrated* recognized Danny Ainge, a player and coach in the National Basketball Association, for his chaste lifestyle. Apparently Ainge, “a devout Mormon,” would “stay at the team hotel reading scriptures while some of his teammates were out looking for action. He tried, both as a player and a coach, to be a positive moral influence.”<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, one writer demonstrated the positive results of Latter-day Saint morality in her reporting about Salt Lake City. The writer stated that with its high concentration of Latter-day Saints, the city’s “rates of sexually transmitted disease, substance abuse, and HIV infection [were] among the country’s lowest.”<sup>314</sup>

Another aspect of morality for which Church members received attention was their antipathy toward gambling. One example of this occurred in a *National Geographic* article entitled “Believing Las Vegas.” The article noted: “Oddly, in Sin City the most emphatic religious presence is that of the nongambling . . . Mormons, whose integrity and industriousness are greatly valued by the hotels.”<sup>315</sup> In another example, an article in *People* magazine about singer Gladys Knight coupled her success in overcoming “a gambling addiction” with her conversion to the Church. The writer explained: “To help her resist the lure of casinos she relies on the spiritual lift she gets from her newfound Mormon religion.”<sup>316</sup> Six other articles appearing from 1991 through 2000 likewise commented on the LDS position against gambling, showing this aversion to be characteristic of Church members in general.

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<sup>312</sup> “No Comment,” 10.

<sup>313</sup> MacMullen, “Eyes Wide Open,” 134.

<sup>314</sup> Finkelstein, “The Computer Cure,” 30.

<sup>315</sup> William R. Newcott and Maria Stenzel, “Believing Las Vegas,” *National Geographic* (December 1996): 65-66.

<sup>316</sup> Steve Dougherty and Karen Brailsford, “Pain and Glory,” *People* (December 8, 1997): 99.



Perhaps coinciding with their stance against gambling was the reputation Latter-day Saints held throughout the 1990s and 2000 for their industriousness. An article discussing regional economics cited “the Mormon work ethic” as a positive contributing economic factor in Utah.<sup>317</sup> Meanwhile, *Policy Review* noted that “work has occupied a central place in Mormonism since its inception.”<sup>318</sup> Another magazine concurred, adding: “Then as now Mormons were sober, hardworking, frugal and highly organized.”<sup>319</sup> According to *The Economist*, “Mormon institutions are . . . noted for producing dedicated workers,” and *Forbes* agreed, reporting that “among Utah's Mormons, devotion to work is highly respected.”<sup>320</sup>

Besides such specific acclaim for their collective work ethic, Latter-day Saints were also recognized for embodying a number of conservative values. One article noted: “Today the Mormons are regarded—and regard themselves—as bearers of classic American values” such as “thrift, self-help [and] sobriety.”<sup>321</sup> In a clear example of this, *Vital Speeches of the Day* published the remarks of Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, who called for a “reformation” in American society “with a return to the teaching of values in our schools.” President Hinckley also articulated the necessity of “putting a good father who will stand beside a good mother in a home where virtue, honesty, integrity, and a reliance upon God will be taught by example as well as by precept.”<sup>322</sup> In a different example, a writer for *The Wilson Quarterly* concluded that LDS politicians in Washington, D.C. consistently supported “conservative causes”

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<sup>317</sup> Tom Bethell, “Bearish on California,” *American Spectator* (October 1994): 18.

<sup>318</sup> Carlson, “Holy Dolors,” 26.

<sup>319</sup> Schleichert, “The Object at Hand,” 14.

<sup>320</sup> “Software Valley,” 69; Phyllis Berman and Alexander Alger, “A One-Man Show,” *Forbes* (February 2, 1994): 68.

<sup>321</sup> Ruthven “The Mormon’s Progress,” 24.

<sup>322</sup> Hinckley, “The Teaching of Values,” 75.

because of their religious affiliation.<sup>323</sup> This view likely reinforced the notion that Latter-day Saints generally sustained traditional values. Some writers, however, described “Mormon, conservative traditions” unfavorably.<sup>324</sup> For instance, an article which sympathetically treated the apparent plight of homosexuals disparaged “Honor, Commitment, Fidelity, [and] Loyalty” as “nasty old straight, American, Mormon, conventional values.”<sup>325</sup> However, reporting on Latter-day Saint support for conservative values tended to be generally neutral.

Another quality largely associated with Latter-day Saints was religious devotion. *U.S. News and World Report* affirmed that Latter-day Saints generally constitute “a highly motivated membership that submits in overwhelming numbers to the church's strict moral code and to its taxing demands on their time, money, and allegiance.” The article continued by quoting “the church's president, prophet, and chief spiritual leader,” Gordon B. Hinckley, who explained: “We have a demanding religion, and that's one of the things that attracts people to this church.”<sup>326</sup> A different article noted that “some of the most rapidly growing denominations in recent years have been among the most rigid in doctrine and lifestyle,” and then proffered, as the leading example of this, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>327</sup>

While some articles thus recognized Latter-day Saint religious devotion as an asset to the Church, others unfavorably depicted it as an ascetic extremity. *Newsweek*, for example, attested that Church members “subscribe to a faith with a rigid moral

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<sup>323</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 42.

<sup>324</sup> “Salt Lake City Breaks Several Barriers,” 24.

<sup>325</sup> Yale Kramer, “Angels on Broadway,” *American Spectator* (July 1993): 24.

<sup>326</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 60.

<sup>327</sup> Jeffrey L. Sheler, “Spiritual America,” *U.S. News and World Report* (April 4, 1994): 49.

doctrine,” and *Time* reported on the “abstemious nature” of Latter-day Saint culture.<sup>328</sup> *The Economist*, meanwhile, described someone who contravened LDS culture as “a rarity in a church that expects conformity.”<sup>329</sup> More specifically, the apparent piety of Church member and Utah Senator Orrin Hatch became a target of criticism in two different articles. The first belittled Senator Hatch’s comments on morality made during confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice nominee Clarence Thomas, characterizing Senator Hatch as “that natty embodiment of Mormon disapproval.”<sup>330</sup> Years later, during the events surrounding President Bill Clinton’s impeachment trial, a different article described Senator Hatch as a “Mormon lay minister . . . steeped in a tradition of morality as chill and austere as a Utah mountaintop.”<sup>331</sup>

*The Economist* indicated that Church leaders wanted to mitigate perceptions of LDS religious zeal. According to the article, Church leaders preferred “to project a moderate, middle-class image: well-dressed young missionaries on bicycles, rather than polygamists huddling in underground shelters with calendars and cans of beans.”<sup>332</sup>

Periodicals thus provided a variety of coverage on characteristics of people belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Of the 124 articles which addressed this theme, 13 were rated unfavorable toward the Church in their reporting, 70 were neutral, 37 were favorable, and four were highly favorable in their reporting.

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<sup>328</sup> Jack Kroll, “The Sins of the Saints,” *Newsweek* (July 5, 1999): 61; Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 57.

<sup>329</sup> “At Day’s End,” 30.

<sup>330</sup> Robert Brustein, “Caricatures in Search of an Author,” *The New Republic* (November 18, 1991): 35.

<sup>331</sup> Walter Kirn, “Justice Should Come Before Closure,” *Time* (August 31, 1998): 54.

<sup>332</sup> “Calendars of Doom,” 28.

## Church Leadership

National periodicals not only provided numerous observations concerning Latter-day Saints in general, but also focused particular attention on LDS Church leaders. During the 1990s, two Church Presidents died and two new Presidents were appointed to lead the Church. These events generated the interest of several national magazines. *The Economist* and *Time*, for example, reported on the death of President Ezra Taft Benson in 1994.<sup>333</sup> The following year, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Newsweek* both mentioned the death of President Benson's successor, President Howard W. Hunter.<sup>334</sup>

The deaths of these leaders prompted several magazines to cover the process of succession to the position of Church President. According to *Time*, succession occurred as "a group of dark-suited apostles called the Council of the Twelve [gathered] in the central Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah, to 'set apart' a new prophet from among themselves."<sup>335</sup> *The Economist* similarly stated that "members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles—the governing body of the Mormon church—met in a private chamber in the Salt Lake Temple" where they ordained from among themselves a new "prophet, seer, revelator and . . . president of the church."<sup>336</sup> In a different article, *The Economist* also explained that upon the death of a Church President, "the line of succession is clear: the senior member of the apostles becomes the next president."<sup>337</sup> *Newsweek* reported in March of 1995 that the appointment of President Gordon B. Hinckley to the office of

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<sup>333</sup> "Politics and Current Affairs," *The Economist* (June 4, 1994): 4; Gregory and Donohoe, "Saints Preserve Us," 65.

<sup>334</sup> "Howard Hunter," *U.S. News and World Report* (March 13, 1995): 18; Kenneth L. Woodward, "The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray," *Newsweek* (March 27, 1995): 63.

<sup>335</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, "Saints Preserve Us," *Time* (June 13, 1994): 65.

<sup>336</sup> "The Prophet's Mantle," 24.

<sup>337</sup> "At Day's End," 30.

Church President came as “no surprise” because of his position as the longest serving member of “the church's Council of the Twelve.”<sup>338</sup>

Interest in the succession process naturally led to commentary on the advanced age of many Latter-day Saint Church Presidents and other Church leaders. *Time*, for example, described the Church’s hierarchy of leaders as a “gerontocracy,” and suggested that it was in spite of such perpetually “aged, ailing” leaders that the Church “remains vibrant.”<sup>339</sup> *Newsweek*, in an instance of overstatement, inaccurately claimed in 1995 that the past seven Church Presidents spanning the previous 50 years had all “either died within two years of taking office or become so disabled that for 25 of those years their two chief counselors have had to assume day-to-day leadership of the church.”<sup>340</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson’s age and health status during the final years of his tenure as Church President in the early 1990s aroused attention in several periodicals. After his death in 1994, *Time* reported that President Benson “had not appeared in public for two years” and toward the end of his life, “he could not leave his apartment and had to be fed by nasal tube.” In spite of his weakened condition, the article noted, President Benson remained in office and retained the mantle of “‘Prophet, Seer and Revelator,’ the supreme authority of the Mormon Church.”<sup>341</sup> A more critical article in *Time* claimed that President Benson “was mentally feeble throughout his eight-year presidency.”<sup>342</sup> Meanwhile, *The Economist* reported that President Benson’s ill health involved both financial and spiritual implications. From a monetary perspective, for instance, “the president of the Mormon church sits at the center of a corporate empire,” and spiritually,

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<sup>338</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>339</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>340</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>341</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>342</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

he is “believed to get revelation directly from God on issues of importance.” The article also included pertinent remarks from Gordon B. Hinckley, the prophet’s First Counselor, who addressed these issues during a General Conference of the Church in April 1994. Hinckley acknowledged that President Benson was “unable to fulfill important duties of his sacred office,” but explained that “when the president is ill or not able to function fully . . . his two counselors together comprise a Quorum of the First Presidency. They carry on the day-to-day work of the presidency.”<sup>343</sup> *Newsweek* also carried Hinckley’s assurance that “‘inspiration and revelation’ are not limited to the president alone.”<sup>344</sup>

When Howard W. Hunter addressed the public after succeeding Ezra Taft Benson as Church President in June of 1994, *The Economist* remarked that “church members [then] heard the voice of a living prophet for the first time in five years.”<sup>345</sup> *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Newsweek* each noted that President Hunter was the first Latter-day Saint Church President born during the Twentieth Century, underscoring the advanced age of recent Church Presidents.<sup>346</sup> *Time* also mentioned that President Hunter was 86 when he became Church President and had already experienced several health problems, including “open-heart surgery eight years [earlier] and a gall-bladder operation” in 1993.<sup>347</sup> Meanwhile, *The Economist* commented that “Hunter . . . is no stripling, but his mind and voice remain strong.”<sup>348</sup> The article reported that President Hunter “still travels regularly on church business,” and cited recent visits he had made to both Brazil and Australia. The article also added that President Hunter’s “international

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<sup>343</sup> “At Day’s End,” 30.

<sup>344</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>345</sup> “The Prophet’s Mantle,” 24.

<sup>346</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65; “Howard Hunter,” 18.; Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>347</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>348</sup> “The Prophet’s Mantle,” 24.

outlook is important” for the continuously expanding worldwide Church.<sup>349</sup> When President Hunter died in March of 1995, both *U.S. News and World Report* and *Newsweek* mentioned that he had been ill with cancer. They also stated that, at nine months, President Hunter had served the shortest tenure of any Latter-day Saint Church President.<sup>350</sup>

After Gordon B. Hinckley succeeded Howard W. Hunter as Church President in March of 1995, a *Newsweek* reporter claimed President Hinckley’s ordination brought “considerable relief” to “many Mormons.” The article reasoned that “the last two prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [had] been so infirm that Hinckley, as one of the president’s two counselors, [had] functioned as the de facto head of the church.” But with Hinckley as Church President, the writer continued, “the Mormons have a prophet who brings vigor” to the Church.<sup>351</sup>

In addition to their reporting on the succession of Latter-day Saint Church Presidents during the 1990s, national periodicals also commented on the role of prophet. A writer for *Time* accurately stated that Latter-day Saints “believe their President is a prophet who receives new revelations from God.” The article explained that current revelation announced by a Church President “can supplant older revelations,” which allows the Church to change its position with regard to its “controversial doctrine.”<sup>352</sup> A different article similarly stated that “the leaders of the Mormon church are considered prophets, that is, they literally relay the word of God to the world.”<sup>353</sup> Another article remarked that Latter-day Saint “conservatism does not rule out innovation. After all, the

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<sup>349</sup> “The Prophet’s Mantle,” 24.

<sup>350</sup> “Howard Hunter,” 18; Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>351</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>352</sup> Van Biema and Gwyne, “Kingdom Come,” 56.

