

## MORALITY ON THE CAMPUS

*Wilford E. Smith*

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Headlines in the newspapers seem to tell us that among the most distressed and confused members of our troubled society are the college students. Research of my own, reported at a meeting of the Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters about four years ago, has shown that even B.Y.U. students report great difficulties experienced in passing through the adolescent years. They are confused with conflicting moral standards which they observe all around them. Among the most confusing problems of adjustment with which they are confronted are those having to do with understanding of their own sexual development and with knowing how to relate to persons of the opposite sex.

The present paper is the product of a more elaborate study of sexual behavior and sexual attitudes of Mormon college students as compared to non-Mormon college students in one large region of the United States. The respondents were students from four major western universities in 1949-50 and again in 1960. The students were representative of all students enrolled in sociology classes at the selected universities at the time, the great majority of them being majors in subjects other than sociology. The responses were given in anonymous classroom settings in which great care was taken to establish a scientific frame of mind. Tests of validity and of reliability showed that responses were remarkably consistent. Over 6,000 students responded.

The responses, some of which will be presented in more detail later, showed a general and statistically significant difference between Mormon and non-Mormon response, the Mormons appearing to be more chaste, in support of the hypotheses which the study was designed to test. Before presenting the findings, it might be well to explain why the hypotheses stated that Mormons would be more chaste in their response.

We know that a new-born child does not identify himself with either sex until he learns through social experience to do so. As he does learn to so identify himself, he also acquires the behavior which is considered appropriate for his sex, insofar as his experience and his adult and age peer models enable him to do so. Concerning the strength of socialization upon even sexual behavior, Lindesmith and Strauss say,

Social influences often shape sex behavior along lines that are contrary to what would be called natural in the biological sense. Furthermore, social influences may lead to the complete elimination of some kinds of natural biological behavior, or cause persons to act in a variety of ways which are biologically inappropriate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred R. Lindesmith and Anselm L. Strauss, *Social Psychology* (Rev. ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956), p. 317.

Assuming that sexual behavior is related to conceptual schemes learned in social interaction enables us to hypothesize that differences in such behavior will be related to dominant traditions and moral beliefs in given social systems.

Accepting this point of view, critics of the Mormon culture might hypothesize that Mormon college students would be *less* chaste than non-Mormon students because of the Mormon tradition of polygamy, which might justify lapses from monogamous standards. To a Mormon scholar, such reasoning would appear shallow in light of great traditional and scriptural condemnation of unchastity in the Church. All Christians, as well as the members of many other religions, tend to condemn unchastity officially; but in addition to all the traditional and scriptural support these people have for such condemnation, Mormons have some rather strong doctrine in the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Book of Mormon. Just three quotations from the Book of Mormon will be presented here to make the point:

Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;

For I, the Lord, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. (Jacob 2:27, 28.)

For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue . . . .

And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, . . . (Moroni 9:9, 10.)

Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost? (Alma 39:5.)

In the latter quotation, Alma was talking to his son Corianton, who had been guilty of boasting in his wisdom and strength and of chasing after a harlot named Isabel.

In addition to moral and religious dogma, however, people in the American culture are also subjected to many other admonitions and enticements pertaining to sexual behavior. Madison Avenue hardly tries to sell even a motor car without appealing to prospective customers' sexual interests. The theatre and movie world appears to be dominated almost entirely by interest in sex, attempting to intrigue customers with suggestions of illicit sexual excitement. Whether or not a person is influenced more by the Book of Mormon, the entertainment world, or by Madison Avenue depends upon the quality and timing of his exposure to each and his own definition of the situation.

Awareness of the scriptures quoted and the great, if somewhat sporadic, efforts made by L.D.S. Church authorities to develop attitudes of chastity in the youth of the Church, led to the hypothesis that Mormon respondents would claim greater chastity than non-Mormon respondents would, even though non-Mormons would also be expected to have been taught chastity from many sources. It follows that both Mormon and non-Mormon respond-

ents with close church affiliation would be expected to report greater chastity than the less church-oriented world.

The data revealed a double standard of morality for males and females, as well as a different standard for L.D.S. and non-L.D.S. students, as expected by our hypotheses. The data also show that a very large majority of the respondents of both sexes acknowledged having experienced passionate kissing, and most of them have experienced heavy petting as well. About half of the non-L.D.S. males and one-third of the L.D.S. males admitted even having participated in sexual intercourse. Between one-fifth and one-sixth of the non-L.D.S. girls reported coital experience, and about one-seventh of the L.D.S. girls admitted having such experience.

These figures do not justify any grand indictment of youthful morality. On the contrary, they indicate that a very large proportion of our youth have withstood heterosexual temptation in a sex dominated culture remarkably well. Examination of background data also shows that non-veterans, regular church attenders, and non-urban dwellers report greater chastity than others do. These findings support the belief that chastity is learned in social interaction.

Despite the general high level of morality of youth, however, the failure of one-third of the L.D.S. boys and one-seventh of the L.D.S. girls to report abstinence from a sin more serious than all others except denying the Holy Ghost or murdering against the light and knowledge of God is shocking! It is also sobering to realize that if these figures are representative, there are 1,000 L.D.S. young men at a university with 10,000 male students who are presently engaging in heterosexual coitus out of wedlock. Further analysis of the data shows that 700 of these men would be having sex relations with more than one girl. The data show also that nearly half as many girls would similarly be involved in coital sin. The greater involvement of the males indicates that much of their sexual activity is with girls not in college.

