

# Memoirs of a Marginal Man: Reflections of a Mormon Sociologist

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NEAR THE BEGINNING of my professional career at Brigham Young University, a community sage (who had observed a continuing struggle to merge the intellectual with the spiritual at the institution) asked me: "Harold, are you a Mormon or a sociologist?" My answer was a quick "yes." Perhaps I was being flippant and even naive. But I believed then and do now that religion and science are not intrinsically in conflict, and to assume that we must choose between them is to adopt an artificial or false dichotomy. Both are approaches to truth, albeit via different methods and assumptions. In the final analysis, truth cannot be in conflict with itself.

Nevertheless, many religionists and scientists hold to dogmas and theories that often are in conflict; and trying to work through the emotions and the distortions sometimes engendered by this conflict can lead to being misjudged in both camps. This is the position of the so-called "marginal man."

On occasion I have been viewed with suspicion in Mormon circles because of the sociological label, while also being considered suspect in sociological circles because of my Mormon identification. Some more conservative Mormons have tended to view my professional probings as evidence of a lack of faith. And certain hard-bound sociologists have wondered if religious faith doesn't get in the way of objective analysis. My attempt to bring these two together and to be a vital part of each in the face of seeming contradictions has been the story of my life.

I met smiling Alice Spencer at BYU after serving as a missionary in New Zealand — thirty months as a proselyting missionary and district president, and an additional fifteen months as acting mission president during a long administrative hiatus. Alice and I were married in the Salt Lake Temple the same afternoon we both graduated, 5 June 1935. I had grown up in a very

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orthodox Idaho family and had been active in personally rewarding Church callings. I felt thoroughly Mormon and thoroughly comfortable as a Mormon.

I was fortunate to be both a student and an instructor at BYU under the administration of Franklin S. Harris (1921–45). A decade earlier, the university had suffered when three professors were dismissed, primarily over the teaching of biological evolution. When a scientific hypothesis clashed with religious dogma at BYU, as in this case, the power rested with Church authority. Harris had a great deal to do with striking a working balance between religious and intellectual impulses, best exemplified, to me, by faculty members like John C. Swensen in sociology and William J. Snow in history. In my opinion, Harris came closer to establishing a climate of academic freedom and operating a real university than any president before or since.

As a senior, resolved on sociology, I conducted a survey of ethical/religious beliefs and practices among BYU students. With the enthusiastic cooperation of the religion faculty, I administered my questionnaire to their students. It showed, among other things, that 88 percent believed that Joseph Smith was a true prophet, 75 percent believed that prayers are answered by divine intervention, 41 percent would be obedient to Church authority even if it was opposed to their personal desires, 88 percent considered premarital coitus to be morally wrong, 68 percent attended church at least once a week, 57 percent said they prayed daily, 42 percent said that their faith in the Church had increased at BYU. In general, women were more orthodox and/or conforming than males, freshmen and sophomores more than juniors and seniors, and returned missionaries most of all.

I supplied these results to President Harris who thanked me for the information but cautioned me not to publish anything. He felt my findings might shock certain people and advised me to “lie low for awhile.” I did not return to this questionnaire until the 1960s and early 1970s. President Harris also deflected me from my proposed master’s thesis: a content analysis of trends in LDS interests and attitudes as drawn from the *Conference Reports* and the *Improvement Era*. He warned that the topic might be “dangerous” since some might interpret the results as unfavorable to the Church. Nevertheless, I was eventually awarded BYU’s first master’s degree in sociology for my thesis on the time lapse between marriage and the birth of a first child for Utah County couples between 1905 and 1935. Alice gallantly assisted in all of this, even while caring for our first son, Carl.

I taught during these years at BYU as well: introductory sociology, social problems, cultural anthropology, human ecology, social statistics, race relations, and courtship and marriage. After three years of teaching and a summer session at UCLA, I was accepted by the University of Wisconsin for doctoral work in sociology. Two academic years and three summer sessions at Wisconsin were followed by another year of dissertation work sandwiched around teaching duties back at BYU, and then I received my coveted degree. By then, our second son, Boyd, had been born and our daughter Janice would follow in 1942.

