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You Don't Know Jack: The Dynamics of Mormon Religious/Ethnic Identity

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Mormon Religious/Ethnic Identity

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Master of Science

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ABSTRACT

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For much of human existence identity was ascribed based on the group one was born into. In such cultures all aspects of social life were fused into one incontrovertible identity: group identity. However as modern mindsets took root individuals began to shift the foundation of meaning and identity away from the fixed focal point of the group to one of personal preference. In response to this modern trend many groups began to intensify the maintenance of group identity as paramount in the lives of group members. Hammond and Warner (1993) assert that a powerful mechanism for sustaining group identity is a pattern known as *ethnic fusion*, where the boundaries of the religion and the ethnicity are essentially nonexistent. Mormonism was identified as a prime example of *ethnic fusion*. This study seeks to understand the role that religion and ethnicity play in identity creation for individuals raised within an ethnic fusion pattern but who, at some point, experience a break with the culture. In addition to being a case study, the current study seeks to understand the historical development of ethnic identity from early conceptualization to contemporary use. To accomplish this, this study draws on a wide range of literature and approaches that have been undertaken in different fields. Specifically, this is a case study that examines the lives of individuals raised in Utah as participating members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly known as "LDS" or "Mormons") who at some point opted to remain in Utah and no longer participate with the dominant religious aspect of the culture. Such individuals are commonly referred to as "Jack Mormons," a term which, in the contemporary usage, is a derogatory label for those who are perceived as lax in their practices of Mormonism. This study will show that religious and ethnic identity exist along a spectrum that can be described as *thick* – indicating high adherence to the orthodox beliefs and practices – and *thin* – indicating low levels of orthodoxy, and "Jack Mormons" will help to illustrate specific points along this spectrum.

Keywords: identity, ethnicity, culture change

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For the majority of human existence individual identity was largely based on the ascribed identity of the group or culture that one was born into. In such cultures all aspects of community, ethnicity, race, religion, and self were fused into one incontrovertible identity: group identity (see e.g. Taylor, 2007 and Lenski, 1984). However, Taylor (2007) has noted that as modern mindsets began to take root individuals began to shift the foundation of meaning and identity away from the fixed focal point of the group to one of personal preference. Such a move resulted in societies becoming essentially universes in which there is no central point around which objects can revolve. In other words, society shifted from groups where it would be impossible for individuals to not share the same belief system to a society with a spectrum of beliefs available as viable options for the individual. In response to this modern trend many groups began to intensify the maintenance of group identity as paramount in the lives of group members. Some groups rallied around ideas of race (Nazis), others around ethnicity (Jews), while others still around religion (Catholics). Hammond and Warner (1993) regard ethnicity and religion as two successful mechanisms for maintaining group identity. The authors assert that one pattern of ethnic and religious identity existing today is *ethnic fusion*, where the boundaries of the religion and the ethnicity are essentially nonexistent. An analysis of individuals who opt to break away from such a group can provide researchers with insight into how identity is created and maintained by both the group and by individuals.

This study seeks to understand the role religion and ethnicity play in identity creation for individuals raised within a culture of ethnic fusion but who, at some point, experience some form of break with the culture. In addition to being a case study, the current study seeks to understand the historical development of ethnic identity from early conceptualization to contemporary use.

To accomplish this, the current study draws on a wide range of literature and approaches that have been undertaken in different fields. Specifically, this is a case study that examines the lives of individuals raised in Utah as participating members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly known as "LDS" or "Mormons") who at some point opted to remain in Utah and no longer participate with the dominant religious aspect of the culture. Such individuals are commonly referred to as "Jack Mormons," a term that originally referred to Mormon sympathizers but now is exclusively used as a label for those who are perceived as lax in their practices of Mormonism. This study will show that religious and ethnic identity exist along a spectrum that can be described as *thick* – indicating high adherence to the orthodox beliefs and practices – and *thin* – indicating low levels of orthodoxy, and "Jack Mormons" will help to illustrate specific points along this spectrum.

Modernity and Identity Creation

In homes of the religious the name Nietzsche is often used with disgust and distain. Such a reaction is likely the result of Nietzsche frequently declaring that, "God is dead." Nietzsche's true intention behind this statement has been fodder for debate for more then a century. Some argue that Nietzsche was arguing that science and reason had replaced the outdated belief systems that no longer served a valid purpose in the new western society based on order and progress (Morgan, 1941). Others feel that Nietzsche was expressing a more subtle understanding of the divine. This subtle understanding resulted in his lamenting the rise of secular thought which Nietzsche felt had in effect terminated any value and meaning in Christianity, which had served as the foundation for morality and identity in the west since the fall of Rome (Morgan, 1941). Independent of what Nietzsche truly intended, it is clear that he was disillusioned with modernity. The death of God, Nietzsche feared, would result in a society that would be overrun

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with nihilism and perspectivism – the notion that no one way of seeing the world can be understood to be definitively true – having lost a perspective based on previously objective truths that held society together (Lampert, 1989).

Most scholars at the dawn of modernity, coming out of the enlightenment, felt that religion would simply fade away and would be replaced by a pure form of scientific thought commonly referred to as secularism. The goal of these modernists was the construction of a utopia based on empirically tested and accepted ideas. However, as technological innovation took place throughout the 20th century the average individual was exposed to an increased number of alternative opinions. Berger and Zinjderveld (2009) demonstrate how modernity shifted into post-modernity with the rise of "plurality" of thought where diverse groups live together in the same society. Where in Pre-Modern times religious beliefs were ascribed by birth, now post-Modernity resulted in a society where religious identity shifted "*from fate to choice*" (Berger & Zinjderveld, 2009: 12 emphasis in original). Berger and Zinjerveld (2009)state:

> [T]he modern individual can select a specific personal identity, such as traditional or progressive, straight or gay, disciplinarian or permissive. In much of the developed world, modern identity is *chosen*, is a sort of project (often a lifelong one), undertaken by countless individuals (13, emphasis in original).

In the United States today even ethnicity has become something that is a personal choice according to Michael Novak, author of *Unmeltable Ethnic* (1995). The result of this historical shift is what Castells (2004) calls a *project identity*. A *project identity* is created out of a need to survive a flood of information emerging from an increasingly accepted plurality of thought in society. Gehlen (1988) refers to the achieved aspects of identity as the *foreground* and the ascribed aspects of identity as the *background*. However as project identity becomes more paramount in the lives of individuals the *foreground* not only becomes the more prevailing source of identity, it all but replaces the background.

A latent outcome of *project identity* is what Castells (2004) identifies as "resistance identities" which often result in a retreat from the ever-changing social identity construction site into the dark world of bigotry and racism. With the onset of project identity and resistance identities, modernity is now inundated with what Berger and Zinjderveld (2009) describe as a *pluralized identity*, where an individual possesses multiple sources of identity that can be utilized as circumstances dictate. To help understand this concept, envision the foreground of an individual with a pluralized identity as existing on a spectrum from the more comprehensive "thick" identity to the more marginalized "thin" sources of identity. The result is a shift in "how" individual identity is expressed, not the actual requirements of cultural pattern. For example an individual who was raised a Mormon may possess a more thinned out Mormon identity expressing that, "I am Mormon but I drink a beer every night." Such an individual is undertaking an act that would be considered a sin by someone possessing a thick Mormon identity.

In American society religion has been recognized, at least by the public if not social scientists, as an elementary means employed for the purposes of identity and association and, in turn, is able to provide grounding to both social solidarities and identities (Herberg, 1960). Warner (1993) suggests that in the American context this can be seen in three ways. First, religion in America has served as a means by which subcultures such as "English Puritans and French Huguenots, German Mennonites and Russian Jews, Tibetan Buddhists and Iranian Baha'is" (1059) escaped persecution and "withdrew from the wider culture into their own geographical and associational enclaves" (1059). Other examples, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, show how even in a society that has a tradition of allowing for religious pluralism, persecution has pushed some groups out, or to the margins, of society.

The second way in which religion may play a role in the creation of identity in America revolves around the "associations [formed] among mobile people" (Warner, 1993: 1059). Historically people in the United States have been very mobile. This can be seen in several examples of ethnic minorities who have immigrated. For example, German immigrants in the 1800s would often initially arrive in the US and live in a large city, only to move west in a short period of time (Cornell & Hartman, 2007: Chapter 5: Case 3). In frontier times the government of the US has even implemented policies such as free land to encourage people to move west. During this time of great mobility the people would participate in voluntary congregational churches that would "provide a means for hitherto complete strangers, migrants on the frontier, to establish close personal relationships quickly" (Miyakawa, 1964: 214). The availability of multiple congregations that one could opt to join provided the highly mobile individual with the opportunity to find a religious social network that was "self-selected and adapted to present circumstances" (Warner, 1993: 1060). In this context, religious groups offer the social settings and resources that contribute to identity formation.

The third point of Warner's proposal for how religion in America helps in the creation of identity is that it "serves as a refuge of free association and autonomous identity, a 'free social space'" (1060). Such a statement relates to Durkheim's (1915/1965) argument that voluntary bonds established between individuals in a society affect how social order is maintained in different societies. To approach this issue, Durkheim looks at, in much the same vein as Spencer, the manner in which societies evolve from one means of subsistence to another. By looking at how societies from different levels of "social evolution" function along different labor categories, Durkheim shows different specializations in employment and social roles created various levels of social dependencies within societies. For Durkheim, it is these social

dependencies that not only tie people to one another, but help in the creation of identity. For Durkheim and Warner religion in the modern context can be seen as one way that social categories and groups are created that shape identity.

Durkheim (1883/1984) showed how increased complexity in the division of labor as a society becomes more "modern" affects individual consciousness; a distinct individual emerges from that of a communal collective consciousness. This emergence of individual consciousness often results in a conflict with the collective consciousness, which can invigorate societal transformation. A possible consequence of rapid change is a condition of confusion in regard to norms and increasing impersonal relations in social life. Durkheim believes that such loss of social norms that regulate behavior will eventually provoke a sensation of normlessness, or anomie. In other words, as a society rapidly changes, if an individual is unable to maintain strong social networks he or she will no longer be a functioning member of society, and may be in danger of being an interloper. Religion, therefore, can serve as a conduit by which people can find refuge and bearings that will help them navigate society.

Religious Ethnicity

Acknowledging historical shifts that have taken place Hammond and Warner (1993) seek to analyze the lasting importance of religion and ethnicity in the late twentieth century. The authors suggest three ideal types to help researchers better understand how religion and ethnicity function together in contemporary society. They call these three patterns of religious/ethnic structures: *religious ethnicity*, *ethnic religion*, and *ethnic fusion*. *Religious ethnicity* occurs when religious practices of a group extend beyond the ethnic group. Such practices are not firmly institutionalized in a single ethnic group; members of the religious sect can come from different ethnic groups. In other words, the ethnicity of an individual within this group will include a

particular religious ideology that upholds various elements of the several ethnic cultures. Examples of this pattern can be found in looking at groups such as Italian and Irish Catholics and Swedish and Norwegian Lutherans.

An *ethnic religion*, on the other hand, works in the opposite way than a *religious ethnicity*. For an *ethnic religion*, cultural practices uphold religious ideology. Hammond and Warner (1993) suggest that, "ethnicity in the pattern extends beyond religion in the sense that ethnic identification can be claimed without claiming the religious identification, but the reverse is rare" (59). *Ethnic religion* is more institutionalized than *religious ethnicity*, and typically religion is just one of many of the underpinnings of ethnicity. Examples of this pattern can be found in looking at groups such as the Dutch Reformed and the Russian or Greek Orthodox.

The third pattern of relationship between religion and ethnicity is *ethnic fusion*. This is the pattern that is of paramount interest to the study at hand. In a pattern of ethnic fusion Hammond and Warner suggest:

> Religion is the major foundation of ethnicity; examples include the Amish, Hutterites, Jews and Mormons. Ethnicity in this pattern, so to speak, equals religion, and if religious identity is denied, so is the ethnic identity (59).

In other words, to the casual observer it is all but impossible to separate the ethnic traditions from the religious traditions when looking at a pattern of *ethnic fusion*. Durkheim's theories of religion, as they relate to the collective nature of society, are helpful for creating a clearer understanding of how a pattern of *ethnic fusion* operates for individuals. Coser (1977) explained that for Durkheim religion was nothing more than "society divinized." For Durkheim then, it is people, not divine entities, which provide order to the physical world, the social world, and the supernatural world. Such ideals are in turn expressed in the form of religious phenomena, which are themselves the result of distinctions made between the sacred- extraordinary or transcendent-

and the profane - everyday activities. For society to function then, the social influence *must* be present within the individual, (1915/1965: 217) in the form of civic morality (given that individuality, according to Durkheim, can only emerge as result of society shifting from a pre-modern to modern context). Hammond and Warner (1993) express a similar sentiment when they assert that in a pattern of *ethnic fusion,* "if religious identity is denied, so is the ethnic identity" (59).

This "all or nothing" mentality, or that denying one source of identity is to deny the other, is not only problematic; it is naive. Volumes of social scientific theory have been produced warning of the dangers of reducing social reality to such mathematical simplicity. Weber (1949) cautioned:

> An 'objective' analysis of cultural events, which proceeds according to the thesis that the ideal of science is the reduction of empirical reality to 'laws,' is meaningless…It is meaningless…because the knowledge of social laws is not knowledge of social reality but is rather one of the various aids used by our minds for attaining this end (80).

Weber was not the only thinker to warn of the dangers of reducing the richness of human diversity to a "pure" state that could be empirically analyzed. Nietzsche wrote in *The Gay Science* (1882/1974) of the dangers of objective analysis of society:

> What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this--reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? Above all one should not divest existence of its rich ambiguity...an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more--that is a crudity and naiveté, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy...A 'scientific' interpretation of the world, as you understand it, might therefore still be one of the most stupid of all possible interpretations of the world, meaning that it would be the poorest in meaning...An essentially mechanical world would be an essentially meaningless world (373).

Unfortunately, empirical research undertaken with a calculator has yet to overcome the shortcomings that Nietzsche warns his readers about. To this end, qualitative research

must be undertaken in situations where greater care is needed to capture the "rich ambiguity" that exists beyond mechanical/mathematical comprehension of reality. In fairness to Hammond and Warner (1993), they acknowledge in a footnote that there may be exceptions to their "all or nothing" mechanical statement stating, "In actuality, of course, there can be exceptions, as the labels 'jack Mormon,' 'banned Amish,' or 'cultural Jew' suggest" (**59**). However the authors fail to offer any methodological explanations as to why exceptions may exist.