In addition to reporting how much sexual experience they had had, respondents were also asked to say whether or not they considered the behavior in question to be against social standards of right and wrong (immoral) according to their interpretation of social standards, and they were asked to say whether or not the behavior in question was against standards of right proclaimed by God (sin) according to their conception of God and His proclamations.

About one-third of the respondents refused to take a definite stand, indicating that in their opinion judgment would depend on the circumstances. The hesitancy of so many to make a definite commitment is puzzling, but the data clearly show that a large percentage of college students, Mormon and non-Mormon, have not yet settled on a rigid standard of right and wrong, regardless of circumstances, concerning passionate kissing and heavy petting. As a matter of fact, there are no precise and uniform authoritative standards concerning these practices either in tradition or scripture which they could fall back on.

In all judgments, except non-Mormon male judgments of sinfulness and 1960 Mormon females' judgments of sinfulness, at least half of all respond-

ents did clearly condemn coitus out of wedlock. Very few Mormons, but a substantial minority of non-Mormons, said the act was definitely not wrong in itself even out of wedlock. These responses show clearly that most of the modern youth represented by these respondents do consider coitus out of wedlock to be definitely wrong, but the substantial numbers who either said it was not necessarily wrong or who declined to commit themselves show that most people who believe and try to teach that non-marital coitus is unequivocally wrong have fallen far short of full success, even with Mormon youth.

The present writer would suggest the following four lines of action to be taken if the campaign to teach morality is to continue and if it is to be more successful:

1. Youth must be clearly apprised of standards which are sound in light of revealed truth and which can be supported with practical logic. This will involve research which will show the evils of immorality as clearly as the evils of smoking cigarettes have been shown. Much research of this nature has been done by Harold Christensen and others.

Many years ago I was in a C.C.C. camp in southern Utah. Some of my friends had just returned from a weekend visit to Las Vegas where they had enjoyed new experiences with prostitutes. As they were graphically describing their experiences, including precautions taken to avoid venereal disease, I said, "Have you guys ever heard this?" Then I read Alma's warning to Corianton to them. I was surprised when the leader of the group said very soberly, "I had never heard that before."

I wonder how many of our youth today have never really heard that while they have heard about "sexual needs" and about ways of being a good sport which are so commonly talked about in youth groups.

2. Pharisaical temptations to attack the problem on its fringes by such measures as arbitrarily dictated dress standards which aggravate thinking persons must be avoided in favor of socializing campaigns which use reason instead of arbitrary imposition of standards. In the long run, this approach will also be futile, of course, unless the young can be involved in the decision making.
3. Greater efforts in counter-propaganda must be made to counteract the alluring enticements of literary, entertainment, and advertising media. This would include rational community anti-obscenity programs as well as training programs designed to expose the trickery of advertising.
4. Measures should be taken to keep communication lines between generations open. If a separate youth culture of important proportions exists among us, it is largely because the youth have been neglected if not rejected by adults who are too busy or too incompetent to discipline them, in the true meaning of that word, so that both groups can share the same culture.

Faulty communication is the key to the problem. Changes in this area will call for extensive adult re-education in a society in which foolish be-

liefs concerning adolescence still prevail. Moreover, adults who so often tell “jokes” about sex and “giggle” among themselves concerning sexual matters can hardly expect their children to do better.

## PROFILE OF A MORMON STUDENT

*Gary W. Grant*

*Finally we are pleased to publish the introductory student speech given by Gary W. Grant at the First Bay Area College Convocation of the L.D.S. Student Association, held at the Oakland-Berkeley Stake Center on May 5, 1968. President Hugh B. Brown of the First Presidency of the Church was the honored guest and principal speaker; he was introduced by Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy, who is National President of the LDSSA. Gary Grant is a second year law student at Stanford University and Vice-president of the Peninsula Region LDSSA.*

My position on this program includes an obligation to “represent” the young people here — the high school seniors, college students, and college age non-students — and I think that means I should do a couple of things in the few minutes given me: I’d like to tell President Brown and Elder Dunn a few things about us, and, since President Brown is our most honored guest this evening, I’d like to tell him something of our feelings for him.

Both President Brown and Elder Dunn are already aware of the kinds of influences surrounding us on our campuses; i.e., student protests over racial strife, the Vietnam war, the draft; the increasing use of LSD and marijuana; increasing sexual freedom; dropping out, turning on, you name it. These are the visible temptations and influences on our campuses. However, tonight I’d like to focus on our more personal side— our individual concerns and responses to these issues and to the Church.

I hesitate to talk about an “average” student because I can’t include all of your feelings, but I have had some experience with high school seniors this semester as a seminary teacher, and I’ve gone through the college experience very recently, so I think the description I’ll make and the things I will say about us are real trends — real concerns of all of us.

First let me reaffirm our faith. We are committed, President Brown, to a belief that those events described by Joseph Smith, in which he spoke to God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, and to other heavenly messengers, actually occurred. And we know that President McKay and President Brown and the other General Authorities are prophets of our God, and that when the Lord reveals His will regarding the Church, it will come through these men.

Finally, we are committed to those two great commandments phrased by Jesus when He was asked which was the great commandment; He said, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with