

Ethnic Groups and the LDS Church

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INTRODUCTION

FROM 1820 TO 1860, most immigrants to the United States came from northern Europe. As a general American history book explained, "Wave[s] of immigration enhanced the wealth and progress of the country, yet encountered bitter opposition. . . . Sudden influxes of foreigners with strange ways and attitudes always do that, everywhere" (Morison 1965, 481). The discrimination northern European immigrants faced, however, was not nearly as harsh as that experienced by later immigrants from eastern Europe, Mexico, Central and South America, and Asia. African-Americans and Native Americans faced perhaps the most intense prejudice of all.

While whites have dominated this nation since its founding, current research suggests that they will not remain the majority race in the United States. In 1990 three out of four Americans were white; but if current immigration and birth rates continue, by 2020 Hispanic and nonwhite U.S. residents will double, while the white population will remain the same. According to Molefi Asante, chairman of African-American Studies at Temple University, "Once America was a microcosm of European nationalities. . . . Today America is a microcosm of the world" (in Henry 1990, 28-29).

Religions have not been immune from ethnic discrimination. During the nineteenth century, European Protestants resented the arrival of Irish and German Roman Catholics; at the same time, Catholics had to adjust to those who professed the same beliefs but came from other cultures. To deal with these cultural differences, immigrants established national parishes, as Catholic historian Jay P. Dolan put it, "to preserve the religious life of the old country." The local parish served a variety of purposes: "For some it was a reference point, a place that helped them to remember who they were in their adopted homeland, for others . . . a sense of community could be found, for still others it

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gave life meaning, and it helped them cope with life in the emerging metropolis or the small town" (Dolan 1985, 164, 197, 207-8).

During the twentieth century, the Catholic Church began to emphasize integration, realizing that separate parishes "reinforced the ethnic differences of the people and enabled neighbors to build cultural barriers among themselves" (Dolan 1985, 21, 44). In 1980 the National Catholic Council of Bishops "urge[d] all Americans to accept the fact of religious and cultural pluralism not as a historic oddity or a sentimental journey into the past but a vital, fruitful and challenging phenomenon of our society." Rather than encouraging separate ethnic parishes, the church advocated those "that serve more than one nationality." Arguing that such parishes had not worked in the past "because they were ill-conceived, were based on mistaken perceptions of cultural affinities between groups, or were inadequately financed," these new "dual purpose parish centers (based upon the notion that religion will bind the ethnically diverse newcomers)" could "have the advantage of shared resources" and could eliminate the "logistical problem for church authorities" of parishes with different languages and cultures (Liptak 1989, 191-92, 202).

For Euro-Americans, this integration in the Catholic Church eventually ran smoothly. For example, although German Catholics frequently had problems worshipping with the Irish, ultimately "their own desire to enter more fully into mainstream American life . . . and especially their retreat from any position that might be characterized as un-American . . . moved them away from separatist patterns of Catholic identification in the twentieth century." Assimilation, however, was more difficult for people of color. Hispanic and black Catholics, for example, according to one historian, found "their experiences within the American Catholic church tended to be even more painful than that of most European newcomers of the post-Civil War period. Members of each minority had to accept the segregated place set for them by society in general; in much the same way, they found themselves separated from other Catholics" (Liptak 1989, 111, 171).

MORMON ETHNIC WARDS TO THE 1970S

Like the Catholic Church and unlike most Protestant Churches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints professes to be a church for all the world. Therefore, it has experienced many of the same problems as the Catholic Church in dealing with immigrants. The problems were less intense during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, since the Church was small and new immigrant converts, urged to come to Zion, were eager to "adopt the manners

and customs of the American people, fit themselves to become good and loyal citizens of this country and by their good works show that they [were] true and faithful Latter-day Saints" (McCracken 1986, 107). While the Church supported ethnic branches, organizations, and native-language newspapers, they considered them temporary measures to use until the newcomers learned English and became part of their geographical wards (Embry 1988, 222-35).

