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Changes in the Religious Devotion of Latter-day Saints throughout the Life Cycle

LDS women rate themselves higher in religious devotion than do LDS men. Both experience diminished religious devotion in certain life stages but increase in devotion over their life spans.

James T. Duke and Barry L. Johnson

Do the religious beliefs and commitments of Latter-day Saints vary during the course of their lives? If so, how much do they change? Specifically, do the Saints grow in religious devotion as they grow older and approach death? Do marriage, children, retirement, and widowhood change people's religious beliefs and behavior in positive or negative ways? Do these experiences have a different effect on men than on women? This study seeks to answer these questions by investigating the religious devotion of LDS people during the life cycle from young adulthood to old age.

Social researchers have learned much about personal religious commitment and behavior,¹ or what they refer to as *religiosity* but what we will call *religious devotion* in this paper. Researchers have found that people have many ways of being religious. That is, there are many different aspects of religious devotion, such as church attendance, prayer and gospel study, religious beliefs, knowledge of scriptures and doctrines, and spiritual experiences. Not all people are religious in the same way. Some people always attend church but rarely read the scriptures, while others pray daily but rarely attend church services.

In this paper, we explore (1) gender differences in religious devotion and (2) religious devotion through the family life cycle. But first we will discuss how the study was conducted.

Methodology

In order to investigate changes in the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint women and men throughout the life cycle, we conducted a survey of a national sample of Latter-day Saint families, using the subscription list of a major Latter-day Saint publication. A random sample of 1,026 households who subscribed to the publication was selected. Each state was represented in proportion to its population except the state of Utah, whose proportion was cut in half to ensure that Utah Latter-day Saints would not predominate in the study. Because we chose this method of sampling, our sample was composed primarily of active Latter-day Saints.

Two questionnaires were mailed to each address with a cover letter asking that they be filled out by the husband and wife or, alternately, by two adults in the household.² A number of follow-up mailings were sent to those who did not respond to the first mailing. A total of 1,384 usable questionnaires were received, with 80 percent of all households returning at least one questionnaire.

Religious Devotion

Some Americans are more religious than others. Belief in Christ, for example, is higher among women, older people, people living in the South, non-Whites, and people with less education and income.³ Among members of different denominations, Latter-day Saints have a relatively high level of religious devotion,⁴ as do conservative Protestants such as Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, and Assembly of God members.

The so-called mainline Protestants—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Unitarians, and Congregationalists—have lower levels of religious devotion.⁵ Catholics have higher than average church attendance, although the attendance of Catholics has declined significantly since the 1960s. Jews are considerably lower than most other Americans in both church attendance and belief in life after death.⁶

Gender and Religious Devotion

Social factors provide the broader context within which human choices take place, so to understand individual experiences and

choices, one must also understand the macrosociological context and the forces that impinge on people in their real lives. For example, marital adjustment is different for men than it is for women in southern California, and the adjustment for both is different again in Saudi Arabia.

The experiences of being a man or a woman are among the most significant in any person's life.⁷ Men and women often make different choices because of the social context within which they live. In the United States and many other societies, women typically are more religious than men. A recent Gallup poll⁸ found that 46 percent of American women attended religious services weekly, while only 39 percent of men did so. In addition, 66 percent of women and only 48 percent of men said that religion was very important in their lives.

Are Latter-day Saints different? Religious devotion among Latter-day Saints followed the general pattern of other Americans. However, on the level of specific practices and beliefs, the survey reveals some interesting differences between Latter-day Saint men and women in their religious devotion. As the data in table 1 demonstrate, Latter-day Saint women typically rated themselves as being more religious than did Latter-day Saint men. For example, they were more likely to attend church, to pray privately, to consider themselves strong Latter-day Saints, and to have spiritual experiences. They also were more likely to believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church, to have faith in Christ, and to love other people. In fact, on 26 of the 31 questions, women were more religious than men. On a twenty-seventh question, women were more likely than men to say they hold family home evenings weekly but were also more likely to say they never hold family home evenings.

