Messages from Two Cultures: Mormon Leaders in France, 1985

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WE OFTEN HEAR THE PHRASE, "The Church is the same all over the world." While a mutual commitment to the gospel provides a feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood that transcends many cultural barriers, I feel the emphasis on "sameness" ignores the power of pluralism within the Church and can create the false impression that members are the same all over the world. While living in France in 1985 I had an opportunity to analyze patterns of culture among French Mormons and found significant differences between them and their Utah Mormon counterparts.

THE MEANING OF CULTURE

The concept of culture is complex and can be confusing. The study of anthropology offers no intact definition of culture, only numerous and diverse concepts. Both Linda Smircich (1983) and Clifford Geertz (1973) articulate a commonly accepted definition of culture — shared meaning in various communities. Many cultural anthropologists agree that "how the individual is oriented to his situation is, in the concrete sense, 'within the actor,' but not in the analytical sense, for modal orientations cannot, by definition, be determined from observing and questioning a single individual — they are culture" (Kluckholm 1954, 960–61). Viewing culture from the perspective of an actor's representations stresses the way in which culture is capable of elucidating different symbolic systems of meaning.

Much of the current fascination with culture stems from recent popular books on corporate or organizational cultures (Ouchi 1981; Pascale and Athos 1981; Deal and Kennedy 1982; Peters and Waterman 1982; Sathe 1985; Schein 1985). William Ouchi describes this type of culture as "symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate the underlying values and beliefs of the organization to its members" (p. 41).

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Another variety of culture, "national culture," is values and beliefs demonstrated by symbols and ceremonies within national boundaries. Some argue that early educational experiences, family patterns, religious experiences, institutional arrangements, language, and geography form common fabrics of meaning for individuals within a national boundary. Obviously, this is more true for homogeneous nations, such as France, than it is for more heterogeneous countries like the United States or the Soviet Union. Cultural subgroups in heterogeneous countries may exert more influence than national origin. Countries such as Belgium and Switzerland are subdivided according to religion, language, and family patterns, resulting sometimes in two separate cultures within the same nation state. Other geographical regions, such as Latin Europe, include different nations with markedly similar cultural make-up.

In 1985, I was a visiting professor at the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD), in Fontainebleau, France, for eight months. INSEAD is one of Europe's most culturally diverse and exclusive business schools, drawing students from all over Europe, North and South America, and the Far East.

My particular research at INSEAD was a cross-cultural study of career orientations (attitudes about work and its relationship to personal life) among business executives in Europe. During my time in France I became interested in my French brethren in the faith, who seemed to me to be listening to messages from two cultures: that of the Church and of their own nation. Membership in one group sometimes made it difficult for them to fit comfortably, without conflict, within the other group, and they often seemed caught between two organizational cultures, trying to develop their own way of doing things. I hypothesized that even long-time Church members, because of life-long national culture experiences, would undoubtedly experience cultural conflict as members of the Church.

In order to examine some of these cultural differences, I asked some French Latter-day Saint leaders to complete a questionnaire that I was using as part of the INSEAD study. Some of the questions, I felt, might shed light on the possible cultural problems associated with being socialized into the Church in France and might provide a model for examining Latter-day Saints in other cultures as well.

About the Study

For this particular problem, I compared the usable surveys returned by four different groups of men: (1) twenty-two non-LDS Frenchmen enrolled in executive development programs at INSEAD; (2) ten successful French businessmen with high-level administrative positions in the Church who had been Church members for five or more years in the Paris Stake and the Bordeaux District; (3) eighteen Utah Mormons who were enrolled in my classes in the University of Utah's executive development program (I did not assess either the level of their activity or their current Church position); and (4) forty-six non-Mormons enrolled in the same Utah program.