During this time, I had another encounter with the threat that working in statistics can present. In Madison, Wisconsin, I gave our Doctrine and

Covenants study group a questionnaire to identify opinions among active and committed Latter-day Saints on paying tithing. I asked such questions as: should the income on which tithing is paid include savings? business expenses? gifts? nonmonetary income? As expected, opinions differed widely. I sent the results and a few interpretive comments to Church headquarters. My work was not even acknowledged. But about four months later, the *Improvement Era* ran an editorial (May 1940) denouncing those who “would quibble about amounts and offsets, and expenses and deductions and who would seek for loopholes in the wording of the law.”

I considered this editorial to be an indirect response and felt both disappointed and hurt. I asked myself, “Can’t a social scientist make objective examinations of Church phenomena without being accused of harboring the very traits he would seek to eliminate through clarification? Does a Mormon who is also a sociologist get himself into trouble simply by raising questions?” In retrospect, my open questioning might have been a bit ingenuous. Had I been less naive, perhaps, I might not have stuck so strongly to applying professional interests to my own religious culture. As it was, my stay at BYU would last only another seven years.

I had been made assistant professor in 1939 during my leave of absence. I returned to BYU in 1940, was advanced to associate professor in 1942 and full professor in the fall of 1943. Although I didn’t receive the title of department chairman until 1944, I had served in that capacity from the time I returned. During those seven years, the sociology department greatly increased its curriculum, faculty, and students — which were, in my opinion, becoming first-rate. I wrote thirteen articles and five book reviews that were either published or accepted by standard professional journals. I did a great deal of speaking and research, and participated in such professional organizations as the American Sociological Society, the Rural Sociological Society, the Population Association of America, the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, and the Utah County Mental Hygiene Society, serving as an officer in the last two. I also spoke on sociology in two Relief Society general conferences, served on a governor’s task force concerned with the state welfare program, worked with a citizen’s advisory committee to the State Industrial School in Ogden, and was appointed by the governor to a Utah Tax Study Committee.

I was part of a five-person team from BYU which visited Topaz, a Japanese relocation camp southwest of Delta, Utah, to collect sociological data on the nine thousand men, women, and children kept there. The rows upon rows of stark barracks surrounded by barbed wire depressed me, but I was impressed with the internees’ obvious attempts at neatness, their gardens, and their organized groups and clubs. We even saw more than one American flag displayed over doorways.

Utah County recruited a group of these internees to help with the 1943 harvest and housed them in a makeshift farm labor camp near Provo. One October Saturday night, a group of youths shot up the camp, terrorizing the Japanese. Fortunately no one was hurt. The federal government required the mayor to call together a group of educators, civic leaders, local government

officials, and army and labor representatives to decide whether the Japanese should be moved back to camp. I was among the forty or so people attending that meeting. I moved that we uphold the city officials in catching and punishing the youth and “that we favor an acceptance of the Japanese situation in the spirit of American tolerance; that we accept the willingness of the Japanese to work, . . . and protect them to the full extent of the law, [and] that we discourage all displays of racial antagonisms and discrimination.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this, I also chaired the Provo Civic Welfare Committee, which made recommendations on youth welfare, law enforcement, health, racial injustice, and community projects to the city commission.

With my family, I spent 1944–45 away from Provo, first working for the War Food Administration in Washington, D.C., and then, for nine months, as leader of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life for the Northeastern Region with headquarters in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. This year convinced me that I preferred academic life to government bureaucracy, that my interests were in teaching and research more than administration, and that I liked the combination of intellectual pursuits within a religious setting.

As the war ended, President Harris resigned to become president of Utah State Agricultural College. Howard S. McDonald, a man I did not know, replaced him. We returned from the east coast, and our fourth child, Larry, was born about three weeks later.

During this same period, I had also devoted considerable time to writing for Church curricula. In 1940, at the invitation of the Relief Society, I put some of the then current cutting-edge research dealing with families and family interactions into seven lessons called “Foundations of Successful Marriage.” The Relief Society board members and officers with whom I worked were very cooperative and helpful, and I willingly took time away from writing my dissertation for this assignment. In 1941 I wrote three lessons entitled “Home Cooperation between Parents and Children” for married MIA members. In 1943–44, Belle S. Spafford, by then Relief Society second counselor, asked me to prepare a fourteen-lesson course called “Modern Applications of Ethical Principles.” All of these experiences were positive, and I cherished the praise I received from both the officers and from the Apostles who served on the Publications Committee. Virtually the only significant change I was asked to make was to eliminate my denunciation of racial prejudice in America, particularly against blacks, as some felt that class leaders might not be successful in handling such a controversial subject.