<sup>353</sup> Stevens, “Investing in the Future,” 15.

prophet is a visionary and given to sudden revelations.”<sup>354</sup> With regard to the claim of prophecy, *The Economist* quoted President Howard W. Hunter, who described seeing “the mantle of prophetic leadership settle upon [the] shoulders” of President Ezra Taft Benson, his predecessor. “I felt . . . his dependence on the Lord as he stepped into that sacred office,” Hunter said. The article concluded that President Hunter, as the new prophet, “was also, undoubtedly, talking about himself.”<sup>355</sup>

Several articles raised concerns regarding the Latter-day Saint belief in a living prophet. These articles suggested that such a belief fostered gullibility or feelings of inferiority within Church members. A *Newsweek* article, for example, reported that a man in Utah formed a dangerous polygamist group that, while unaffiliated with the LDS Church, allegedly gained a following by exploiting “the Mormon concept of a single prophet.” The article quoted a Church member in Utah who stated that “Mormons tend to be taken in by someone who has just had a revelation from God.”<sup>356</sup> Continuing this theme, a writer in *Forbes* commented on the “unquestioning acceptance of authority” on the part of Latter-day Saints. “Mormonism,” she wrote, “holds that its designated spiritual leader speaks for God. That makes it really difficult to argue with him, for then you are by implication arguing with God himself.” This article unfavorably represented Latter-day Saint prophets as being naïve to the needs of many Church members, including women. It also ascribed Machiavellian motives to Latter-day Saint prophets in

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<sup>354</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>355</sup> “The Prophet’s Mantle,” 24.

<sup>356</sup> Linda Wright, “A Prophet and His ‘Sisters,’” *Newsweek* (August 19, 1991): 23.



instances where they altered Church teachings or policy.<sup>357</sup> Another article depicted Latter-day Saint prophets as rigid and essentially irrelevant.<sup>358</sup>

In addition to these writings regarding the spiritual claims of Latter-day Saint prophets, two articles suggested that Latter-day Saint leaders were lacking in actual prophetic qualities. According to one writer, “concerned Mormons” had noticed that “the visionary leadership of Joseph Smith [had] long since given way to a more bureaucratic exercise of collective church authority.” The writer proffered as evidence of this claim the statement that “Mormon presidents have received only two major revelations” during the past century.<sup>359</sup> The other article mentioned that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had “become much more centralized and bureaucratized” in contrast to its prophetic beginnings. “Unlike the charismatic icons of the past—such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young—today’s Mormon leaders function more like corporate executives.”<sup>360</sup>

The characterization of Latter-day Saint prophets and Church leaders as businessmen appeared in national periodicals throughout the 1990s and in 2000. For example, *The Economist* emphasized the financial as well as the spiritual power of the Church President, reporting that all “church financial holdings are ‘owned’ by the ‘Corporation of the President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,’ a company directed by the church’s prophet.”<sup>361</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* described the Latter-day Saint Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as a “powerful hierarchy of lay leaders who . . . marshal the church's vast resources with a businesslike efficiency unrivaled in other

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<sup>357</sup> Southwick, “Circling Faith,” 239.

<sup>358</sup> Stevens, “Investing in the Future,” 15.

<sup>359</sup> Woodward, “The Mantle of Prophecy Comes Only in Gray,” 63.

<sup>360</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 78.

<sup>361</sup> “Render Unto Smith” 28.

religious movements.”<sup>362</sup> An article which discussed at length the Church’s growing wealth quoted a sociologist who attributed the Church’s financial success to the corporate experience of its leadership. He explained that Latter-day Saint Church leaders were “plucked for service from successful endeavors in other fields,” and, as a result, the “people at the top of the Mormon church have immense experience in the world.” Latter-day Saint leaders were, according to the article, “a bunch of hard-nosed businessmen.”<sup>363</sup> Expounding that idea, one article insinuated that the LDS hierarchy were a collection of “corporation men” who had greater interest in Church finances than in spiritual matters.<sup>364</sup>

On the other hand, several articles which characterized Church leaders as businessmen were, to varying degrees, complimentary of their handling of Church finances. A writer for *The Economist* observed that the Church’s “companies are conservatively run” and surmised they are “probably free from financial fraud.”<sup>365</sup> Moreover, an article entitled “LDS, Inc.” favorably pointed out the modest lifestyle of Church President Spencer W. Kimball in relation to the Church’s immense assets, which suggested financial integrity on the part of Church leaders.<sup>366</sup> *Time* quoted President Gordon B. Hinckley regarding the purposes and management of Church assets: “We’ve always been a practical people dealing with the issues of life. We’re doing today’s job in the best way we know how.”<sup>367</sup> As evidence of this, the article affirmed that the “church would make any list of the most admired [of Fortune 500 companies] for straight dealing,

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<sup>362</sup> Sheler, Hadfield and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 60.

<sup>363</sup> Van Biema and Gwyne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

<sup>364</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormons’ Progress,” 47.

<sup>365</sup> “Render Unto Smith” 28.

<sup>366</sup> “LDS Inc.,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 43.

<sup>367</sup> Van Biema and Gwyne, “Kingdom Come,” 55.

company spirit, contributions to charity (even the non-Mormon kind) and a fiscal probity among its powerful leaders that would satisfy any shareholder group.”<sup>368</sup> This statement provided a fine endorsement for the financial integrity of LDS Church leaders.

Of the 34 articles which addressed Latter-day Saint Church leadership from 1991 through 2000, five articles were deemed to have anti-LDS bias and seven others were rated unfavorable. Additionally, 17 articles were neutral in their reporting, and five were favorable toward the Church. The sum of national magazines’ reporting on Church leadership was therefore unfavorable.

### **Latter-day Saint Wealth**

Perhaps related to the characterization of Latter-day Saint leaders as businessmen was the attention national periodicals gave to the Church’s apparent wealth. Several major magazines from 1991 through 2000 commented on LDS Church finances. *The Economist*, for instance, asserted that “Mormonism is a business-minded religion.”<sup>369</sup> Additionally, both *Time* and *The Economist* estimated the Church’s assets to be worth 30 billion dollars, and *U.S. News and World Report* mentioned that if the Church “were a public corporation, it would rank among the top 20 percent of the Fortune 500.”<sup>370</sup> Such figures led one writer to conclude: “The business of religion is good business for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, better known as the Mormons.”<sup>371</sup>

Several articles mentioned the variety of assets owned by the Church. One, for example, stated “the church has vast holdings in real estate, financial services,

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<sup>368</sup> Van Biema and Gwyne, “Kingdom Come,” 52.

<sup>369</sup> “Salt Lake City’s New Image,” *The Economist* (February 13, 1999): 34.

<sup>370</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 73.

<sup>371</sup> “Render Unto Smith,” 28.

broadcasting, publishing and insurance” and “employs about 10,000 people.”<sup>372</sup> Another article reported the Church had “built a diversified corporation that controls 100 companies in insurance, publishing, broadcasting, advertising, satellite communications, property, hotels, agriculture and tourism, as well as a portfolio of stocks and bonds.”<sup>373</sup> An article in *Time* specifically named three major Church-owned companies: “The largest producer of nuts in America, AgReserves, Inc., in Salt Lake City, is Mormon-owned. So are the Bonneville International Corp., the country's 14th largest radio chain, and the Beneficial Life Insurance Co., with assets of \$1.6 billion.”<sup>374</sup>

Periodicals not only discussed the corporations owned and operated by the Church, but also its investments in land properties. *The Economist*, for example, affirmed that “across the United States and western Canada, the Mormon church is one of the largest private landholders” with property ranging from “farms in Iowa to a high-rise office building in Tucson, Arizona.”<sup>375</sup> Five articles appearing from 1991 through 1997 mentioned the Church’s valuable Deseret Ranch outside Orlando, Florida.<sup>376</sup> According to *Time*, the ranch “runs 34,000 head of cattle,” making it “the top beef ranch in the world.”<sup>377</sup> In further describing the ranch, *Time* stated: “It covers 312,000 acres; its value as real estate alone is estimated at \$858 million. It is owned entirely by the Mormons.”<sup>378</sup> An article in *The Economist* focused particularly on the Church’s real estate holdings in Salt Lake City, Utah. The article described the Church’s “global headquarters” there as

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<sup>372</sup> Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” 22.

<sup>373</sup> “Render Unto Smith,” 28.

<sup>374</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>375</sup> “Render Unto Smith,” 28.

<sup>376</sup> P. Painton and C. Booth, “Fantasy’s Reality,” *Time* (May 27, 1991): 56; “Render Unto Smith,” 28; Hugh Sidey, “Don’t Fence Us In,” *Time* (March 8, 1993): 39; William Kittredge, “Free Range,” *The New Republic* (December 13, 1993): 17; Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>377</sup> Sidey, “Don’t Fence Us In,” 39; Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>378</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

“a vast complex that includes a temple, a huge tabernacle, a genealogical library, a museum, an administrative complex and an apartment for the Prophet.”<sup>379</sup> The 1999 article added: “The church is currently building a \$240 million assembly hall that occupies an entire city block and will provide seating for 22,000. It paid for the project in cash.”<sup>380</sup>

After reviewing the estimated quantity and value of Latter-day Saint financial holdings, *Time* reported there were “richer churches than the one based in Salt Lake City,” mentioning specifically that “Roman Catholic holdings dwarf Mormon wealth.” On the other hand, the author reasoned, “the Catholic Church has 45 times as many members.” Ultimately, however, the author concluded there was “no major church in the U.S. as active as the Latter-day Saints in economic life, nor, per capita, as successful at it.”<sup>381</sup> *The Economist*, on the other hand, reported the Church’s claim that estimates of its wealth were “grossly overstated” because “most of its assets consume money, rather than make it,” such as “missions, temples, schools and the like.”<sup>382</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* indicated that “no one really knows what portion of the liquid wealth in America’s portfolios is held by the Latter-day Saints Church.”<sup>383</sup> *The Wilson Quarterly* affirmed that sentiment, stating: “The church publishes no annual budget, but it is clearly a massive economic enterprise.”<sup>384</sup>

Overall, periodicals tended to be neutral in discussing the Church’s wealth. Of the 15 articles which addressed this topic, two were unfavorable toward the Church, 12

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<sup>379</sup> “Salt Lake City’s New Image,” 34.

<sup>380</sup> “Salt Lake City’s New Image,” 34.

<sup>381</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.

<sup>382</sup> “Render Unto Smith,” 28.

<sup>383</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 61.

<sup>384</sup> “LDS, Inc.,” 43.

were neutral in their reporting, and one was favorable, producing a slightly unfavorable sum rating.

### **Church Organization and Discipline**

The Church also received attention in national periodicals for its policies related to organization and discipline. Three articles, for example, focused on the Church's authoritative structure, emphasizing the organizational control of its central leaders over Church affairs. Specifically, one article mentioned that during the 1970s, the Church "installed a more centralized system" of government in order to "maintain organizational discipline." The article asserted that this system, called Church correlation, "placed nearly absolute power over church life in the hands of the top LDS officers." This in turn produced a "more efficient and coordinated church bureaucracy" as well as, according to the article, "a more standardized and simplified brand of Mormonism" emphasizing "families, temple work, and the pre-eminence of the Book of Mormon."<sup>385</sup>

*U.S. News and World Report* corroborated that perspective while claiming the Church was facing "increasing pressure to modify its teachings to fit the broader audience it is trying to attract."<sup>386</sup> According to the article, some of this pressure apparently came from "church dissidents" who complained that correlation was simply "a watering down of traditional Mormonism in order to make it more palatable to a non-American audience."<sup>387</sup> With a fairly critical tone, a different article similarly suggested that correlation was a strategic move by Latter-day Saint leaders in order to maintain

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<sup>385</sup> Sheler, "The Mormon Moment," 63.

<sup>386</sup> Sheler and Wagner, "Latter-day Struggles," 73-74.

<sup>387</sup> Sheler and Wagner, "Latter-day Struggles," 78.

control of “the church’s rapid international growth.”<sup>388</sup> The author alleged that “the ‘cookie cutter’ effect of correlation” resulted in “less tolerance for diversity and dissent” by Church members.<sup>389</sup>

In addition to correlation, several articles discussed various aspects of Church discipline, including its practice of excommunication. With a measure of overstatement, one article declared that Latter-day Saints who “publicly question church teachings or criticize church leaders risk excommunication.”<sup>390</sup> Moreover, a 1992 article in *The Economist* reported that the number of excommunications within the Church was increasing. The author claimed the Church had been “scolding and excommunicating” any member who veered from mainstream doctrine or practice. The author also suggested that the apparent rise in the volume of Church discipline represented an intentional “clearing of the decks” by the LDS hierarchy in anticipation of a new era of Church leadership and expansion.<sup>391</sup> Additionally, in 1992 *U.S. News and World Report* announced the existence of “a secret committee at church headquarters” designed to monitor both “dissident members” and “doctrinally troublesome writings and beliefs.”<sup>392</sup> The committee was, according to *Time*, a tool for Latter-day Saint leaders to enforce the “strict patrolling of dissent” within the Church.<sup>393</sup>

In 1993, *Time* also noted that the Church had engaged in “a harsh campaign of intellectual purification against dozens of feminists and dissidents.”<sup>394</sup> *The Economist* similarly reported that a number of “distinguished men and women” had been

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<sup>388</sup> Sheler, “The Mormon Moment,” 63.

<sup>389</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 63.

<sup>390</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 63.

<sup>391</sup> “Calendars of Doom,” 28.

<sup>392</sup> Sheler and Wagner, “Latter-day Struggles,” 77.

<sup>393</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, “Saints Preserve Us,” 65.

<sup>394</sup> Van Biema and Gwyne, “Kingdom Come,” 57.

“excommunicated or demoted because their ideas were considered too unorthodox.”<sup>395</sup>

By the summer of 1994, however, magazine attention given to Church discipline abated. This coincided with the ordination of Church President Howard W. Hunter. After he publicly “invited members who had transgressed or had been offended to come back into the fold,” *The Economist* reported that President Hunter appeared “ready to lead a church more tolerant of dissent.” The article also carried President Hunter’s statement urging Church members to “treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness.”<sup>396</sup>

In summary, Church organization and discipline proved to be a source of substantially unfavorable periodical attention. Of the twelve articles which mentioned Latter-day Saint organizational and disciplinary practices from 1991 through 2000, one was highly unfavorable, nine were unfavorable, and two were neutral in their reporting.

### **Public and Political Influence**

The public and political influence of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was another topic which garnered attention in national periodicals. *Time*, for example, emphasized the Church’s influence in American life by indicating the Church had “played a role, and continues to play a role, in the economic and social development of the West—and indeed, because of the spread of Mormons everywhere, of the nation as a whole.”<sup>397</sup> Both *The Economist* and *American Spectator* supported this assertion in articles which showed how Latter-day Saints affected the political landscapes of Utah,

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<sup>395</sup> “At Day’s End,” 30.

<sup>396</sup> “The Prophet’s Mantle,” 24.