Because I added subjects to an already-existing sample and used convenience sampling, my respondents were not perfectly matched. Many of the Americans I studied were executives in small and medium-sized companies, while my twenty-two INSEAD executives mostly came from large, multinational corporations. The eighteen Utah Mormons were in various stages of church activity but were active enough to list themselves as practicing Latter-day Saints, while the ten French Latter-day Saints were all considered very active. All of the respondents either were or had been married (a few were divorced and had not remarried), and all had children.

Each of the issues compared below are statistically significant, at least between the two groups with the most extreme scores. I have not reported questionnaire items not significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISONS

Most career surveys concentrate only on professional self-assessment, but one group of questions in this survey was designed to examine the hypothesis that an individual's personal situation affects and, in some cases, limits his or her career choices (Derr 1986, Ch. 11). Such personal constraints might include accommodating a spouse with his or her own career, not wanting to move because of responsibilities for aging parents, or needing more time at home to deal with children or family problems.

One personal constraint question asked respondents, on a scale of one (representing strong agreement) to five (representing strong disagreement), to agree or disagree with the statement: "It is wishful thinking to imagine I can begin a new career once I am invested in the old one; there are too many personal constraints (for example, family obligations, financial responsibilities, geographical location, my spouse. . .)."

The French Mormons agreed most strongly out of the group (their mean score was 2.0 on the five-point scale), followed by the non-LDS French (2.9), the American Mormons (3.44), and the American non-Mormons, who agreed the least (3.76). The response to this question would lead me to hypothesize that national culture is more important than religion in producing this particular feeling of limitation. The rigid educational system and the socio-economic class system in France tend to limit options to a smaller group of people earlier in life than in the United States. For instance, elite French universities, known as *les grandes écoles*, have no way to accommodate beginning students who are not entering directly from the high schools and, with competition for the places so keen, no motivation to encourage people to come back for retraining or sampling classes. Late bloomers may simply not get the second chance they need.

A second statement on the survey was: "A personal life factor which greatly influences my career planning is my parental responsibility." In this case, religion seemed to be the most important consideration. The French Mormons agreed most strongly with this statement — 1.4 (where 1 indicates "strongly agree") — followed by the American Mormons (2.2), the non-LDS Frenchmen (2.3), and the non-LDS Americans (3.0).

Although Mormons in general agreed with this statement more often than their non-Mormon colleagues, the French Mormons were significantly ahead of the Americans. Why do French Church members perceive that fatherhood has such a significant impact on their careers? Perhaps sampling bias accounts for the results. Church activity among the American Latter-day Saint group varied, but the French Mormons all had stake or ward leadership positions.

Since the French non-LDS score differed from the American Mormons' by only one-tenth of a point along a five-point scale, the difference could be attributed to a greater national concern in France with fatherhood. A typical middle- and upper-class French family is small; the children receive a great deal of attention, affection, and care; parents routinely save for years to provide education for their children, sacrifice their own interests to spend time with their children, and focus a great deal of energy on their children. Working parents, for example, dutifully observe a four-week vacation period in the summer. Both parents also normally work with their children on school assignments each evening. At INSEAD, French executives in multi-national corporations who were also parents of school-age children were most reluctant to take promotions that would require them to move outside of their country. From the earliest grades on, French education depends on placement by examination before continuing to the next level. If another country did not have well-recognized French schools, it would be very difficult for children to reenter the French educational system and qualify for the *grandes écoles*.

A related survey question involved extended families: "A personal life factor which greatly influences my career planning is my extended family responsibilities (caring for parents, living near extended-family members)." The overall mean score for this item on the five-point scale was 3.29. The French Mormons scored 1.5, followed by the American Mormons (3.4), the non-LDS Americans (3.54), and the non-LDS French (3.7). There was a significant statistical difference between French Mormons and all other groups on this question. It is possible with only ten subjects that all of them coincidentally had unusual situations; but it is also tempting to hypothesize that the Latter-day Saint emphasis on the importance of families reinforces the French emphasis on extended families. To my knowledge, five of these men were second-generation Mormons who had grown up with their new religion as an additional bond between them and their parents but as a separating factor between them and their non-Mormon brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

A fourth question probed the extent to which a strong geographical preference constrains careers. In most companies people being groomed for the top must be willing to move with the opportunities. Many American executives routinely move every three to five years until they are senior executives. I asked my groups to respond to this statement: "A personal life factor which greatly influences my career planning is my strong geographical preference. (I am not geographically mobile)."