In 1946, I spent an intensive fifteen weeks preparing thirty-six lessons on marriage and family relationships for the Sunday School. I was clearly expected to write as a professional, and Superintendent Milton Bennion even asked, “Would you object, in connection with marriage, to recommend[ing] temple marriage?” Of course I did not, and the 209-page manual, *The Latter-day Saint Family* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1946), came off the press in the fall of 1946, the first thirty-six lessons by me

<sup>1</sup> Clipping cited is in Harold T. Christensen personal papers, Harold B. Lee Library Archives, Brigham Young University.

and another twelve lessons on genealogy by Archibald F. Bennett. It was, to my knowledge, the first LDS Sunday School course on family relationships ever offered. (Incidentally, I would strongly suggest a reevaluation of the current system where anonymous committees produce manuals. My experience and observations indicate that such a method negates the creative surge that a named author feels and may even invite lowest-common-denominator thinking and writing.)

This manual was also used as a course text for our marriage and family relations classes on campus under the supervision of the Religion Division. Its chairman, Wiley Sessions, however, approved recommendations from three other faculty members that the text be more doctrinal and designed more directly for an exclusively LDS audience. I felt it important to keep the sociological slant *combined* with a religious orientation, a decision that tipped me in the professional direction and made me realize potential limitations for professional development and experience that a sociologist in an LDS setting might face.

Many professionals, like many religious people, can point to a moment of dramatic conversion, a landmark event which shaped the course of their lives — or perhaps a stone wall or an impassable bog that rerouted them in a new direction. In the process of my marginalization, I cannot point to stone walls but rather, to medium-sized rocks, to patches of slippery ground instead of bogs. I suppose that I entertained hopes of contributing to my religion and my profession simultaneously, of bringing the tools of empirical investigation to the Church and its programs. Rather than accepting religious dogma and ecclesiastical instruction at face value, I found myself asking questions and seeking answers — at least partial answers, at least supplementary evidences — in data which could be observed, measured, and analyzed. It was this professionalizing, in short, that most strongly influenced my eventually leaving BYU.

One small event — a stone on the path, so to speak — was a visit with Elder John A. Widtsoe some time after my family relations manual had appeared. He was most complimentary about my writing and encouraged me to consider doing a full-length book for Deseret Book. Then he added, “But you know, at one place in there, you come awfully close to advocating birth control.” (Although I never used the term, I had discussed the pros and cons of families that are overly large or small and had argued for a middle ground.) I responded frankly, “Brother Widtsoe, I believe in birth control.” While he listened courteously, I explained myself more fully and then asked directly if the Church had an official position on the subject. He admitted that it had not and that his own position was strictly personal. (He had written an *Improvement Era* article decrying family limitation for selfish reasons and allowing birth control only under extreme health strictures and only with such natural methods as abstinence or the rhythm method.) We parted on good terms and our later associations, though infrequent, were always pleasant and, I believe, characterized by mutual respect.

I was often asked to speak, and as early as September 1941, I noted in my diary that I had helped with a symposium as part of stake conference on

"Youth and Religion in the Present World Crisis." I wrote: "Our approach was analytic, which seemed to conflict somewhat with the dogmatic approach of a visiting General Authority. But we [i.e., outspoken panel members] received many compliments just the same." I gave a popular talk at a faculty fireside on 11 November 1945 entitled "Some Isms of Mormonism." I argued that we need to avoid human pitfalls and correct human errors within the Church to preserve and enhance the divine elements, but that certain "isms" could prevent such a process. The key "ism" that I treated, institutionalism, means "the shifting of attention from the individual to the institution so that *its* programs and welfare become even more important than the interests or the needs of people or of consequences to them." I also discussed particularism, verbalism, authoritarianism, anti-intellectualism, and provincialism arguing:

Adherence to principle is more important than obedience to persons, and the authority of right and truth should be more highly esteemed than that of either tradition or position. . . . Yet those who love power are always with us and, because of this, the tendency is ever present to make man servile, to stifle his creative urge, his individuality, his God-given right to doubt, in order to better control him. . . . Critical loyalty is better than gullible loyalty and intelligent faith is better than that which is blind. Unless BYU is able to develop the powers of both faith and thought, it will have failed in its purposes, both as a religious institution and as a university."