However, as the Church grew worldwide, it was no longer practical, or even desirable, for all members to become Great Basin Mormons. Members now came from a variety of cultures rather than from a few European countries. This new growth created for the Church the same dilemmas the Catholic Church had faced at the turn of the century: How can the wards and branches best serve the needs of people whose language, culture, and life experiences are different from those of the majority? As minority people become more prominent in the United States and in Mormon congregations, how can the Church, and particularly its members, truly accept them and avoid discrimination and prejudice?

Like the Catholics, the LDS Church has at times encouraged ethnic congregations. During the 1960s, for example, Apostle Spencer W. Kimball was very active in organizing Indian congregations, generally called Lamanite branches. There were even separate Indian missions in the Southwest and North Central United States (Whittaker 1985, 38-39). These congregations were organized to preserve the Native American culture. During the same time, Kimball and fellow apostle LeGrand Richards organized a German-speaking ward in the Salt Lake Valley. At that ward's initial meeting, Kimball explained that the Quorum of the Twelve favored the arrangement; as the Church expanded to all nations, it was not "not right" to force everyone to learn English. But the General Authorities hoped that as the immigrant members in the United States learned English, they would return to their geographical wards (German-speaking 1963).

Ethnic branches continued throughout the 1960s. However, during the early 1970s, Church leaders questioned the utility of sponsoring separate branches. In a 1972 letter to all the stakes, wards, and branches, Church leaders explained that members should be conscious of "racial, language, or cultural groups." Where language barriers were a problem, special classes could be organized. If there were sufficient need, a stake could ask for authorization from the Quorum of the Twelve to organize a branch, but several stakes could not organize a branch together. Some stakes, like Oakland, thought they were supposed to dissolve their special units. Others, like the Los Angeles Stake, interpreted the letter as authorization to create language branches, but

its request to form one was denied (Larsen and Larsen 1987, 55; Orton 1987, 262-63).

In 1977, the Church introduced the Basic Unit plan, and the idea of ethnic branches returned. Initially planned as a program to help Native Americans, the Basic Unit plan was an effort to provide the essential Church programs for a small group that might not have all the leadership or membership to conduct the complex, regular Church programs. These simplified branch units provided a set-up for restoring ethnic branches. In describing the need for these units, President Spencer W. Kimball told the regional representatives in 1980, "Many challenges face all of us as we fellowship and teach the gospel to the cultural and minority groups living in our midst. . . . When special attention of some kind is not provided for these people, we lose them" ("Aid Minorities" 1980). Several changes led to separate congregations: increasing numbers of Southeast Asians immigrating to the United States, growing Church population in largely black sections of American cities as a result of increased missionary efforts following the priesthood revelation in 1978, and desire by ethnic groups such as Tongans, Samoans, Hispanics, and Native Americans to worship in their own language and with members of their own backgrounds. In 1990 language wards and branches organized in Salt Lake City during the 1960s, such as the German ward and several Tongan wards, were still functioning. Black branches have been organized in Charlotte and Greensboro, North Carolina. Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese wards can be found in communities from California to Virginia. Hispanic membership has grown so much in the Los Angeles area that there is now a Spanish-speaking stake.

The roller coaster dilemma of whether to have separate ethnic branches or integrated wards continues, fluctuating according to which of two mutually exclusive concepts has the most official support. The first is the practical management problems posed by multi-cultural, multi-lingual units. Some branches have been organized because General Authorities and local church leaders felt, as Joyce L. Jones, stake Relief Society president of the international Relief Society units in the Oakland California Stake, put it, that "[ethnic groups] would learn better in their own language surrounded by other members who shared the same ethnic/cultural background" (Oakland Stake 1988). The second principle is the ideal—and idealized—view of gospel unity producing social unity. Paul H. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, articulated this view when he was rededicating a chapel in Oakland: "Do you think when we get to the other side of the veil the Lord is going to care whether you came from Tonga or New Zealand or Germany or America? . . . No. That's why we call each other

brothers and sisters. That's why we are in an eternal family. The color of skin, the culture we represent, the interests we have are all quite secondary to the concept of the great eternal family" (Oakland Stake 1988).