On the other four questions, men responded with higher religious devotion than did women. One of these questions concerned knowledge of the scriptures and doctrines of the Church, and the men's higher rating of themselves on this question obviously is due to more men serving missions on which they learn such doctrines. Men were also more likely to say they are more temperate than women. Most notably, men were more likely than

Table 1. Percent Men and Women with High Religious Devotion

Question	Men	Women
How strong a Latter-day Saint would you say you are?		
Extremely strong	20.0%	21.2%
Very Strong	40.3	48.5
How often do you attend church meetings?		
Every week—two or more meetings	76.4	79.1
How often do you hold a genuine family home evening?		
Weekly	26.6	28.9
Twice a month	25.3	19.6
Never	13.4	21.2
How often do you pray privately?		
Twice a day or more frequently	34.0	41.0
Once a day	34.4	39.0
How often would you say that you have the feeling that God has answered your prayers?		
Frequently	54.8	66.4
Would you say that you have ever had a spiritual experience?		
Yes	88.4	90.5
How often would you say that you have had such spiritual experiences?		
Frequently	22.8	25.1
Occasionally	57.5	57.6
Mormon leaders teach that Jesus Christ is a divine person who is the Son of God and the savior of the world. Please rate yourself on the extent to which you accept that teaching.		
Rated Self 10:	89.3	94.3
If you were to die today, which of the three degrees of glory do you feel worthy to enter?		
Celestial	35.9	29.0
Terrestrial	53.3	64.4
Telestial	10.7	6.6

Question	Men	Women
<p>What score would you give yourself on each of the following dimensions of religion, in comparison with <i>other LDS people</i>? <i>[Percent Giving Themselves an 8, 9, or 10]:</i></p>		
Knowledge of the scriptures and doctrines of the Church	39.0%	23.7%
Belief that the LDS Church is the only true church	89.6	95.4
Faith in Christ	89.7	93.9
Church activity & attendance at meetings	77.2	86.0
Fulfilling Church callings & assignments	70.1	87.3
Love of others	68.6	80.3
Service to others	61.9	63.3
Spirituality, or the reception of the Holy Ghost	58.7	65.2
Obedience to the commandments	70.1	77.7
Testimony	75.7	82.6
How closely your life follows the life that Christ wants us to live	35.9	35.3
Now, taking all things together, how religious a person would you say you are?	62.6	68.8
<p>We would like to ask you now to compare yourself to other people you know, both LDS and non-LDS people. What score would you give yourself on the following characteristics? <i>[Percent Giving Themselves an 8, 9, or 10]:</i></p>		
Gentle	48.3%	56.6%
Humble	29.6	40.2
Kind	56.7	65.3
Loving	57.3	73.9
Obedient	51.9	61.1
Patient	38.6	40.0
Sacrificing	50.1	57.1
Temperate	51.9	48.8
Virtuous	73.7	85.2
Honest	89.4	92.7

women to believe that if they died today, they would be worthy of the Celestial Kingdom (36 percent of men and only 29 percent of women responded this way). Men were also slightly more likely to say their lives closely follow the life that Christ wants us to live, although the difference between men and women was less than 1 percent. Men therefore felt more confident than did women about their place in the final judgment, despite the fact that they rated themselves less religious than did women on 26 of the 31 questions.

Because responses to questionnaires involve self-ratings (which are used extensively in social sciences), we must be cautious about interpreting such data. Respondents may deceive themselves, differ in mind sets and therefore differ in perceptions, or have other response biases. Obtaining observational data on some indices such as church attendance can help us substantiate the self-report data—women do attend church more frequently than do men. However, many self-reports cannot be corroborated with behavioral data. Obviously, the percentage of men and women who will eventually live in the Celestial Kingdom cannot be objectively determined at this time through social research. But we doubt men are really more likely to be worthy of gaining the Celestial Kingdom.

Religious Devotion throughout the Life Cycle

Many researchers have used the family life cycle to examine changes in the family over time.⁹ The family life cycle refers to the sequence of stages through which individuals pass during their lives, including marriage, parenthood, the maturation of children, the “launching” of children into adult life, the “empty-nest” stage, retirement, and widowhood.