I received mostly positive responses although one faculty member, a lifelong friend of my parents, wondered what they might think of my apparent tendency toward liberalism. I took up a similar theme at a student devotional, arguing for the teaming of intellectuality and spirituality. Without spirituality, I pointed out, intellect frequently fails to better the human condition. And without intellect, spirituality often degenerates into narrow dogmatism and superstition. I was almost overwhelmed with laudatory comments from students, faculty members, and administrators.

Experiences like these encouraged me to plead for the development of a research arm within the Church to study the effectiveness of curriculum and program. Although I was ahead of my time by some thirty years, I am encouraged by the current existence of a Research and Evaluation Committee within the Correlation program of the Church staffed by a small group of young, dedicated social scientists.

During my stay at BYU, I enjoyed several Church callings: The Utah Stake Sunday School organization, the Utah Stake High Council, and a very satisfying campus Sunday School class. Up to that point in time, ecclesiastical units had not been organized on campus, but these Sunday School classes were an early beginning. Other teachers included — though not all at the same time — Parley A. Christensen, Thomas L. Broadbent, Carl F. Eyring, Thomas L. Martin, J. Wiley Sessions, Sidney B. Sperry, Russel B. Swensen, and O. Meredith Wilson. Every Sunday my room, which held 110 students, had standing room only. "I like to teach a group at this age level and of this cultural background and I appreciate being free to plan and organize my own

lessons," I wrote in my journal 28 November 1942. "A job like this is much more challenging and satisfying than stake board work."

Alice and I participated in a study group with six or eight young faculty couples. We called ourselves "The Cracked Egg Club" ("the Cracked Egg-head Club," someone not a member of our group retorted) because we all took turns purchasing second-grade eggs from a nearby cooperative at a bulk discount and used our monthly Sunday get-togethers to take orders and arrange for purchases and distributions.

Our group's academic specialties and religious perspectives represented a wide range. We all agreed that we would allow honest probing and open, responsible discussion without personal judgment, betrayal, or misrepresentation. We chose current topics or issues — usually controversial ones — which were relevant to our religious interests, then took turns presenting. Our presentations could take almost any form: a brief book report, a nontechnical research report, an analysis of an issue, or a personal position. Open discussion followed each presentation. Alice and I genuinely enjoyed these occasions. Our no-nonsense discussions not only made for a cross-fertilization of ideas but brought needed relief from some of the tensions inherent in an authoritarian belief structure such as the one in which we operated. Out of that group came many enduring friendships for Alice and me.

There were rocks along my path, but it was basically a pleasant path. Then, in the spring of 1946, I was offered a position in the Sociology Department at Utah State Agricultural College, now Utah State University, in Logan, to develop the field of marriage and family relations and possibly follow the current chairman when he retired in a couple of years. I had been at BYU for six years since my return from graduate study and was department chairman, but my salary had climbed from a starting level of \$2,100 in 1940 to only \$3,200. The Utah State offer would have meant a \$400 increase. When I discussed this offer with President McDonald, he agreed to advance my salary to \$3,500 but said that was all he could do out of fairness to other faculty members. He seemed to act half-heartedly, but the salary increase, as well as my genuine enjoyment of my work and friends, convinced me to stay.

This was not my first encounter with President McDonald, of course. A professional educator and former superintendent of Salt Lake City public schools, he resigned as president of BYU after four years to become president of Los Angeles City College. In faculty meetings and other gatherings, he seemed a bit outside his natural element. Technically, he was an adequate administrator, but he lacked the intellectual curiosity and the vision of what a university should be, which had characterized Franklin S. Harris. He stressed conformity to doctrines and rules but did little to encourage questioning or creative thinking.

During the spring of 1947, two other rocks appeared on my path. BYU was planning special academic events as part of the centennial celebration of the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in Salt Lake Valley. I suggested inviting Kimball Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, eminent sociologist at the University of Wisconsin, and past president of the American Sociological Associa-



tion. He was, however, a lapsed Mormon, though he still identified strongly with the culture. The administration turned down my recommendation. This type of political caution irked me.

During this time, I had prepared drafts of three or four chapters of a college text on marriage and the family and had distributed copies for criticism and suggestions to several colleagues. Wiley Sessions was one of them. As head of the Division of Religion, he had the uncomfortable duty of keeping the rest of us in line. I found him generally friendly but a little unpredictable, alternately both liberal and conservative. Wanting to maintain a friendly atmosphere but being under pressure from above, he tended to play things politically, and I was never quite sure where I stood with him or where he would stand on a given issue.

