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Caffeine, Agency, and the Role of Rules in Mormon Identity

Abstract

This paper uses the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or the Mormons) and its cultural discourses around caffeine consumption as a lens through which to consider questions of boundary delineation within religious communities. In Mormonism, discursive strategies differentiate between “doctrine” and “culture” on any number of issues as emic strategies for negotiating identity, and the extent to which those issues are parsed in keeping with the institutional party line discursively locate individuals within fragmented Mormon communities. Moreover, ways of parsing Mormon identity serve as surveillance technologies for members of the community to monitor the identities of other members, particularly when these are broadcast via mediating technologies.