Every time an individual makes a transition from one stage of the life cycle to another, a new social role must be learned, challenges met, and adjustments made. Evelyn Duvall found that in each stage of a person’s life there arise “developmental tasks.”¹⁰ Some of the tasks associated with becoming a parent, for example, are learning to care for the new infant, adjusting to the physical and emotional pressures of parenthood, and reconciling the roles

of spouse and parent.¹¹ If the person makes an adequate adjustment to each developmental task, life proceeds in an orderly and normal fashion. However, if the individual does not learn the task or cannot make an adequate adjustment, then a crisis ensues that threatens the peace of the family and its members.

Many people, including some Latter-day Saints, drop out of activity in their teens or early twenties and then return to activity after marriage and the birth of children.¹² Changes in religious devotion are likely to occur in conjunction with other fundamental changes, such as marriage, the birth of a child, or retirement. Of course, many changes in an individual's life may lie outside the typical stages of the family life cycle, such as employment or educational changes, changes in health, and changes in place of residence. Thus we would not expect that all changes in religious devotion are correlated with changes in the life cycle. Still, as we will show, significant changes in religious devotion are associated with progress through the cycle.

Some people do not experience all these stages, or they go through them in a different sequence, especially those who remain single, are divorced or widowed, or are childless. Sometimes the timing or order of the stages is neither expected nor considered ideal. The timing of events in one's life is significant, such as the timing of the beginning of dating, the birth of the first child, and of retirement. In many cases, a "normal trajectory" during one's life, or what Allen Bergin refers to as "continuous religious development," is more likely to lead to better adjustment than a truncated trajectory.¹³

This study is not a longitudinal study that followed people through their entire adult lives. Ours is rather a cross-sectional study; we compared persons in each of nine different stages in the life cycle. We defined the stages as shown in table 2. Our definitions included the marital status and age of the parents, the presence of children, and the age of the youngest child. We had a very few respondents who did not fit into one of these stages, such as couples over the age of 35 with one child, or widowed people under the age of 54, and these respondents were excluded from this analysis.

Table 2. Family Life-Cycle Stages

Stage	Name of Stage	Marital Status	Age of Adults	Presence of Children	Age of Youngest Child
1.	Single	Single	Age 17-35	No children	
2.	Young Married	Married	Age 17-35	No Children	
3.	New Parent	Married	Age 17-35	One Child	
4.	Young Children	Married	Age 17-64	2+ Children	Age 0-4
5.	Growing Family	Married	Age 17-64	2+ Children	Age 5-11
6.	Launching	Married	Age 17-64	2+ Children	Age 12-18
7.	Empty Nest	Married	Age 17-64	2+ Children	Age 19+
8.	Retired	Married	Age 65+	2+ Children	Age 19+
9.	Widowed	Widowed	Age 54+		

Changes in Religious Devotion throughout the Life Cycle

We analyzed each question concerning religious devotion separately, and we also performed a statistical technique called factor analysis to combine questions into factors or dimensions of religious devotion. Factor analysis is a statistical technique designed to show which questions fit together into a single factor. In this report, we will discuss five significant factors of religious devotion. In turn, these five factors can be divided into two types, intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic aspects of religion involve the inner self and the feelings and experiences people perceive inside themselves. The extrinsic aspects of religion are the outer and behavioral manifestations, such as church attendance. We will briefly discuss each factor separately and identify the changes that occur through the life cycle. Then in the following section, we will discuss the life cycle trends in total religious devotion and make some concluding remarks.

Public Devotion. The “public devotion” factor includes a question each about church attendance, church activity, and the fulfilling of callings. This factor involves religious behavior that is public and may or may not be performed for social rather than purely religious motives. Changes in public devotion were similar for men and women and occurred in an opposite direction to those of most other factors, as we shall see presently.

Public devotion was fairly high in the single stage, dropped precipitously for both men and women upon marriage, and then began a long period of progress through the family-rearing years. Public devotion then decreased in the empty-nest stage and stayed relatively low for women through the years of widowhood. For men, public devotion increased moderately upon retirement. Except for the stage of retirement, the public devotion of women was considerably higher than that of men, especially in the child-rearing years.