When we discussed these chapters, he had just returned from consultations with General Authorities in Salt Lake City. I understood, from interchanges with him and others, that he had been admonished to see that the gospel was "uppermost in everything" that went on. He told me, "Harold, you write well and you have something important to contribute, so by all means you should go on with the book. But surely you cannot do it the way you have started. You must deal with the doctrine of celestial marriage, with getting sealed in the temple, with genealogy work, etc. In short, cite scripture and make sure you approach the subject from the Mormon point of view." Surprised, I repeated that this book was for a general market, that I would be happy to prepare a supplement to make the book more useful on campus, but that surely his approach would not suit a national publisher. As I recall, he said that I should put the Church audience first and the national audience second. We had clearly reached a near stalemate.

These and other experiences weakened my commitment to BYU so that I frankly acknowledged my increasing discomfort with the restrictions and expectations that seemed to be tightening around me. I perceived it as pressure — not serious pressure yet but an unpleasant indicator of the future.

Then in May 1947, I received a letter from the director of the Division of Education and Applied Psychology at Purdue, offering me the chairmanship of their emerging sociology program. They had just added an M.S. program and were promising a separate sociology department and Ph.D. program within a few years. The salary would be \$6,250, more than \$2,000 more than I would be making at BYU. It turned out that I had been recommended by a Purdue education professor who had been visiting in Utah in February 1947 and had heard me speak at a Parents' Day program in, of all unlikely places, Hinckley High School in Delta, Utah.

I did not want to give up the emotional security of our comfortable environment, the good atmosphere in which to raise our children, the religious satisfactions of being part of a Church-centered community, my pleasure at the real contributions I was able to make, our friends, and the fine students. But Purdue was a prestigious university with a top-flight reputation. In addition to being free of financial worries for the first time in our married life, I would also be free to develop professionally. That was an appealing feature.



It was not an easy decision. I was thirty-eight years old, a good age for a career move. Alice and I debated the pros and cons. Her encouragement and willingness to move helped convince me that we should take the chance. In the late summer of 1947 we packed up and left for West Lafayette, Indiana. It is a move we have never regretted.

At Purdue, our fifth child, Gayle, was born and I was appointed professor in both sociology, and child development and family relations — an across-department arrangement that lasted about a dozen years, although my duties in the developing Sociology Department soon absorbed most of my attention. I finished my book, *Marriage Analysis*, which, I'm happy to say, went through three editions and was used on hundreds of campuses. I was involved in the exciting work of strengthening staff and curriculum, attracting high-quality students for our emerging program, and enhancing our reputation through professional activities. Sociology became a separate department in 1953, and I became its chairman.

We invited guest lecturers and visiting professors such as Ernest W. Burgess, a pioneer in family sociology from the University of Chicago; renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead; and Alfred C. Kinsey, then notorious for his sex research at Indiana University. His visit did not pass without controversy, but I reflected philosophically that it could not have happened at all at BYU.

When we arrived in West Lafayette, there were only about a half-dozen Mormon families in the community, all of them newcomers. Alice and I offered our home for an organizational meeting in October 1947 and about twenty attended, including the district president and our mission president, Creed Haymond. Most present wanted a full organizational program, with all auxiliaries and full-scale proselyting in the community. I was alarmed, feeling that there were too few of us to justify a full auxiliary program, and I urged a more sensitive approach to the public. I concluded by pointing out that while I wanted to remain a good Latter-day Saint, I had to be aware of my role at the university where I intended to be a good sociologist and a well-balanced departmental administrator. Although I startled many of those present, my words seemed to have the intended effect and we organized a branch presidency, a sacrament meeting, and Sunday school.

But some of those present thought I had thrown cold water on the Lord's work. A few months later, a former student and friend wrote that Creed Haymond had told a congregation in East Lansing that I was "selfish in not permitting the Church to come to Lafayette." I wrote promptly to Haymond, explaining, among other things:

The Church, of course is now organized in Lafayette and Alice and I are among the participants. I have been asked to conduct a number of the fireside chats and am to give the talk in sacrament meeting a week from next Sunday. We have felt good about it all. In a university class last week, I had my third opportunity of taking a full hour to explain Mormonism. I even extended an invitation to listeners to attend our Sunday services. I sincerely hope that you are not now using my name in this way, publicly and in your official capacity, without having given yourself an opportunity to really get acquainted or without giving me the opportunity of defending

myself. I certainly would welcome an opportunity of talking things over with you at some future time.