In practice, the Church's policy has vacillated because neither ethnic branches nor integrated wards have met the needs of all Church members. Language and cultural differences have often weakened the uniting ties of religion. And whether ethnic Latter-day Saints were Swiss-German immigrants to Logan, Utah, during the early twentieth century, Tongans settling in the Oakland, California, area, or Navajos on the reservation, they have voiced many of the same concerns about their experiences as Church members. The difference, however, is that the Swiss-Germans were usually integrated in one generation; other racial groups have had a longer and more difficult adjustment.

Oral history interviews and manuscript histories give us valuable information about the ways ethnic Latter-day Saints have responded to separate branches. According to these sources, some of the advantages and disadvantages of ethnic groups seem to be universal, regardless of the ethnic group; others are unique to a specific group. It is also clear that segregated branches impacted not only the members of the branches, but white Latter-day Saints as well.

This essay draws heavily on the experiences of Native Americans and Hispanic Americans, using examples from other ethnic groups to support the conclusions. As the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies continues its LDS Ethnic Oral History Project, researchers will be able to test these results with other groups including Tongan Americans, Samoan Americans, Chinese Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Cambodian Americans, and others. My essay "Separate but Equal?: Black Branches, Genesis Groups, or Integrated Wards?" (Embry 1990) covers many of these same issues for LDS African Americans.

ADVANTAGES OF ETHNIC BRANCHES

There is a compelling reason for organizing and maintaining ethnic branches: they genuinely aid Church members with language and cultural differences. An elderly sister in the Spanish-speaking branch in Oakland, California, for example, illiterate in both Spanish and English, could participate once again in meetings, something that had been impossible in an English ward (Larsen and Larsen 1987, 38). The clerk of a Samoan branch in the Long Beach, California Stake declared with pride when the branch was organized in 1966, "Now we are taught in our own mother tongue" (Samoan Branch, 23 October 1966). Esmeralda Meraz, a Mexican American from Southern

California, explained why her parents decided to attend a Spanish-speaking branch: "Even though my dad speaks English, he has not mastered the English language and he can't communicate very well. He is not a very educated man as far as schooling is concerned. My mom has had less schooling than he has. . . . I think [my dad] felt that he would get more out of it and so would his family if we attended the Spanish branch" (Meraz 1991, 5).

Cultural language is often as important as the spoken word. Ernesteen Lynch, a Navajo, recalled going to a Lamanite branch in Upper Fruitland, New Mexico: "When I went to Alma, we were all Navajo and we just automatically understood where the other was coming from. We didn't have to feel uncomfortable about what we did because we were all Navajo and we knew our Navajo-ness" (Lynch 1990). As Gabriel Holyan Cinniginnie, who traveled from Salt Lake City to attend the BYU Lamanite ward explained, "If you don't find good LDS Indian people, then you can lose your culture, get off track, and become more non-Indian. You lose your Indian point of view. You lose interest in being who you are and where you came from. You lose everything about your whole family as an Indian" (1990, 10).

Shirley Esquerria Moore, a Native American, described a Navajo visiting teaching companion she had in the Poston, Arizona Lamanite Branch. That branch has been dissolved, and members are asked to attend a ward in Parker, Arizona. Moore said, "Let me tell you about Sister Redhouse. She's a Navajo woman, and she wears her Navajo clothing. She's what I think of as a typical Navajo woman. I feel like she's a spiritual giant. . . . I feel like people could learn from Sister Redhouse, but I don't know that she'd ever go to the Parker Ward because the cultural contrast would be too much for her to overcome" (1990, 10-11).