The current study seeks to explain the existence of ambiguous exceptions to Hammond and Warner's all or nothing understanding of ethnic fusion. The findings from a case study on Jack-Mormons will provide a better understanding of how ethnic fusion functions to formulate identity, and in turn offer theoretical insights into other groups with a pattern of ethnic fusion. Paramount to the current study is an understanding of the social forces that are used to compel individuals to embrace the idealized identity emanating from a pattern of fused ethnicity. In seeking to understand how identity is created, maintained, and changed in a pattern of ethnic fusion the current study utilizes Hirschman (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Response to decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*.

Hirschman, as an economist, is primarily concerned with the economic processes that drive consumer purchasing patterns. However, in his preface of *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty,* he acknowledges that, "I had come upon a manner of analyzing certain economic processes which promised to illuminate a wide range of social, political, and indeed moral phenomena" (vii). Since the time of publication Hirschman's theory has been adapted and implemented by researchers in all of the social sciences. The current study, therefore, will continue in this

tradition and apply his theory to the study of ethnicity, religion, and identity creation in groups with patterns of ethnic fusion.

Hirschman's theoretical approach, as it relates to religion, can be understood by addressing the behavioral patterns of the members of the religious institution. The theory contends that when a member of the religious organization begins to feel that participating fully with the group does not have the same positive returns that the member once felt that it did, then the individual has essentially two options: *exit* (the separation from religious affiliation) or *voice* (use of socially sanctioned and unsanctioned means to express his/her concern in the hopes that doing so will inspire change). It should be noted that Brown (2003) extended Hirschman's theory by suggesting that *exit* does not have to include a physical removal of from a situation, but be undertaken by emotional or mental disengagement from the institution. Brown's specialized form of exit will hereafter be referred to "*symbolic exit*."

Of the two options that Hirschman offers *voice* is the most useful to the institution in that the organization will actually be provided with information that can be addressed and possibly utilized to assuage the concerns of the individual. When an individual opts to *exit* as a symbolic act, such action can only be interpreted by the organization as an indication of unrest and a warning of decline in satisfaction among the members. The key to understanding why an individual will choose *exit* over *voice* or visa versa is the availability of the option. In other words, if an organization offers ample opportunities for *voice*, people will be less likely to choose *exit*. However, if voice is not an option, *exit* becomes the optimal solution for expressing discontent. In a later work Hirschman (1995) stresses in such a situation exit is undertaken in order to be allowed more opportunity for voice.

For the purposes of the proposed research, and to help explain why there are examples of individuals from patterns of ethnic fusion that may deny the religious aspect of their culture, the focus will be on the third element of Hirschman's theory: *loyalty.* Hirschman's argument suggests that as social actors attempt to optimize their satisfaction with elements of their organizations, sometimes the sense of *loyalty* will overpower desires for *voice* or *exit* and result in individuals offer unquestioning support to the meta-structure. Loyal individuals who many experience a level of disagreement with the meta-structure will likely opt to "suffer in silence, confident that things will soon get better" (1970: 38).

I suggest that the organizations associated with groups showing patterns of ethnic fusion have an understanding of the relationship between *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty*. Furthermore, I suspect that with this understanding, such organizations are likely to devise ways to instill a heightened sense of *loyalty* so as to offset the desires of *exit* and *voice*. In the same way that the last thing a fish will notice will be water, I suspect that those who are fully invested in the important organizations associated with a group displaying ethnic fusion will not be likely to notice the pressures used by the organization to cultivate *loyalty*; such pressures will be more noticeable to the individuals who are choosing *exit* or *voice*.

The Jack Mormon who is experiencing a level of detachment from the fused ethnic Mormon identity may still be experiencing a degree of loyalty to some of the elements of the culture. If this were not the case then Hammond and Warner's "all or nothing" conception of fused identity would still stand. As loyalty to the previously thick identity begins to thin individuals will experience a degree of exit associated with the new self conceptualization. Therefore, I assert that in understanding patterns of fused ethnicity *loyalty* needs to be conceptualized in terms of *loyalties*. For example, it is this sense of *loyalty* that can keep an

individual thickly tied to the ethnic traditions, even after a *symbolic exit* resulting from a thinning attachment to religious traditions. In this case *symbolic exit* is used to reduce personal discord in place of "suffering in silence" as Hirschman suggests.

Expected Results

Research suggests that, "religion and ethnicity maintain a significant relationship in late-twentieth-century America, but it is just as plausible to note that this relationship systematically varies from one kind of ethnic group to another" (Hammond & Warner, 1993: 66). Therefore, to aid in the understanding of how social actors navigate religion and ethnicity, I undertook research that included individuals, all of whom were raised in a sub-cultural group with a pattern of ethnic fusion, that at some point opted to abandon the practice of the religious fundamentals of the culture yet remain and participate to various degrees within the geographical community in which they were raised.

To accomplish this qualitative investigation with a group of individuals raised in Utah within the context of the Mormon faith, I chose individuals from communities around Provo, the home of Brigham Young University. Because of the large percentage of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in these communities and the strong prevalence of LDS cultural norms, there is a greater likelihood of finding participants who were raised in a pattern of ethnic fusion. The nature of qualitative inquiry allowed me to adjust my research question as needed to identify factors that have an effect on a group with a pattern of fused ethnicity.

The goal of this research was to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between identity and integration as it relates to religious and ethnic group participation, and by extension society at large. Utilizing the theoretical framework provided by Hirschman of *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty* I investigated how the identity of an individual raised in a pattern of ethnic

fusion, and the degree of integration that the individual has in relation to said pattern, will guide the actions of the individual. In connection with the above discussion of ethnic fusion, *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty*, I explored why and how a group of people choose to *symbolically exit* the religious element of the ethnic fused culture, in this case Mormonism, and yet still choose to physically remain in the geographic location of the ethnically fused culture.

At the outset of this research I speculated that the reason for the *symbolic exit*, as opposed to the *physical exit*, was most likely correlated with Hirschman's idea of *loyalty*. In the case of the fused ethnicity, I anticipated finding various elements of the culture, for example, family support, that may have also motivated individuals who are opting for symbolic exit to choose to remain "loyal." I hypothesized that loyalty would overpower the desire to physically relocate, thus supporting the option of symbolic exit.

I also sought to identify institutional and individual variables, such as income and lifestyle preferences, that may have affected the availability of opting for physical exit. Fitzgerald (1986) devised a metaphor for explaining social impetuses that are at work in shaping contemporary American culture. Fitzgerald felt that America was "not a melting pot but a centrifuge that spun [people] around and distributed them out again across the landscape according to new principles," including income lifestyle preferences (1986: 16).

Additional variables for understanding the formation, and maintenance, of group identity can be best identified from analyzing the historical impetus of the group itself. Mills (1959) asserted that historical analysis should be undertaken to aid social scientists in understanding how individuals come to not only understand of their roles within the social structures and institutions, but how these individuals navigate the meta-structure of a given culture or society. The relatively young age of Mormonism, the availability of a pantheon of historical

documentation, has allowed me to bridge the remote forces of history to contemporary events in the lives of social actors experiencing the larger workings of fused ethnic Mormon society. Clear perceptions of the history of Mormonism provides the underpinning needed to understand how group boundaries were formed, changed, and continue to aid assimilation to the group or hinder exit from the group. The history of Mormonism further illustrates how a new ethnic group is formed and eventually is granted place in a pluralistic social structure.

In looking at how a group may or may not be integrated into a larger social context, it is useful to consider ethnic assimilation processes. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) offer an ontological look at ethnicity by addressing issues of *thick* and *thin* ethnicity or varying degrees of assimilation. By this I mean that for them ethnicity is something that can change and shift in importance over time and place. For example, someone with a "thick" ethnicity will resist assimilation into a new culture and rely instead on previous cultural standards. In contrast, someone whose ethnicity is thinning will be more likely to embrace (depending on how thin their ethnicity has become) elements of the host culture that deemed to be useful; the thinner the ethnicity the more likely a person is assimilated into the dominant or host culture. Similarly, this person is less likely to express loyalty to and maintain affiliation with the culture of ethnic fusion. When an individual experiences a thinning of both ethnic and religious elements of the fused culture he/she has moved beyond the group as a primary source of self conceptualization.

As individuals increasingly experience a thinning of primary sources of identity and corresponding participation with alternative social networks/ideologies, they are likely to experience what Berger and Zijderveld (2009) refer to as "cognitive contamination." The idea of "cognitive contamination" is that as people interact with one another they will begin to influence each others' ontological perceptions. As such "contamination" will occur when the individual

finds it increasingly difficult to "characterize the beliefs and values of the others as perverse, insane, or evil" (Berger and Zijderveld, 2009: 11). As the ontology resulting from "contamination" becomes a thicker source of identity, such an individual will be more prone to voice and exit as a result of newly places loyalties. Aware of this likelihood boundary construction of "us" and "not us" from the vantage point of the meta-structure will undertaken in such a way as to stigmatize anyone who is in danger of contamination as "wayward," "prodigal," "lost," or some such pejorative conceptualization. Such actions are employed by the meta-structure in hopes of using pressure to curtail exit and symbolic voice.

Additionally, this idea of thick and thin ethnicity will be useful in addressing the issue of symbolic exit from a fused ethnic culture as well. The key here will be to look at how the thinning of ethnicity interacts with the ideas of exit, voice and loyalty. For example, an individual may have experienced a thinning of his/her ethnicity (fused ethnicity), which results in a desire to exit and embrace other cultures. However, this individual may still have a feeling of loyalty to some aspects of their original culture; as with fused ethnicity he/she may feel loyal to the religious elements of the culture and not necessarily to the ethnic cultural elements or vise versa.

Prior to addressing issues of fused ethnicity this thesis will be prefaced with a discussion of how social scientists have – and currently – conceptualize ethnicity and religion. This is undertaken with the knowledge that such cultural phenomena, and by extension fused ethnicity, are understood differently by the social scientist than by the individual who lives it. This will be followed by an analysis of how such phenomena are currently understood by LDS individuals who exhibit a pattern of fused ethnicity. Key to understanding the lives of these contemporary individuals is a working knowledge of the history of Mormonism as it relates to the development

of a culture of ethnic fusion. I will then address how this history and resulting Mormon culture

impact the lives of marginalized members of society followed by a final analysis of the findings

of this study.

CHAPTER 2: TERMINOLOGY: ETHNICITY

In undertaking research of this manner it is important to remember that *religion* and

ethnicity are simply words that have been chosen to represent immensely complex phenomena.

Schaefer (2008) suggests that the terminology used in looking at such social phenomena is a

"complex and sensitive matter that transcends any purely scholarly discussion...Frankly, even to

scholars immersed in the field, categorization remains a challenge that is also puzzling and

arbitrary" (xlix). Therefore, I feel that the development of a basic understanding of how I, as the

researcher, understand these phenomena is central to the proposed research. Prior to attempting

at definitions for *ethnicity* and *religion* I feel that it is important to stress that, due to the

complexity of social phenomenon, any definition attained should not solely be based "within the

narrow confines of empirical observation of explicit group behavior" (Hargrove, 1989: 20). A

colleague of mine described social phenomena to me as an iceberg. When looking at an iceberg

what can be seen on the surface is relatively uninteresting when compared to that which is

beneath the water. With 80% to 90% of the mass of the iceberg hidden beneath the surface, the

most fascinating, dangerous, and interesting elements are hidden from our view from the surface.

I find this metaphor useful for several reasons. First, such an understating helps to illustrate how

complex and reaching social phenomena can be "under the surface" of everyday life.

The second reason that I like the iceberg metaphor has to do the refractivity of water.

Refraction is a scientific term that explains the turning, bending, or distorting of a wave (such as

sound or light) when it moves from one plane into another that contains a differing level of

optical density. Think of a pencil sticking out of a glass of water; the resulting image is

commonly referred to as an "optical illusion" where the pencil appears to be broken. If we accept

the iceberg metaphor we can begin to see that simply recognizing the existence of the elements

below the surface is inadequate: anything that exits beneath the surface, but which can be seen

on the surface, must be viewed with uncertainty due to the fact that our perception is distorted in

one way or another. With an iceberg we are able to physically go below and empirically measure

and verify any variable of interest; unfortunately social scientists are unable to luxuriate in such a

manner. With the social sciences, depending on the location that a phenomenon is being

observed, entirely different conceptions of reality can, and will, be formulated.

What is to follow is the presentation of how I observe the twin "icebergs" of ethnicity and

religion. In any science, stated or not, the manner in which definitions are crafted influence and

facilitate the very questions that can be asked (and how those questions can be asked). Hargrove

(1989) suggests that social scientists "can ease pressures upon [them] in one way and not pretend

that [theirs] is an absolute definition, it is operational" (20). In other words, any definition that is

crafted and used in a study should be thought of as a definition for that study and not as "the"

definitive definition for all occasions and perpetuity. Therefore the following operational

definitions of ethnicity and religion are merely constructs that I feel are adequate in scope for the

proposed research. This chapter concentrates on conceptualizing ethnicity while the following

chapter will deal with religion.

Ethnicity

Again, ethnicity often is seen in subjective terms and its conceptions can vary depending

on if you're the actor or observer (Banton, 1994). Additionally, Cornell and Hartmann (2007)

suggest that "it is most unlikely that any one definition of ethnic group or ethnicity will satisfy

all the specialists or fully escape the ambiguities that seem an inevitable part of the study of

ethnicity" (19). Given that the first edition of Cornell and Hartmann's book *Ethnicity and Race:*

Making Identities in a changing World been called by Marks (1999) "a most valuable and

accessible text" that is "accessible and perceptive way into the dense social science literature on

the subject" (314-315) I will use their framework to facilitate an outline, from which I will add

addition literature, for the understanding of what lies beneath the surface understanding of

ethnicity.

Cornell and Hartmann preface their book by illustrating that they "see ethnicity and race

as referring to distinct but often overlapping bases of identification" (xix). From this

understanding, they suggest that it is possible to think of situations where race could (or could

not be) the same thing as ethnicity, and an ethnic group may or may not be at the same time a

race. They suggest, in much the same way as my iceberg metaphor, that:

> The dynamics of ethnicity and race are inextricably linked with macrohistorical
> forces that are global in their reach. These forces of rationalization,
> industrialization, urbanization, and other developments – in short the project of
> modernity – have shaped the context in which contemporary ethnic and racial
> identities are made and remade and have provided much of the social and cultural
> foundations on which those identities are formed (xix).