The American Mormons, mostly from Utah, had a mean score of 1.2. There was a considerable gap between them and the next group, the non-

Mormon Americans, at 3.6. The French Mormons followed closely at 3.7, and the French non-Mormons trailed at 4.25. Utahns are commonly perceived as placing a high value on staying in the state. This bias may, in fact, skew the data. Would Latter-day Saint participants from other areas in the United States respond the same way? Because France is a relatively small country, we might also ask if Mormons would have a higher mobility rate within the traditional zones of intermountain Zion than outside that area? In any case, French Mormons seem more geographically mobile — at least within France — than their Utah counterparts.

As my INSEAD studies showed, French executives, more than those of other nationalities, work hard but keep their personal and professional lives strictly separate. They take full advantage of long lunch hours, private evenings, weekends, and holidays. They very seldom take work home. I asked them to respond to this statement: "Our company believes that how an employee manages his/her 'personal' life is not the company's business, as long as personal life doesn't affect performance."

As Figure 1 shows, the French agreed with this statement more emphatically than the Americans, and French Mormons showed the highest rate of agreement. This value was underscored for me when the Paris Stake Primary held an all-day children's olympics for families on a national religious holiday in May (Ascension Day). In May the French have one work holiday per week, so there are only four working days per week. I did not attend the

FIGURE 1

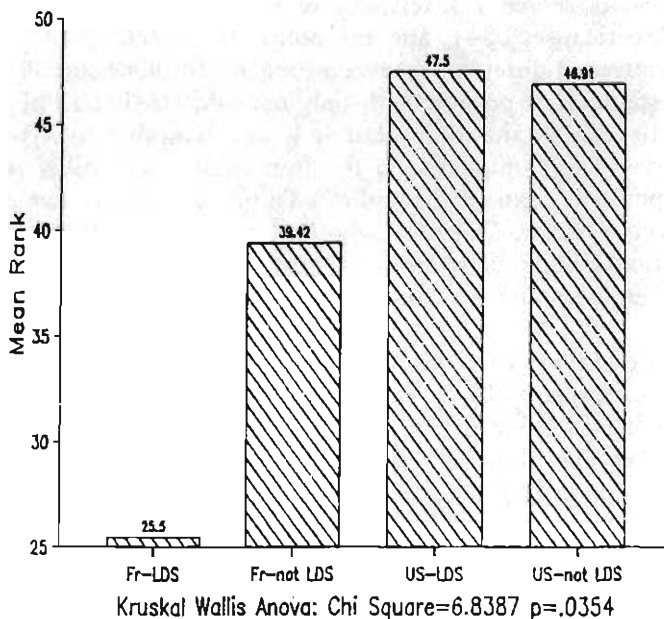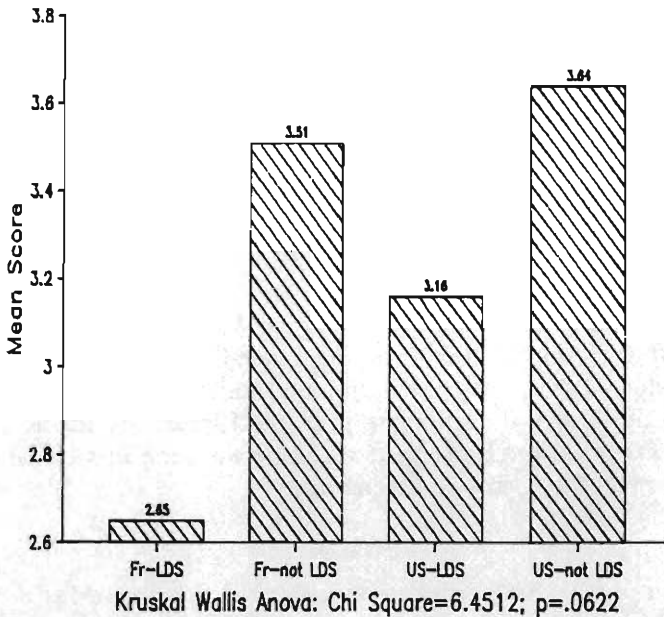### BALANCE AS SEPARATING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Kruskal Wallis Anova: Chi Square=6.8387 p=.0354