Branches also give ethnic members opportunities to serve in a wider range of callings than they might have in a larger ward. In the Alma Branch in Upper Fruitland, New Mexico, "everybody was Navajo. The whole bishopric was Navajo. The Relief Society and everybody was Navajo that had a calling" (Lynch 1990). Carletta O. Yellowjohn, a Shoshone Indian, enjoyed attending the Lamanite branch at Brigham Young University because it gave her an opportunity to serve as a Relief Society president (1990, 18). Edouardo Zondajo explained, "I think the underlying purpose of the Lamanite ward here [at Brigham Young University] is to give leadership training." He questioned why Native Americans were not given the same opportunities to serve in other wards, but added, "It's good for people to get opportunities to do things that they ordinarily wouldn't get a chance to do for some reason or another" (1990, 8). Esmeralda Meraz's parents also

have been able to serve in the Spanish-speaking branches. Her father served as a branch president. When his job forced him to travel more, he was called as a Sunday School president. Her mother "has probably pretty much done about everything. She has worked in the Primary. . . . She has been Relief Society president before. She was the Young Women's president" (1991, 6).

Spencer W. Kimball watched the growth of Native American Church members during his tours of the Southwest Indian Mission during the 1960s. He rejoiced when Native Americans took part in meetings, especially when they played the piano and sang. If their performance was not always the best, he complimented them in his journal on their willingness to participate. He recorded after a district conference in Kayenta in 1962, "It was thrilling indeed to see the beginning of what will become standard procedure in the future with Indian leaders in branches and districts, Indians at the piano, at the baton, Indians at the pulpit, Indians making the arrangements, Indians even furnishing the luncheon" (21 April 1963; 3 June 1962).

Even when ethnic members adjusted to integrated wards, they acquired new skills and deeper spirituality when they could speak their native language or simply be with people from their own culture. Ernesteen Lynch felt a great deal of spirituality in a Lamanite congregation. Although Alma was a branch, she remembered it as being a ward: "Alma Ward was just a struggling Navajo ward that was trying to make ends meet in many different spiritual ways. . . . We all decided that we would make it the very best ward that we could possibly make it. We would be the very best that we could in terms of living the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . I'm not exaggerating when I say that we grew a lot together" (Lynch 1990).

As an additional benefit, ethnic branches reduced the possibilities of perceived prejudice. Odessa Neaman, a Yakima/Shoshone Indian, recalled that after the Lamanite branch she attended in Washington state was combined with a ward, "things began to be bad, . . . There were different families, mainly white families. We had no grudge with them. I'd say they were pretty snobby." Her brother "became inactive because one of the people there." Because the bishop was concerned about saving money, he would shut off the lights while Indians, members and nonmembers, were playing basketball. Native Americans resented this, viewed it as prejudice, and stopped attending church (1990, 10-11). Helen Taosoga remembered going to a Lamanite branch in Omaha, Nebraska. When the branch was eliminated after she moved from the area, she went back to ask the former branch president, a Native American, about what had happened and why the Indians were

no longer attending church. "He broke down and told me that the reason a lot of the Indians quit the Church was because they pushed them into a basement." For the Native Americans, this was proof that the rich white people did not want them in their meetinghouse (Taosoga 1990).

Ernesteen Lynch was also concerned with economics: "If you go into a ward where people think another group of people of different color or different language are poor, the last thing you want to tell a person is, 'Gosh, you're poor.' But you can say that in so many ways outside of the words" (Lynch 1990). Edouardo Zondajas also described how economics can be expressed through actions. One of the reasons that the Native Americans didn't like to attend the wards in Omaha, he said, was because they would go and "see all of these white faces. Everybody was all dressed up and decked out. The men were wearing suits and ties, and the women were wearing dresses. There are not too many Indian women that wear dresses." In the branch, however, sometimes people would wear "jeans and a shirt." It didn't matter, though, because "no one looks down on anybody" (1990, 8-9).

Esmeralda Meraz enjoyed attending the Spanish-speaking branch in El Centro, California, because "the kids that went there were my friends. I saw them as my friends. I felt very secure. I knew that no one was going . . . to make a reference to my skin color or the fact that I am Mexican. I was in my territory." When she attended seminary with the teenagers from the English-speaking ward, however, she explained, "I felt that they didn't like me, they saw me as a different person, and they didn't care. They would often make remarks and say things that didn't make me feel very good and didn't make me feel like I belonged" (1991, 9).