<sup>397</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 53.



Idaho, and Arizona.<sup>398</sup> Additionally, *U.S. News and World Report* described the Church's "growing...political and social influence" in the United States.<sup>399</sup>

Magazines often associated Latter-day Saints with the state of Utah because of the Church's pervasive presence there. *Money*, for instance, included Utah in its 1994 list of "The Best Places to Live in America" but mentioned that "free-living, single techies may not feel too comfortable" in Utah because "Mormons ... make up 70% of the population."<sup>400</sup> The following year, an article in *The Economist* reported that Utah was "getting more Mormon, not less." This was accredited to both the high percentage of Latter-day Saint births within the state as well as Latter-day Saint immigration: "fully 61% of newcomers to Utah say they are Mormons," the article reported.<sup>401</sup> *Time* indicated that the high concentration of Latter-day Saints in Utah produced positive economic results for the state. Noting that Utah's neighboring states were "bogged down in recession," the article concluded that "Mormons deserve much of the credit for Utah's economic vibrancy."<sup>402</sup> In 1999, *The Economist* specifically affirmed that the Church's active presence in Utah's capitol city had "long protected downtown Salt Lake from the urban blight that is commonplace elsewhere."<sup>403</sup>

While the state of Utah may have retained its Latter-day Saint predominance during the 1990s, *Time* reported that Salt Lake City, the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had become more religiously diverse.<sup>404</sup> "So many people have moved in," the article reported, "that Mormons, once 75% of [Salt Lake

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<sup>398</sup> "Paradise Reborn," *The Economist* (February 11, 1995): 30.

<sup>399</sup> Sheler and Wagner, "Latter-day Struggles," 73.

<sup>400</sup> Smith and Nance-Nash, "The Best Places to Live in America," 138.

<sup>401</sup> "Utah, Only More So," 33.

<sup>402</sup> Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," 22.

<sup>403</sup> "Salt Lake City's New Image," 34.

<sup>404</sup> Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," 23.

City's] population, now account for only half.” According to *Time*, the “new arrivals...have begun to dilute the pervasive—and sometimes smothering—Mormon atmosphere.” The article thus concluded that “for some, the changes flowing from Utah’s opening itself up to the outside world cannot happen soon enough.”<sup>405</sup>

*U.S. News and World Report* expressed a similar view, indicating that “in close-knit Mormon communities, and in places where the LDS church is dominant, non-Mormons sometimes feel left out” both as individuals and as families. Continuing, the article stated that “being non-Mormon also can be a drawback in the LDS-dominated business community” because people who are not Latter-day Saints “have to establish a level of trust that would be automatically assumed if [they] were LDS.”<sup>406</sup> Conversely, *Money* reported that “many corporate transferees find the Utah Valley a delightful surprise, after initial reservations about the Mormon dominance.” A new family in Utah “often feels strange at first,” the article suggested, “and they put in for a transfer back home. But by the time it comes through, they don’t want to leave.”<sup>407</sup> Frank Layden, then President of the National Basketball Association’s Utah Jazz, endorsed that sentiment, telling *Time*: “I came here [to Utah] scared to death. For the first time in my life, I was going to be a minority, an Irish Catholic among Mormons.” Layden then affirmed that he “found home” in Utah, and “nobody jammed the Mormon religion down my throat.”<sup>408</sup>

The Church’s influence in Utah became a primary topic of interest for major national periodicals in 1999 when it became apparent that officials of the Salt Lake

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<sup>405</sup> Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” 23.

<sup>406</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 64.

<sup>407</sup> Smith and Englander, “The Best Places To Live Now,” 130.

<sup>408</sup> Jordan Bonfante and Patrick Dawson, “Sky’s the Limit,” *Time* (September 6, 1993): 23.

Organizing Committee had used bribery to secure the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Several articles emphasized the irony of such a scandal occurring in Salt Lake City because of the city's pious Latter-day Saint image. An example of this occurred in *Newsweek*, which noted that while Salt Lake City was "built around the magnificent Mormon temple" and was known as "the city of the Saints," it had become "sullied by allegations of corruption."<sup>409</sup> *The Economist* similarly reported: "for years, Brigham Young's city in the Great Salt Desert has been trying to get rid of its image as a holier-than-thou Hicksville. Now it has managed it: the Olympics scandal has made it a byword for bribery and corruption."<sup>410</sup> *Time* ironically stated: "the leaders of S.L.O.C.," the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, "were not present-day saints," while *Forbes* indicated that "Mormon church financings" were reported to be "among the alleged baits" employed by Salt Lake City officials in order to secure the bid for the Olympics.<sup>411</sup> There were, however, no connections between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the actions of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee in bringing the Olympics to Utah. Indeed, *The Economist* conceded the scandal did not represent "typical behavior...for the city of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," stating: "there is more to Salt Lake City than Mormonism."<sup>412</sup>

Magazines also commented on the Church's public and political influence outside the state of Utah. For instance, five articles mentioned specifically the power wielded by Latter-day Saints in Washington, D.C. In 1997, *Time* noted that "fifteen Mormon

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<sup>409</sup> Matt Bai and Andrew Murr, "Go For The Greed," *Newsweek* (January 25, 1999): 31.

<sup>410</sup> "Salt Lake City's New Image," 34.

<sup>411</sup> Robert Sullivan, "How the Olympics Were Bought," *Time* (January 25, 1999): 38; William P. Barrett, "Fraud Per Capita," *Forbes* (February 8, 1999): 56.

<sup>412</sup> "Salt Lake City's New Image," 34.

Senators and Representatives currently trek the halls of Congress.”<sup>413</sup> A different article asserted that “the Saints in the nation's capital may be less numerous than members of other denominations, but they are more tightly organized.”<sup>414</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* confirmed that idea, stating: “Mormon financial and political power is exerted in Washington to a degree far beyond what one would expect from one voter in 50.”<sup>415</sup> The same article also explained how Latter-day Saint influence is used in Washington, averring that “in the political arena, LDS leaders are outspoken in opposing what they call negative influences on families, such as pornography, abortion, gambling, and alcohol abuse.”<sup>416</sup> *The Economist* indicated the Church’s influence in Washington D.C. was also used to help “Mormon missionaries who ran into trouble abroad.”<sup>417</sup>

National periodicals were typically neutral in their reporting on the Church’s public and political influence. Of the 107 articles which discussed the subject, one demonstrated anti-LDS bias, 15 were rated unfavorable, and 76 were neutral. Moreover, 13 articles reported favorably on this topic, and two others were highly favorable toward the Church. The various unfavorable and favorable articles on this subject essentially cancelled each other numerically to give this topic an overall exact neutral sum.

## **Education**

National periodicals also identified education as a significant component of Latter-day Saint influence and culture. One article, for example, asserted that Latter-day

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<sup>413</sup> Van Biema and Gwynne, “Kingdom Come,” 52.

<sup>414</sup> “The Mormon’s Progress,” 42.

<sup>415</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 61.

<sup>416</sup> Sheler, Hadfield, and Singer, “The Mormon Moment,” 64.

<sup>417</sup> “Latter-day Losers,” *The Economist* (January 30, 1993): 29.

Saints comprise “one of the most highly educated denominations in the United States,” while another simply noted that “the church places a high premium on . . . education.”<sup>418</sup>

Several articles showed how the Latter-day Saint emphasis on education was positively reflected within the state of Utah. *Newsweek*, for example, reported that “the Mormon family life helps ensure a civic commitment to schools,” which helped Utah’s schools avoid many of the problems seen elsewhere in the country. Consequently, Utah had “become an educational magnet to an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 students, some coming from as far away as Alaska and Florida.”<sup>419</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, meanwhile, indicated that “with its huge Mormon population . . . the state [of Utah] has certain built-in advantages. According to Mormon scripture, ‘The glory of God is intelligence’—and Utah claims the nation’s highest literacy rate at 94 percent.”<sup>420</sup>

The Church’s emphasis on education was also noted for benefiting Utah economically. In 1991, *Time* stated that “Mormon dominated Utah . . . boasts the nation’s youngest, best-educated and most productive work force.”<sup>421</sup> Additionally, a 1996 article in *Forbes* reported that Utah had “a highly educated, industrious work force that is 75% Mormon.” According to the article, the LDS educational influence in the “Provo-Orem metropolitan area” was at least partly responsible for a thirty percent increase in jobs in that area during the previous five years, which represented “the fourth-highest rate in the nation.”<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Ruthven, “The Mormon’s Progress,” 39; Stern and Gutner, “A Helluva Place to Have a Business,” 117.

<sup>419</sup> Andrew Murr, “The Ultimate Magnet School,” *Newsweek* (February 20, 1995): 51.

<sup>420</sup> Jim Impoco, “How Utah Created a Mountain of Jobs,” *U.S. News and World Report* (February 22, 1993): 43.

<sup>421</sup> Donnelly, “Mixing Business and Faith,” 22.

<sup>422</sup> Suzanne Oliver, “It’s the Costs, Stupid.,” *Forbes* (October 21, 1996): 252.

Meanwhile, *Time* magazine correlated Utah's positive job growth with the abilities of many of its Latter-day Saint residents to speak a foreign language. One article indicated that Utah had "attracted foreign investments because so many of its people became fluent in foreign languages while serving as Mormon missionaries."<sup>423</sup> A different article similarly noted that "the Mormons' proselytizing tradition has made Utah attractive to companies in the U.S. and abroad." As a result, "Utah has a disproportionately high number of people who are fluent in foreign languages, a prime selling point in the global marketplace."<sup>424</sup> The article specifically mentioned Compaq and American Express as companies which sought to capitalize on Utah's "hundreds of Mormon missionaries" familiar with languages and cultures "from around the world."<sup>425</sup> In a similar vein, *Newsweek* and other magazines noted that the CIA had begun to hire a growing number of former LDS missionaries because they possessed a "desperately" needed skill, "knowledge of a foreign language."<sup>426</sup>

*The Economist* recognized another way in which the Church contributed to economic growth in Utah. A 1994 article reported that Utah's Wasatch Front contained "the second-biggest swathe of software and computer-engineering firms after California's Silicon Valley" largely because of "Brigham Young University, a Mormon institution at the other end of Software Valley." The article continued: "With 27,000 students on its Provo campus, BYU has become a veritable production line of software talent." The article also mentioned that BYU was "noted for producing dedicated workers."<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> J. Bonfante, "The Endangered Dream," *Time* (November 18, 1991): 48.

<sup>424</sup> Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," 22.

<sup>425</sup> Donnelly, "Mixing Business and Faith," 22-23.

<sup>426</sup> "D. Wallero "The CIA's Next Generation," *Newsweek* (February 17, 1992): 27.

<sup>427</sup> "Software Valley," 69.

A number of other articles likewise referenced Brigham Young University's Latter-day Saint affiliation. One article, for example, called BYU "the Mormon educational citadel."<sup>428</sup> Another explained that BYU "is owned and run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), based in nearby Salt Lake City." Continuing, the article noted that "almost all the students, and all the teachers, are members of the Mormon church." It also reported that BYU's mission was "to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life," and involved research into "both reasoned and revealed learning."<sup>429</sup>

The same article also unfavorably described Brigham Young University as a place where "dissent" was "not the stock in trade." "On the BYU campus," the author claimed, "most people's idea of a free thinker is someone who wears shorts cut away at the thigh." However, in 1993, students defied this stereotype by demonstrating on campus in the name of academic freedom—and brought national attention to the Latter-day Saint university in the process. *The Economist* subsequently speculated that BYU's religious mission and conservative rules could jeopardize the university's academic prerogatives and prestige.<sup>430</sup> A 1994 article in *Time* affirmed that sentiment, mentioning that two professors were allegedly punished for circumventing BYU's religious mission in their academic pursuits. One "was fired from Brigham Young University, which is run by the church," and the other "resigned under pressure," the article stated.<sup>431</sup>

*People* magazine also underscored Brigham Young University's religious prerogatives while reporting on the suspension of a student, Julie Stoffer, for her

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<sup>428</sup> "Latter-day Saints and Martyrs," 50.

<sup>429</sup> "In a Glass House," 27.

<sup>430</sup> "In a Glass House," 27.

<sup>431</sup> Gregory and Donohoe, "Saints Preserve Us," 65.

participation in the HBO reality television series *The Real World*. The article mentioned that her BYU classmates warned her “of the temptations—drinking, cohabitation, sex—cast members face on” the show. It also affirmed that her participation on *The Real World* “not only upset her parents and members of the Mormon community, it led to a yearlong suspension from BYU” for violating the school’s honor code, or standard of ethics.<sup>432</sup> An article in *The Progressive* suggested that Stoffer’s suspension by BYU officials was hypocritical. The article alleged that in other cases the university had wittingly ignored honor code violations in order to protect the eligibility of key athletes such as football quarterback Jim McMahon.<sup>433</sup>

While Brigham Young University and, by extension, the Church thus received some unfavorable magazine coverage from 1991 through 2000 relative to education, the overall sum of periodical reporting on this topic was slightly favorable. Of the forty-four articles which mentioned the Church’s involvement in education, nine were rated unfavorable, 25 were neutral, and ten were favorable in their reporting.

### **Effects of People and Culture on Image**

In conclusion, the reporting of national periodicals from 1991 through 2000 regarding Latter-day Saint people and culture varied extensively in terms of favorability toward the Church’s image. Reporting on Church organization and discipline was solidly unfavorable, for example, as were reports on the Church’s leadership. Meanwhile, magazine writings concerning the Church’s wealth were just slightly unfavorable. The Church’s public and political influence drew wide attention and received an overall

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<sup>432</sup> Joanne Fowler and Barbara Sandler, “Real-Life Lessons,” *People* (September 11, 2000): 147.

<sup>433</sup> Fred McKissack, “Enough Reality Already!,” *The Progressive* (September 2000): 40.



neutral rating. Moreover, the Latter-day Saint emphasis on education and the Church's sponsorship of Brigham Young University was slightly favorable. Finally, the general characterization of LDS people in magazines, the theme which received the most periodical attention, was rated firmly favorable toward the Church. While a substantial discrepancy exists regarding how these themes fared in terms of favorability in relation to each other, the overall volume of coverage regarding LDS people and culture was favorable. This is due to the greater quantity of coverage drawn by the favorable themes, which outpaced the less favorable themes by over 100 articles.