FIGURE 2

OVERALL PERSONAL CONSTRAINT MEAN SCORES

Contrasting 2 Nationalities and 2 Religious Affiliations

Kruskal Wallis Anova: Chi Square=6.4512; p=.0622

Primary Olympics because an internationally known American professor was coming to INSEAD for a faculty seminar. At that seminar, most of my French colleagues were conspicuously absent; I later found out I was virtually the only father in the stake who worked instead of attending the Olympics.

Figure 2 shows the impact of all the personal constraints: spouse's career, parental responsibilities, extended family, health, geographical rootedness, social/economic background, age, and lack of support networks. All of these can constrain or alter progression along a basic career path. The French Mormons report more perceived personal constraints affecting their careers (2.65), followed at a considerable distance by the American Mormons (3.16). These scores may reflect the Latter-day Saint emphasis on putting family and church first, on wariness about "worldly" rewards, and on the importance of service to others. All of these values would modify a single-minded pursuit of career success. In short, for both American and French Mormons religion seems to modify national culture when it comes to career success orientations.

I also asked the participants to fill out another questionnaire to identify what they felt constitutes career success. Is it an unbroken string of promotions (getting ahead)?; loyalty to the company family (getting secure)?; autonomy in deciding how to do your work (getting free)?; the excitement of the work itself (getting high)?; or finding a satisfactory balance between personal and professional life (getting balanced)? (Derr 1986, 189–93)

As Figure 3 illustrates, the French Mormons rated significantly higher on getting balanced and significantly lower on getting ahead, followed closely on both dimensions by French non-Mormons. In Figure 3, the lower the mean score or place on the graph, the less a group has that particular career orientation. According to the Career Success Map Questionnaire, American Mormons rated about the same on the five orientations as did non-Mormon Americans. This data further indicates that the French define career success as achieving equilibrium between personal and professional life where American career values cluster around company loyalty (getting secure) and getting ahead.

A study I did with an INSEAD colleague on the career orientations of European executives corroborates these findings. The French come out significantly higher on getting balanced than British, Swedish, German, or American executives (Derr and Laurent 1988).

To summarize, by comparing the French Mormons with their compatriots and with their LDS faithmates in the United States, we can ascertain the extent to which French Mormons may be caught in the middle between two cultures. As shown in the summary in Table 1, there are no clear patterns of similarity: French Church members are in between the French and Latter-day Saint cultures on these various dimensions.