Varying cultural habits could also be perceived as prejudice. It was hard, for example, for Ernesteen Lynch when she attended a ward in Provo, Utah. "White people don't shake hands like Navajos do. It took a long time for me to realize that just because they didn't shake my hand didn't mean that they didn't like me. In Navajo if you don't shake somebody's hand it's an offense to them. But white people just normally don't shake hands. I noticed they weren't shaking anybody else's hands too although they had all known each other for the last thirty years. I understood that through a long process of observation." But she felt differently about physical contact when she attended a ward in Kirtland, New Mexico. While she viewed shaking hands as an important part of Navajo culture, hugging she felt was inappropriate. "It seemed like I was constantly being reminded that I was a Lamanite. . . . [White] people were constantly telling me how much they loved me. I always got hugs. . . . I just don't consider church to

be a hugging place. That's an action for me that's reserved for your family" (1990).

Ethnic branches also give the Church a presence in ethnic neighborhoods. Navajos became interested in the Church and were more likely to attend an ethnic branch. Ernesteen Lynch said that funerals in the Alma Branch especially attracted nonmembers, who "were impressed by the hope that the bishopric gave in their talks at funeral services. They were impressed by the songs, the chorus, and the music being provided by Navajos and things just proceeding in an orderly and organized fashion." As a result, "people started coming to our church" (Lynch 1990). According to an obituary of Dolores Rivera (Lola) Torres, a member of the Lucero Mexican Ward in Salt Lake City, "The narrative of the ward . . . [and] her life is inseparably connected with its history. It was this fine woman, together with two of her sisters and other limited few who originated the missionary work among the Mexican people of Salt Lake Valley which led to the establishment of what was then the 'Mexican' branch" (Lucero Ward, 23 October 1961).

When the Chinese-American branch was organized in San Francisco in 1962, Latter-day Saints received publicity in the Chinese newspapers and radio stations and sponsored social activities so the residents of Chinatown had an opportunity to be exposed to the Church (Chinese-American Branch 1986).

Ethnic branches often planned activities unique to that culture which were popular and the members enjoyed a sense of home. In addition to its regular meetings, the Lucero Branch sponsored socials, operettas, and Mexican dinners. Its annual "Piñata Party" drew people from throughout the Salt Lake Valley, and its operettas helped fund-raising in other wards. Besides raising money, the annual December "party of Mexican food, excellent talent, and social dancing has served to provide a much desired contact with Latin culture" (Lucero Ward, 6 December 1958).

Parties were also important to the members of the Annandale Asian Branch. Janean Goodsell, an Euro-American who was called to serve as Primary president in the branch, recalled, "Whenever we would have a branch party, it was unbelievable how many people were there. Everybody brought their friends. They loved having parties." Important parts of these socials were the native foods, talents, and dances. As Goodsell remembered, "They just loved the socializing and the food. I remember one time in particular. Maybe it was the Christmas party. They had people do different skits or talents. I just remember the people laughing so hard at this one skit. It was in Cambodian, so I didn't really know what was going on other than just watching what

was happening. They were just laughing so hard. They just enjoyed it so much" (Goodsell 1991).

Activities were very important to Native American members, too, according to Odessa Neaman.

We had more activities when we were a Lamanite branch. That's because we knew that's how we could get our Indian people involved. It was just to invite them and to get them into the ward. Once they did that, more of them stayed for sacrament. They would stay longer in the Church. I think that's how some of them got converted because they were led to it by what attracted them the most. Then eventually they would start coming to Church and start thinking of spiritual things. (1990, 10)

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND ETHNIC BRANCHES

Often members of ethnic branches are all new and have no real perception of how the Church operates. Julius Ray Chavez, a Navajo, felt that the branch he attended in Sawmill, Arizona, was not especially good because "no one there really fully understood the nature of the Church. They only understood the branch and how it worked. They didn't know the whole Church system." Though that lack of understanding led in part to the focus on activities, Chavez saw that as a positive element: "What I liked about the small branch is that the people there were more activity oriented than they were religious oriented. You call a quilting thing and all the ladies will be there, even the nonmembers. You call a planting thing for the Church, and everybody will be there. . . . But call a leadership meeting, hardly anybody will show up" (1990, 22-23).