Chapter 6 contains figures that represent this information visually. Figure 5, which concerns Latter-day Saint culture, reflects periodical coverage of the Church's involvement with education. The topics of Church leadership, Latter-day Saint public and political influence, and Church organization and discipline are reflected in Chapter 6, Figure 6, which contains data on the Church hierarchy. The general characterization of Church members, meanwhile, appears in Chapter 6, Figure 8 regarding LDS people. Finally, the topic of Latter-day Saint wealth is represented in Chapter 6, Figure 13, which relates socio-economic information.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study surveyed national periodical coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1991 through 2000 and provided analysis of the writings as a reflection of the Church's public image. This thesis represents an extension of past projects respectively authored by Richard O. Cowan,<sup>434</sup> Dale P. Pelo,<sup>435</sup> Adam H. Nielson<sup>436</sup> and Matthew E. Morrison.<sup>437</sup> The previous studies surveyed and evaluated national periodical reporting on the Church from the years 1851 through 1990. This study extended the research through 2000. Like the other studies, this thesis operated under Richard Cowan's original premise that popular national periodicals both reflect "prevailing points of view" and help "formulate public opinion" by presenting "facts and views on issues in exactly the same way at the same time throughout the entire country."<sup>438</sup>

This thesis surveyed only major popular national U.S. periodicals printed in English, and excluded all regional, scholarly, specialized, and exclusively electronic publications. It also excluded all religious periodicals in order to avoid blatant denominational bias. Moreover, a substantive report of fact, opinion, or impression relative to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was required in order to qualify an article's inclusion in this research. For this thesis, indexes providing the full text of periodical articles such as Academic Search Premier and Lexus-Nexus Academic

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<sup>434</sup> Cowan, "Mormonism in National Periodicals."

<sup>435</sup> Pelo, "Mormonism in National Periodicals 1961-1970."

<sup>436</sup> Nielson, "Latter-day Saints in Popular National Periodicals 1970-1981."

<sup>437</sup> Morrison, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in National Periodicals 1981-1990."

<sup>438</sup> Cowan, "1850-1961," 3-4.

were used to produce a list of sources from popular national periodicals addressing Latter-day Saint topics. This approach served to produce research stemming only from sources of general national interest, which, in turn, helped to more accurately document general public perception of Latter-day Saint topics. These parameters limited the scope of this thesis to only those periodicals included in and comparable to those surveyed in the preceding studies by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson, and Morrison, thus maintaining continuity between the studies.

Pertinent articles were also categorized according to the same methodology employed by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson, and Morrison. Each of the 422 articles which qualified for this study was read and given an overall rating of -2 for obviously biased "anti-Latter-day Saint" writing, -1 for unfavorable treatment of the Church or its members, 0 for neutral reporting, +1 for providing a favorable impression and +2 if the article was deemed to be "pro-Latter-day Saint" biased.

In addition to rating whole articles, specific topics within the articles (such as LDS family values, Church leadership, etc.) were also rated using the same methodology. These topics were grouped into ten themes used by the previous studies, including cultural, hierarchy, origins, people, polygamy, programs, race, rites, socio-economic, and theology.

### **Overall Treatment of the Church in National Periodicals**

This final chapter includes a number of tables and figures in order to present the overall results of this study in a concise form. Table 1 lists every national periodical which significantly addressed a Latter-day Saint topic from 1991 through 2000. The

table shows that many magazines made repeated references to the Church throughout the decade. Table 1 also includes a rating for each periodical. A magazine's rating was calculated by averaging the ratings of each LDS-related article it published. *Sports Illustrated* produced the highest volume of Latter-day Saint references during the decade. This resulted from the attention the magazine lent to the beliefs and lifestyles of LDS athletes, including the missionary service rendered by many, and its coverage of Brigham Young University athletics and mores. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *The Economist* also provided substantial attention to the Church while covering a wide variety of LDS topics. Of all the magazines which addressed the Church regularly (at least ten times throughout the decade), *Forbes* and *People* were respectively rated most favorable in their overall treatment of LDS topics, while *Rolling Stone* consistently generated the least favorable coverage.

**Table 1**  
**Articles and Ratings by Magazine**

Magazine	Number of Articles	Ratings
America	4	0.25
American Demographics	11	0.18
American Heritage	7	0.43
American History	4	0.50
American History Illustrated	2	0.00
American Spectator	8	0.00
American Theatre	4	0.00
American Visions	4	0.50
Americas	1	0.67
Billboard	3	0.67
Biography	2	0.00
Business Week	5	0.40
Civilization	2	0.00
Commentary	4	0.00
Compute!	2	0.50
Earth	1	1.00
The Economist	32	-0.19
Esquire	2	-1.00
Essence	1	1.00
Films in Review	1	1.00
Forbes	23	0.30
Fortune	8	0.00
Good Housekeeping	4	0.25
Harper's Magazine	5	-0.40
Headway	2	0.00
Health	3	0.33
Heritage	2	0.00
History Today	1	1.00
Human Life Review	1	0.00
The Humanist	1	-1.00
Humanities	3	0.00
Inc.	4	0.25
InfoWorld	1	1.00
Inter@ctive Week	1	0.00
Kiplinger's Personal Finance Review	2	0.50
Life	3	0.00
Men's Health	1	-1.00
Money	6	0.16
Mother Jones	4	-0.75
Ms.	1	-1.00

**Table 1 Continued**

Magazine	Number of Articles	Ratings
Nation's Business	1	0.00
National Geographic	3	0.00
National Interest	2	0.00
National Journal	3	0.00
National Parks	2	1.00
New Crisis	2	0.50
New Criterion	1	0.00
New Leader	1	0.00
The New Republic	13	-0.15
New York Times Book Review	1	-1.00
Newsweek	34	-0.12
Omni	1	0.00
Parks and Recreation	2	1.50
PC Computing	1	0.00
PC Magazine	2	1.00
People	18	0.28
Policy Review	4	0.25
Popular Mechanics	1	0.00
The Progressive	3	-0.67
Reason	1	0.00
Rolling Stone	10	-0.70
Science News	1	0.00
Sport	1	0.00
Sports Illustrated	40	0.20
Smithsonian	5	-0.40
Time	36	0.03
Total Health	1	1.00
U.S.A. Today Magazine	1	0.00
U.S. News and World Report	30	0.07
Vital Speeches of the Day	7	1.00
Washington Monthly	3	0.33
Whole Earth	2	0.50
Wilderness	3	0.67
The Wilson Quarterly	7	-0.43
Woman's Day	1	0.00
Women's Review of Books	1	-1.00
Total	422	

The following figures provide data regarding periodical coverage of the Church on a yearly basis from 1991 through 2000. Figure 1 indicates both the total number of articles per year which addressed LDS topics and the average rating of those articles. The figure shows that the Church received the most attention during the middle years of the decade, from 1993 through 1997. This was partially due to the change in Church Presidents which occurred in 1994 and again in 1995. Additionally, during these years high-profile Church members such as Sean Bradley, Stephen Covey, and Steve Young prompted interest in various Latter-day Saint topics. The Church's 1997 sesquicentennial celebration of the arrival of LDS pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley also generated substantial magazine attention.

Moreover, Figure 1 shows that throughout the decade, magazine reporting on LDS topics remained relatively neutral overall. The first year addressed in this study, 1991, was the least favorable overall. In contrast, 1999 was the most favorable. In 2000, the rating slipped to unfavorable again, probably as a result of the unfavorable attention the Church received for its leadership against both the legalization of gay marriage and the incorporation of gays within the Boy Scouts.

**Figure 1**

**Total Number of Articles and Average Ratings Per Year**

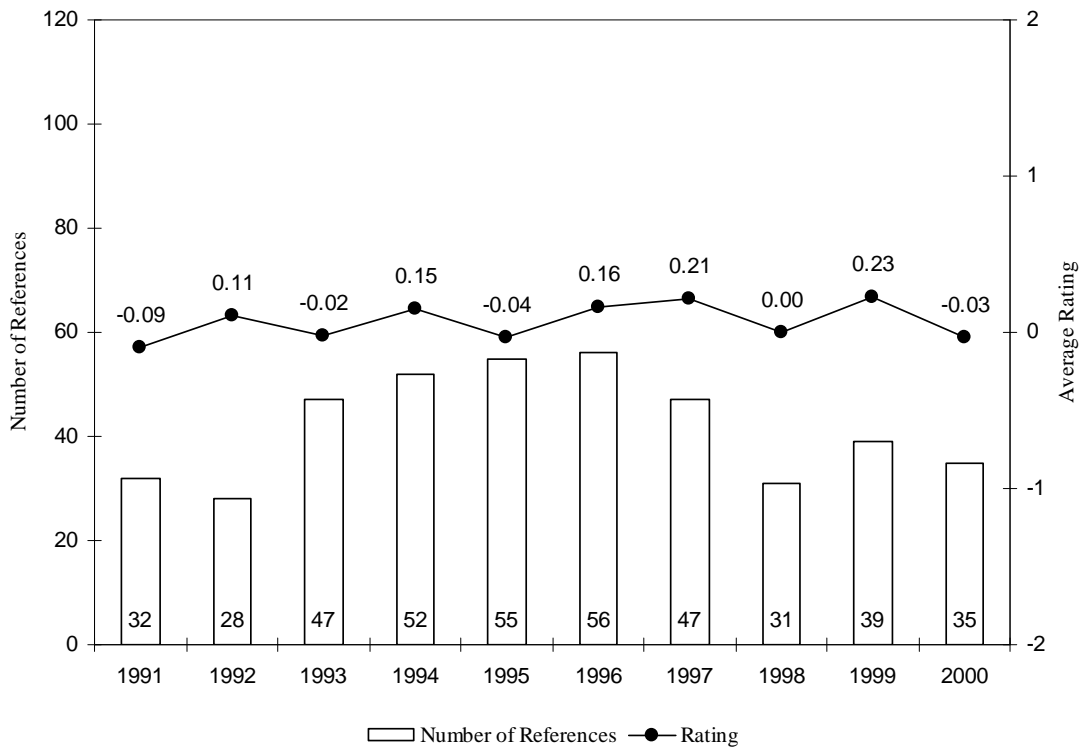


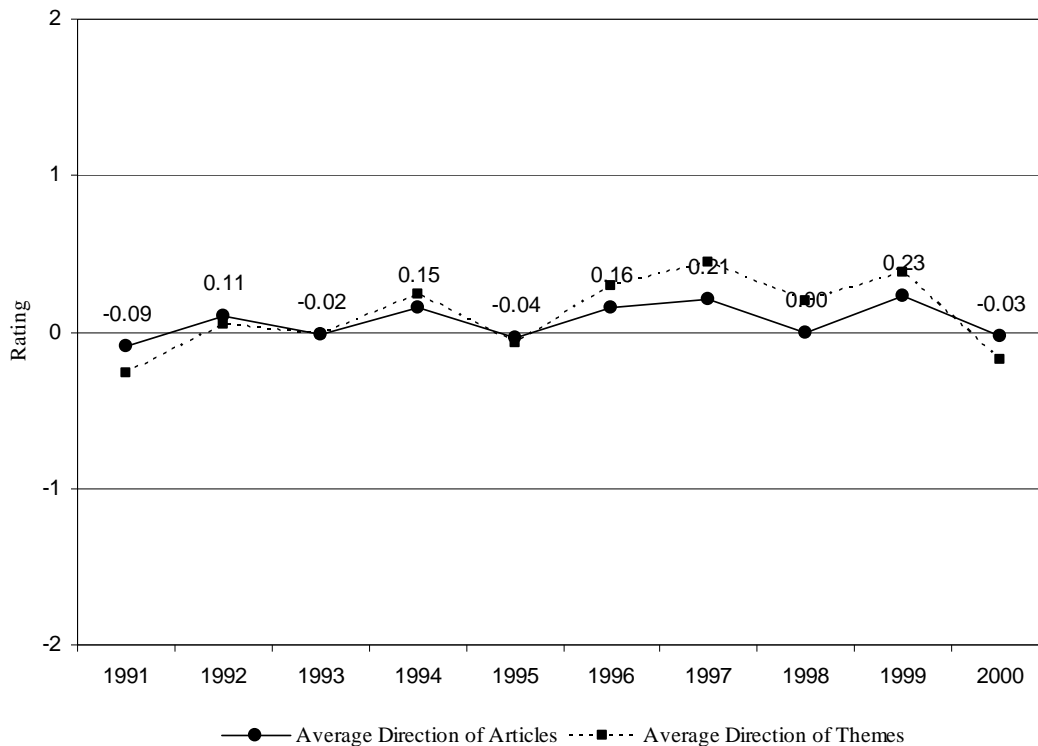
Figure 2 is helpful in demonstrating how the Church was portrayed in magazines during each year of the study. By comparing adjacent years in the figure, a reader may ascertain whether the Church's image was moving in a positive or negative direction over time. This figure also compares the average yearly ratings of articles and themes. One article may have addressed various themes, with each theme receiving an individual rating. Thus, an article may have treated some themes in a favorable manner and others unfavorably. The overall rating of each article reflects the combined ratings of the individual themes it treated. By showing that theme ratings were more extreme than



article ratings in terms of being favorable or unfavorable, Figure 2 demonstrates that the manner in which individual LDS themes were addressed largely dictated the overall direction of periodical attention given to the Church.

**Figure 2**

**Direction of the Periodicals' Image: 1991-2000**



### **LDS Themes Addressed in National Periodicals**

Subsequent tables and figures provide further analysis of the attention national periodicals provided on Latter-day Saint themes from 1991 through 2000. The left-hand side of Table 2 displays the ten themes used by Cowan, Pelo, Nielson and Morrison that categorize LDS-related periodical coverage. Each topic addressed in the earlier chapters of this thesis is included in one of the ten themes. The table also shows two topics, the

Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Latter-day Saints and race, which received significant coverage in the past but did not warrant detailed analysis in this study because they received only minimal attention from 1991 through 2000. Additionally, Table 2 indicates that four new topics emerged as sources of interest during the decade: Church discipline, Church growth, the Latter-day Saint position on homosexuality and gay marriage, and persecution of Latter-day Saints.