Beatitudes. The “beatitudes” factor is composed of six questions in which the respondents rated themselves for gentleness, kindness, humility, patience, love of others, and temperance. Men rated themselves very low before marriage and then experienced a huge jump in these tender qualities upon marriage. Both men and women

suffered a decline in the beatitudes upon the birth of the first child. The decline was followed by fairly consistent increases through the rest of life, with small downward variations especially at widowhood. Women rated themselves higher than did men on these beatitudes except for a slight reversal immediately after marriage.

Prayer. Two questions are included in the “prayer” factor—frequency of prayer and answers to prayer. This factor shows trends that were distinctly different from other factors. Some groups of people who were highly religious on most dimensions, such as high priests and their wives, prayed relatively infrequently. Conversely, divorced people, especially divorced women, were much more likely to pray daily than other subgroups. Prayer, then, in a time of trial may be used as a source of strength and comfort and a reminder that one is not alone. At other times, people may not pray as often because they are satisfied with their situation or confident in their standing with the Lord.

A fairly high percentage, about 30 percent, of Latter-day Saint people were highly religious on the prayer factor before marriage. After marriage, this percentage jumped more than twenty percentage points for women while remaining flat for men. At the birth of the first child, women experienced a decline in prayer while men showed a slight increase. Thereafter, the trend for women was a gradual but significant decrease in the percentage who prayed regularly, with only a slight reversal in the last stage of widowhood. This decline, from a high of 53 percent in the just-married stage to a low of 14 percent in the retirement stage, was one of the most prolonged and significant changes in our data. Unfortunately, it was a negative change. Men showed more variation, but overall the percentage of men who prayed regularly was about the same at retirement as it was before marriage.

Testimony. Three questions compose what we call the testimony factor: belief that the LDS Church is the true church and self-ratings of the respondent’s testimony and faith. The overall trend was upward—toward an increasing percentage of people who had strong testimonies. In later life, approximately 70 percent of both men and women believed they had strong testimonies. Women again were more likely than men to rate their own testimonies as strong, although the percentage difference was not great. Women

experienced a sharp increase when the youngest child was a teenager, a significant decrease in the empty-nest stage, and then a significant increase again in the retirement stage.