In other words, the categories that have resulted from a history obsessed with categorization,

amongst other things, has culminated in the categories used by social actors to help conceptualize

themselves as well as others; it is the construction of "us" and "not us." Therefore, in order to

produce an operational view of *ethnicity* as is it used today we need to not only understand how

the *word* was understood yesterday and today, but we need to have a knowledge of the

macrohistorical forces that have crafted this understanding.

Defining the Word

The first item of recognition in the history of ethnicity would be the meaning of the word

itself. We must be cautious when doing this and keep in mind the works of the German

philosopher Wittgenstein (1953) who suggested that many times philosophers (any by extension

social theorists) have removed "language" from its social context, thus alienating it from the

necessary contextual clues that are essential for true understating. Wittgenstein suggests that, philosophically, this has been done to remove semantic misunderstandings from conversation and produce an artificial environment that is free from the murky nature of everyday life. For Wittgenstein such an approach is problematic in that it is likely to result in conversation that has no worth in real social situations. To overcome this Wittgenstein suggests that the understanding of ordinary language needs to be returned from the abstract conceptions of linguistic philosophy to the "rough ground" (1953: 107) of ordinary language. I will here after map out how, in the quest to understand the word "ethnicity," social theorists conceived and used a definition of *ethnicity*, that in essence caused them to fall into the trap that Wittgenstein warned of and treated the idea independent of the social context. Following this discussion I will show how there has been a push in recent years to return the idea ethnicity to the "rough ground" of social constructed understanding.

Looking back at the history of how ethnicity has been understood in the social scientific community it is apparent that many conceptions have been crafted for the "systematic features of human naming, and of attempts to delineate types of human group" (Tonkin et al, 1989: 24). If we trace the etymology of the word "ethnicity" back the earliest known uses we start with the Greek word *ethnos* which can be roughly translated to mean "nation." These early uses of *ethnos* can be found in Homer, and should be seen as "not a word used for familiar groups of people sharing a culture, an origin, or language. It was used, rather, to describe large undifferentiated groups of either animals or warriors" (Tonkin et al, 1989:19). It has been suggested that in understanding how *ethnos* was used in the "rough ground" that it would be profitable to "compare early Greek use of ethnos to modern English 'tribe' – a term still used by many educated people to describe all political units that are not of the familiar nation and nation-state" (Tonkin et al, 1989: 19).

Continuing on the etymology of *ethnicity* the next stop is the idea of *ethnikos*. *Ethnikos* appears to be a bit more specific then *ethnos* in that is refers to the behaviors of peoples that adhere to the non-dominant religious customs. Some have suggested that the best operational comparative definition of *ethnikos* would be "heathen" (e.g. Cornell and Hartmann 2007; and Tonkin et al 1989). Such an understanding could be the result of 15th century usage of ethnicity to refer to those who were not a Christen or a Jew (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007). At all stages in the etymology of ethnicity it appears that the term was used as a mechanism for creating a boundary between those who were common members of society, "us," and those who were outsiders, "not us." Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that the conception of ethnicity for differentiating between "us" and "not us" was firmly entranced in western usage by the 1900s , and the word was now used in a way that "referred to a particular way of defining not only others but also ourselves, and this is how it entered sociology" (16).

Tonkin et al (1989) suggest that contemporary conceptions of ethnicity are historically based and are the " product of a long-standing feature of English Sociolinguistcs" (19). Sociolinguistics is the study of how society affect language (vs, sociology of language which is the study of how language affects society). The sociolinguistic argument is that "ethnicity" as a word is a completely socially constructed term. Social scientists agree, but would like to know how this socially constructed term has in turn constructed the cultures of different peoples. There have essentially been three meanings of ethnicity used by social scientists: 1) as a phenomena that can be understood in terms of assimilation (or resentence to assimilation) into a larger group, or 2) as a phenomena that is the product of circumstances to which the group find themselves or 3) primordial biologically driven needs. I will address each of these issues in depth shortly; prior to

attempting this I must first acknowledge the works of a few of the social thinkers that set the stage

for the debate between the assimilation perspective and the constructionist perspective.

Social Thinkers on Ethnicity

As a young discipline, sociology has not has the time to create and recreate itself as much

as some of the other sciences. As a result, some may confuse various trends in conceptualizing

research as being more, or less, influential than perhaps they really are. However, in looking back

at the ethnic assimilation theories of the first half of the 19th century, it is clear that these

researchers had a lot of influence in how ethnicity was understood by the majority. Arguably the

most influential of the group was Weber. It has been suggested that "there are few contemporary

perspectives on race and ethnic relations that cannot be linked, in one way or another, to some

theme of Weber's seminal writings" (Stone, 1995: 395). In Weber's highly influential book

Economy and Society, originally published in German in 1922 (and available in a full English

translation in 1968), a working definition of ethnicity is offered:

> We shall call "ethnic groups" those human groups that entertain a subjective
> belief in their common decent because of similarities of physical type or of
> customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration
> (1922/1978: 389).

It is interesting to note that this definition views ethnicity not in terms of a physical population,

but rather more as an identity that results from the experiences of social assimilation. Weber

believed that this group identity, resulting from the pressures of social assimilation, would in turn

facilitate the formation of a physical population and community. Once the physical population

had been identified, and group identity entrenched, the subjective belief in common ethnicity

becomes paramount and can persist long after the community disintegrates. Before going to much

further with Weber's definition it should be noted that Weber expressed that "the concept of the

'ethnic' group, which dissolves if we define our terms exactly…as soon as we attempt a

sociological definition." (1922/1978: 395). In other words, subjectivity in ethnic group formation needs to be taken into account, and operational definitions should always be adjusted accordingly.

Weber articulated that "it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" (1922/1978: 389), the key to Weber's conception of ethnicity is to be found in the subjective belief in common descent, which emerges from the experiences that the ethnic group forms around. Weber suggests that various elements in social experience will result in a heightened sense of ethnic affinity within groups. Among these elements are shared language and political desires. Weber suggests that ethnic identities that are the result of emigration, or formal withdrawal from a previously held social alliance, can be a powerful catalyst for the formation of ethnic identity. The power in such a situation comes for a previously held history and group memory which is common with the former group; this will result in a heighted sense of subjective blood relationship. Weber's discussion of group emigration (and secession) suggests that many ethnicities present in a given society may have at one point been independent and then merged. After assimilation, these ethnic groups are able to maintain their group identity as the result of a collective memory of some political conquest or defense. In addition to these elements, Weber holds that ethnic populations that possess a heightened level of ritual regulation in social life will bolster the existing ethnic identity.

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that while much of Weber's emphasis on subjective common descent was incorporated in a number of subsequent definitions of ethnicity, many sociologists "abandoned Weber's definition and came to equate ethnicity with shared culture" (17). Anthropologists seemed to follow suit. Barth (1969) offers that anthropologists who previously considered an ethnic group as a population that has four defining traits: "1. Is largely biologically self-perpetuating; 2. Shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in

cultural forms; 3. Makes up a field of communication and interaction; 4. Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable form other categories of the same order" (75). Barth is concerned with the above definition because if ethnicity is conceived in such a way, social scientists will be unable to comprehend the phenomenon of ethnic groups in the context of their place and role in human society (75). Barth continues to suggest that relying on "an ideal type model of a recurring empirical form, it implies a preconceived view of what are the significant factors in the genesis, structure, and function of such groups" (76).

Such criticisms place Barth, in many respects, in the same camp as the sociologists who Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest abdicated Weberian ideas of decent in favor of conceptions that "came to equate ethnicity with shared culture" (17). Barth (1969) suggests that these criticisms are the result of overreliance on conceptions that "limits the range of factors that we use to explain cultural diversity: we are led to imagine each group developing its cultural and social form in relative isolation, mainly in response to local ecologic factors, through a history of adaptation by invention and selective borrowing" (76). Previous conceptions had oversimplified complex social phenomena resulting in notions that group boundary maintenance is a given that "follows from the isolation which the itemized characteristics imply: racial difference, cultural difference, social separation and language barriers, spontaneous and organized enmity" (Barth 1969: 76). Barth was not alone in his criticisms.

The social sciences began to move in a new direction for the understanding of ethnic relations. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that "the core of the definition shifted from Weber's concern with putative origins and shared history – for the most part, this is, with how the past shapes present self-concepts – to currently shared culture, to what group members now do"

(17). Common traits in such conceptions of ethnicity include "common culture, typically

including language, religion, or other patterns of behavior and belief" (Cornell and Hartmann,

2007: 17). For those who employ a more modernistic approach such conceptions are problematic.

As definitions shifted away form neat categories of "what is" and "what is not," ethnicity drifted

into nebulas of self-aware collectives of people subjectively understanding themselves; empirical

observation becomes increasingly less likely.

At the same time that the social sciences were having a debate over conceptions of

ethnicity, the public in the United States began to express their own "colloquial understanding" of

this complex phenomena. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that this colloquial American

understanding is in many ways is Weberian at its core. They offer:

> Although most Americans may consider various ethnic groups culturally distinct
> to one degree or another, they generally seem to view the origins of these groups
> as what sets them most clearly apart and accounts for whatever distinctive cultural
> characteristics remain…the fact that group members came originally from 'there,
> not here,' or at least not from where 'we' came from, is ultimately the source of
> their distinctiveness, with homeland approximating Weber's concept of shared
> ancestry (18-19).

Many scholars found the public "rough ground" definition problematic because the current

thinking was that "Ethnicity and race had been expected to disappear as forces to be reckoned

with in the modern world…being replaced by other, more comprehensive identities linked to the

vast changes in the modern world" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 5).

Weber also agreed that ethnicity would recede from public life in importance. However,

Weber suggested that ethnic identity persisted to the extent that it was the result of communal

relationships and subjective perception "that they belong together" (Weber, 1922/1968: 40).

Stone (1995) suggests that "Weber may be criticized, along with almost every other social

thinker from the time of the French Revolution until the outbreak of World War I, for failing to

give sufficient weight to racial, ethnic, and national conflicts" (391). Historically such conflicts

can be seen as a direct result of one group seeking to gain some advantage over another. This

criticism of Weber suggests that, as Weber admitted, that "the whole conception of ethnic groups

is so complex and so vague that it might be good to abandon it altogether" (1922/1968: 385). As

I have previously stated, this does not indicate that we should simply abandon our studies of

ethnicity, but instead I suggest that Weber simply didn't have a viable conception of ethnicity,

and thus resulted in his failure to acknowledge the great diversity of forms that ethnicity can, and

does, take.

      Social scientists who study ethnic phenomena must understand that in some cases

"distinctive cultural practices have declined over time, but the identity – that sense of ethnic

distinctiveness – has not" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 18). Cornell and Hartmann (2007)

suggest:

> Ethnicity and race are arenas in which those relationships and that search are
> continually in flux. They have to do with fundamental group processes: how
> human beings come to see themselves and others in particular ways, how they
> come to act on those perceptions, and how their understandings and actions are
> shaped by social and historical forces (13).

Yetman (1999) points out that at different times and in different settings, race and ethnicity have

been used interchangeably to refer to linguistic, religious, national, and quasi-scientific

distinctions (3-7). Scientifically, there is no basis for the belief that race or ethnicity can be

defined by biological differences or characteristics (see e.g. Cornell and Hartman, 2007; Yetman,

1999; Schermerhorn, 1974). Yetman (1999) in expressing his frustration with understanding

ethnicity and race suggests:

> Given that it is difficult to establish conclusively that *racial* and *ethnic*
> phenomena can be qualitatively distinguished, it is appropriate to adopt an
> inclusive definition of ethnicity that emphasizes the different criteria – physical
> differences, language, religion and putative common ancestry or origins – used to

distinguish groups… [which] emphasis that the crucial feature of such phenomena is that group differences are *attributed* to ascriptive characteristic. In other words, I am arguing that *racial* characteristics, which are perceived to be so crucial to the distinction used in American society, represent only one of several possible criteria that can be used to allocate people to different ethnic categories (8).

As I have already shown, conceiving a definition of ethnicity has historically been problematic. In what follows I will overview how social thinkers have attempted to accomplish this monolithic task.

Interpreting the Monolithic

In starting this discussion about the history of academic understating of ethnicity, it is interesting to recall that Weber expressed that "the whole conception of ethnic groups is so complex and so vague that it might be good to abandon it altogether" (1922/1968: 385). With this in mind, the persistence of ethnicity is puzzling to many. Fortunately for the masses, a social scientist being puzzled by social phenomena that in "complex and vague" does not give him/her the right to force society to "simply abandon it."

Current literature would suggest that understanding ethnicity as a source of identity that encourages pride, unity and achievement in a group could explain the persistence of this "complex and vague" social phenomena. In addressing some of Weber's later publications Banton (2007) suggests that Weber was aware that a subjective feeling of ethnic identity "could spring either from common activity or from a sense of common fate in virtue of shared opposition to other visibly different groups" (24). Banton goes on to suggest that Weber's way of understanding ethnicity was as "the character of the social relationships, particularly of any attempt to secure and defend a position of privilege" (25). In other words Banton is suggesting that Weber began to see ethnicity as socially constructed idea undertaken by a people to monopolize power and privilege at the expense of others.

The view of ethnicity as an extension of social systems determining the position that groups hold in society at large can be expanded in looking at Du Bois's book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Du Bois asserts, at the turn of the 20th century, in spite of the Emancipation Proclamation, Black folk in the U.S. are not free. The slavery that Black people faced, according to Du Bois, was a structural "color line" created to stop subordinate groups from advancing in society. Du Bois provides an historical account of the political issues that have created the color line. Du Bois in turn uses this history to present examples of how these structural impediments have kept Black people subservient. Included in the argument it the presentation of what Du Bois calls a "veil" which has been placed over the eyes of people distorting their perceptions of the world. The veil:

> Is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois, 1903/1996: 5)

The concluding chapters of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) present Du Bois's response to Booker T. Washington's suggestion that Black folk need to accept their stations in society, and simply be the best second-class citizens they can possibly be. Du Bois suggests that Black cultural pride, education, and racial cooperation will ultimately result in the destruction of the color line. In other words, in order for a group to emerge from a subservient position in society an ethnic identity must emerge from within the group instead of being placed on them in the way the veil was.