FIGURE 3

MEAN SCORES FROM THE CAREER SUCCESS MAP

Contrasting 2 Nationalities and 2 Religious Affiliations
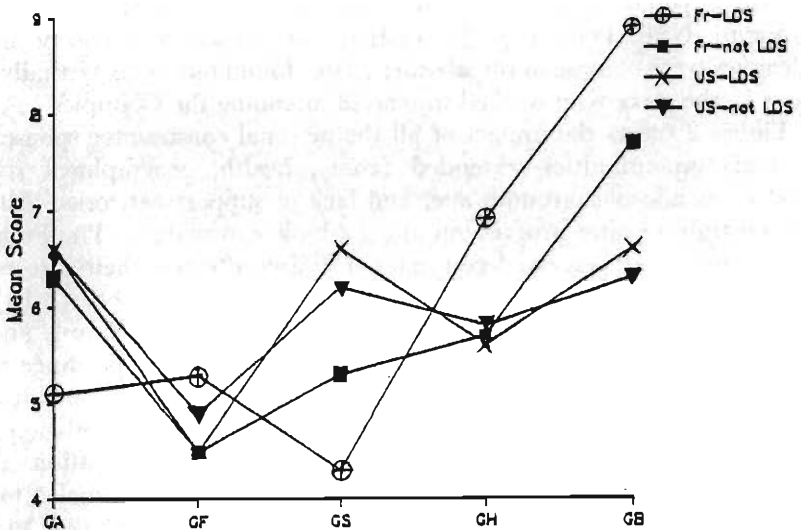
GA = getting ahead
GF = getting free
GS = getting secure
GH = getting high
GB = getting balanced

TABLE 1
CAREER CONSTRAINTS: A COMPARISON

	FRENCH MORMONS COMPARED TO:	
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	*Non-LDS French*	*LDS Americans*
1. I can't change — there are too many personal constraints	More Similar	Less Similar
2. Parental responsibility an important personal constraint	(Slightly) Less Similar	More Similar
3. Extended family responsibilities an important personal constraint	Less Similar	More Similar
4. Strong geographical preferences an important personal constraint	More Similar	Less Similar
5. Total personal constraints	Less Similar	More Similar
6. My private life is none of the company's business	More Similar	Less Similar
7. Getting-balanced career orientation	More Similar	Less Similar

CULTURAL CONFLICT

In a 1986 study of corporate culture and European executives, André Laurent claimed that national culture is more important in forming basic assumptions about managing people than age, education, job, professional experience, hierarchical level, or type of company. Furthermore, even in U.S. firms with international branches, national culture predicted values and behavior more accurately than did being in a particular company. In other words, a French employee of Exxon, at a very basic level, is more like a French employee of Shell than another non-French Exxon employee.

Does the same hold true in a multinational church? The Church should, at least theoretically, influence values, beliefs, and assumptions as much as a multinational corporation because it seeks to change some of these values at a deep level. One common Latter-day Saint value, for example, is family life, summarized by the epigram, "no success can compensate for failure in the home." Another is the covenant of consecration to building the Church. Mormons of all nationalities who are also committed to professional success at high levels can experience severe conflict between the heavy demands of executive life (where it is assumed that the company comes first) and the requirements of their religious culture. However, because of the acceptance of a variety of religious cultures in the United States, the work place often accommodates many subculture orientations, and Mormons can usually find a fairly comfortable place within it.

French Mormon executives, however, come from a much more homogenous national culture — a more tightly woven national web. Latter-day Saint culture interrupts that web with a pattern of its own. French converts (and other converts in other cultures) may be caught in the middle, and the pressure points may be particularly severe.

For example, several LDS French executives talked openly about the conflict they feel because they do not drink wine or coffee. Americans really do not understand what an important part food plays in conducting business in the French culture. The French business lunch, a leisurely and congenial three-hour affair accompanied by fine wine, focuses on building a relationship. Business concerns simply do not come up until the end of the meal — during cheese and dessert, accompanied by wine, coffee, and liqueurs. This process reflects a deep cultural value that breaking bread together and establishing collaboration is the best foundation for doing business together. If one member of the party causes a serious break in the routine — such as refusing wine or coffee after dessert — he disrupts the ritual, emphasizes differences rather than similarities, and creates uneasiness by not being on the same wavelength. My Mormon colleagues report having to find alternative ways of communicating that they can be trusted.