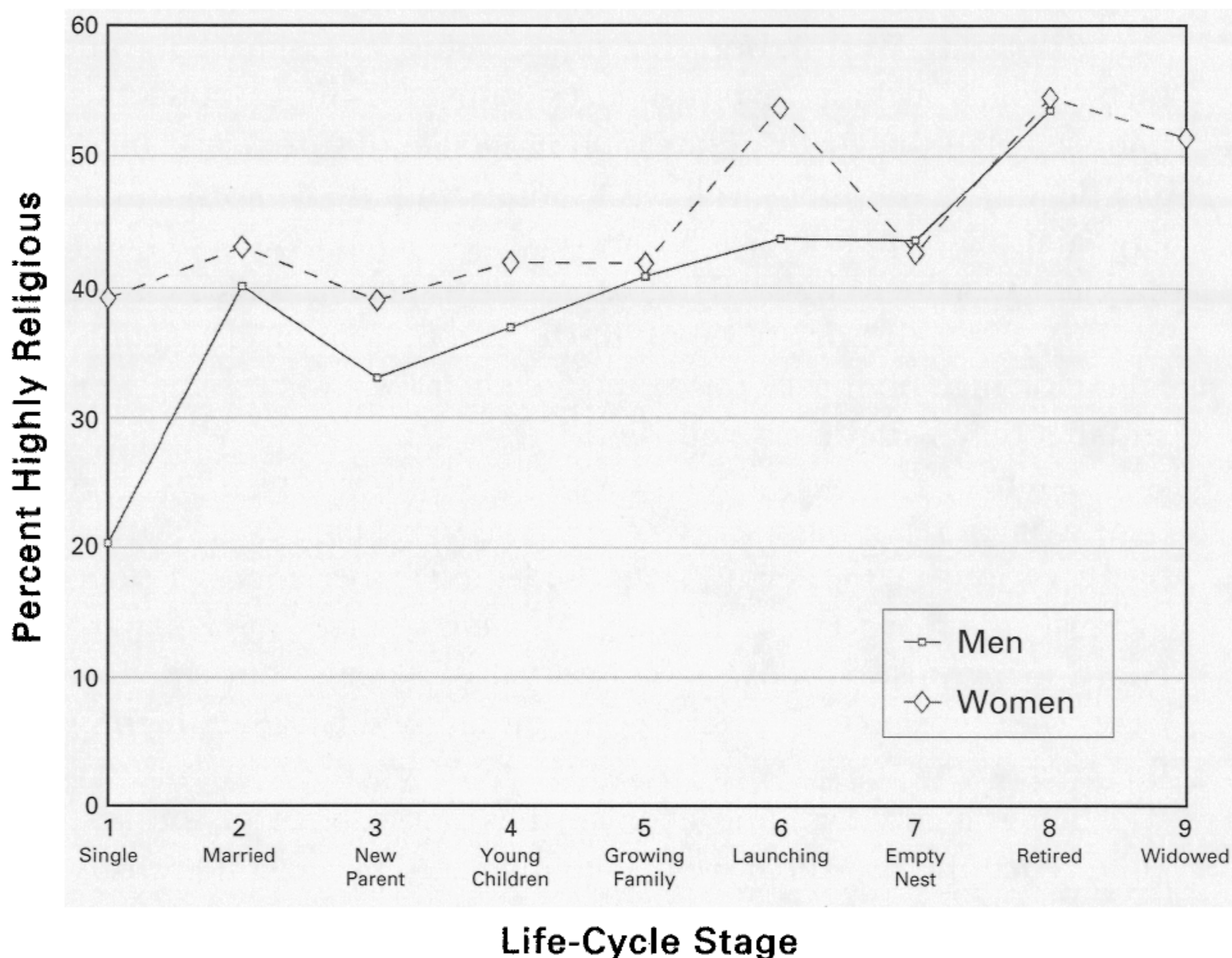
Spiritual Well-Being. The final factor was spiritual well-being, which includes five responses: ratings of the respondent's knowledge of the gospel, emulation of the life of Christ, and overall religious devotion, as well as questions on how strong a Latter-day Saint the respondents felt they were and what degree of glory they felt worthy to enter. The latter two responses indicate how well people feel they are doing in the grand scale of life. People who rank high on this factor would feel their lives were going well and that they were "right with God."

Contrary to what we found with the other factors, more men than women felt a high sense of spiritual well-being. Men started out very low in the single stage and then experienced a huge increase upon marriage. Through the life course, men experienced many ups and downs in spiritual well-being, but the final trend was upward with over 50 percent rating themselves high in the retirement stage. Women experienced declines in spiritual well-being at marriage and even further at the birth of the first child. Then their spiritual well-being increased in the child-rearing years, declined during the empty-nest stage, and increased again through retirement and widowhood.

Total Religious Devotion. Finally, we computed a "total" religious devotion score that represents the average of all questions on religious devotion (see figure 1). This is as an indicator of the total religious life of the individual when every dimension of religious devotion is taken into account.

As the graph in figure 1 shows, the total religious devotion of Latter-day Saint respondents was relatively low, especially for men, in the single stage and then increased fairly consistently through retirement and widowhood. Women were more highly religious than men in the first six stages, but men and women were almost identical in the empty-nest and retirement stages. Men's total religious devotion was more consistent than that of women respondents, with an especially notable increase at marriage. Women experienced a large increase when the youngest child was a teenager, a sharp drop when all the children left home, and a large increase again about the age of retirement.

Figure 1. Percent High in Total Religious Devotion in Each Life-Cycle Stage



The Effect of Each Life-Cycle Stage

Having summarized the trends for each of our measures of religious devotion, we now look specifically at each life-cycle stage and discuss more fully the effect each stage has on both men and women. Table 3 shows the percentage of people classified as having high total religious devotion in each stage of the life cycle. We also show the average change in the percent who were highly religious in each stage.