Others argued that access to power and privilege need not be a battle between different groups. Instead of dividing a society into different "camps" that each have their own interests in mind thinkers such as Park suggested that eventually all ethnic groups could be assimilated into "a common culture and a common historical life" (Park, 1926/1950: 149). Park continued by

suggesting that "everywhere there is competition and conflict; but everywhere the intimacies which participation in a common life enforces have created new accommodation, and relations which once were merely formal or utilitarian have become personal and human" (Park 1926/1959 : 149). In other words Park viewed ethnicity as a latent function of people participating in common activities. Park, and other assimilationist theorists, felt that as society became increasingly urban people would "mingle, intermarry, exchange ideas" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 8) and establish new social and emotional ties that would in effect disconnect from the "homeland." One can't help but think of Marx's belief that industry and social class would increasingly replace traditionally ideas such as ethnicity as the dominate mechanism for generating identity.

The assimilation model was biased on the idea that European out-migration as the major catalyst driving worldwide social reorganization (Feagin and Feagin, 1999). From this theoretical assumption Robert Park suggested that ethnic and racial relations would inevitably progress through cycle once contact between two (or more) groups has taken place. Park suggested that following contact the groups would undertake some form of competition and conflict similar to the above discussion. However, Park felt that ethnic identity would continue to flux as groups began to accommodate one another. Finally, Park suggests that as a result of accommodation the minority group traditions will completely fade away and be replaced as they are assimilated into the mainstream culture of the dominate group. In the book *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921) Park and Burgess, suggested that during the phase of assimilation that group members will "acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of [of the dominate group in the society] and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (1921: 735). Park would go on in a later publication to suggest that once a person

has been assimilated he or she "can participate, without encountering prejudice, in the common life, economic and political" (Park 1930: 281).

As can be seen in the above discussion, the assimilationist perspective is almost utopian in nature(that is, the perspective that given time all peoples will have the same cultural traditions and all conflict will cease). Gordon in *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) suggests that the assimilation model offered by Park fails to take into account that the stages in the cycle are all part of assimilation and are likely to occur at different rates (71). While Gordon is willing to point out that the assimilation process is more complex than Park had eluded, he is not willing to move away from the utopian idea of one perfect society. Feagin and Feagin note that "Gordon recognizes that structural assimilation has been retarded by racial prejudice and discrimination, but he still seems to suggest that non-European Americans, including African Americans, will eventually be absorbed into the core culture of society" (Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 20). Social scientists would be hard pressed to support a claim that assimilation does not take place.

Parsons suggested that mass assimilation was "the only tolerable solution to the enormous [racial] tensions lies in constituting a single societal community with full membership for all" (quoted in Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 21). Hidden within the assimilationist paradigm is a copious amount of ethnocentrism with the assumption that others will have to assimilate to Western ideals. This idea is most likely the result of social Darwinist ideology that was put forth by Spencer in his books *Progress: Its Law and Cause* (1857/2009) and *First Principles* (1860/2009) as well as other writings. Spencer's essays suggest that "the evolution of human societies, far from being different from other evolutionary phenomena, is but a special case of a universally applicable natural law" (Coser, 1977: 90). With this understanding it is easy to see how assimilationist theorists would be prone to idea of one mass society.

The assimilation modal was also highly influenced by the works of the Anthropologist Boaz who "cleared the way for a series of social scientific works suggesting that differences between ethnic and racial relation in terms of cultural contacts" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 45). In assessing the differences between biological evolution and social evolution Boas saw that:

> Biology was largely static, at least in the short run, but culture was mutable. If ethnic groups were most importantly cultural group, not biological groups, then they were mutable as well…what had been thought of as rooted in biology and therefore permanent was now seen as rooted in culture and therefore changeable (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 45).

The "mutable" nature of human culture is of paramount importance to the assimilationist perspective. In place of forces of nature slowing changing the physiology of a species, the social structure of a society could be systematically studied and changed to better serve the needs of the group. Ethnicity increasingly began to be seen simply as a culturally phenomenon that "was variable and contingent; it could change" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 46). In other words, social characteristics of small groups could be identified as maladaptive to the progress of society at large and, in parks stage if conflict and accommodation, be expunged.

The assimilation model appeared to reign supreme until the political upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s. During this time period researchers began to express concerns that the assimilation model fundamentally had a "an 'establishment' bias, as not distinguishing carefully enough between what *has* happened to a given group and what the establishment as some point felt *should have* happened" (Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 22, emphasis in original). Others suggested that the assimilation model had produced a public bias that "the only 'good groups' were those that assimilated (or could assimilate) in Anglo-conformity fashion" (Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 22). Assimilation theorists began to be criticized by their contemporaries for their

failure to acknowledge the structural impediments such as those that can seen in the United States between those of non-European ancestry and those of African or Native American ancestry.

With the shortcomings of the assimilation model being discussed, social scientists began searching for alternative theories to explain the persistence of ethnic identity. In exploring these alternatives it is interesting to note how diverse the academic literature has become in their explanations of this phenomenon. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) capture this diversity of thought within the social sciences when they state:

> For some, ethnicity was malleable or even negotiable; for others, it was resilient and unchanging. By some accounts, ethic identities and connection provided a refuge for persons alienated by modern society or struggling with the coasts of social inequality, by others, they constituted a resource to be used as a basis of proactive mobilization, linking people together and firing their passions on behalf of a common interest or cause. Some treated ethnicity as a social form with a logic of its own; other treated it as a social category or set of categories that individuals could use, manipulate, transfigure, or work with according to their own logics and by their own lights. Some saw ethnic identities as self-consciously chosen by those who carry them – others, as so deeply embedded as to be beyond choice or even consciousness (49).

On one hand ethnicity can be seen as being utilitarian in nature, to help individuals achieve their material interests. On the other, ethnicity is rooted in behavioral disposition, "the distinctive ways that people live, act, speak, eat, worship, and celebrate (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 49).

As academics began to see the discrepancy between assimilationist theory and the real life behaviors of social actors two distinctive academic camps, which on the surface seem to be at odds with one another, developed. The first camp consists of those who feel that ethnicity is a force that is elementary in human nature; the power of such identities is what keeps groups from mass assimilation. The perspective of this group has been labeled *primordialsim*. The primordial

group will "survive because they are rooted in the [biology of the group] (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 50). In the second camp you will find those who tend to see ethnicity as a phenomenon that is malleably and flexible; such a conception derailed assimilation because an ethnic group will not need to assimilate to gain any benefit if they could simply adapt and survive on their own. I will now address both of these perspectives in greater detail.

Primordialism

The primordial perspective relies on the idea that ethnicity is "fixed, basic to human life, forever 'given' by the facts of birth" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 50). Crosby (1994) suggests that "to some extent, these powers over life can be purposely manipulated, although, even then, the consequences of much manipulation are often unforeseen" (56). On the other hand, Crosby continues, "to some extent these powers remain beyond our manipulation; that is one of the reasons why human beings stand in awe of them: They remain *ineffable* and *coercive"* (56). Connor (1993) suggests that primordial groups employ a high level of verbal rhetoric such as "fatherland" and "motherland" (373). Connor goes on to suggest that additional images and phrases – blood, family, brother, sister, forefather, mother, home – are used in reference to origin and kinship as a stratagem to convince, mobilize, and appeal to people (373-374). Such common perceptions in the biological similarities are held to be innate and therefore unchangeable (Yetman, 1999: 8).

The primordial perspective is inclined to "emphasize the emotional and imperative nature of ethnicity" (Verkuyten, 2005: 86). Recalling that the primordialist standpoint is that ethnic distinctions are a deeply rooted and elementary aspect of human sociality we can see how the emotional nature of ethnicity can emerge as a result of "kin selection and its corollary, nepotism, [which] are the basic principles on which societies have been based for most of human

existence" (Yetmann, 1992: 8). Therefore, primordial ethnic identity can be seen as a result of an almost primal need to take care of those who share a blood line.

Arguably one of the most influential contemporary social thinkers that embraced the primordial perspective was as political scientist named Harold Isaacs. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that "Isaac's version of primordialsim was the most elaborately worked out in the scholarly literature, but it is also representative in that it asserts the 'givenness' of ethnic and racial identities and acknowledges a common understanding of that givenness in many societies and within many ethnic and racial populations" (51). In his book *Idols of the Tribe* (1975) building off of the work of anthropologist Geertz as well as others, Isaacs suggests that ethnic identity is the most "basic group identity" (38). Isaacs goes on to explain that this basic group identity provides every individual in a group with a common set of gifts and identifications at "the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time and place" (38). In the remaining text of *Idols of the Tribe* (1975) Isaacs offers, in nauseating detail, eight key elements that he believes to be of great influence on an individual's basic group identity. I will forgo any detailed discussion of these eight elements – physical body, name, history and origin, nationality, language, religion, culture, geography of place of birth – and instead offer a brief explanation of the power of primordial attachment followed by a brief discussion of the weakness of such a perspective.

Perhaps the biggest strength in primordial relations is to be found in the previously mentioned notion that primordial ties "emphasize the emotional and imperative nature of ethnicity" (Verkuyten, 2005: 86). Cornell and Hartman suggest that such a level of emotional arousal "can compel a high degree of commitment from group members is amply demonstrated in the history of ethnic and racial conflicts" (55). The strength of emotional connection was

addressed at length by Herder, a German philosopher who is recognized as one of the key figures in the development of primordialsim (see e.g. Jacquin-Berdal,2002; Smith, 1986; Stack, 1986). A recent article by Bahr, Durrant, Evans, and Maughan (2008) demonstrates Herder's conception of the importance of primordial associations. In relation to the "fatherland" they quote Herder writings:

> Our first fatherland…is the father's house, a father's field, family. It is in this small society that the first and foremost friends of the fatherland live, as in an idyllic circle; the land of our early youth lives by just such idylls. Let the soil or climate be what it may: the soul yearns to return there, and the further this small society in which we were raised was from a state, the less ranks and classes of men were separated within it, the fewer obstacles are there to the imagination that yearns to return to the bosom of this fatherland (Herder 2004: 110; quoted in Bahr et al, 2008: 509).

Such attachment that culminates in the primordial climate[1] result in a relationship that Shils (1957) believes "could only be described as primordial, a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood" (42).

The notion of blood ties is paramount to understanding the primordial position. Horowitz (1985) suggests that the envisioning of ethnicity in terms of blood ties results in "the language of ethnicity," which in turn is "the language of kinship" (56-57). This language provides members of a group with the ability to express the subjective feelings of attachment to each other, impetus for action, and underpinning for collective identity. Returning to Herder we can glean that "all the works of men are above all voices speaking, are not objects detached from their makers, are part of a living process of communication between persons and are not independently existing entities" (quoted in Bahr et al, 2008: 506). Understanding ethnicity as a "language of kinship"

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[1] Bahr et al (2008) point out that Herder's use of the word "climate" refers to more than just the weather. Herder is referring to "the natural characteristics such as the sea, the soil, the altitude, and the adaptations of living beings to these natural characteristic. It includes much of the environment, both physical and perceptual, external and internal (510-511). In other words, Herder is referring to both the natural and cultural conditions of the "Fatherland."

helps us to understand how primordial attachment is conceived and persevered independent of the circumstances of birth.

While the strengths of the primordial argument are philosophically tantalizing, there is little evidence beyond truth found in reason to support them. The idea of blood ties is immediately problematic when one realizes that "ethnic relations are *immediately social* rather than biological" (Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 22). The biological linkages that are often cited by primordial theorists are never developed beyond assumptions of kin selection, nepotism, and selfishness (see Feagin and Feagin, 1999). If in fact ethnicity is biologically based than there should be little change, or as McKay (1982) expressed "man is seen as a leopard who cannot change his ethnic spots" (398). Furthermore, as Feagin and Feagin (1999) point out, "if ethnicity is primordial in a biological sense, it should always be a prominent force in human affairs" (22-23), and not take a back seat to other social phenomena.

Additionally, as we look at the history of imperialism and colonization we can find a multitude of examples where identities began to overlap. If ethnicity is a basic identity, in a situation where these identities begin to overlap, how can we determine which one is basic. Furthermore understanding the nature of imperialism and colonization we can see that many times powerful groups have "invented ethnic and racial identities not only for others but also for themselves, often with tragic and devastating consequences" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 54). This idea of invented ethnic identity and be understood in greater detail by discussing Anderson's Influential book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991).

Anderson asserts that a nation, and the sentiment of nationalism accompanies it, is socially constructed and, therefore imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of

that group. Anderson refers to such a group as an "imagined community." The imagined

community is unlike the "actual" community because it is not, and never will be, based on the

affinity that comes from the commonplace face-to-face interaction of its members. Rather the

members of the imagined community fashion (imagine) a mental image of their affinity for one

another. Anderson asserts that the imagined community is the result of, amongst other things, a

movement to bring to an end the concepts of divine rule and monarchy. Throughout the history

of imperialism and colonization different groups have manipulated ethnic identity and imposed a

divergent view upon them. The *a priori* assumption of primordialsim that ethnicity is "deeply

embedded, enduing, set-in-stone" (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 54) simply does not hold up to

historical experience. In short, ethnic groups have expressed to great an ability to change and

adapt, by choice or by compulsion, to outright accept the primordialist logic.

Circumstantialism

The second camp that formed in response to the assimilation model is commonly referred

to *circumstantialism*. In essence, circumstantialism views ethnicity in a utilitarian light

dependent upon the context and circumstances that an ethnic group is located. Such a

methodology is willing to take into account, much like Benedict Anderson, the adaptability of a

group. In many ways the circumstantial point of view suggests that groups will recognize, and

act, as a group when it makes sense to do so. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that

"ethnicity is fundamentally a political phenomenon….It is a type of informal interest grouping"

(Cohen 1974: 97). In other words, ethnicity is a conduit for group expression and action based on

communally held interests based on the surrounding social circumstances and the

majority/minority relationships of that time and place (see e.g. Yetman, 1999). The ethnic

identity manifests as a result of consolidation to gain strategic advantages.

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that out of a desire of maintaining these strategic advantages:

> Individuals and groups emphasize their own ethnic or racial identities when such identities are in some way advantageous to them. They emphasize the ethnic or racial identities of other when it is advantageous to set those others apart or to establish a boundary between those viewed as eligible for certain goods and those viewed as ineligible (61).