Haymond wrote back, partially misrepresenting my position. Although I had been primarily concerned about premature *over*-organization and about the insistence that *members*, not just missionaries, launch into proselyting, he accused:

You will recall that you were quite outspoken in opposing the assignment of missionaries and their proselyting activities in Lafayette . . . until you had more firmly established yourself at the University, indicating that the unfavorable reputation of the Church would be detrimental to your reception at the school. . . . My assignment is not to discuss with local members whether or not a Branch should be organized and would it please them, but to send Missionaries as far and wide as possible and make available to the members the opportunities of Church activity. I came to Lafayette with that intention and felt that it was not necessary to have a private discussion with anyone.

He did not, then or later, offer me an opportunity to discuss my position. Despite this bad start, I was invited to become a member of the newly organized district council, a calling I reluctantly turned down because of my professional overload at the time. I was never again asked to serve in any capacity above the ward level, and my Church service consisted of a one-year stint as Sunday School superintendent and several long and very enjoyable assignments teaching Sunday School. I know that my approach sometimes made conservative members of the class uncomfortable (as when I suggested that we test, through qualified research, the promise of monetary blessings with three groups of Latter-day Saints — full tithe-payers, partial tithe-payers, and nontithers). I remained committed to the Church and usually attended meetings regularly, although I also would give myself “sabbaticals” during intensive periods of work.

At Purdue, Alice and I always missed associating with a group like the Cracked Egg Club and, although we tried to organize such a group a couple of times, it simply didn’t catch on. The existence of *DIALOGUE* and later *Sunstone* has helped fill that void, giving me a place to publish some Mormon-related research and to read about the scholarly and creative efforts of others. I also found other outlets for my continuing interest in supplying a research-oriented examination of my Church.

With Kenneth L. Cannon, a BYU professor in Child Development and Family Relations, I wrote about the rates of divorce, fertility, and timing of first births in temple and non-temple marriages, updating and expanding the data base collected for my master’s thesis. We published our results in *Social Science* and were pleased to see some of our findings cited in a priesthood manual during the 1960s.

During the summer of 1961 when I was a visiting professor at BYU, I explored the possibility of picking up again on my 1935 student questionnaire and was pleased when John R. Christiansen, then associate professor of sociology, expressed interest in joining me in a follow-up.

We planned to replicate the study and see what changes, if any, had taken place over time. Our proposed study required approval from Earl C. Crockett, then university vice president. We submitted my 1935 questionnaire along with an explanation of our methodology and our prediction that the results would please the Brethren by showing a trend toward greater conservatism. The approved portions came back to us, shortening the questionnaire by almost half. The first section was missing entirely. It had consisted of thirteen statements designed to test orthodoxy, such as: "Do you believe . . . that Joseph Smith communed with God as a true prophet? . . . that prayers are ever answered by divine intervention?" etc. Four additional questions — dealing with attitudes toward Church rituals, contraception, premarital intercourse, and the wearing of temple garments — also were disapproved. Reasons given for all of these deletions centered around the fear that such questions were dangerous to the faith of LDS youth since they might raise doubts in their minds.

These deletions substantially weakened our study, but we decided to move ahead anyway. Christiansen administered the abbreviated questionnaire and got back a rather large sample of responses, after I had returned to Purdue. Nothing more happened. Over the next few years, I began urging another try at getting the original questionnaire approved. In January 1968, Christiansen wrote that a special committee Crockett had appointed had rejected the request, citing as reasons, "the disinclination of members of our department to collect the data," sampling problems, ambiguity in some questions and "inappropriateness" in others. Christiansen also stipulated that if the 1961–62 data were used it could be only with the two of us as joint authors, but that he had serious reservations about the project. I wrote back expressing my dismay at the censoring of the original 1935 study, my repugnance at the process involved in making the 1968 decision, and my frustration at having even the 1962 data withheld. I invited him to "take the lead in drafting an article" as a proof of his sincere desire to collaborate. Christiansen wrote back saying that he preferred to drop the project.