**Table 2**  
**Composites of Topics within Themes**

Theme	Topic			
<b>Cultural</b>	Education	Mormon Tabernacle Choir*		
<b>Hierarchy</b>	<i>Church Discipline</i>	Church Leadership	LDS Political and Public Influence	<i>LDS Position on Homosexuality and Gay Marriage</i>
<b>Origins</b>	Beginnings	<i>Persecution of Latter-day Saints</i>	Pioneers	
<b>People</b>	General Characterization of Church Members	Homemakers and Working Mothers	Large LDS Families	Perceived Oppression of LDS Women
<b>Polygamy</b>	Polygamy			
<b>Programs</b>	<i>Church Growth</i>	LDS Family Values	Missionary Work	Welfare
<b>Race</b>	Latter-day Saints and Race*	Revelation on the Priesthood		
<b>Rites</b>	Genealogy	Temple Marriage	Temples and Temple Worship	Word of Wisdom Health Practices
<b>Socio- Economic</b>	Latter-day Saint Wealth	Tithing		
<b>Theology</b>	Theology			

Italicized topics are new to this study

\*Topic did not receive sufficient coverage to warrant a heading in a previous chapter

Figure 3 indicates the relative emphasis given to the ten different themes from 1991 through 2000. As the figure shows, the themes on programs, hierarchy, and people received the greatest volume of periodical coverage for the Church. These three themes totaled 55.6 percent of magazine references to LDS themes from 1991 through 2000. Rites and origins comprised a second tier in terms of volume of coverage, combining for 22.9 percent of all references. Finally, the remaining themes of theology, cultural, polygamy, socio-economic, and race gleaned the remaining 21.5 percent of periodical references to LDS themes.

**Figure 3**

**Relative Emphasis Given by National Periodicals to Themes: 1991-2000**

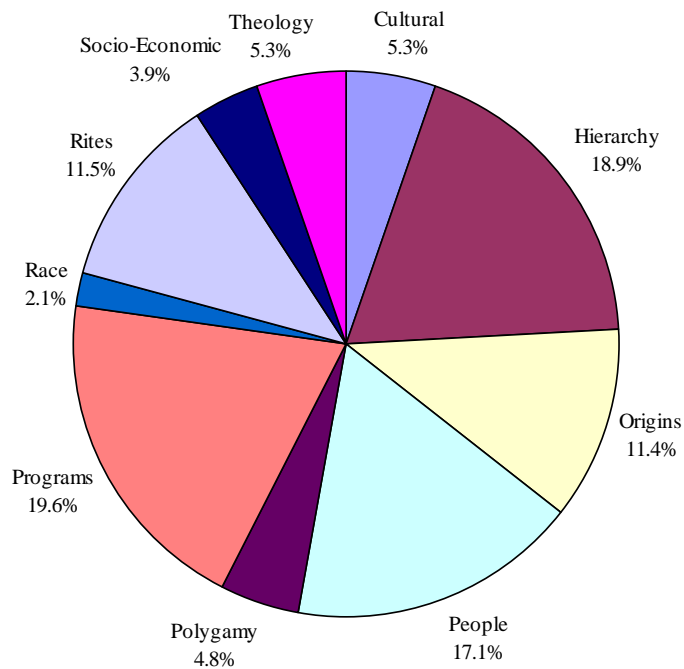
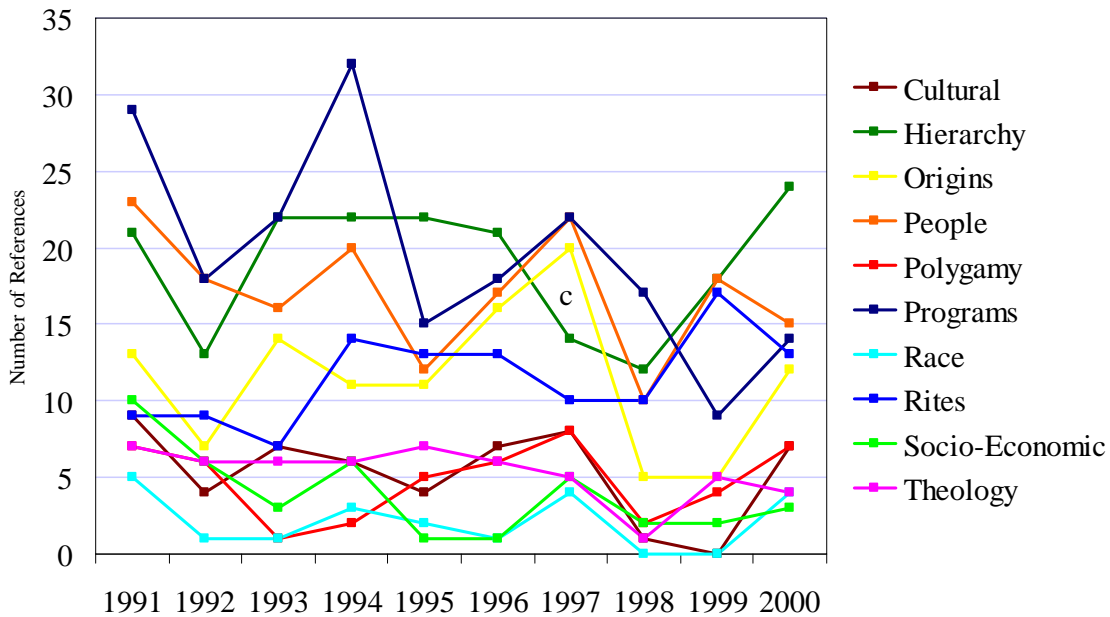


Figure 4 shows the volume of references each theme received by year. The figure may be studied by year, which shows which theme prompted the most attention at any given interval from 1991 through 2000. For example, the figure shows that in 1994, the Church received a relatively high amount of periodical coverage for its programs. This reflects the abundant attention magazines provided on the Church's missionary program and its accelerating international growth. Figure 4 may also be studied by following a particular theme throughout the decade. Studying hierarchy in this way, for example, reveals augmented periodical interest in Church government during the central part of the decade as two Church Presidents died and were thereafter succeeded. In another example, tracing the origins theme from 1991 through 2000 shows a sudden spike of magazine interest in 1997 as the Church celebrated the sesquicentennial anniversary of the arrival of LDS pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley.

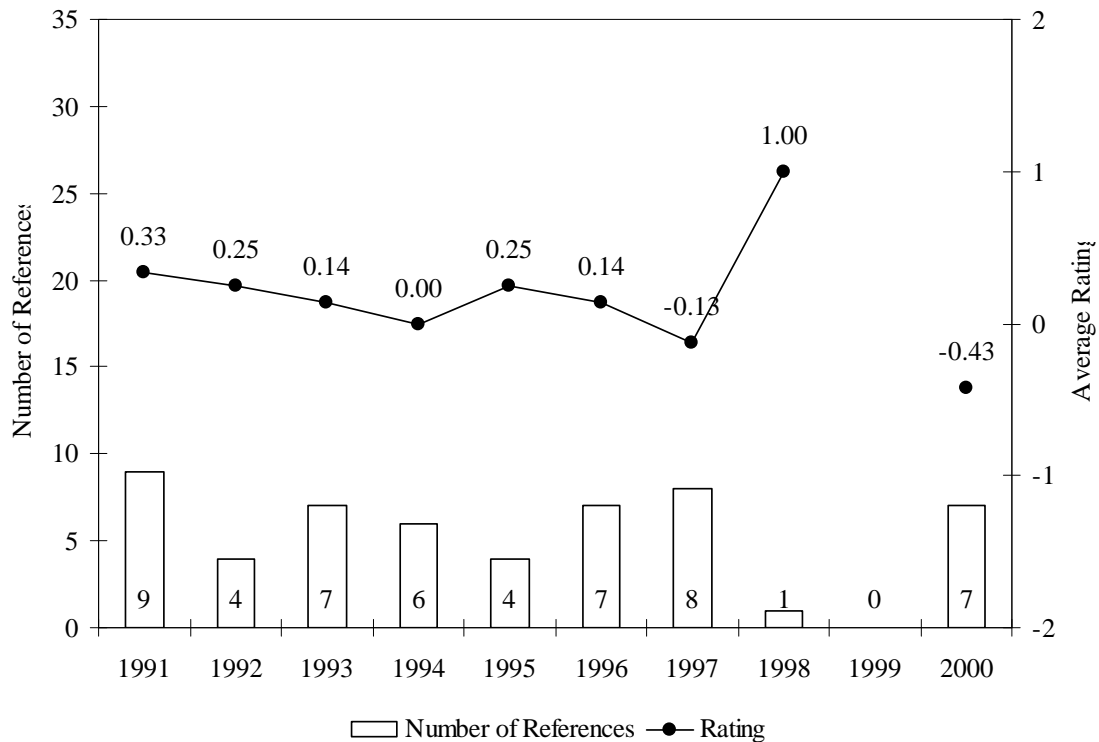
**Figure 4**  
**Themes Referenced by Year**



Figures 5-14 contain individual data for each of the ten themes. The figures show the number of references to a particular theme during each year from 1991 through 2000, as well as the yearly average rating of those references. A brief review accompanies each theme, indicating the topics it encompasses and its treatment in national magazines.

*Cultural.* This theme consists of the topic of education, including the Church's sponsorship of Brigham Young University, as well as several minor references to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. LDS returned missionaries also received attention for their foreign language skills. The cultural theme received an overall favorable rating as Latter-day Saints were recognized throughout the decade for their dedication to learning. Unfavorable ratings in this theme generally stemmed from the view in magazines that Brigham Young University stifled the intellectual and social freedom of its faculty and student body. This was particularly evident in 2000, when a Brigham Young University student was disciplined for violating the school's standard of ethics while participating in a television show. References and ratings for this theme are shown in Figure 5.

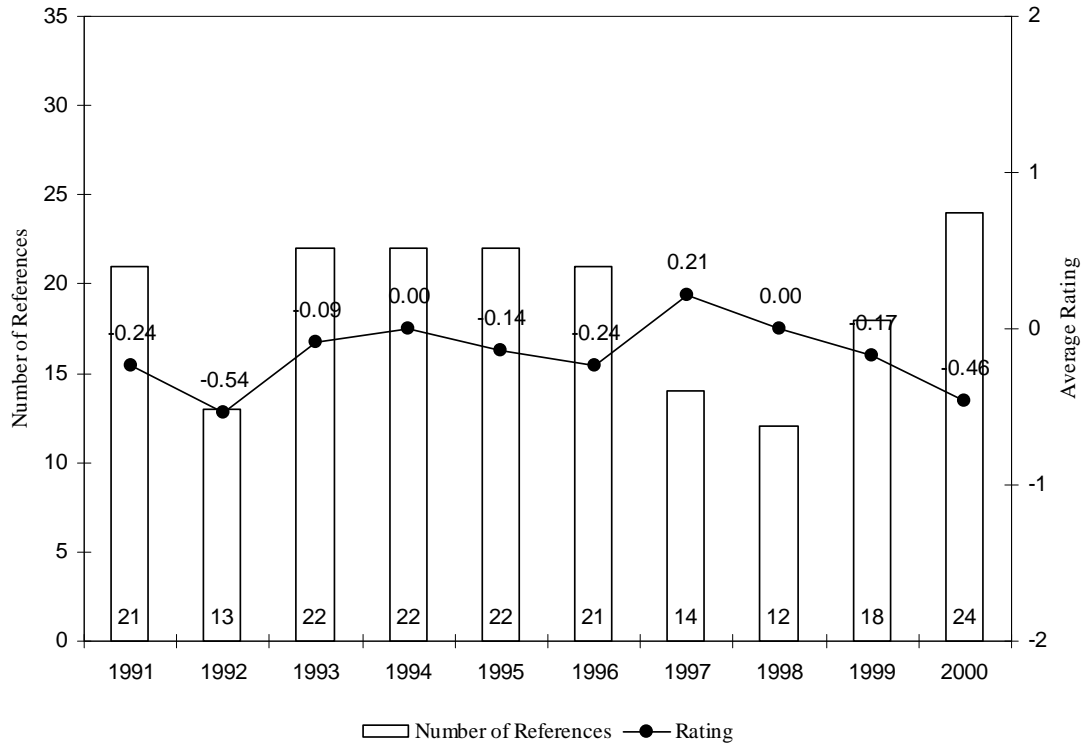
**Figure 5**  
**References and Ratings of Cultural**



*Hierarchy.* Comprising the topics of Church discipline, Church leadership, Latter-day Saint political and public influence, and the LDS position on homosexuality and gay marriage, the hierarchy theme received widespread periodical coverage. Indeed, this theme received the second highest quantity of references behind only the theme of people. As Figure 6 demonstrates, reporting on hierarchy tended to fall just below the neutral mark throughout the decade. The years 1992 and 2000 received more unfavorable coverage than the other years. This was due to negative reports on Church disciplinary practices in 1992 and the Church’s stance on homosexuality and gay marriage in 2000. Conversely, 1997 witnessed a surge of favorable coverage with respect to this theme as a result of positive reporting on the Church’s public influence. This stemmed from attention given to the sesquicentennial celebration of LDS pioneers

arriving in the Salt Lake Valley.