On the other hand, it may be easier for business executives to live the underlying Latter-day Saint value of consecration to church and family in France than in America. Because of the French separation between personal and professional life (see Figure 1), activities outside work are not the employer's business. Employees are not expected to be work-oriented during nonwork hours. Even busy executives have Sundays, many Saturdays, holidays, and the sacrosanct three- or four-week summer vacations to devote to personal concerns. Clearly, this is why even high-powered INSEAD executives scored higher on the getting-balanced scale than the Americans.

Most American executives, in contrast, are known for working long hours and taking work home. American executives take few vacations that are not work-related, and they have a difficult time separating their personal and professional lives. For example, even if they golf or play tennis, it is very often with business associates (see Mintzberg 1973; Kotter 1982).

My wife Jill and I recently had dinner with a Swedish couple who currently live and work in France. The husband is a highly placed executive in a dynamic, multinational corporation headquartered in Sweden. He ruefully compared his work style to that of his French colleagues, whom he saw as much better at leaving their work behind them and going home. Furthermore, they were frequently unavailable once they had left the office. On the other hand, the Swedish executive took a six-week vacation every summer. He shook his head when the topic of his American colleagues came up. "I just don't know how they do it," he said. "It takes me three weeks just to unwind and get back into the family. The Americans I know take a week — or even four days — off and call it a vacation. It's crazy."

The French also separate personal and professional life by maintaining rigid boundaries about which relationships belong to which category, a custom that can be somewhat disconcerting to Americans. My banker in Fontainebleau was invariably friendly, accommodating, and helpful in expediting my banking business, calling me by name and exchanging courtesies. One day, I encountered her at the open-air marketplace and greeted her in the usual way. She looked at me as if I were part of the scenery and did not respond. She had

certainly recognized me, and I was quite taken aback, wondering if I had somehow offended her. A French colleague, to whom I related this incident, explained that outside of the role requirements of her work, she had no obligation to be friendly. As a person, rather than as a worker in role, she was completely free to choose her private associations.

The underlying achievement ethic in many American Mormons may also clash with French culture. Perhaps due to our long-time minority status, many Mormons overcompensate by striving too much for success, status, and influence. As Eric Hoffer, the longshoreman philosopher, once said at a lecture I attended in 1967 as an undergraduate at Berkeley, "Put a Mormon in the hopper and out comes a tycoon." Vivid examples of the role models our culture embraces are illustrated in *This People* magazine, various firesides and meetings extolling high-achieving Mormons as heroes and heroines, and the ideal models of manhood and womanhood held up to our youth exemplified by the stake president/corporation president/father of eight.

Paradoxically, one of the strong norms in French society is to recognize and accept your place within the socio-economic class structure. Even making a fortune does not necessarily buy a place within that structure. This concept contradicts the popular version of "eternal progression" that begins with social progression in this life and strongly encourages achievement and success. Some French Mormons lean to the French side of this issue, but many members accept the American perspective of upward mobility. For French Mormons, the Church offers their children opportunities outside the class structure. Going on a mission and learning another language or going to BYU and getting an American degree outside the structure of the *grandes écoles* could circumvent more traditional paths to success and catapult the younger LDS generation into higher career and social positions. An MBA or similar degree from an American university is viewed as prestigious in some less traditional French circles. I cannot say whether the career orientations and personal constraint picture will change in the future.

PERSONALLY EXPERIENCING CULTURE

During our time in France, our family wanted to have a French experience rather than an expatriate one, so we did not seek out other American groups. A major and much-valued part of that cultural experience came through our interaction with the members of the Melun Branch, a relatively small congregation of about fifty, very welcoming and very involving. I had served a French mission some twenty years earlier and was called to serve in the branch presidency within two weeks of arriving. Jill and the children were in the process of learning French, but Jill was immediately called to the Relief Society presidency and the children were absorbed into their various classes. We were the only American family in the branch.

One of the cultural differences we experienced was doing church home visits, as in home teaching or visiting teaching. Monthly visits were advocated according to policy but seemed to me both impractical and also inappropriate

for a number of reasons. Members were widely scattered in our branch, even
though it was in a stake, and many of them did not have cars. Using public
transportation to visit these dispersed members was both expensive and time
consuming.