Ethnic members view cultural differences as positive as well as negative. For example, some ethnic groups have a different concept of time than most Euro-Americans. For Audrey Boone, "time management and being on time" were important reasons for having "a mixture of other cultures, especially the Anglo society" in a ward "because they are so rigid with their time. We need a little bit of them rubbed off with Indian cultures" (1990, 11). But that less-fixed time frame was something Edouardo Zondajas liked. He explained that the BYU Lamanite ward was "really laid back. I guess it's not as formalized. We don't start exactly on time. We don't get out of class exactly on time. There's not as much seriousness" (1990, 8).

While smaller branches give more people the opportunity to hold positions, they often do not have enough members to fully staff the auxiliary organizations. According to Joseph Harlan, who served as a branch president in Macey, Nebraska, "Without the numbers, you can't really have all of the programs in the Church and all of the

auxiliaries. You get a watered down version of the gospel. You have to do a lot of independent study to really get the meat of the gospel" (1990, 14). Esmeralda Meraz had similar experiences attending a Spanish-speaking branch in Southern California. When her family moved from Mexico to California and attended a Spanish-speaking branch there, she had difficulty adjusting. In Mexico, she explained, "I was used to attending these ward meetings, separating into my classes, and seeing my friends." In California, however,

I felt like we weren't really part of what was going on. It was kind of discouraging to see only ten people, twelve people in the meetings. It was also discouraging not to see any youth. We were the only kids that were attending church. . . . We didn't really have any teachers in Primary or Young Women's. . . . We always had a feeling of not being complete and of not having everyone there that needed to be there to make it a successful experience for us every Sunday.

She went on to explain that the Spanish branch

didn't have the leaders. It didn't have people that were strong in the gospel. . . . There weren't people there who were examples of returned missionaries. . . . or people who had been outside of El Centro or the Imperial Valley. (1991, 5, 10)

Other ethnic groups had trouble fulfilling callings and adapting to the Church's lay ministry. Shirley Esquerro Moore loved attending a Lamanite branch in Poston, Arizona, but added, "It was frustrating. A lot of the members weren't too dedicated to their callings. Sometimes they wouldn't show up or call. At the last minute we'd have to improvise. Sometimes I wanted to shake them and say, 'Get with the program'" (1990, 10). Cambodians, for example, were not used to religious practices that included accepting callings, but they also considered it rude to say no. As a result, some accepted callings but did not attend meetings or perform the duties of the callings, thus confusing the Euro-American members in Oakland (Larsen and Larsen 1987, 45-46).

A similar response in the Annandale Branch made the Asian members seem unreliable, and therefore branch leaders did not extend calls to them. Janean Goodsell, however, watched those attitudes change as Asian members started to feel more comfortable in the Church. "We even had one sister from the branch, Sister Sun, who accepted a call to serve as a counselor in the Primary with enthusiasm!" Because Sun was so new to the Church, Goodsell and the other Primary counselor charted out the responsibilities that they felt she could fulfill. After having her greet the children and observe Primary for a while, they asked her to teach during opening exercises. "Teaching in itself was new to her. So it seemed not overwhelming but a challenge to her. . . . She wanted me to come over and go through it with her. She basically

did it herself, but she just wanted me to know what she was going to talk about and to make sure that it was okay. She did a wonderful job" (Goodsell 1991).