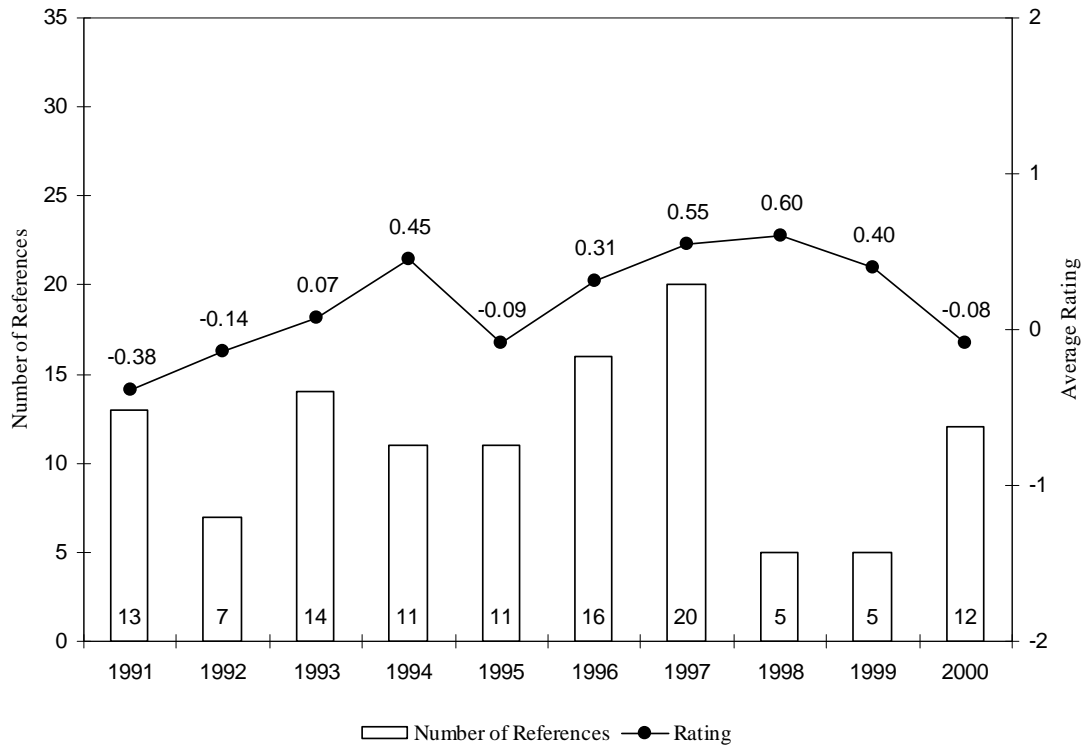
**Figure 6**  
**References and Ratings of Hierarchy**



*Origins.* This theme encompassed the topics of beginnings, pioneers, and persecution of Latter-day Saints. Periodical interest in Latter-day Saint origins was particularly high in 1997 as the Church celebrated the accomplishments of its pioneers. This theme was rated slightly favorable overall largely because of the attention garnered by LDS pioneers and the historical persecution of Latter-day Saints. In years where magazines focused less on pioneers and persecution, such as 1991, 1992, 1995 and 2000, the average ratings for this theme were unfavorable. This reveals that periodical reporting on the Church's beginnings, including the story of the Church's founder Joseph Smith, was consistently unfavorable throughout the decade. These trends are shown in Figure 7.



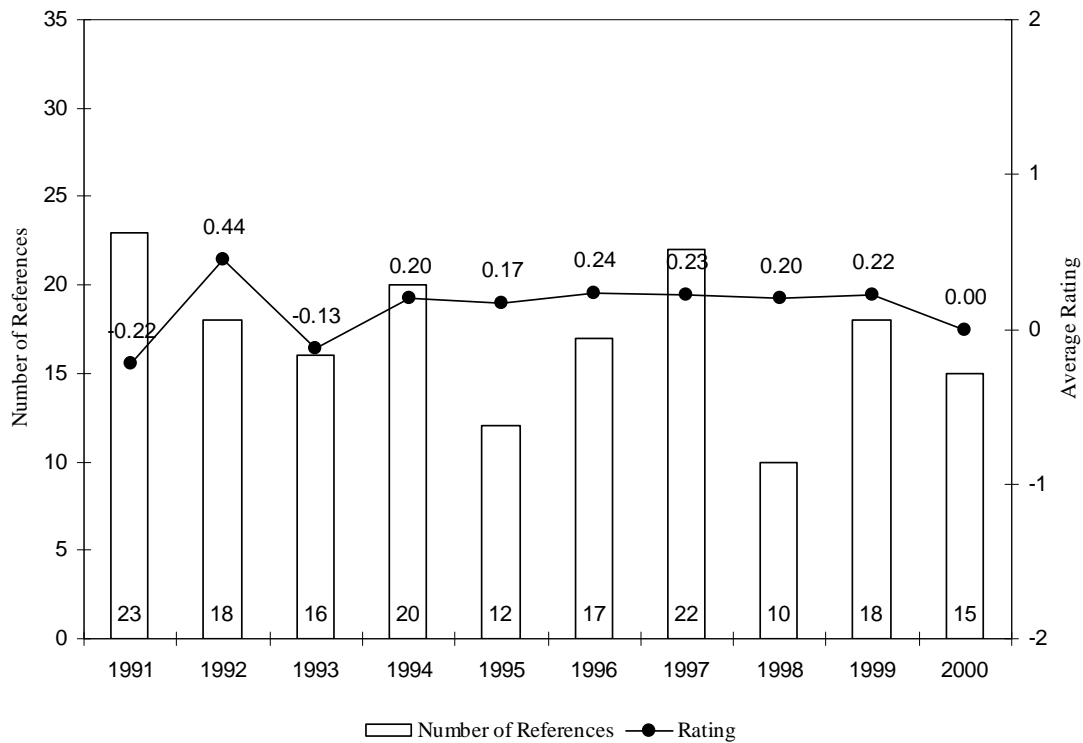
**Figure 7**  
**References and Ratings of Origins**



*People.* Four topics comprised the theme on people: general characterization of Church members, perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women, homemakers and working mothers, and large Latter-day Saint families. Periodical coverage on LDS topics throughout the decade often served to reinforce certain perceptions of Latter-day Saint people in general. Five particular characteristics of Church members surfaced repeatedly from 1991 through 2000, including kindness, morality, industriousness, conservative values, and religious devotion—all traits which tended to bring favorable attention to the Church. In contrast, reporting on the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women, LDS homemakers and working mothers, and large LDS families typically engendered unfavorable magazine coverage. However, because of the high volume of favorable coverage regarding the general characterization of LDS people, this topic outpaced the

other three unfavorable topics in this theme, thus providing a slightly favorable overall rating for the theme of people. This is demonstrated in Figure 8.

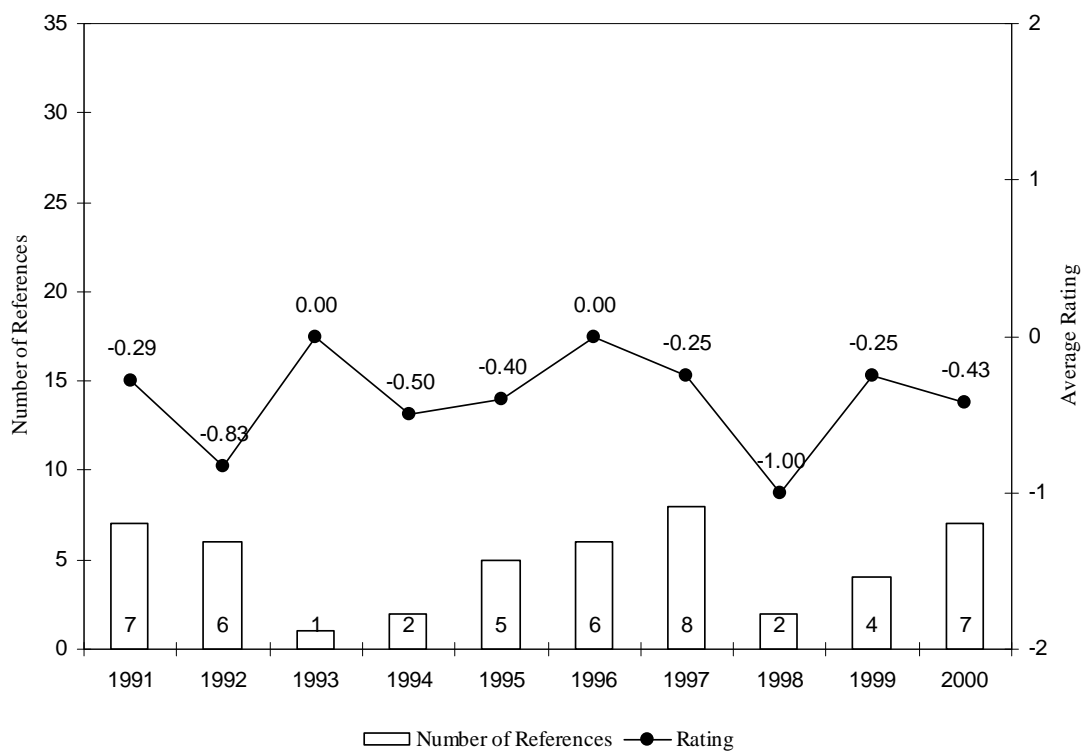
**Figure 8**  
**References and Ratings of People**



*Polygamy.* Periodical reporting on polygamy generally fell under one of three categories. These included the origin of LDS polygamy and its historical practice among Latter-day Saint pioneers, the Church’s official cessation of polygamy in 1890, and the ongoing public perception which continued to associate Latter-day Saints with polygamy throughout the 1990s and in 2000. As previously shown in Figure 3, polygamy received less periodical coverage than all but two other themes. The coverage polygamy generated, however, proved to be consistently unfavorable. Figure 9 demonstrates that in only two years, 1993 and 1996, did the Church experience overall neutral reporting on

this subject. In every other year, coverage of polygamy was unfavorable. The unfavorable ratings stemmed from one of three causes: imputing salacious motives to early Church leaders for introducing and practicing polygamy, negatively describing the Church's renunciation of the practice, or failing to distinguish between the Church and various break-off sects.

**Figure 9**  
**References and Ratings of Polygamy**

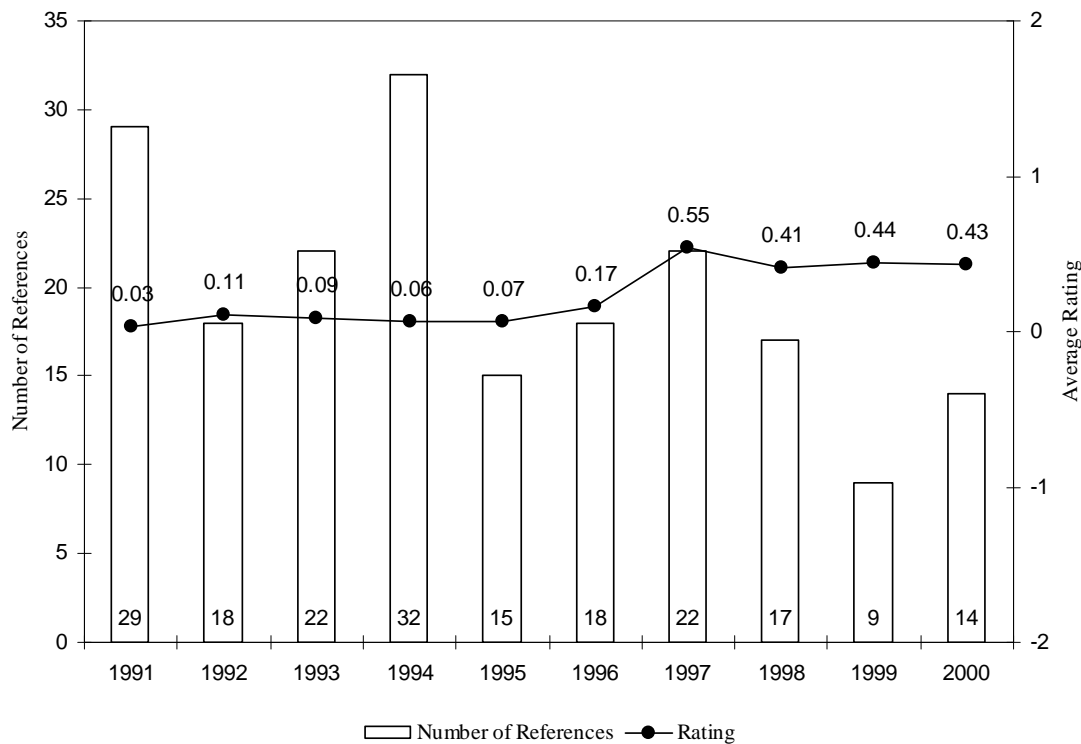


*Programs.* This theme involves the topics of missionary work, Church growth, welfare, and Latter-day Saint family values (which includes the practice of family home evening). Of the four topics which comprise this theme, only Church growth received an overall unfavorable rating. Even then, reporting on the Church's expansion was only slightly unfavorable, with 27 of 30 articles mentioning the topic in a neutral manner. Missionary work received slightly favorable coverage during the decade, while LDS

family values generated solid favorable attention overall. Welfare was the only topic which received either a favorable or highly favorable rating in every instance it was mentioned in national magazines.

Church programs represented the only theme which scored a favorable rating every year from 1991 through 2000, and, significantly, it also garnered the highest volume of magazine coverage of any theme. The data in Figure 10 therefore indicates that Church programs contributed substantially in elevating the Church’s public image throughout the decade.

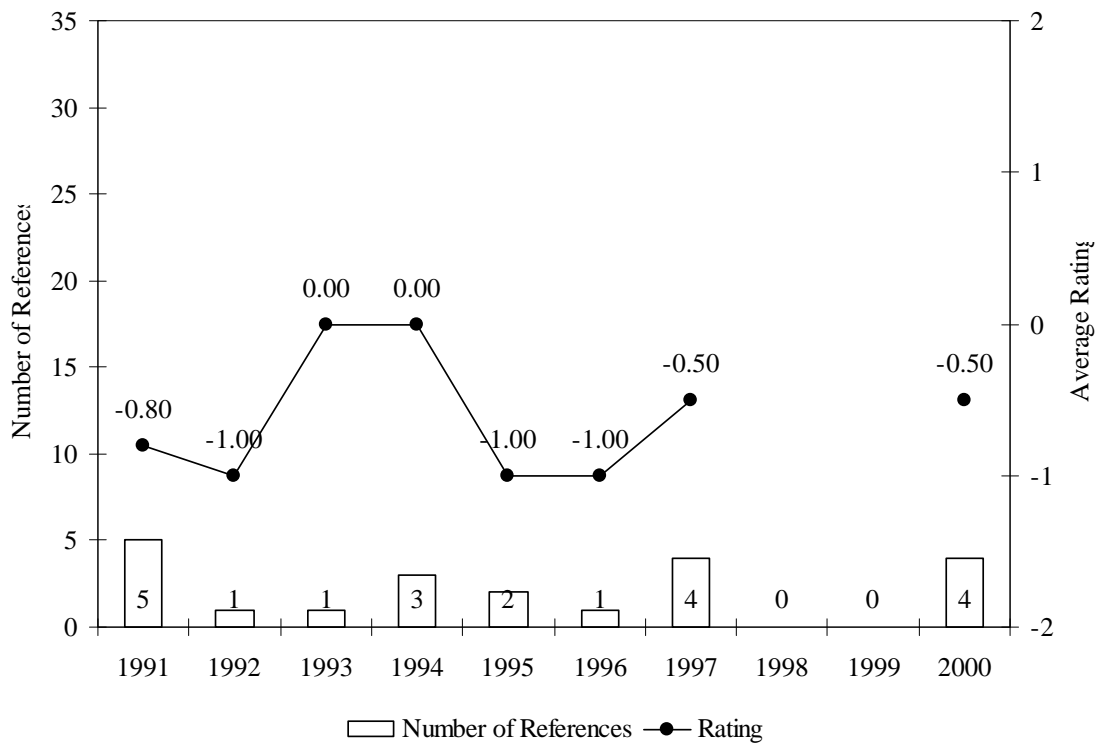
**Figure 10**  
**References and Ratings of Programs**



*Race.* This theme contains the topic of revelation on the priesthood as well as other references to Latter-day Saints and race. The topic of revelation on the priesthood includes reporting on the Church’s announcement in 1978 that all race-related restrictions

on priesthood ordination or temple admittance had been lifted. This topic aroused generally unfavorable magazine coverage as magazine writers tended to look back on the announcement as simply an act of expediency necessary for the Church's continued worldwide expansion. Of the ten themes, race received the least attention in magazines. Data on this theme is shown in Figure 11.