The boundary, or separation, between "us" and "not us" it therefore determined, and arbitrated, based upon the temporal and social circumstances of a society. Cornell and Hartman (2007) point out that by stressing the circumstances of a group ethnic identity can be seen as resulting from a "changeable social situation instead of in the unchanging attachments that often lie at the heart of primordialsim, and it captures the reliance of this approach on social change as the motor that drives the logic of collective identification" (62). They go in to stress that "social change and circumstances sometimes encourage or produce ethnic and racial identities…circumstances may create ethnic and racial groups and identities not through a logic of interests so much as through a logic of social organization" (62). In other words, ethnic identity (or the embracing of an ethnic identity) results from situations that can either bolster established social networks or encourage the creation of new ethnically conceived patterns.

As I have alluded to previously, the circumstantialist perspective is underpinned with ideas of competition and conflict. In understanding the role of completion and conflict underpinning the circumstantialist perspective it would be appropriate to return to the previous discussion of Weber. In reference to a group of people in a society undertaking actions to secure and protect beneficial resources at the exclusion of others Weber coined the term "social closure." In reference to social closure Weber stated:

> Usually one group of competitors takes some externally identifiable characteristic of another group of (actual or potential) competitors – race, language, religion,

local or social origin, decent, residence, etc. – as a pretext for attempting their exclusion. It does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon. Such group action may provoke a corresponding reaction on the part to those against whom it is directed (1922/1968:32).

Cornell and Hartman (2007) suggest that "ethnicity and race have been common bases of social closure for one of the same reasons that they are common bases of mobilization: They tend to be visible" (64). From this understanding we can see that ethnic identities have been created by (or ascribed to) groups in response to political circumstances in society.

While the benefits of such an approach are readily apparent, there are a few shortcomings in the circumstantial approach. First, with a heightened awareness of the role of other social phenomena, such as economic needs, social researchers may be more prone to misinterpret the importance in a key variable in the formation of ethnic identity. Furthermore, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that by including socioeconomic class in the analysis of ethnic identity may help to understand persistent patterns in one population, but fail to do so in another (69). Such a criticism makes sense in light of divergent circumstances from population to population. However, "the circumstantialist account attributes the resilience of ethnic and racial identities to forces operating outside those identities, such as economic or political interests, but has little to say about ethnicity and race in and of themselves" (Cornell and Hartman, 2007: 69). In other words, the circumstantial approach affords more insight into circumstance than it does to the people who must navigate such circumstance.

Primordial vs. Circumstance: A Conclusion

Following the assimilationist approach for analyzing ethnicity, the primary departure has been on theoretical lines. Barth (1969) suggests that there are three main, interconnected elements of this departure (75). First, there has arisen a emphasis on seeing ethnic groups as

nothing more than categories for identification; I have repeatedly referred to this as creating boundaries between "us" and "not us" in this essay. Second, there is no clear "checklist" of criteria that can be used to identify a ethnic group. In place of a checklist the social sciences have suggested different processes which are employed to create and maintain an ethnic group. Finally, the best way of understanding the different processes used to generate ethnic identity is most like to be found on the periphery of a group, not in the core. This is the case because it will allow a social scientist to see what criteria the group is using to differentiate between "us" and "not us" which in turn gives insight into the ethnic identity that corresponds to the group.

Understanding these theoretical elements, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that social scientists should acknowledge the complexity of ethnicity and seek a theory that is a synthesis of the primordial approach and the circumstantial approach. They suggest:

> These two accounts are in many ways mirror images of each other, the strengths of one reflecting the weakness of the other. Each contributes insight where the other seems blind, but we need both sets of insights….We need to recognize that ethnic and racial identities are both contingent on circumstance and therefore fluid, and are often experienced as primordial and therefore as fixed" (74).

Cornell and Hartman (2007) call their synthesized approach a *constructionist approach*.

Cornell and Hartmann (2007): Constructionist Approach

Cornell and Hartmann's perspective acknowledges that historically established ethnic and racial identities are powerful forces in and of themselves for producing collective action and social relations. They stress that "for many people [historically established ethnic and racial identities] carry an emotional charge that cannot be accounted for by appeals to interests alone" (xx-xxi). They, in the same vain as Barth, are suggesting that looking at the intersection (and corresponding interaction) between group identity that is ascribe by others and group identity that is self-ascribed, is where social scientists need to look for the most profitable insights into

understanding ethnicity (see also Ito-Adler 1980). Cornell and Hartmann suggest that "this interaction is ongoing. It is, indeed, a 'reciprocal fluxion,' and there is nothing absolute about the process or the end product" (75). It is the idea of ongoing process of "reciprocal fluxion" that the Constructionist approach is based on.

Cornell and Hartmann state that the constructionist approach "focuses on the ways ethnic and racial identities are built, rebuilt, and sometimes dismantled over time" (75). They go on to suggest that the constructionist approach "accepts the fundamental validity of circumstantialism, while attempting to retain the key insights of primordialsim, but it adds to them a large dose of activism: the contribution groups make to creating and shaping their own – and others' – identities: (75-76). Fundamental to this argument is acknowledging that ethnic identities are infinitely malleable and adaptable.

Recall that I suggested that fundamental to the constructionist approach was addressing the intersection of identities that are ascribed by others and self-ascribed. Connect this idea with the conception of infinitely malleable and adaptable identities and we can see that the very intersection of identities is also in a constant state of flux. Cornell and Hartmann offer:

> There is a reciprocal relationship at work between these two sets of claims. The reciprocity is missing from circumstantialism, which conceives ethnic and racial identities as largely hostage to external forces and conditions that in effect assign interests and identities to groups. Identities are made in the circumstantialist account, but not by the groups involved. On the contrary, circumstances do the work. Ethnic and racial actors may use their identities instrumentally in pursuit of their goals – this is one of the key points of circumstantialism – but they do little to shape, reinforce, or transform those identities. They simply exploit the identities that situations make available and useful (76).

By acknowledging the ability to transform and utilize multiple elements from both the eternally ascribed and internally ascribed identities Cornell and Hartmann are suggesting a method of gaining greater insight into the comprehensiveness of ethnic identities.

To understand what is implied by comprehensiveness of ethnic identities Cornell and Hartmann suggest that we think of this as a "thick" or increasingly comprehensive identity (85). This "thick" identity is one that organizes much of social life in a way that is "unmatched by any other dimension of individual or collective identity" (77). To help explain what all this means allow me to relate this so some seemingly nonrelated sociological concepts: *status* and *status sets*.

Typically status is understood as prestige that accompanies a position or role that is held in society. As society has become increasingly complex people now possess complex status sets, or a collection of various statuses that accompany a collection of roles that this person has in society. For example with little effort we could imagine an individual that is a graduate student, an adjunct professor, and a butcher. Each of these roles has a corresponding status. If this person most identified with the role of butcher, that that would be his or her master status, or in Cornell and Hartmann's terminology the status that is "thick." Now this individual can chose to emphasis other status as situations change. While performing the functions required of a graduate student this individual may choose to utilize his or her status as an adjunct professor and "thin" out the status that comes from being a butcher.

Relating this back to Cornell and Hartmann's framework of constructionist approach to understanding the role of ethnicity in identity formation we can see that when we acknowledge the adaptability of ethnic identity between internally-ascribe and externally- ascribed ideals, groups (or individuals) can chose to see some statuses as being "thick" while they may see others as "thin." It is important to keep in mind that just because a statuses is perceived as being "thin" that this does necessarily imply that it is insignificant. Cornell and Hartmann suggest that "some portion of [a] population may experience their ethnic identity as very thick, while others may

experience it as rather thin, producing very different manifestations of a supposedly singular

ethnicity" (79). Tonkin et al (1989) suggest that "a group or an individual has no one identity,

but a variety (or potentially very large variety) of possibilities, that only incompletely or partially

overlap in social time and space" (24). In other words, social actors have many dimensions of

social life that they can pull from to create identity; what is emphasized as "thick" and what is

emphasized "thin" will change over time.

The "thinning" can be seen in many sociological and anthropological studies. For

example in *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1970) Glazer and Moynihan illustrate how European

immigrants to the U.S. slowing "thinned" out the original customs of their home-country until

they were by and large absent in the third generation. That is not to suggest that the third

generations had completely abandoned this ethnic heritage, rather is had simply thinned to the

point of use as "distinction terms of name, identity, and, for the most part, primary group ties"

(Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 20). This approach acknowledges both the assimilation perspective –

as the second and third generations became increasing more like their "host" culture – and the

primordial perspective – in the acknowledgment of importance of maintaining kinship ties.

The constructionist view ethnicity goes beyond simply acknowledging the assimilation

and primordial perspectives; it also incorporates the basic ideas of circumstantialism. Cornell and

Hartmann suggest that this new perspective takes:

> Circumstantialism's basic idea of fluidity – the idea that identities change in their
> nature and significance across time and situations – but also builds on
> circumstantialism's attempt to identify the specific factors that drive that change.
> Part of the meaning of 'construction' is that ethnic and racial identities are not
> rooted in nature, but are situational precipitates, products of particular events,
> relationships, and processes that are themselves subject to change" (81).

It is simply the circumstances that a group finds itself in but the conscious way that the group, or individuals, responds to the circumstances. There are multiple factors that affect the group, not singularly the structural circumstances.

The construction site where ethnic identity is built is littered with materials that can be picked up or discarded as the group sees fit. Instead of viewing "ethnicity" as an episteme (see Foucault, 1961/2006) that forced members of the group to be [insert name of ethnic group], a constructionist approach acknowledges that social actors "accept, resist, choose, specify, invent, redefine, reject, actively defend, and so forth" (81) criteria for the construction their identities. The materials littering the construction site could be – at the most basic level – the attributes that others have claimed about the group. Yet to simply keep this discussion to the internally/externally ascribed ideas is to over simplify. Cornell and Hartman suggest that the construction site also is littered with "the raw materials of history, cultural practice, and preexisting identities to fashion their own distinctive notion of who they are" (81). The community gets to set the boundary based on whatever criteria they see fit.

Construction of the Boundaries

Boundary construction is no simple task. As I alluded to earlier the construction of an ethnic identity has no end product, it must keep adapting and reproducing. For an ethnic identity survive full assimilation – if desired by the group – the group must establish internal means of perpetuating itself. Cornell and Hartmann suggest that this task can be accomplished in a number of ways: establishment of organizations, research into the groups ethnic history and culture, recreating/updating official histories, choosing to reestablish previously defunct cultural practices, or by inventing new cultural practices (82). They further explain that:

> In all these ways and dozens more, ethnic groups play a creative role in shaping
> their own identities. These are not idle activities. They variously elaborate,

reinforce, glorify, specify, or otherwise add to the identity that group members share (82).

Such activities should be seen as a conscious effort on the part of the group to make the ethnic identity "thicker" for the members of the group; thus pushing the ethnic identity to the role of "master status" for many. A "thick" ethnic identity requires equally thick and meticulously constructed boundaries. Barth (1969) offers that:

> Stable inter-ethnic relations presupposes such a structuring of interaction: a set of prescriptions governing situations of contact, and allowing for articulation in some sectors or domains of activity, and a set of proscriptions on social situations preventing inter-ethnic interaction in other sectors, and thus insulating parts of the cultures from confrontation and modification (80).

In navigating the minefield of external/internal ascription of identity, it is important to remember that these boundaries are constructed on both sides, each brandishing painstakingly chosen criteria.

Such criteria result in what Yetman (1999) calls "inherently ethnocentric" attitudes that are "the basis for much of the competition and conflict between different ethnic groups (3). These ethnocentric attitudes are what Nash (1989) refers to a group *index features*. Nash explains that index features "must be seen, grasped, understood, and reacted to in social situations. The index features implicate or summarize less visible, less socially apparent aspect of the group" (24). This is an extension of group assertion or assignment of a meaningful boundary (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 84). When addressing a different ethnic group index features of group separation create a caricature (stereotype) of those that are "not us." These caricatures are used to emphasize what "we" are by way distorting what "we are not." In addition to the caricature, differentiation between acceptable material and nonmaterial aspect of culture are used to reify the location of group boundaries.

Nash (1989) suggests this reification of group boundary can be seen as a universal characteristic of groups. This idea can be connected back to Barth (1969) who suggests that "the ethnic boundary canalizes social life" for group members (79). When conceptualizing this idea it is important to remember that "the boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth, 1969: 79). By coming to a greater understanding of the boundaries of a group social thinkers will, theoretically, be able to better see whom to ascribe identified characteristics. To this end social scientists should employ the theories of George Simmel.

Simmel's approach to the study of society had been described as "the conception that society consists of a web of patterned interactions, and that it is the task of sociology to study the forms of these interactions as they occur and reoccur in diverse historical periods and cultural settings" (Coser, 1977: 177). Within this concept of "a web of patterned interactions" Simmel identifies a social entity which he identifies as *the stranger*. Simmel conceptualizes the stranger as a individual that, as a result of close proximity, see what is going on within a group. However the stranger is not considered to be part of the group and is consequently kept at arms length. The social distanced experienced by the stranger is not excessive, yet is sufficient to forgo allowing the stranger to have any input in regards to issues that are of interest to the group. Ritzer (2003) suggests:

> If she came too close, she would no longer be a stranger; she would be a member of the group. However, if she was too far away, she would cease to have any contact with the group. Thus, to be a stranger involves a combination of closeness and distance (48-49).

Simmel perceived the stranger as someone that has now personal agenda to perpetuate, and as such will offer an unbiased opinion about the group. I am not convinced that such a person would in all actuality remain unbiased or wouldn't attempt to push a personal agenda. However,

I do agree with Simmel that the stranger would provide insights into group activity that could not be gained by any other source.

In the terminology that I have used in this essay the stranger slides into the boundary markings of "us" and "not us" as an entity that is "sorta us." This "sorta us" individual typically would posses several "thin" identities, and little if any that are "thick." Barth (1969) suggests that such an individual posses great insight into "the boundaries that enables social interaction and the sorting of values orientation in judgments and evaluation of each other" (80). It is interesting to note that in many cases the powerful majority may be completely be unaware of the evaluations and judgments directed at them by subordinate groups. It has been suggested that this phenomena has resulted in the invisibility of ethnic dominance (Park Nelson and Doerfler, 2007) or hidden ethnicity (Doane, 1997).

