

Latter-Day Saints (Mormons)

INTRO: Who are the Latter-day Saints (LDS) ? What do we know about them?

- they are the 7th largest denomination in the U.S. ; they are very fast growing group
- they are a group that is firmly entrenched in American society EX: TV ads, Reader's digest
- in many ways, they are similar to other mainstream denominations; they are viewed as moral, hard-working, patriotic, etc.
- they have some very distinctive beliefs that set them apart

HISTORY

Joseph Smith, recognized as the founder of the LDS church

- in 1820, at the age of 14, he was living in what is now Palmyra County, New York; he began to have a series of visions after reading from the Bible (Jas. 1:5)
- he was told, according to his testimony not to join any of the existing churches, that they were all wrong

- over time, he was led to a set of "golden plates", buried in a hillside; he eventually translated them into the Book of Mormon, which was published in 1830; the LDS church was established at that time
- the "book" tells a story of two Jewish families that left Jerusalem and came to a new 'Promised Land' in the western hemisphere; teaches that Jesus came to visit this group.

The history of the LDS is one of rapid growth and persecution

- as they move west from New York, they were often perceived as a threat by local populations, and were driven out
- at one point they settled in Nauvoo, IL, the essentially established a Mormon city-state; smith and other leaders were criticized (Polygamy), eventually arrested in 1844; were killed by a mob that stormed the jail
- a large group was led west by Brigham Young, settled in Salt Lake City; to the present day the LDS culture dominates some areas of the western U.S.

DIVERSITY

There are diverse groups within the overall LDS umbrella

- (1) Reorganized LDS – small group that did not follow Brigham Young, but stayed with Smith's widow and son; today based in Independence, MO
- (2) Conservatives & liberals – LDS leadership tolerates a broad variety of opinions, as long as groups do not publicly advocate positions contrary to official church positions
- (3) Gender – some leadership positions are reserved for men; while women are encouraged to become educated, they are encouraged to be homemakers first
- (4) Race & culture – LDS has been perceived as racist due to a past restrictions on persons of African descent, policy was changed in 1978

BELIEFS

While LDS consider themselves to be Christians, they have some very distinctive beliefs that cause some groups to deny that reality

- (1) scriptures – LDS recognize the following books as authoritative writings:

- Bible (KJV) "as far as correctly translated"
- Book of Mormon
- Doctrine & Covenants
- Pearl of Great Price

The latter 3 are all "latter revelations"; they believe that God still speaks through the LDS leadership

- (2) God – has a body of flesh and blood, was once a man, became God
- (3) Humans – are the literal children of God; pre-existed before this life as spirit children of God
- (4) Salvation – is obtained by a combination of faith in Christ's atonement and works (p.191)
- (5) Ordinances are essential to reach the highest level of heaven; include: baptism (age 8), confirmation, and Temple ordinances
- (6) Provision is made for persons who do not have the chance in this lifetime to participate in the Temple; others who have can be "proxy" for them EX: baptism for the dead

LIFESTYLE PRACTICES

LDS are expected to live by the moral teachings of scriptures and church leaders

- tithing is expected

- alcohol, tea, coffee are prohibited
- males (age 19) are expected to serve 2 year mission; females can at age 21
- very family oriented (EX: family home evenings); any behavior that undermines the stability of the family unit is considered sinful

EX: sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, masturbation

COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

Most LDS will prefer an LDS counselor; a minority will not for fear of being judged of hearing the "same old stuff"

- there is no evidence that LDS are any more or any less healthy, in terms of DSM categories; they do show lower rates of divorce, delinquency, drug abuse, etc.

Some psychological issues tend to be entangled with some LDS beliefs

- (1) perfectionism & shame – may need help seeing that perfection in this life is not possible
- (2) abuse of authority – great authority is vested in parents and church leaders; over-control is sometimes an issue

- (3) sexual guilt & inhibition – LDS sexual ethics are strict when compared to mainstream society
- (4) denial of anger & conflict – must distinguish between the emotion and acting it out
- (5) Gender role conflicts – sometimes must be negotiated
- (6) Divorce & singlehood
- (7) Social pressure to conform

There are some interventions that are clearly incompatible with LDS clients (and with some other faiths) (p. 203)

The supportive nature of the LDS community and faith has great healing potential (pp. 203-205)