However, in 1971 I discussed the project with Ken Cannon. He was enthusiastic and worked quietly to get a thousand-plus sample back. We published a joint article in the March 1978 issue of *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* showing, as predicted, a dramatic and consistent shift in the direction of greater conservatism. The data also demonstrated that behavior has moved toward conservatism even faster than belief, that students in the 1970s were surer of themselves than those in 1935, and that part of the conservative shift occurred while they were attending BYU. In short, while many major religious groups had become more liberal, the Mormon Church was experiencing new fundamentalism. A second article drawn from the same data, "The Effect of Religious Orthodoxy: A Statistical Analogy," appeared in the Winter 1980 issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, which I co-authored with Marvin Rytting, professor of psychology at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.

A *Dialogue* article of mine published in Winter 1972 identified "Stress Points in Mormon Family Culture": excessive terminal petting, a tendency to

marry very young, guilt-laden premarital sexuality, an unrealistic emphasis on having large families, and an over-emphasis on male authority within the home. Over the years, I also published in standard social science journals. I compared data on premarital sexual attitudes and behaviors of Purdue students, LDS students from an anonymous Utah university, and Danish students from the University of Copenhagen, all collected during a 1957–58 Fulbright Scholarship year (with survey follow-ups during 1968 and 1978).

This research led to three articles where I argued for a research-based rationale for personal decision-making — in other words, finding rational reasons, not just dogmatic ones, for supporting the chastity norm. During the summer of 1967, I delivered an address to an auditorium packed with BYU students while I was visiting professor there for the second time. The speech was subsequently published in *BYU Studies* as “The New Morality: Research Bases for Decisions in Today’s World” (Autumn 1967: pp. 23–35). A second article, “Mormon Sexuality in Cross-cultural Perspective,” was printed in a special issue of *DIALOGUE* (Autumn 1976) on sexuality in the Mormon culture that Marvin Rytting and I guest-edited. In 1981, I read before an annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, “The Persistence of Chastity within Contemporary Mormon Culture: A Case of Built-in Resistance to Secular Trends,” later published in the March–April 1982 issue of *Sunstone*.

All three essays essentially indicate that the Mormon students (identified as Intermountain) were most conservative, the Danish sample most liberal, and the Indiana sample in between. In both attitudes and behavior, Mormon students were most conservative and became increasingly so over time, compared to the others. Mormons who did break the chastity norm, though fewer in number than other groups, felt greater guilt or experienced greater negative consequences as a result. By measuring the effects of premarital sex and relating these to both the circumstances and to the internalized value systems of participants, it should be possible in time to develop a research-based “morality of consequences” which would reinforce traditional standards of behavior.

I received no criticism or report of criticism on any of this material from General Authorities or other ecclesiastical leaders. In fact, G. Homer Durham, then a member of the presidency of the First Quorum of Seventy, singled out my essay co-authored with Ken Cannon for praise. I wondered, with some irony, what the BYU administrators had feared earlier on.

Although my cross-cultural writings have attracted wide and favorable attention in social science circles, to the best of my knowledge I have never been judged by colleagues as biased or partial toward the Church — even though much of my professional writing has drawn upon Mormon data and it is generally known that I am a participating Mormon and have researched my own culture. I would hope that this is because I am as objective as possible in my reporting, avoid personal value judgments, and am willing to derive generalizations from the available data alone.

In 1975 I retired from Purdue and was made Professor Emeritus, feeling largely satisfied with my professional achievements and with the patterns of personal life that Alice and I had established for ourselves and our children.

It is natural, I suppose, to sum up at this stage. Sociology does not deal with “what ifs.” I have no way of knowing what might have happened if we had stayed in Provo and continued work at BYU. It is at least possible that I might have been called to the Sunday School general board since I had done a certain amount of traveling with board members to present conferences and institutes on teaching marriage and family relationships. Almost certainly I would have written more manuals — at least for a period of time. But it seems likely that increasing dissonance would have developed, brought on as my professional goals conflicted with a continuing desire to serve the Church.

Lifelong experience has taught me that innovators may best serve the Church from the outside — that is, free of job dependence. In conservative Church circles, the Mormon sociologist (and many other LDS scientists, particularly social scientists) quite frequently is regarded with suspicion. His probing and questioning, which are the essence of science and scholarship, tend to be seen as threats to the powers that be who sometimes label the questioner as short on faith. In a church that stresses free agency, eternal progression, the acceptance of *all* truth whether revealed by deity or discovered by man, and sees intelligence as “the glory of God” — this is most unfortunate.