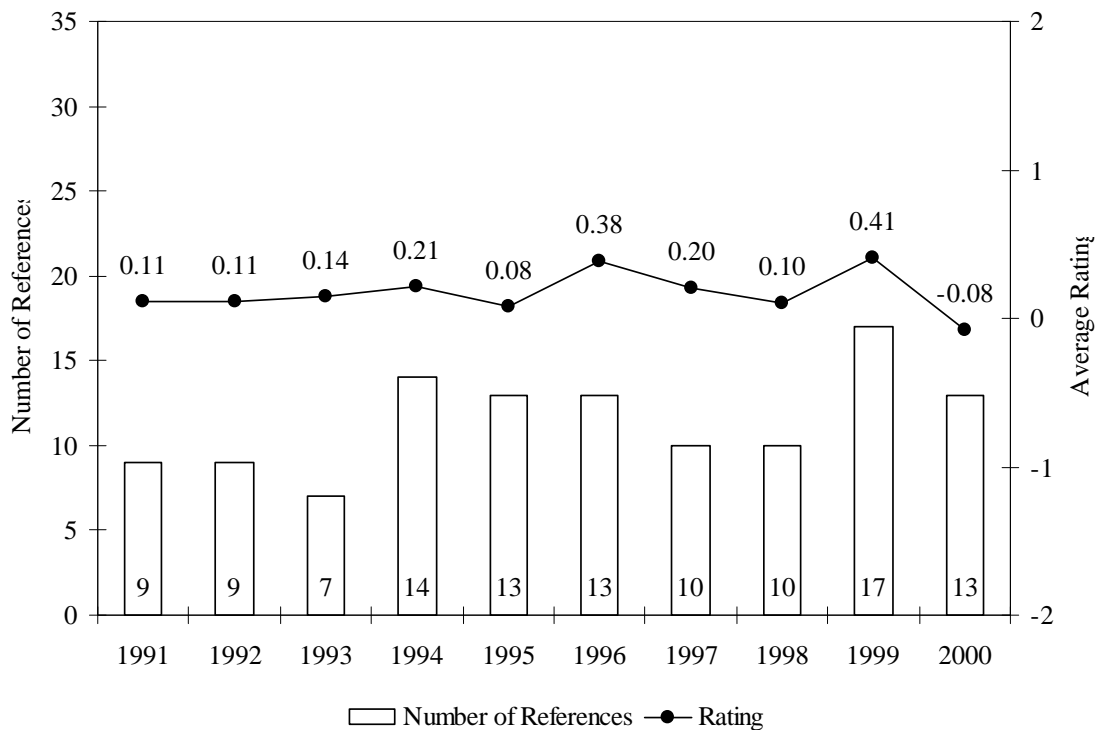
**Figure 11**  
**References and Ratings of Race**



*Rites.* The topics of genealogy, temples and temple worship, temple marriage, and Word of Wisdom health practices comprised the theme of rites. Because of the typically favorable attention given to genealogy, temple marriage, and Word of Wisdom health practices, this theme enjoyed a consistently positive rating from 1991 through 1999. This was especially apparent in 1999 as magazines favorably recognized the Church's launch of its family history website, Familysearch.org. However, this theme's

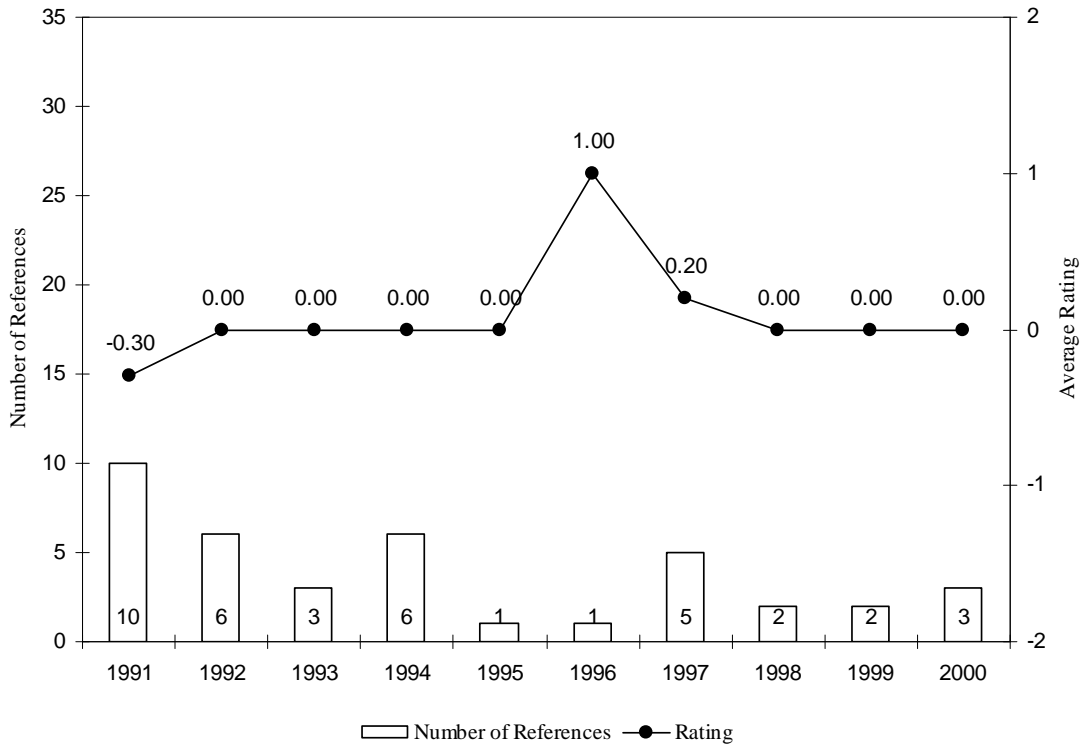
rating fell significantly in 2000 when the Church dramatically increased its temple building activity. Magazine coverage of temples and temple worship received an overall unfavorable rating as periodicals characterized both the price and size of LDS temples as excessive. Ratings and coverage on rites are displayed in Figure 12.

**Figure 12**  
**References and Ratings of Rites**



*Socio-economic.* This theme encompassed the topics of tithing and Latter-day Saint wealth. Reporting on tithing received an overall neutral rating for the decade, while coverage of the Church's wealth was slightly unfavorable. As Figure 13 shows, ratings on this theme tended to be consistently neutral from year to year. In discussing Latter-day Saint wealth, magazines focused on the Church's impressive business assets and real estate holdings. Articles also mentioned that Church leaders appeared to be both competent and trustworthy in their management of Church finances.

**Figure 13**  
References and Ratings of Socio-Economic



*Theology.* Figure 14 demonstrates that LDS theology garnered more favorable ratings from 1996 through 2000 than it did during the first half of the decade, 1991 through 1995. This may reflect the efforts of top Church leaders to publicly emphasize the central role of Jesus Christ in LDS theology. Magazines also showed interest in the Church's unique doctrine on the nature of God, the possibility of eventual deification for human beings, and Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding both the historical and future significance of certain locations in the state of Missouri.

**Figure 14**  
**References and Ratings of Theology**

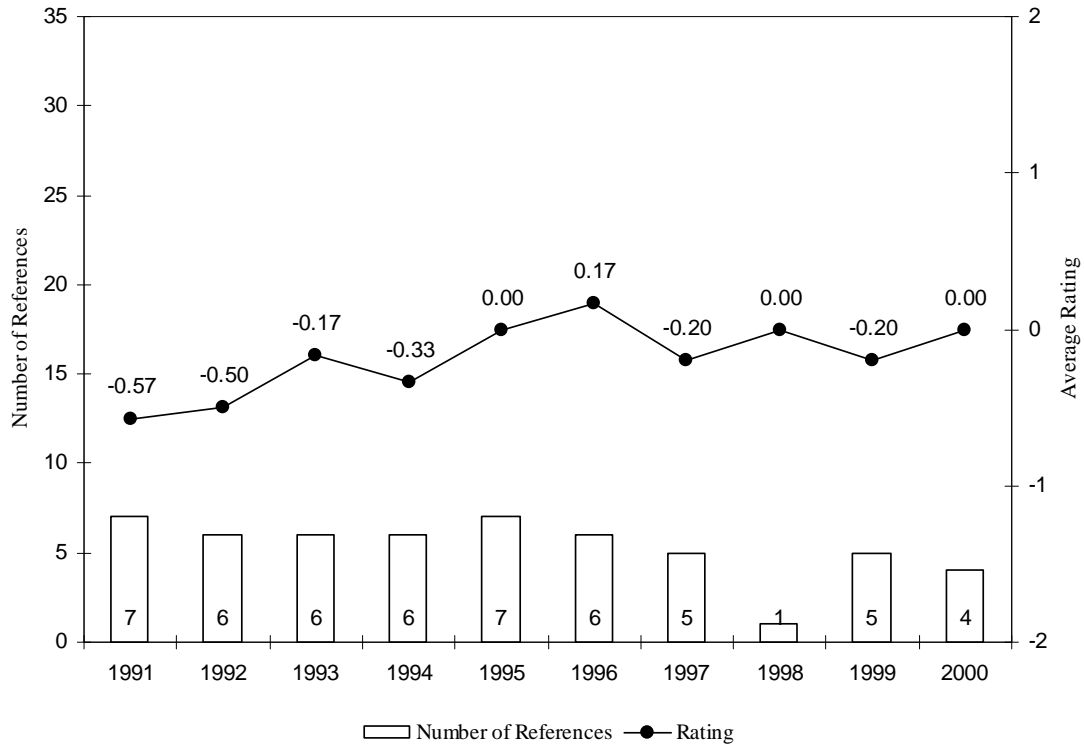


Table 3 combines all the data on references to Latter-day Saint themes from 1991 through 2000. While 422 national periodical articles addressed the Church in a significant fashion during the decade, this table reveals that many of those articles addressed more than one topic. This is evidenced by the sum of references to LDS topics by theme, which totaled 999. Moreover, Table 3 provides a weighted average for each theme, signifying how it fared in terms of favorability overall. The table indicates that the three most highly unfavorable themes, race, polygamy and theology, received relatively little attention—a combined total of 12.2% of periodical coverage from 1991 through 2000. Combining these themes with hierarchy produces a sum of 31.1%, which in turn indicates that less than a third of periodical coverage was included under generally unfavorable themes. The other 68.9% of references to LDS topics comprise the



remaining six themes, each of which received an overall favorable rating. This suggests that the Church's public image fared well in terms of the LDS themes that periodicals chose to address. Finally, Table 3 provides an overall rating for the entire decade by averaging the ratings of all 999 references to LDS topics individually. The resultant rating of 0.03 shows that from 1991-2000, national periodical reporting on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was slightly favorable overall.

**Table 3**

**Image by Theme: 1991-2000**

Category	#	%	Rating
Cultural	53	5.3%	0.08
Hierarchy	189	18.9%	-0.17
Origins	114	11.4%	0.17
People	171	17.1%	0.13
Polygamy	48	4.8%	-0.38
Programs	196	19.6%	0.20
Race	21	2.1%	-0.57
Rites	115	11.5%	0.18
Socio-Economic	39	3.9%	0.03
Theology	53	5.3%	-0.21
	999	100.0%	0.03

**Comparison to Previous Studies**

From 1991 through 2000, the Church witnessed greater periodical attention than ever before in its history. Figure 15 indicates the rise in volume of national periodical references to LDS topics by comparing five consecutive decades, 1951 through 2000. The increased attention may be due in part to a general proliferation of new periodicals which emerged in the 1990s. For example, this study included references from more than double the number of magazines which treated LDS themes in Morrison's study spanning

1982-1990. However, a comparison of the number of articles in the same periodicals during both decades also reflects a substantial increase of interest in LDS topics. For instance, *Newsweek* made nine references to LDS topics from 1982 through 1990, compared to 34 references from 1991 through 2000.

**Figure 15**

**Comparative Volume of Periodical References to LDS Themes: 1951-2000**

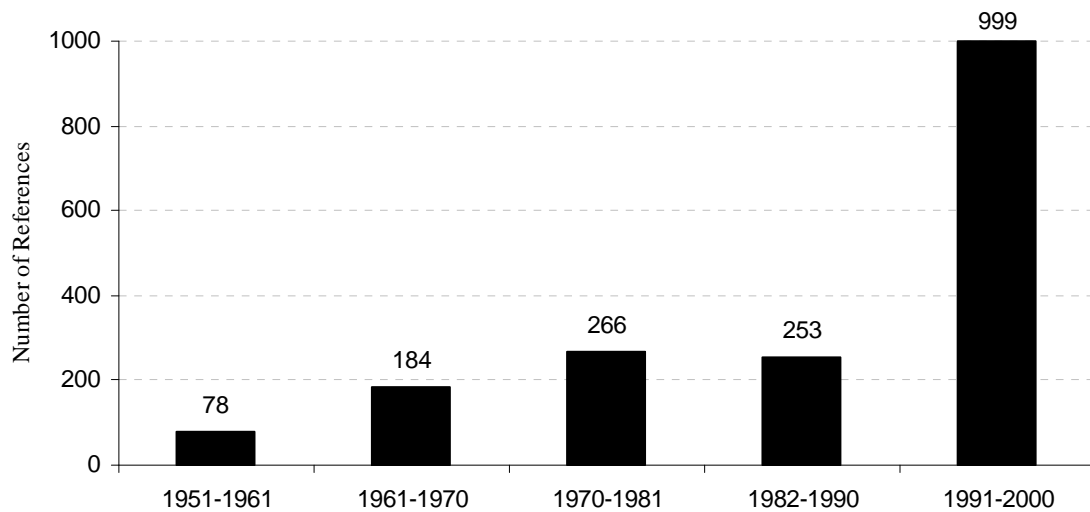


Figure 16 provides data on the relative emphasis given to Latter-day Saint themes in national periodicals over 150 years. It reflects the research of Cowan, Pelo, Neilson, and Morrison, as well as the results of this study, and may be studied both by theme and by time period. Figure 16, for example, shows data from Richard Cowan’s study indicating that from 1851 through 1950, magazines greatly emphasized the themes of polygamy and hierarchy. Because periodicals treated these two themes in an overwhelmingly unfavorable manner, the Church’s image from 1851 through 1951 received a decidedly unfavorable rating of -0.47. During the final ten years of Cowan’s study, polygamy was surpassed by people as the leading theme. This occurred as

magazines began to highlight admirable qualities of Latter-day Saints and the effectiveness of Church programs. Reflecting this change in periodical attention, the Church's image rose substantially during this time to a favorable rating of 0.55.