Hidden Ethnicity

Hidden ethnicity has been a topic in the social sciences since the early 1950s when Hughes and Hughes declared that "we are all ethnic" (1952: 7). Unfortunately, throughout history time and time again we can see that membership in the dominant group corresponds with a unspoken identity that is the standard by which all the non-dominant groups are judged (Cornell and Hartmann, 2207; Frankenberg 1993; McIntosh 1989). Schermerhorn critiqued this idea (1974) suggesting that members of the dominant group: "regard all newcomers to our country as ethnics but, simultaneously, in some vague way, regard themselves as non-ethnic. A false premises if ever there was one" (1). The majority group occupies a position in society of comprehensive power where their extremely "thick" ethnic identity has become so strong that it has superseded all others, and in effect become invisible to them. The Idea of "invisible ethnicity" is explored in depth in *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color Blind Society* (Brown

et al, 2005). The Authors suggest that in much the same way as fish will noticing the water that it is swimming in, ethnicity for the dominant group simply goes unnoticed and is therefore not problematic.

Many are quick to suggest that ethnic affiliation cannot be invisible. Cornell and Hartman respond by stating:

> Yes, it can. Belonging does not require self-consciousness. One can belong to a collection of people distinguished by its position in relationships of power and privilege and by cultural commonalities among its members without any substantive awareness that this position and culture – and the identity embedded in both – are primary factors organizing life experience (88).

In other words, as stated previously, ethnicity can under certain circumstances be constructed in a sufficiently "thick" way as to become a given. At first the idea of invisible ethnicity may appear to be at odds with the conscious, active, nature of building and maintain boundaries. On a macro level, as discussed above in relationship to boundaries, ethnic identity must be self-conscious, but on a micro level this is just simply not the case.

Pulling it all Together: Definition of Ethnicity

Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that "it is most unlikely that any one definition of ethnic group or ethnicity will satisfy all the specialists or fully escape the ambiguities that seem an inevitable part of the study of ethnicity" (19). I would like to return now to some of the sentiments expressed at the beginning of this section. Recall that I cited Hargrove (1989) as suggesting that social scientists "can ease pressures upon [them] in one way and not pretend that [theirs] is an absolute definition, it is operational" (20). I went on to state that any definition that is crafted and used in a study should be thought of as a definition for that study and not as "the" definitive definition for all occasions and perpetuity. Therefore I am bound to offer an operational definition the social phenomena of ethnicity for the study proposed.

The history that I have addressed above has been undertaken with the interest of acknowledging the scholarly analyses that have taken place in attempting to understand ethnicity. This is important for several reasons. First, I cite this catalog of literature in hopes of avoiding "recreating the wheel" when it come to the study of ethnicity. Secondly, I believe that the best definition of ethnicity should reflect the same nature of the phenomena itself. I agree with Hall (1992) that ethnic identity is not a given but rather is "constructed historically, culturally, politically – and the concept which refers to his is 'ethnicity.' The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity" (257); any operational definition of ethnic identity should reflect this same process.

As stated earlier I have used the work of Cornell and Hartmann as the underpinning of my understanding of ethnicity. Therefore, I will offer their definition of ethnicity as the operational definition for the proposed research. First, ethnicity needs to be understood as something that is constructed in contrast something else. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) offer that "to claim an ethnic identity (or to attempt to assign on to someone else) is to distinguish ourselves from other; it is to draw a boundary between 'us' and 'them' on the basis of the claim we make that 'we' share something that 'they' do not" (20-21). In other words, ethnicity cannot be present in a vacuum; ethnic meanings can only emerge within a social structure that involves other peoples. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that this does not necessarily imply that the group must be a minority group, rather "it is never conceptually isolate" (21).

With the above history understood, Cornell and Hartmann (2007) suggest that ethnic identity can be defined in the following manner:

> An *ethnic identity* is an identity is an identity conceived in such terms. A population or social collectivity may be simply an *ethnic category*, assigned an ethnic identity by outsiders. But once that identity become subjective – that is,

once that population sees itself in ethnic terms, perhaps in response to the identity outsiders assign to it – it becomes an *ethnic group* (21).

To understand how this definition works there are two key elements. First, ethnic identity is a active process that can never sit stagnate. Second, the conceptualization of ethnic identity as it relates to the constructionist model sets the unit of analysis as the social system that is the "construction site" for group identity, not the group itself.

CHAPTER 3: TERMINOLOGY: RELIGION

I discussed previously the need of social thinkers to rely on empirical data in anticipation of categorizing and generalizing that which they observe. The need for empirical data remains paramount in the study of religion. Hargrove (1989) warns that:

> [S]ome of the most miserable failures in the attempt to understand sociologically that phenomenon we call "religion" have occurred through the literal and narrow application of those principles. To limit the study of the sociology of religion to the observation of behavior of organized groups labeled as religious and generalized into categories of faith, denomination, geographical area, or social class is to deal with so small a segment of the meaning of religion in human life as to be almost useless (19).

From this Hargrove is suggesting that the empirical needs of the social researcher have, historically, resulted in the generation of definitions for religion that, in the world that exists beyond academia, have little, if any, validity.

Furthermore, the very nature of the phenomena that have been labeled "religion" is symbolic in how it is preceded by social actors. With this understanding, there has been a fair amount of social research in the field of religion utilizing the symbolic integrationist perspective (see e.g. Weaver and Agle, 2002; Dyck et al, 2005; and Wimberley, 1989). Keeping in mind that human behavior is symbolic in character, Hargrove (1989) points out that when looking at religious behavior, "two very dissimilar actions may be classified by their originators as almost the same thing, or two similar actions as meaning nearly opposite things" (19). Hargrove goes on to explain that this symbolic classification process requires social thinkers concerned with the study of religion to possess an elementary understanding of how such symbols are interpreted by the group (or individual) in question. Therefore, social thinkers who concern themselves with the study of religious behavior, in many ways, need to be renaissance men and women in that they must be willing to utilize additional resources from such arenas as mythology and theology.

Returning to the idea that those who participate in religious customs may, symbolically, perceive dissimilar actions as being the same thing (or similar actions as being different) is a good place to being our discussion of how to define religion. Simmel begins his classic essay "A contribution to the Sociology of Religion" (1997 [1898]) by offering the following insight:

> No light will ever be cast in the sybillic twilight that, for us, surrounds the origin and nature of religion as long as we insist on approaching it as a single problem requiring only a single word for its solution. Thus far no one has been able to offer a definition of religion that is both precise and sufficiently comprehensive. No one has been able to grasp its ultimate essence (101).

Simmel's attempt at developing a viable definition of religion can be read in the same manner as Goldilocks assessing the temperature of the three bears' porridge (too hot, too cold, just right); that is suggesting that religion needs to be defined in a way that is "both precise and sufficiently comprehensive" (Simmel 1997 [1897]:101). Therefore, we as social researchers need to devise a definition that is "just right" (keeping in mind that where Goldilocks found Papa bear's porridge to be too hot, for Papa bear the porridge may well have been "just right").

McKinnon (2002) has suggested that not only were social thinkers unable to grasp the essence of religion in Simmel's time, but in fact, throughout more than a century that has transpired since, no one else has either. McKinnon asserts that this is because in the real world "there is no essence of religion outside the discourse of religion" (2002: 61). However, McKinnon is quick to point out that it is possible to "conceptualize or define 'religion' sociologically" (2002:61). To understand how this can be accomplished, I believe that a brief history of how social thinkers have approached this issue is in order. As a beginning point, Hargrove's book *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches* (1989) offers basic outline of the history of how religion has been viewed in sociology.

In looking back at how social thinkers have crafted their definitions of religion it appears that most of these researchers have approached the issue by employing inductive methodology. By this I am suggesting that these researchers made observations, identified patterns form these observations, and from these patterns constructed their definitions. In other words, these researchers' definitions were crafted based on what they discovered empirically instead of reasoning an ideal of what religion should or should not be and then looking for evidence to support the definition that they devised. Hargrove (1989) suggests that such an inductive method "seeks to distill from all behavior that had been called religious those factors that seem to form an irreducible core to which people generally apply the adjective 'religious'" (21). Using Hargrove's work (1989) my overview is based on the assumption that there have been essentially two common inductive approaches that have been utilized: 1) the historical approach and 2) the comparative analysis approach.

The Historical Approach

The historical approach has been used by social thinkers that have been seeking to reduce religion to the common core that is free from "the excess baggage of tradition and elaboration" (Hargrove, 1989: 21) that has slowly throughout history been added on to religious customs. Freud expressed the notion that a historical look back can aid in glancing "in the other direction to ask what further fate lies before" (1927/1989:5).(More on Freud shortly). Perhaps one of the most influential social thinkers that employed this historical approach for understanding religious behavior was Durkheim. In the early part of his book, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915/1965), Durkheim suggests that:

> It is necessary to begin by defining what is meant by religion; for without this, we would run the risk of giving the name to a system of ideas and practices which has nothing at all religious about it, or else of leaving to one side many religious facts, without perceiving their true nature (37).

From this we can see that Durkheim, much like Simmel, is concerned that unless a carefully crafted definition is generated in relation to religious behaviors, social researchers may find themselves ascribing the classification of religion to a phenomenon that is in its very essence not religious when one acknowledges how the social actors that have undertaken such behaviors perceive them.

In using a historical approach social researchers have undertaken two approaches: 1) using personal histories, and 2) looking at the historical development of human cultures. When researchers choose to look at personal histories, they are attempting to identify the "early stages in individual development to find sources and trace the development of religious behavior" (Hargrove, 1989: 21) that can be generalized to larger populations. Numerous contemporary examples of social scientists using personal histories to devise the nature of religion exist. I will mention just a few.

Barry and Nelson (2004) undertook research that sought to identify what function religion serves for young adults as they transition to adulthood. The authors utilized 445 questionnaires that had been administered to undergraduate students attending institutions that self-identified as Catholic, Mormon, and public. The results of their study point to university settings that "reinforce cultural standards and beliefs, or provide a climate conducive to exploration of one's identity and beliefs (including religious beliefs)" (242). The authors found that at the Mormon university the respondents reported a higher level of commitment to their religious principles in adulthood than at the Catholic and public universities. I will return to discus this article in greater detail at a later point. For now I would just like to point out that the authors concluded that the religious backgrounds of the respondents served to provide the criteria these young adults deemed as necessary for adulthood.

Eggebeen and Dew (2006) look at the role that religion has in the process that young adults undertake in choosing to form a family. By utilizing survey data from the National Study of Adolescent Health (Add-Health) Eggebeen and Dew sought to understand "the effects of religion on family formation behavior…consider[ing] the interplay between religious identity, the extent or importance of religious beliefs and how often the person attends places of worship" (3). This results show that youth who self-identified as being conservative Protestants are more apt to move towards marriage in their early adult lives. Furthermore, youth who reported greater attendance at church related services experience higher odds of marrying than those who do not frequently attend church services.

Elkind's research (1964) looks at how religious identity changes as children grow older. The author conducted interviews with youth of different ages, "asking questions that require the child to apply his conceptions to new or novel situations" (36). From these responses Elkind suggests that individuals pass through three stages in the development of their religious identity: the global stage, the concrete stage, and the abstract stage. During the global stage (ages 5-7) the children in the study "confused their religious denomination with national and racial designations" (37). The global stage is contrasted with the concrete stage (ages 7-9) where the respondents "had a clear-cut notion as to the meaning of religious denomination. Their conception of religious denomination however was rooted in behavioral manifestations" (38). In abstract stage (ages 11-12) the children now possess the ability to understand their religion "involving nonobservable qualities such as *belief, faith* and *intelligence*" (38, emphasis in original). In sum, Elkind concludes that until a child reaches adolescence, he or she "knows much more than he [or she] understands about his [or her] religious identity" (40). From this we

can conclude that religious identity is something that develops over time as social players interact with their culture and environment.

Elkind's findings are interesting in connection with the notion of social researchers undertaking a personal historical inductive approach for the purposes of constructing a viable definition of religion. Hargrove (1989) suggests that one of the purposes of using a historical approach is to identify how religion developed in much the same way that a child must "learn to control his/her body, to channel emotions and actions (21). Basically Hargrove is suggesting that in the same way that a child is helpless in the early stages of life, so is society. From this sensation of helplessness came a desire for social order for the survival of the human race. Hargrove goes on to suggest that such social patterns hold back "the chaos of unlimited choice by providing a setting in which meaning can be found and consequences of acts predicted. In other words, a person lives largely in a world of his or her own fabrication, maintained by continuing dialogue with those who share that world" (22). Ultimately, findings such as this are the goal of the social scientist undertaking a historical approach to determine the role of religion.

The above examples illustrate how looking at the personal histories of religious individuals can be utilized to show one function of religion; that is religion can be seen as a mooring to provide individuals with a "constant;" to provide them with meaning as individuals encounter the chaos that exists within human culture. However, it should be noted that some scholars feel "that in many traditional societies religion has done such a good job of ordering chaos that individuals seldom feel a concern for meaning" (Hargrove, 1989: 22). If this is in deed true, then scholars must ask way these traditional religion became increasingly complex as history moved on.

In expanding the religious function of providing order to the chaotic world of human existence it is important to remember that the individual who is participating in society is most likely not aware that he or she is participating in something that is personally beneficial. In fact many thinkers who follow in the traditions of Freud believe that human society is upheld, in many ways, by the suppression of individual desires and persona. Therefore, social scientists in this tradition see religion as a tool that societies (and individuals within society) use to alleviate the fears that arise from nature, specifically from the awareness of the certainty of death. In other words, religion developed as an attempt to master "the unknown or uncontrollable aspects of life" (Hargrove, 1989: 24).

Freud saw other possibilities for explaining the existence of religious phenomena. In fact, Freud published several books (*Totem and Taboo*, 1913; *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927; *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930; and *Moses and Monotheism*, 1938) in an attempt to better understand religious phenomena and the nature of religion. In sum, Freud felt that religious phenomena developed not from the divine, but rather "have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities" (Freud, 1939). While it is clear from Freud's writings that he himself was not a believer in the divine, it is interesting to note that he did view religion as functional. In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927/1985) he stresses the need for a historical approach when determining the functionality of religion, he states:

> Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilization. On the contrary! Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect (56).

For Freud, religion is all about psychological stability. Those who have agreed with Freud tend

to feel that as humanity gains greater scientific knowledge the underlying need for religion will

be increasing met by secular ideas and the strict functional religious ideas of the past will fade

away. In other words, these individuals feel that historically religion worked to "account for

those factors in human experience that fail to fit the frameworks provided by the belief systems

of the culture" (Hargrove, 1989: 23) , and now science can and does account for these factors.

Not all social thinkers feel this way. At the core of Durkheim's theory is the

understanding that religion works as a means of maintaining the collective consciousness. It was

in his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1883/1984) that Durkheim first offered up his idea

of the collective consciousness; he states that:

> The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of society forms a
> determinate system with a life of its own. It can be termed the collective consciousness.
> Undoubtedly the substratum of this consciousness does not consist of a single organ. By
> definition it is diffused over society as a whole, but nonetheless possess specific
> characteristics that make it a distinctive reality. In fact it is independent of the particular
> conditions in which individuals find themselves" (38-39).