The Single Stage. There were relatively few respondents who were unmarried and under the age of 35. Among the ten single men, the level of religious devotion was extremely low, with only 20 percent categorized as highly religious, while 39 percent

of single women were highly religious. Many single men may have been serving missions and were not included in the sample, but many also may have been inactive in this stage of their lives. Single women, on the whole, appear to be more committed to the Church and its teachings at this stage of their lives.

Marriage. Marriage has a powerful influence on the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint men. Newly married men were much more religious than single men, and the percent of men who scored in the high range of religious devotion doubled from 20 percent to 40 percent. For men, this was the most significant period of growth in religious devotion during the entire life cycle. Women also experienced growth in religious devotion upon marriage, but their change was modest, from 39 percent to 43 percent of respondents.

Marriage appears to have a softening and tempering affect on men, changing them most significantly in the inner or intrinsic aspects of religious devotion. From the point of view of Church teachings, growth in love, devotion, caring, service, and sacrifice are more likely to be practiced in a close relationship with a loved spouse. Newly married people become involved in establishing and enhancing a relationship with a loved one, and therefore become more concerned with helping and serving that person. Men probably experience this shift from self-concern to concern for another person more than do women because such service is less a part of the role definition of the single male.

The Birth of the First Child. The growth of religious devotion at marriage was reversed at the birth of the first child for both men and women, but the decline was larger for men than for women. For men, the most significant declines were in precisely those intrinsic aspects that had shown the greatest growth at marriage. As new parents, Latter-day Saint men believed they were less loving, warm and sharing.

One notable finding was that public devotion again underwent a change opposite to most other religious devotion factors. Church attendance increased at the birth of the first child while other dimensions were declining. Perhaps parenthood puts greater social pressure on parents to attend church services and motivates them to establish more consistent attendance habits. Church attendance may also be a means of compensating for the perceived

Table 3. Percent Who Were Highly Religious and Percent Change in Religious Devotion, by Gender and Life-Cycle Stage

Life-Cycle Stage	Percent Highly Religious		Percent Change In Religious Devotion		Number	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Single	20	39	—	—	(10)	(24)
2. Young Married	40	43	+20	+4	(20)	(19)
3. New Parent	33	39	-7	-4	(39)	(51)
4. Young Children	37	42	+4	+3	(182)	(224)
5. Growing Family	41	42	+4	0	(61)	(71)
6. Launching	44	54	+3	+12	(54)	(51)
7. Empty Nest	44	43	0	-11	(63)	(88)
8. Retired	54	55	+10	+12	(43)	(29)
9. Widowed	—	52	—	-3	(3)	(44)

decline in the other dimensions of religious devotion. If one observes that one's kindness and feeling of religious self-worth are declining, church attendance may be a means to reverse that trend.

Motherhood is an especially significant transition in the life of the young Latter-day Saint woman, but this transition does not appear to have as great an influence on religious devotion as it does on other aspects of the young mother's life. LDS women experienced approximately the same types of changes in religious devotion as men did, but the changes were not as extreme.

Why was there a decline in the inner or intrinsic dimensions of religious devotion in this stage, and why was this decline more significant for men than for women? One explanation is that the added pressures of child care, even though anticipated and desired in most cases, resulted in the individual being more tired, impatient, and perhaps frustrated. The needs of the parents for affection, caring, and emotional response may not have been met to the same degree as during the period before the birth of the first child.

The love and warmth poured out upon the child could be expected to lead to an increase in the intrinsic aspects of religious devotion, but these would be offset by impatience and frustration as the new parents sought to adjust to the new role of parent, to meet the needs of the child, and to deal with the loss of sleep. The father probably experienced less growth from the nurturing process devoted to the child in his new role of parent than did his wife, especially at this time when the husband is most likely under pressure to complete school or establish his occupational career.