Dale P. Pelo next conducted a study covering 1961 through 1970, and found that 48 percent of periodical attention on LDS themes during this time was dominated by the theme of people. Figure 16 shows a dramatic spike which reveals this trend. Increased interest in the theme of people occurred as magazines focused on the U.S. Presidential campaign of Church member George Romney. Moreover, Billy Casper, a famous golfer who became a Church member, likewise helped to generate interest under the theme of people. In addition to people, race was a significant theme during this period of civil rights activism. Periodicals generally commented unfavorably upon the Church in this regard because of its policy of restricting men of African descent from priesthood ordination. As a result of this emphasis, the Church's image declined from 1961 through 1970, receiving a rating of 0.12.

Adam Nielson showed that the Church's image declined significantly from 1970 through 1981, receiving an overall unfavorable rating of -0.12. Figure 16 demonstrates that periodicals during this time particularly focused on hierarchy and theology. These two themes were treated in a typically unfavorable manner largely because of the Church's opposition of the Equal Rights Amendment during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Figure 16 also shows that during the following period, 1981 through 1990, no particular theme dominated periodical coverage of the Church. Indeed, the figure points to a general homogeneity of magazine attention as all ten themes remained within five

percentage points of the ten percent line. Reflecting the relatively even volume of coverage engendered by each theme, the score of -0.05 for this period indicated that periodical coverage had become more neutral. However, Matthew Morrison also noted in his study that hierarchy and the perceived oppression of Latter-day Saint women were largely responsible for this period's overall unfavorable rating.

Finally, Figure 16 shows that from 1991 through 2000, magazines again gave significantly greater emphasis to particular themes while largely ignoring others. During this time, programs, hierarchy, and people gleaned the greatest attention for the Church.

**Figure 16**

**Relative Emphasis Given By National Periodicals to Themes:  
1851-2000**

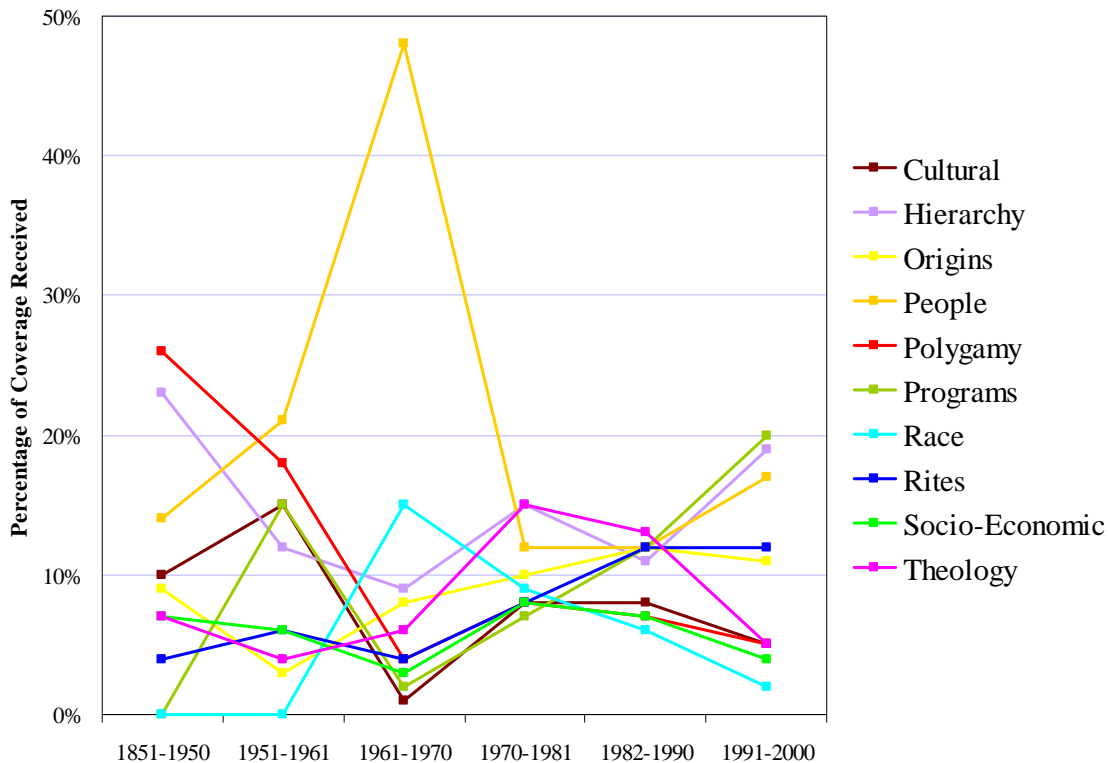


Figure 17 allows one to track the Church's image over time as presented by periodicals from 1851 through 2000. The figure dissects Cowan's original study spanning 110 years into smaller periods and includes the results of each study thereafter. The trend line shows that between 1851 through 2000, relatively few decades received overall favorable magazine attention. It also shows that periodical coverage of the Church became steadily more favorable between 1982 and 2000. The years comprising this study represent a rebound of favorable magazine reporting on the Church after some twenty years of generally unfavorable press.

**Figure 17**

**Public Image According to Periodicals Over the Years**

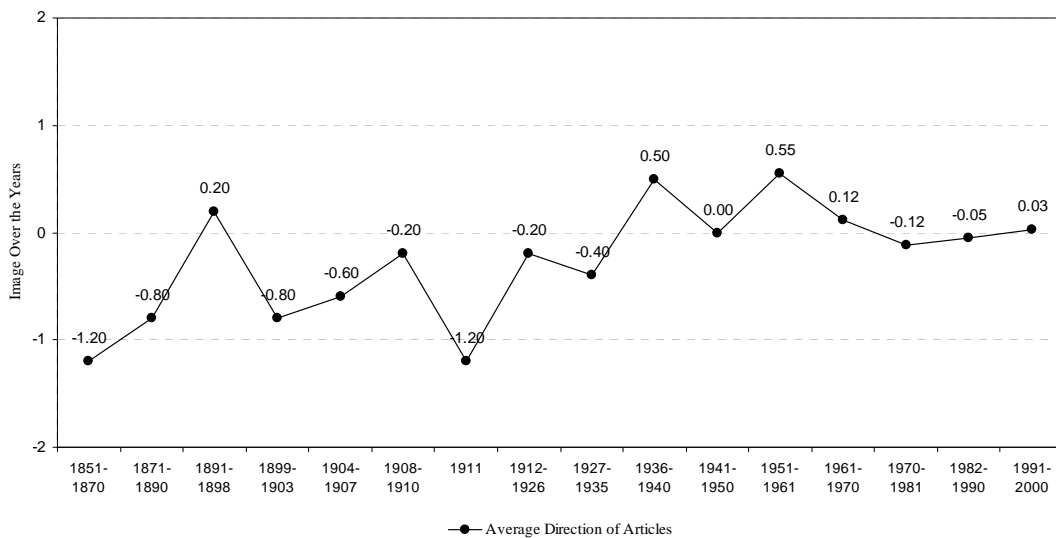


Table 4 groups 150 years of periodical coverage on LDS topics into the five rating categories set forth in the methodology of these studies: anti-LDS, unfavorable, neutral, favorable, and pro-LDS. The table shows that periodical coverage from 1851 through 1930 was largely either anti-LDS or unfavorable. Later, between the years 1931 and 1965, magazine attention on the Church changed drastically, as LDS topics received increasingly favorable attention. From 1951 through 1965 in particular, Table 4 shows

that 52 percent of all periodical coverage on the Church was rated either favorable or pro-LDS. The trend from 1966 through 1981, however, demonstrates a reversion to significantly unfavorable coverage. Then, from 1982 through 2000, a different trend emerged as magazine reporting became generally less unfavorable and considerably more neutral, with the percentage of favorable attention remaining essentially unchanged.

**Table 4**

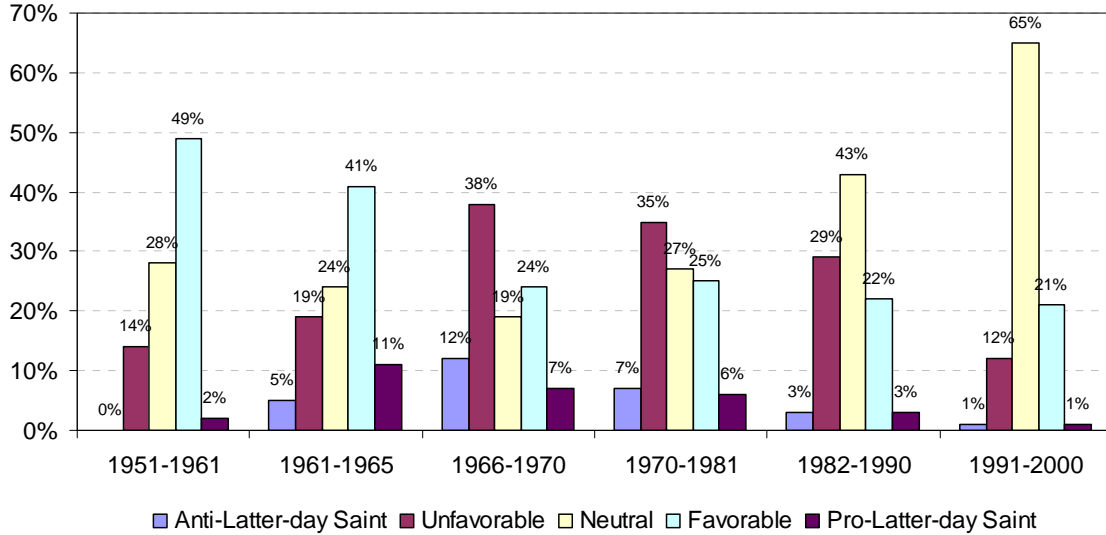
**Rating Trend Percentages from 1851-2000**

Years	Anti-LDS	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Pro-LDS
1851-1870	67%	27%	6%	0%	0%
1871-1890	33%	49%	10%	2%	6%
1891-1910	21%	31%	20%	24%	4%
1911-1930	31%	28%	27%	10%	4%
1931-1950	2%	19%	39%	38%	2%
1951-1961	0%	14%	28%	49%	2%
1961-1965	5%	19%	24%	41%	11%
1966-1970	12%	38%	19%	24%	7%
1970-1981	7%	35%	27%	25%	6%
1982-1990	3%	29%	43%	22%	3%
1991-2000	1%	12%	65%	21%	1%

Figure 18 dramatically represents the increased quantity of neutral ratings as well as the drop in unfavorable attention experienced by the Church from 1991 through 2000. Because of the decreased unfavorable percentages and increased neutral percentage of magazine reporting on LDS topics, the Church's public image improved from 1991 through 2000 to an overall favorable rating.

**Figure 18**

**Rating Trend Percentages from 1951-2000**



In summary, this thesis indicates that the volume of periodical coverage of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints increased during the years 1991 through 2000 in comparison to past decades. Magazines tended to focus on Church programs, hierarchy, and people during this time. Also, the percentage of unfavorable periodical coverage of Latter-day Saint topics decreased markedly during these years in comparison to the previous four decades. The resultant increase in neutral periodical attention coupled with the relatively consistent percentage of favorable coverage suggests the Church's image ascended in public esteem between 1991 and 2000.

In terms of Latter-day Saint history, the results of this study are of particular significance. Public recognition and respect largely eluded the Church for much of its history, although Latter-day Saints from the beginning anticipated the Church's tremendous growth both in numbers and influence. In November 1831, just eighteen months after he organized the Church, Joseph Smith prophesied it would come "forth out

of obscurity and out of darkness.”<sup>439</sup> Later, as the Church faced daunting opposition, Joseph Smith dispatched a letter from his Missouri dungeon cell enjoining the Saints to “gather up the libelous publications that are afloat” including “all that are in the magazines” as a testament to the illicit and inhumane persecution which had been “practiced upon this people.”<sup>440</sup> Joseph Smith indicated this collection of slanderous publications would witness to “all the world” the “damning hand of murder, tyranny, and oppression” which had callously abused the Latter-day Saints.<sup>441</sup>

In 1997, one hundred and fifty-eight years after Joseph Smith penned his letter from Liberty jail, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley noted the Church’s vastly improved circumstances: “People are beginning to see [Latter-day Saints] for what we are and for the values we espouse. The media generally treat us well. We enjoy a good reputation, for which we are grateful.”<sup>442</sup> As the 1990s closed, President Hinckley exclaimed, “This is the greatest season in the history of the Church. There never before was a time like this. We are larger in numbers, a great family of 10 million people scattered over 160 nations. The media treat us honestly and generously and right. We have a good reputation among most people.”<sup>443</sup> The findings of this thesis affirm President Hinckley’s assessment of the Church’s improved public image. With regard to Joseph Smith’s prophecy concerning the Church’s ascent “out of obscurity and out of darkness,” the decade from 1991 through 2000 assumes historic significance.

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<sup>439</sup> HC 1:224. See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:30.

<sup>440</sup> HC 3:302. See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 123:4-5.

<sup>441</sup> HC 3:302. See also *Doctrine and Covenants* 123:6-7.

<sup>442</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “Look to the Future,” *Ensign* (November 1997): 67.

<sup>443</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, “Words of the Living Prophet,” *Ensign* (August 1999): 14.



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