However, even if travel had not been such a laborious process, the French
sense of privacy would also work against casual drop-in visits. French homes
are very much private spaces. It is obvious even to the casual observer that
massive stone fences and imposing gates for houses and multiple locks for
apartment doors are barriers between the outsider and the resident. One
French executive commented to me that in visiting a fellow Frenchman at
their U.S. subsidiary, he was invited to his home for dinner. He loved the
New Jersey suburb where he lived but felt very uncomfortable because there
were restrictions against fences and the backyard was open space. He com-
mented that his host also liked everything about the house except the open
yard.

To be welcomed into a French home, we found it necessary to formally ask
permission to come in advance. The permission was not lightly given, for the
family gave serious thought as to when they might receive us. When the visit
actually occurred, elaborate preparations had often been made. The whole
family was usually in attendance, prepared to spend two or three hours with
us. If a member was missing, his or her absence was explained with apologies.
The children were scrubbed, dressed in their best, and on good behavior.
Quite clearly, they expected our children to make the call with us and be
similarly prepared. Such visits never passed without carefully prepared
refreshments.

Despite such formalities, the visits were not formal. We never felt that we
were received grudgingly or out of mere courtesy, as both Jill and I have
sometimes felt when making similar home visits in Utah. Our French member-
hosts were gracious, delighted to have us, warm and welcoming in every sense,
and very open. The conversations were personal, significant, and intimate.
We had profound gospel discussions and much warm sharing. In short, once
they decided to let us in, they let us in all the way. I want to stress as well that
conversations with other French friends led me to understand that we were not
receiving special treatment because we were Americans.

Sometimes, we would be invited to dinner as part of the visit. Again, we
found that this was not casual or drop-in hospitality. A French dinner can last
up to five hours, with the formalities of serving and eating setting the stage
for extended conversation. Needless to say, such visits are events that represent
a commitment to a relationship. Through them we often became *des amis de
la famille* (friends of the family), a term implying near-kinship.

In this cultural context, an unannounced ten-minute home-teaching visit
every month would be puzzling, perhaps offensive, and certainly ineffective,
even if it were practical. A formal family visit each month would, in my
opinion, be too often for such an intense experience. Even if our family had
the time to make such visits, it was quite clear to us that they were prohibitively
expensive in terms of the French family's time, as well as the money spent

preparing food. It seemed to be that a better system — one which fit better within the cultural norms — was to visit with the family at church or on the telephone regularly and to make a formal visit once every three months. It would be appropriate, in these circumstances, to entertain them at about the same intervals.

A second cultural difference involved administrative styles in the Church. A colleague of mine at INSEAD who has researched extensively the impact of national cultures in international corporations has observed:

> French managers look at the organization as an authority network where the power to organize and control the actors stems from their positioning in the hierarchy. They focus on the organization as a pyramid of differentiated levels of power to be acquired or dealt with. French managers perceive the ability to manage power relationships effectively and to 'work the system' as particularly critical to their success (Laurent 1986, 96).

In the branch I also encountered this phenomenon. On one occasion when our branch presidency needed to make a decision affecting only our branch, which seemed completely in our jurisdiction, I was surprised that the French brethren, though agreeing with me that the decision we wanted to make was logical and meaningful, still insisted on searching the handbook of instructions to find a rule which would permit us to proceed — or at least allow us to say that the decision was not against the rules. When I asked about this, one of them explained that not to be able to cite the handbook would cause stake leaders to view them as incompetent. But he added with a smile, "You can always find a way around the rules." Mind you, these were loyal, dedicated, and experienced Church officials, not inexperienced or rebellious individuals trying to undercut or sabotage Church policies. I began to understand that members of the Church in France had some different assumptions and shared meanings from those members we knew in the United States.