The Birth of the Second Child. As the parents became established in their marriage and in their parental roles, the percentage of people who were highly religious again increased. At the birth of the second child, both men and women showed a slight overall increase in total religious devotion. The birth of the second child probably did not require the same level of adjustment as did marriage or parenthood. Most parents with a second child probably had completed their education, had entered upon their careers, and perhaps were feeling less stress as life progressed.

The Aging of Children. With older children in the family (stages 5 and 6), there was a continuation of the increase in religious devotion noted at the birth of the second child. This increase

was substantial for both men and women, but was especially strong for women, principally as their children became teenagers—a paradoxical and unexpected finding.

Both men and women experienced an increase in their testimonies, a 26 percent increase for men and a 32 percent increase for women. We believe such increases were due primarily to the experiences of parenthood, which gives people practice in living and teaching the theological principles they have learned previously. They come to recognize the validity and truth of gospel principles. This awareness strengthens their testimonies that the Church is true, that the principles are correct and have been revealed by God through his prophets, and that they have practical applications in the mortal world.

At the same time, prayer declined for both men and women. As noted previously, the prayer factor was the most dissimilar to the other factors. Persons with high scores on prayer often were people with significant problems, such as illness, divorce, separation, or other family challenges. Prayer may have been a source of solace and reassurance for people with problems. Conversely, some people who were otherwise strong in their religious devotion prayed only infrequently. Possibly prayer was taken for granted and neglected as other aspects of life became more comfortable and secure. The lack of a strong prayer life among otherwise highly religious people is one of the most important findings of this study and should be a matter of deep concern for leaders and members of the Church.

The Empty-Nest Stage. The changes in religious devotion that occurred at the empty-nest stage were especially interesting and significant. On balance, men showed neither growth nor decline in religious devotion, and the transition experienced by fathers as their children left home did not have a substantial effect on their religious devotion.

The same cannot be said of the Latter-day Saint mothers in the sample. The empty-nest stage had a very strong negative impact on their self-reported religious devotion. A decline was evidenced in all five factors, with the average decline being 11 percent. The greatest declines were in public devotion, testimony, and spiritual well-being.

On questions concerning happiness (not reported here), there was a gradual increase rather than a decline in overall happiness during the transition from child-rearing to the empty-nest stage, a finding which is consistent with research on Americans in general. By this measure, the transition does not appear to be a traumatic one. Nevertheless, the empty-nest situation had a significant negative impact on the religious devotion of women.

In Latter-day Saint families, both the mother and father roles are defined in religious terms. However, the mother role may be more important to a woman's sense of well-being than is the father role for a man. The decline in religious devotion does not appear to have been the result of aging or of what sociologists call cohort or period effects. It occurred specifically at the time that the Latter-day Saint mother lost her most consuming and responsible role, one that she had played for twenty or more years and that had been a chief means by which status had been achieved within the Latter-day Saint community.

Service to and sacrifice for her family is a significant part of a mother's life for many years, and much of this service is viewed in religious terms: one serves God by serving and loving others, especially one's family. Thus the loss of people whom one can serve may lead to a decline in both the inner and outward aspects of religious devotion. Such a decline is significant but does not last long.

Retirement. Many people retire before or after the age of 65, but we chose this age as the typical landmark in the life cycle of most Americans. The retirement stage was a good time for our respondents. One would imagine that retirement would have a greater impact on the spirituality of the husband than on that of the wife, but our data do not support such a conclusion. There were substantial increases of both men (an increase of 10 percent) and women (an increase of 12 percent) who were highly religious at this stage. The people we are considering here were still in intact first marriages, because divorcees, remarried people, and those who had never married were excluded from these life-cycle analyses. Therefore, these respondents had been married for many years, their families were grown and gone, and they were facing retirement and old age with the companionship of their spouse.

At the least, this appears to have been a happy and comfortable stage where religious devotion (except prayer) was especially high.

Perhaps men compensated for the loss of occupational status with renewed activity in the Church. Men felt better about themselves and their religious lives, and the Church was a very important part of their lives during this stage. Women exhibited an even more substantial increase in religious devotion than did men at this stage. For women, this increase reversed and perhaps compensated for the decline experienced in the empty-nest stage.