For Durkheim then, religion can be seen as primary mechanism for the maintenance of mass

social sentiments and beliefs.

Durkheim's seminal work *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) has been

called the "greatest piece of sociology ever" (King, 2007: 219). A bold statement such as this

should not be tossed around lightly. The book covers a great deal of sociological terrain, so

regardless of the validity of King's statement, the book, at the least, should be seen as being a

piece of great importance to the sociological community. With *The Elementary Forms of the*

Religious Life (1915) Durkheim seeks to answer the concerns of philosophers in regard to the

definition, the origin, and the nature of religion. To this end Durkheim pursues a historical

approach utilizing information on societies with less complex substance strategies to understand

religion and attempt to discern the elements that underlie the essential forms of religious thought and practice.

Durkheim shows how religion, philosophy, and morals should be understood only as products emerging from social needs. Following this line of thought, Durkheim states that the underlying source of religion and morality is to be found in the collective consciousness of a group, not in minds of individuals. From the findings offered in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915)*, Durkheim begins to construct what he feels are the most basic of functions of religion. Ultimately Durkheim feels that religion can be condensed into four major functions: a disciplinary function: forcing or administrating discipline; a cohesive function: bringing people together, a strong bond; a vitalizing function: to make more lively or vigorous, vitalize, boost spirit; and a euphoric function: a good feeling, happiness, confidence, and well-being. As stated previously, Durkheim believed these religious functions served as a mechanism to shore up and protect social order. Therefore, from this understanding social thinkers can deduce that as a religion erodes in a society so does the moral community of that society.

The religious model that Durkheim constructs, to illustrate the relationship between individuals and the supernatural, can be seen as a model for the relationship between individuals and the community. In this stream of understanding Coser (1977) suggests that Durkheim saw religion as "society divinized" (138). Coser continues by explaining that for Durkheim

> [T]he deities which men worship together are only projections of the power of society. Religion is eminently social: it occurs in a social context, and, more importantly, when men celebrate sacred things, they unwittingly celebrate the power of their society. This power so transcends their own existence that they have to give it sacred significance in order to visualize it (138).

In other words, it is people, not a divine entity, that order the physical world, the social world, and the supernatural world to a given set of ideals. These ideals are expressed in religious

phenomena as the result of distinctions made between the sacred- extraordinary or transcendent-and the profane - everyday activities. As such "society has to be present within the individual" (Coser, 1977: 136) in a form of civic morality given that individuality can be seen as a result of society.

From his understanding of the importance of religious phenomena in society, Durkheim developed a carefully constructed definition of religion. In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) Durkheim offers that religion can be defined as:

> a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (62).

Durkheim elaborates on this definition by adding that the notions of *religion* and *church* are inseparable. In this he expands his idea of religion as an "eminently collective thing" (1915/1965: 63). By so doing, he essentially rejects the notion that all definitions of religions must include belief in gods and spirits. In place of such an inference, Durkheim suggests that the fundamental nature of religion is to be found in the social network of believers (Church) that adhere to a given set a beliefs and rituals (1915/1965: 217). In other words, the Durkheimian model of religion serves to reinforce Durkheim's understanding of the social relationship that establishes community and what the community sees as "supernatural."

Durkheim's definition has come under fire for the use of the word "church." Ploch (1987) points out that "historically, we have confused religion with creed or with churches" (43). In all likelihood Durkheim fell victim to the trap of ethnocentrism. After being so careful to construct a viable definition for religion, he was too quick to apply the Eastern-European idea of "church" to all religious phenomena. I suggest that instead of rejecting Durkheim's definition outright (as a result of semantics) that social scientists would do well to remember that by "church" Durkheim

is referring to the method by which the collective consciousness finds place in the individual; he is referring to social networks.

The role of social networks is imperative to Durkheim's definition of community, and from community to religion. In summarizing the Durkheimian model of religion we can see that religion is an inherently social phenomenon where individuals participate for the greater good of the group. This model can be extended to "a group of people who share the activities and anticipations of the religion, even if they may not practice it together with any amount of frequency or regularity (Hargrove, 1989: 25). The key here is community. I anticipate that this community mentality of religion will be of paramount importance to understanding the religious phenomena that will be observed in cultures that have a pattern of fused ethnicity.

Drawing heavily on the historical approach employed by Durkheim, Burhoe (1984) suggests that religion stems from not only the social needs of the group, but also from the environmental needs. Religion functions to help society live with the restraints of the natural boundaries of human existence by the development of a cosmology that is conscious of the natural limitations existent in respect to the natural environment. Therefore, the historical approach used by Burhoe suggests that religious phenomena have a dual role: 1) like Durkheim's model religion serves to maintain social stability, and 2) religion works towards maintaining of human species.

This section has served to illustrate that the historical approach that many social scientists have used to understand the nature of religious phenomena has expanded our understanding of the possible functions of religion. I turn to the comparative analysis method of defining religion to expand how religion may or may not work in a given society. I will continue to utilize

Hargrove *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches* (1989) as a basic outline for this discussion.

The Comparative Analysis Method

Recall that I earlier suggested that the historical approach has been used by social thinkers that have been seeking to reduce religion to the common core that is free from "the excess baggage of tradition and elaboration" (Hargrove, 1989: 21) that have slowly throughout history been added on to religious customs. The comparative analysis method has a similar goal, only social scientists who make use of this approach typically seek to understand the similarities and differences that that can be found from matching up different religions phenomena. As with the historical approach, the comparative method has the goal of generating a viable definition for religions phenomena. This methodology is perhaps more commonly used by anthropologists, but more and more sociologists are being seduced by it charms. Hargrove (1989) suggests that comparative analysis seeks to establish the "basic ingredients of religion in those overlapping areas that exist within the great variety of human religions. These areas may by treated in two ways, as areas of function and structure" (26). I will address these areas in this order.

Many social scientists have suggested that the religious functions that can be seen in society are the result of group selection. In other words, many social thinkers are suggesting that in the same way that Darwin and Spencer talked about the "survival of the fittest" *individual*, human societies can be seen as "survival of the fittest" *group*. For the social scientist that embraces this point of view, religious phenomena are seen as fulfilling a function that allows for a culture to adapt and survive when others opted not to change and consequently collapsed (for further on group selection see Diamond, 2005). Understanding that what may have been adaptive for one society may have been maladaptive for another, social scientists that undertake a

comparative analysis method for understanding the nature of religious phenomena are more likely to necessitate a functional definition.

In his book *The Invisible Religion: the Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (1967) Luckmann suggests that many sociologists, sensitive to understanding that different societies have different needs, have attempted to avoid ethnocentrism by defining religion in much the same way as social scientist would define the economic foundations of a society. That is to say, by attempting to identify how the social group assists the individual with gaining access to shared goods/services. Luckmann concludes that social scientists will best be able to understand religion by identifying the function that religion achieves in all societies (22-26). In other words, religion will be defined as that which fulfills those needs.

The assumptions that go with understanding religion by the functions that it accomplishes for society, include that religion operates the same way that Durkheim suggested in his definition of religion. That is to say that viewing religion as a way of keeping society from collapsing assumes that religion is a way of uniting the masses within a "formal" system of meaning. Hargrove (1989) points out that "if religion provides a unified system of meaning, it also provides the rationale for the structure of the society and the individual's place in it. It allows for the integration of the personality by organizing the chaos of existence and choice" (26). Once again we find ourselves walking in the footsteps of Durkheim suggesting that religion is the chief mechanism employed by society for the purposes of establishing the association between individuals and society at large.

While we have seen similarities in results between the historical and comparative approaches for constructing a viable definition of religion, I would like to suggest that there is one fundamental difference. Rashly speaking, the historical approach is primarily concerned with

understating religion simply with logically devised ideas. This Idea should be contrasted, just as rashly, with the comparative approach which seeks to understand religions phenomena via a system of action (it is interesting to note that Parsons offers in his book *The Social System* (1951) that religion should be seen as being committed to action). In other words, the comparative approach would tend to believe that religion is more than just abstract thoughts and beliefs; religion is practiced.

Religion, therefore, from the comparative approach, can be seen in the actions taken to integrate society with a sense of common moral behavior and meaning. Malinowski (1948) remarked that "magic and religion are not merely a doctrine or a philosophy, not merely an intellectual body of opinion, but a *special mode of behavior*, a pragmatic attitude built up of reason, feeling, and will alike" (24, emphasis added). From Malinowski we can see that religion is both a system of belief and a mode of action. Malinowski goes on to explain that religion at its core serves as a means of reinforcing social moral codes. He states:

> Religion, the permanent source of moral control, which changes its incidence but remains eternally vigilant, has to turn its attention to these forces [of generation and fertility], at first drawing them merely into its sphere, later on submitting them to repression, finally establishing the ideal for chastity and the sanctification of askesis (41-42).

Malinowski further elaborates, by stressing that "religion needs the community as a whole so that its members may worship in common its sacred things and its divinities, and society needs religion for the maintenance of moral law and order" (54). In sum, Malinowski is suggesting that religion serves the functions of enforcing moral codes, providing emotional safety to the members of society, and serves as a means by which society can adjust and change codes of behavior as needed.

Many social scientists are quick to point out the shortcomings of this functional approach. Arguably the best articulated critique of functional comparative analysis can be found in Merton's book *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1957). In the first one-hundred pages of the book Merton critiques functional approaches (both coming from the historical and from the comparative approaches) for defining religion. Merton points out that misinterpretation abounds within the social sciences that look at religious phenomena. These misinterpretations have arisen from social thinkers failing to account for manifest functions (intended consequences) and latent functions (unintended consequences) of religion.

In essence Merton's argument is that when social scientists attempt to understand any social phenomenon purely based on its functions, acute simplifications are made by ascribing motives to social actors who participate in a given religious action. Such a simplification often results in the assumption that all social actors are consciously undertaking behaviors to participate in social action, when in reality there is a distinct possibility that many people are simply unaware of how their religion functions for them. In other words, social phenomena (such as religion) are almost infinitely complex to the point that those who participate do so with little thought about why they do the things they do.

Perhaps the biggest weakness in functional definitions of religion deals with the seemingly contradictory nature of religion. Hargrove (1989) asserts:

> We may define it as that which integrates or that which disturbs, that which preaches commonality or that which legitimates class or ethnic differences, that which prevents change or that which inspires change. Not only is defining an institution in such conflicting terms an exercise in nonlogic, but it also could be applied to the institutions of the state, education, or the family. Clearly, by itself the functional definition of religion is insufficient (27).

Acknowledging that a purely functional definition in insufficient does not mean that functional definitions are not helpful in constructing a viable definition for religious phenomena. On the

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contrary, such a statement simply indicates that such an approach tends to be overly simplistic. To help overcome this shortcoming additional information is needed that deals with the structural nature of religion.

When I talk about the structural nature of religion I am referring to the elements and patterns that are inherent in religious phenomena. Recall Durkheim's definition of religion from *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915):

> a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (62).

For Durkheim all religions are therefore social in structure (formal or informal) being comprised of a community of people that adhere to the beliefs/practices.

Where Durkheim saw religion as a mechanism that was used to uphold collective social solidarity Weber, on the other hand, was more concerned with how religion interacted with all aspects of human social life. In other words, Durkheim saw religion as "society divinized" and Weber viewed religion as the social quest to explain the extraordinary. Weber felt that religion served as an instrument that helped to not only mold social/individual identity, but also to create a "clear" image of the world (1922/1993). This ability of religion to organize the world for the practitioner provides the individual with a perspective that can than be used to filter other social influences. Weber argues that understanding how religion is used to organize the world provides social scientists with insights to the social networks of a society which can, in turn, be used to generate historical narratives in regard to specific social cases. Key to this understating is to examine how myth and ritual are integrated in the social structures of society.

Myth is what anthropologist Greenway has called the "narrative charter of religion"(quoted in Debreczeny, 1997:235). In other words, myth gives a society the means of

understanding the very "meaning of the society and its structure within a universal setting…myths provide in story form the rationale for the particular worldview constructed by a society, and they reinforce belief in it" (Hargrove, 1989: 27-28). One example offered by Weber can be used to explain how concerns with environmental (social and physical) influences are explained and incorporated by religion. Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1922/1993), suggests how external forces shift and are interpreted by the masses. In essence this work depicts how a belief in predestination by Puritans ultimately gave way to the rise of capitalism. But what gave rise to the notion of predestination? Weber argues that the doctrines of predestination came about in part as a result of a Calvinist impression that only a select number of people would be "saved" and the rest of humanity would be damned. The notion of predestination was developed to assuage the concerns the public had in regard to their salvation.

From this example we can begin to understand how myth is used to "focus on the relationship between legitimation, power and religion in modern society may lead to fruitful theoretical directions" (Kokosalakis, 1985: 367). Myth is the theory that allows for social change, and ritual is the means by which this new theory is implemented. Ritual works to bring people together through the purposes of reenactment, in one way or another. Hargrove points out that "the effect of myth and ritual upon one another is circular, each maintaining the other…myth provides a framework for comprehension of phenomena outside ordinary experience, ritual provides a way of participating in it" (28). Once again I would like to point out that motives and understandings of why a ritual is undertaken may in fact be absent from the minds of the social participants. Furthermore, the possibility exists that two individuals participating in a ritual may have completely conflicting ideas about the meaning of the actions undertaken.

For the purposes of understanding the structural nature of religion, and the proposed research of this study, it is important to recall religion should be seen as a social institution that is employed for various subjective reasons. Anderson (1991) asserts that myth is used to embed subjective "human lives firmly in the very nature of things, giving certain meaning to the everyday fatalities of existence (above all death, loss, and servitude) and offering, various ways, redemption from them" (36). Subjectively experienced religion results in objective social realities with very real social consequences. These social consequences historically have been seen as twofold: "[1] universal pacification and [2] the elimination of all power struggles for power in the great world empires, and particularly the bureaucratization of all political power" (Weber, 1922/1993: 225).

In a recent article Kinnvall (2004) noted that in a more globalized world, "Religion shares many of the characteristics of nationalism, and religion and nationalism are often mixed" (758). She bevies that this is the case because both religious identity and national identity creation tends to be based on "a monolithic and abstract identity" (758) that is seen as a stable point in the chaos of a post 9/11 world "linking the past and the present to the future action" (758). Durkheim and others have suggested that one of the functions of religion is to provide order to reality. To achieve the goal of bring order to chaos religions must find institutionalized ways of retaining their independent identity.