CONCLUSION

I began this study out of curiosity about the possible cultural binds of Latter-day Saint Church leaders in France who were also successful business-men. In fact, I found that French Mormons were different from both the non-LDS French and from American (Utah) Latter-day Saints in several ways. They experience personal life factors as constraints or modifications of their basic career orientations to a much greater extent than their non-Mormon counterparts in France or than American Mormons.

Possibly, the hand-picked, highly orthodox French Mormons skewed the results; perhaps because the non-LDS French group was also a hand-picked, high-achieving sample in an executive development program, they were more success centered. The constraints of both cultures (French and Latter-day Saint) might cause French Mormons to adopt a more extreme, less flexible lifestyle. However, it is also evident that the French Latter-day Saints in this study have developed their own cultural orientations and assumptions that

differ from both their national culture and from the American version of their religious culture.

No doubt this same phenomenon occurs in other cultures where the Church has existed long enough to establish stakes and has a history of a generation or more. I recently pondered with a Latter-day Saint colleague, for example, how LDS business executives in Japan cope with the expectation that they attend beer and saki bashes after work to get to know their peers and their boss more intimately, especially once they are intoxicated. As an expert in Japanese management practices, my colleague maintained that many Japanese members go to these events and act silly and friendly even though they don't drink. They have their own Japanese way of adapting. Future studies should try to understand more systematically the unique cultural adaptations and coping mechanisms of individuals and groups caught between two definite cultures.

In an international church, we must learn to understand cultural binds, cultural adaptations, and individual coping mechanisms if we hope to understand religious experience and practice in diverse national cultures. The Church may become too big to manage centrally; program and other cultural adaptations will probably need to be made at the local level. For example, a former stake president, now a General Authority, used to tell us to take the Church programs and first adapt them to our East Coast situation before presenting them to him. Finally (and my own values enter here even more explicitly than before), the Church will be strengthened as it learns to value cultural diversity. Within some doctrinal limits, most programs, norms, values, assumptions, and practices could benefit from cultural adaptation. Achieving a good fit — a symbiotic relationship — between a culture and the Church can only energize our faith. Members who feel like misfits and apostates simply because they observe the rules of a different cultural fabric will inevitably suffer.

Does there exist a uniquely Mormon culture which is worldwide and supercedes both national and organizational cultures? Perhaps it is a level deeper than even the cultural influences coming from homogeneous national roots which, according to André Laurent (1986), supersede organizational culture at the most fundamental levels of thinking and behaving. One Latter-day Saint colleague, an expert in Mormon research, asserts that there is such a culture and that it becomes dominant for each individual at some point in time and at some level of commitment after initial conversion. The unanswered questions, he said, are how long it takes Mormon values and maps to assume such dominance and what level of commitment is reached. Some may view this attitude as cultural imperialism, Mormon style. An alternative theory would argue that even long-time, active Church members will always feel conflict about culture, caught at a deep level between Mormon and national culture.

Does a hybrid culture, the Mormon-French culture, exist? If so, how do we describe it as its own unique subculture? Is Mormon culture more compatible with American or French culture? All of these questions deserve study. I would propose, from my observations, that there is a Mormon-French sub-

culture and that it borrows from both the Mormon American and French traditions.

General Church leaders could enhance the Church's effectiveness by better understanding the cultural binds of members in these situations and adapting programs. For instance, it would make sense to have home visits take place at wider intervals in France and to rewrite lesson materials to include a greater role for extended family members. The Church has made some adaptations to national cultures (for instance, rewriting manuals and materials) but may not yet have fully realized the benefits of diversity and richness added by faithful members with unique cultural orientations. American and Utah Mormon practices could indeed be strengthened by importing ideas and programs from these unique cultural groups.

We understand and value the strengths of sameness in the Church. Perhaps it is time to further explore the strengths of an orientation that rejoices: "The Church is different all over the world. *Vive la différence!*"

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