Widowhood. The final life-cycle stage before death is widowhood, in which a significant rupture has occurred to a long-held social relationship and in which the widow is usually left more socially isolated. There were only three male widowers in the sample, a number which probably reflects a greater likelihood for husbands to predecease their wives and for male widowers to remarry. Therefore, our analysis can be done only for the forty-four widows in the sample.

Widows experienced a substantial decline in overall happiness at this time, but this was not matched by an equally strong decline in religious devotion. A slightly lower number of widows were highly religious, and this decline was accounted for almost entirely by decreases in beatitudes. These declines may have occurred because of the emotional and social stresses incident to aging, but probably were due to the loss of relationships that allow the giving of service, love, and kindness.

While public devotion was not at the same levels it was during the child-rearing years, it remained remarkably high for these widows. Religion may serve as a refuge in an otherwise stressful period. There was no evidence that Latter-day Saint widows face death with either a marked increase or decrease in religious devotion. Consistency rather than change tends to mark this life-cycle stage. We saw little evidence of disengagement or of isolation among these Latter-day Saints, although such probably occurs in some cases.

Generally, the religious devotion of older people was considerably higher than that for younger people. In summarizing the general changes in religious devotion through the course of people's lives, the increase in religious devotion for men was very great,

while women demonstrated more consistency. Men showed more variation or irregularity in the early stages (one through three) of the life cycle, while women showed greater variation in the later stages (five through eight). Perhaps the challenges faced by men were greater in early adulthood, while those faced by women were greater in later life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, many of the dynamics of religious behavior and attitudes can be understood better by taking into account the specific life-cycle stage of the individual. Personal development during the life cycle, and the accompanying challenges and opportunities generated by changes in people's life situations, appear to have a significant impact on the religious devotion of Latter-day Saint families.

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NOTES

¹See Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young, eds., *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

²See also Don A. Dillman, *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method* (New York: Wiley, 1978).

³American Institute of Public Opinion, *Religion in America, 1992-93*, Gallup Opinion Index Series (Princeton, N.J.: American Institute of Public Opinion, 1993), 21.

⁴Tim B. Heaton, Kristen L. Goodman, and Thomas B. Holman, "In Search of a Peculiar People: Are Mormon Families Really Different?" in *Contemporary Mormonism*, ed. Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, 92-93; Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 97-98.

⁵Roof and McKinney, *American Mainline Religion*, 81-99.

⁶Roof and McKinney, *American Mainline Religion*, 84.

⁷Rose L. Coser, "Reflections on Feminist Theory," in *Feminism and Sociological Theory*, ed. Ruth A. Wallace (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage, 1989), 201.

⁸American Institute of Public Opinion. Gallup Opinion Index. *Religion in America, 1992-93*, 43, 55.

⁹See also Vern L. Bengtson and Katherine R. Allen, "The Life Course Perspective Applied to Families over Time," in *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach*, ed. Pauline Boss, William J. Doherty, Ralph LaRossa, Walter R. Schumm, and Suzanne K. Steinmetz (New York: Plenum, 1993), 469-99; see also Paul Mattessich and Reuben Hill, "Life Cycle and Family Development," in *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, ed. Marvin B. Sussman and Susan K. Steinmetz (New York: Plenum, 1987), 437-69.

¹⁰Evelyn Duvall, *Family Development* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977), viii.

¹¹Duvall, *Family Development*, 229.

¹²Stan L. Albrecht, "The Consequential Dimension of Mormon Religiosity," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 70; Stan L. Albrecht, Marie Cornwall, and Perry H. Cunningham, "Religious Leave-taking: Disengagement and Disaffiliation among Mormons," in *Falling from the Faith*, ed. David Bromley (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1988), 66-67, 70.

¹³Allen E. Bergin, I. Reed Payne, Paul H. Jenkins, and Marie Cornwall, "Religion and Mental Health: Mormons and Other Groups," in *Contemporary Mormonism*, ed. Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, 149-50.