ETHNIC BRANCHES AND WHITE MEMBERS

The perceptions and perspectives of Euro-American members play a major role in the success of ethnic branches. Most traditional members were aware of the obstacles simply because they were often more visible and overwhelming than the successes. Quite often the problems they observed reinforced stereotypes that Euro-Americans had about a particular ethnic group. As mentioned earlier, some whites perceived the Asians as unreliable because they would accept callings and then not perform. Some whites also felt that Native Americans were cold and aloof. In summarizing a trip to the Southwest Indian Mission in 1967, Elder Kimball wrote, "The progress of the Indians in the years is unbelievable nearly. When I began coming to this area the Indians were backward and timid and frightened. When we approached them, they shyed off, hid their faces, stood like a post, and if we would shake hands with them it was a cold . . . hand they gave us. It was impossible to get them out to meetings and especially the men. Today many are coming out" (23 April 1963). The first part of this description fits many stereotypes Euro-Americans have of Indians; the "unbelievable change" involved Indians adapting better to the white's world.

Despite the problems, though, whites recognized positive gains. Foremost among these was how prejudice dissolved when whites worked directly with racial groups. Janean Goodsell had already gained an appreciation for Asians on her mission to the Philippines. Serving in the Asian branch strengthened that commitment as she visited the children in their homes and served as a Primary president. In summarizing her experiences, she explained, "It is a neat experience to associate with people who are different in some ways. Yet you also find and see the common things" (Goodsell 1991). Learning about the hopes, desires, and needs that all people share helped whites called to serve in the branches see individuals rather than stereotypes.

Working within the branches, Euro-Americans also learned about other cultures. White Relief Society helpers in a Ute branch in Gusher, Utah, recalled that their first year "was well spent. We feel we have made endearing friendships, helped them understand some of the Gospel principles, taught them the art of preserving, storing, remodeling, and making new clothes. Indeed they feel they can trust us, and that we really are interested in their welfare and we are trying to help them." These women recognized that the learning was not one-sided.

"Here we got many good points from them. . . . They alone weren't just learning from us. But we also are learning from them, and we all are enjoying it immensely" (Gusher Branch, April-June 1951).

Janean Goodsell recalled one party when the Asians tried to teach the Euro-Americans a dance. "All of us tried to follow, but we were not able to do our hands like we were supposed to." The Asians, according to Goodsell, "always liked to see us eat their food." She added, though, that culture was more than just socials. "It is just a way of life and of thinking." She recalled asking the parents of two Thai children to come watch them perform in a sacrament meeting program. The parents explained to the children: "You kids can go to church on Sunday. We want you to be American. But we can't go because if we go our Gods will leave us" (Goodsell 1991).

Ethnic members had positive and negative reactions to Euro-Americans running the branches. Robert Yellowhair, a counselor in the Snowflake Third Branch presidency, explained at a stake conference that native Americans may not always understand the whites, but they did appreciate their help: "Many times when our white brothers and sisters talk, they use many big words that we do not understand. We need teachers to teach us in words we understand. We need your help to take us by the hand and show us more about the Gospel and the Book of Mormon" (Snowflake Third, 11 September 1966).

Shirley Esquerria Moore, whose husband and father-in-law later served as branch president, resented the constant use of whites in the Poston Branch, noting that "since most of the Brethren were new in the Church and all of them are Lamanites, . . . maybe an advisor will work out very well." Therefore, a white couple was asked to assist (Southwest Indian, 2 May 1954). As a teenager in that branch, Moore had felt whites were used in the branch "because, of course, the Indians couldn't be leaders. What did they know?" (1990, 6). She added, "I'm being sarcastic," but emphasized that she felt that the Native Americans could have served very well in the branch.

In an ethnic ward, however, only a few white members have a chance to appreciate another culture. In an integrated ward, more members have that opportunity if they choose it. The geographical boundaries of the BYU Lamanite ward actually include white members, then any Native Americans at the university are invited to attend. According to Audrey Boone, "It was kind of hard at first because there was a distinct segregation between the Lamanites and the [apartment] complex. It was just obvious there was a division among us." However, as time as passed,

we've had sort of an education process. Many of the Anglos who are in the ward have learned a lot. They express their appreciation for what they have learned

from the Lamanites. Not too many white people know a whole lot about Native Americans, the founders of the country. It's been good that way because they've come to appreciate a different culture and a different people. It's also the other way around. We've appreciated getting to know the Anglo ways, culture, and society. (Boone 1990, 11)

Esmeralda Meraz, who attended a Spanish-speaking branch for sacrament meeting and an English-speaking ward for Young Women's meetings, noted:

I had the opportunity to learn about . . . serving in the Church. I was asked to be the Laurel president. . . . I learned how to deal with people, how to use my English skills, and how to develop my leadership in the Church. I learned how to conduct a meeting.