If anything, the hiatus between strict conformity on the one hand and open inquiry on the other, between unquestioning obedience versus thoughtful probing, has become even more pronounced in recent decades. My 1935 BYU survey combined with later follow-ups has demonstrated that a very dramatic shift toward conservatism within Mormon culture has taken place, affecting both attitudes and behavior. A recent onslaught of articles in *DIALOGUE* and *Sunstone* have, in one way or another, dealt with this same phenomenon. Richard Pearson Smith’s “Science: A Part of or Apart from Mormonism?” argues that science was more acceptable in Church thinking a few decades back than it is today, decries that fact, and asks for a return to the presumably better balance of the earlier period (*DIALOGUE* 19 [Spring 1986]: 106–22).

By using the phrase “Mormon Sociologist” — for the sake of brevity and readability — in the subtitle of this article I have been guilty of resorting to literary license. Strictly speaking, there “ain’t no such animal.” There can be and is, of course, a sociology of Mormonism, which attempts to analyze the Mormon phenomenon objectively; but not a *Mormon* sociology, not a special brand of social science which seeks to defend or promote the Church’s position. In the same sense, there can be no Catholic sociology, no Marxian sociology, no sociology of any kind which is willing to select or slant or bias its results in support of a sectarian position or any vested interest. Sociology, by definition, is a science, which means that it is committed to following the procedures of open, objective investigation and to let the resulting data stand on their own merits.

The issue, of course, is essentially the same as that faced in the present controversy over the writing of Mormon history: faith-promoting history on the one hand versus faithful (i.e., truthful and objective) history on the other. I hold to the second of these, believing that to the extent history is made to *promote* the Mormon view it ceases to be history.

I consider myself a Mormon. I identify with that religious culture and feel a sense of loyalty to its most essential beliefs and programs. I also consider myself a sociologist. I search for answers using empirical observation and measurement. And I see no necessary conflict in this dual identification; one can be Mormon *and* sociologist to the strengthening of both institutions.

I have tried long and hard to blend the intellectual with the spiritual in my life; I am still trying but with only limited success. It is ironic, perhaps, that at age seventy-eight I remain even now caught up in this lifelong struggle. I have found that, as a rule, fellow sociologists are more tolerant of my religious interests than are fellow Mormons of my scientific inclinations — probably because of the “suspended judgment” stance of science contrasted with the “true to the faith” stance of religionists. I am a believer but not a “true believer” in the sense of never raising questions; and I am a social scientist who remains unwilling to purposely slant his investigative outcomes in support of preconceived assumptions.

I can and do (more now than formerly) put certain questions on the shelf, as it were, regarding the doctrines pertaining to them as working hypotheses and not letting them bother me too much until more is revealed. I find that in this manner I can handle most of the theological/philosophical problems which come my way — to my own satisfaction at least. But increasingly, it seems to me, a “good” Mormon is supposed to just believe, to not raise bothersome questions, to have a testimony and be willing to bear it. With certain of my more conservative fellow Mormons, my questioning proves my lack of faith. I frequently am made to feel out of line when I do not readily bear testimony or when I push for discussion rather than offering supporting statements. It is the institutional and interpersonal pressures — which seem particularly strong of late — that I am finding difficult to cope with. Not the basic gospel principles.

Essentially, Alice has been and remains right with me in all of this. Her religious feelings seem to be less urgent than mine; she is less concerned about doctrinal positions and can brush things off easier than I. From the beginning, we have tried to raise our children as active albeit analytical Mormons. While they were with us, we encouraged church participation but also challenged them to ask questions and to think things out for themselves. I guess our marginality was showing through.

What about now? Of our three sons, none is at all active in the Church. Our two daughters, on the other hand — along with their returned-missionary husbands and five children apiece — are as active and orthodox as the best of Mormons. Alice and I are somewhere in between. But we think we have the love and respect of all our children and that they, for the most part, feel that way toward each other, in spite of differences. So far within our extended family, there seems to be unity, together with considerable keeping in touch. In June 1985, for example, twenty-nine of us — everyone except one grandchild who was serving a mission in Pennsylvania — assembled here in La Jolla for a most wonderful three-day golden wedding celebration in our honor. It is our sincere hope that this kind of family love and solidarity, despite certain divergencies in views and lifestyles, can continue. We are optimistic enough to believe that it will.