The adjustment had worked well for Meraz as a teenager; it was more difficult when she was in Primary.

When I was younger. . . . I depended more on my parents and . . . I didn't have the knowledge of the gospel that I did when I got to be older. . . . When I went to a Spanish branch for sacrament meeting and then switched over to a ward for Primary, I didn't know the people in the ward. Being young, it was difficult to feel comfortable with people that my parents were not friends with. Also, it was difficult for me because I was still struggling to learn the language. (Meraz 1991, 8, 10)

Ethnic members often helped strengthen traditional wards. When Alan Cherry, an LDS Afro-American, started attending the Rego Park Ward in New York City in 1968, a number of Hispanic Americans were joining the Church. Cherry was disappointed when a Spanish-speaking branch was organized. Because a lot of the Hispanic members wanted to become bilingual, he hoped that the English-speaking members would make the same effort to learn Spanish. He felt that the ward's future energy left with the new Hispanic converts (1991).

CONCLUSION

Ethnic members can see the blessings of attending a ward where they can "worship with their own people," but they can also see problems in understanding Church organization and growing in the gospel. They appreciate the help of white Latter-day Saints but sometimes resent being considered part of what might seem to be "the white man's burden." LDS Euro-Americans, on the other hand, also have mixed feelings about working in ethnic branches. While many see the need for the branches, they view the ideal situation as assimilation. Neither group is sure what culture should dominate in an integrated church. Robert Hatch, a Navajo who used to attend the Alma Lamanite Branch, epitomizes the dilemma of many ethnic Latter-day Saints.

When the branch was dissolved and members were asked to go to a geographical ward, Hatch quit attending. "For me it was dissolving this Lamanite Branch," he said. "I just miss it so much. It was joyous. It was always a friendly feeling to go there. . . . It's really sad to see it interrupted now." Yet when asked what he would do for Navajos if he were the stake president, he explained, "I don't know that I'd make such a big deal about Indians or Navajos. . . . Maybe our Lamanite Branch that we used to have wasn't such a good idea. It kept us separate for all these years for no reason really. . . . While I'm sad that Alma Branch is gone, I think it's good that we're all mixed in like this." He wanted the integrated ward, but he did not want to lose his heritage.

I'd like the Indians to be proud of themselves. I wouldn't want them to hide that. I'd like them to blend in, but at the same time be individuals. . . . I just think that we don't need to bury our heritage, bury our skin color. We don't need to raise it on a flagpole either. We just need to be somehow more aware of who we are but it's not a big deal to anybody. I don't think we need to glorify it, just be content. I don't know what a program like that would be. (Hatch 1989, 9, 11-12).

Like Hatch, other ethnic members have seen both the advantages and disadvantages of separate branches and integrated wards and are unsure which is most beneficial.

This same dilemma faces not only the LDS Church and other religious groups, but American society as a whole. While early immigrants were eager to learn English and "Americanize," Hispanics today want to maintain their language and culture and resent drives in some states to make English the only official language. Yet traditionalists argue that a society must accept some minimal level of common symbols and values to sustain itself. According to Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, "The future of America can't be sustained if the people keep only to their own ways and remain perpetual outsiders." The opposite argument is made by scholars like Thomas Bender, a professor at New York University, who feels that "if the center cannot hold, then one must redefine the center" (in Henry 1990, 29, 31). In other words, should immigrants be forced to Americanize, or should the United States attempt to create a multi-cultural society? Within the Church, the debate is much the same: How do members determine what is gospel and what is culture and if there is a difference? Because both proposals have both positive and negative aspects, the topic will continue to be hotly debated.

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