By employing the circular nature of myth and ritual, religions are able to maintain their identity. It has been suggested that to accomplish this many religions opt to declare access to some idea of truth that transcends other religions claims (see e.g. Alam, 1999). This can be accomplished by differentiating between the "sacred" and the "profane" as Durkheim suggested. Or this can be accomplished by giving credence to the idea of the "Holy" as suggested by Otto in

his book *The Idea of the Holy* (1923/1958). Otto discusses the development of religious

phenomena as a historical process in much the same way I have previously discussed. The

difference in Otto's treatment of the history of religion is that he sees religious phenomena as

something that have undergone a gradual refinement of how people understand the "Holy" until

this understanding produced Christianity which "yet has its analogies in other fields, has for the

first time come to maturity in a supreme and unparalleled way" (142).

Otto's book is different than the others that have previously been discussed in that Otto

starts his writing by stressing that a "bias to rationalization" has corrupted both how theologians

have addressed religion and "the science of comparative religion in general"(1923:3). Otto

expands this idea by stressing:

> It is salutary that we should be incited to notice that religion is not exclusively
> contained and exhaustively comprised in any series of 'rational' assertions; and it
> is well worth while to attempt to bring the relation of the different 'moments' of
> religion to one another clearly before the mind, so that its nature may become
> more manifest (1923:4).

In other words Otto is suggesting that religion deals with something that is "alien" to our nature

and thus he is concerned with any attempt to explain religion based on that which can be

experienced by human beings. For Otto that which is "Holy" transcends the ability to be

understood in any terms of experience other than those experiences that interact with the "Holy."

For Otto the "Holy" is the notation of the existence of a mysterious something within society that

is both terrifying and fascinating at the same time. Otto's conception of the "Holy" is something

that possesses the qualities *overpoweringness*, or that which arouses a heightened notion of

humanity (19-23) and *energy* or *urgency*, instilling the feeling of strength and vigor (23-24). In

addition to these two qualities the "Holy" needs to possess the quality of what Otto calls

"awefulness," or the ability to transcend what is physically preceded and reach for something that can only be called "other" (13-19).

In many ways Otto is suggesting that religion is not something that can be defined, rather it is something that has to be experienced. Furthermore, Otto is suggesting that solely experiencing religion will not result in understanding religions phenomena in any expressible way. This can be better understood by looking at Fernández-Armesto's book *Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed* (1997). Fernández-Armesto suggests that one of four ways to understand the world has historically been through the truths that you can feel, he states:

> Truth has generally been conceived not as modern western philosophers understood it – as the property of a proposition or of some similar form of words – but as a substance; not necessarily a material substance, but a substance which has enough in common with matter, in the ways which we think we experience it, to license the kind of metaphor in which we talk about it: a truth independent of the language in which it might be expressed (25-26).

Both Otto and Fernández-Armesto are suggesting that there are phenomena in this world, perceived by social actors that simply can't be articulated in any acceptable way to thinkers following the enlightenment tradition. Religion is one such phenomenon. Yet the needs of social scientists still insist on a way to construct a viable definition of religion.

Religion Defined

Pick up any introduction to sociology text book, and with a quick read you will notice what I feel is THE *a posteriori* assumption of the science. That is, that with the exception of a few involuntary functions and reflexes that are biologically determined, human behavior has almost unlimited pliability that is, and will continue to be, fashioned by culture and society (which in turn was shaped by the societies and cultures that have come before). With this *a posteriori* assumption in mind I agree with Swatos (1983) who suggested that "traditional categories for understanding religion are based on models that no longer fit actual circumstances,

if they ever did" (321). New definitions must be constructed that are sensitive to the malleability of the human condition that has arisen in post-modernity.

I have provided a brief overview of how the social sciences have attempted to offer explanations for religious experiences based on systems of function and social structure. Swatos (1983) suggests that "much misunderstanding of the modern world situation with regard to religion is a function of a conceptualization of religion that is historically narrow, and as a result is dysfunctional when applied to developments in contemporary socio-cultural systems" (323). Social scientists must be constantly on guard to resist the temptation of treating social phenomena as fixed and static things when studying them. Religion is more than a thing, it is a process (see e.g. Hargrove 1989 and Swatos, 1983). Even labeling religion as a process is problematic. The word "process" carries with it the latent assumptions of a pattern that can be identified, mapped out, labeled, and boxed in. Yes, historically we can see some patterns in religious development, but these patterns are not universal. Therefore, as suggested by Hargrove (1989), "any definition we use must be recognized as existing in that area of tension between the solidity of a thing and the fluidity of a process" (29). In other words, our definition must be as malleable as society is.

The discussion thus far has led us to a slippery slope that may lead to a desert of infinite relativity. Unlimited relativity is a tempting thought, but if embraced ultimately will produce meaninglessness in society. Therefore, a line must be drawn. In her discussion about the dangers of relativity in the study of religion, Barker (2006) warns that "empirical diversity clearly indicates that while what is actually 'out there' might suggest how we perceive reality, it does not actually dictate what we see" (202). She is suggesting that cultural relativity exists in the form of shaping what members of that society see and don't see. Just think of Plato's allegory of

the cave from *The Republic*; the shadows on the cave walls are not real, but are understood by the prisoners based on their understanding of the world. This understanding comes from their cultural and social background, and while technically not "real" they are "real" in consequence. Due to our understanding of phenomena such as religion as "real," we can understand that cultures have attempted to reduce the relativity of such complex ideas and have, in effect, drawn boundaries around these phenomena.

Understanding that societies have drawn lines does not release social scientists from the need to be careful when constructing viable definitions for complex phenomena. Barker (2006) continues to explain that:

> [Societies] impose order by categorizing phenomena by categorizing boundaries. But although the boundaries that distinguish phenomena (objects, concepts, ideas, peoples) from each other are necessary (*we got to draw the line somewhere*), how and where these boundaries are drawn is arbitrary – or at least, relative to the society of group that draws and maintains the boundaries (202).

What a group chooses to include and exclude as being part of a social phenomenon is of fundamental importance to social scientists. Barker continues to explain that when a society is deciding what to include and exclude in a definition of religion, "sometimes the contents are shifted by a sleight of hand so that the definition of religion might, for example, exclude Scientology according to criteria that would also exclude, say, Buddhism were they (which they are not) consistently applied" (203). Therefore, we can see that societies can choose to ignore their own categories as they see fit. Religion could be confined to a belief in the supernatural, or extended to ideologies such as Marxism. Even Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* can be read to suggest that religion would at some future point be divorced of the supernatural and replaced by the secular.

Perhaps one of the most influential anthropologists of the past century was Geertz. In an essay titled "Center, Kings and Charisma: Reflections in the Symbolics of Power" (1977) Geertz offered:

> Thrones may be out of fashion and pageantry too; but political authority still requires a cultural frame in which to define itself and advance its claims, and so does opposition to it. A world wholly demystified is a world wholly depoliticized; and though Weber promised us both of these, specialists without spirit in a bureaucratic iron cage – the course of events since, with its Sukarnos, Churchhills, Nkrumahs, Hitlers, Maos, Roosevelts, Stalins, Nassers, and De Gaulles, suggest that what died in 1793 (to the extent that it did) was a certain view of the affinity between the sort of power that moves men and the sort that moves mountains, not that there is one" (167-168).

Religion is a "cultural frame" by which society can define itself. Geertz is often credited with providing one of the best definitions of religion in his book *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (1966). He defines religion as "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (4). However, in light of Otto's explanation of religion need for the "Holy," we can see that the definition proffered by Gerrtz, while being very structural and functional, in shortsighted and therefore unrealistic for the needs of this study.

Based on the above discussion I suggest that religion therefore is a constructed social phenomenon that has three elements to its character: 1) it is *malleable* in nature, 2) it is *social* in nature, and 3) it is "*active*" in nature. Religion is malleable in two ways. First religion seeks to fulfill the abstractions of cultural values. Second, religion can be seen as an expression of something that transcends human comprehension. The social nature of religion can be seen in the ways it fulfills various social needs. These needs could include, but are not limited to, a)

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protecting the moral order of society, b) providing access to a common identity, c) providing group stability and survival, d) providing access to goods and services, and e) providing order to society and the universe for the purposes helping individuals to comprehend phenomena, social and physical. Finally, religion is "active" in that is a process of incorporating points one and two with the intent of allowing for change, development, or decline. The active aspect of religion can be found in the beliefs and practices that are undertaken.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

To ascertain the nature of ethnic Mormonism I conducted a case study. A case study is an ideal approach to take for such a study in that it is "a study of an issue as it is explored through one or more cases with in a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007: 73). A bounded system is any social network in which all the social actors in the system have upper and lower limiting restrictions imposed on them. Such restrictions can be determined by meta-structure of society, subcultural groups emerging from the meta-structure or by the framework from which the researcher is working. For this study, the boundary of the group that I am studying is determined by both participation in the religious and ethnic culture that has produced ethnic fusion and symbolic exit from that culture. Creswell (2007) suggests that there are three types of case studies: *instrumental*, *intrinsic,* and *collective*. An instrumental case study looks at an issue of concern by way of one selective bounded case. The intrinsic case study focuses on the case that is the result of unusual or unique situations. A collective case study is similar to an instrumental case study with the exception that instead of looking only at one bounded case the researcher will use several cases to illuminate the issue of interest. Given the exploratory nature of this project it would be inappropriate to utilize a collective case study approach at this time. Instead the case study that I present is an instrumental case study that will provide future researchers with greater insight in relation to groups that demonstrate fused ethnicity.

Denzin (1994) asserts that when conducting qualitative research of this nature it is imperative to use data triangulation, which seeks to use at least three methods to check results. This method has also been called "cross examination" (Cheng, 2005). The goal of data triangulation for qualitative research is to provide a higher degree of validity and credibility. The theory behind such an approach is that confidence in the results will be greater if researchers

utilize several methods that result in the similar findings. In other words, by utilizing the strengths of different approaches researchers are more likely to surmount built-in biases that arise from overreliance on a single method. The case study that I am presenting is built primarily on data collected from three sources: 1) historical analysis, 2) semiformal and informal interviews, and 3) participant observation.

Historical Analysis

The importance of historical analysis has been marginalized in many contemporary sociological studies. Mills (1959) asserted that history should be considered a key for understanding how individuals come to an understanding of their roles within the social structures and institutions of a given culture or society. By connecting the remote forces of history to contemporary events in the lives of social actors, Mills hoped that insight could be gained about how individual experiences are related to the larger workings of society. In *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills stated:

> The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions (1959: 5).

In other words, Mills felt that a working knowledge of the historical conditions of society would endow social researchers with the ability to look beyond the personal contemporary circumstances and analyze broader meanings of social phenomena. Understanding ethnic Mormons, therefore, requires a clear understanding of the history of Mormonism.

Being officially established in 1830, Mormonism as a system of belief is still in its adolescence. This relatively short amount of time that Mormonism has been in existence allowed me the opportunity to become more thoroughly familiar with its history than would have been

possible with other ethnic/religious groups with histories that reach back hundreds if not thousands of years. Additionally, resulting from doctrines established at the time the church was organized by Joseph Smith Jr. on April 6, 1830 as well as at other times (see for example D&C 21:1; 47:3; 85:1), The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now operates a historical department and archive in Salt Lake City, Utah, which is as complete a written record of a people as exists anywhere in the world. Using the records gathered by the church as well as numerous historical analyses undertaken by scholars, I will present a historical justification for contemporary ethnic Mormonism.

Semiformal/Informal Interviews

The interview information presented in this case study was primarily gathered from individuals who participated in in-depth group interviews, or focus groups, I conducted with the same 8 individuals, 5 male and 3 female, over a period of several months. The initial goal when I started this project was to have focus groups that would last approximately one hour. However, as these were undertaken the interviews lasted upwards of three hours. The reason for the extended length of interviews was that the respondents wanted to keep talking. The very fact that the respondents wanted to spend as much time as they did would indicate that there are few sanctioned opportunities afforded to them to exercise voice about the meta-structure and correspond culture.

Jack Mormons hold a marginalized and often denigrated position in Utah culture, therefore locating and gaining access to such a group is problematic when used traditional sampling techniques. As a hidden population there was a degree of difficulty in gaining access to the group to be studied. To overcome these difficulties I implemented a "snowball" sample. Snowball sampling is a procedure that is frequently used in both qualitative and quantitative

social science research for the purposes of developing a research sample where study subjects are identified and asked to participate in the study by those who are already participating (Creswell, 2007). Typically the result is a sample that is constructed of acquaintances that are known to the entire group. The Snowball metaphor is used to describe the availability of data that starts of small, i.e. with one or two respondents, but with each layer added, i.e. additional respondents invited to participate, new and rich insights are added that will help to create larger and clearer understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Because snowball techniques typically result in a study sample that is largely constructed of individuals who may have many common social connections some social researchers feel that conducting research with such a sample results in a heightened degree of bias. However, the focus groups, which consisted of individuals with similar, or related, experiences relevant to a common social structure and history, made possible the study of the specific cultural phenomena and context of interest to this study. That the members of the focus groups knew each other meant that they felt more comfortable in discussing experiences and perspectives that were often known and understood by other members of the group. This respondent driven sampling technique allowed me to begin to identify the social networks that are in place in the hidden population.

I intentionally sought individuals for the focus groups who were likely to be currently experiencing some level of detachment from the more idealized Mormon ethnic/religious identity. Bauman (1973) holds that humanity has basic needs that result in the praxis "of active assimilation of the universe, of imposing on the chaotic world the ordering structure of human intelligent action" (118). This praxis has resulted in the construction of social boundaries that order and structure group identity into clear conceptualizations of what "is us" and "is not us."

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As previously explained, in modern society these lines have become increasingly blurred. The fuzziness of group identity results in individuals who appear to be "sorta us" or what Bauman refers to as "ambivalence" in the meta-structure. Bauman cautions that when the imposed ideal identity of the meta-structure is not questioned exclusionary practices can develop that detrimental to humanity as a whole. Therefore, by intentionally seeking insights from those who have been recognized as "ambivalence" and experienced sanctioning form the meta-structure, exclusionary practices can be better understood and placed in context with the structural processes that are employed to identify who "is us" and who "is not us." Such individuals will also be able to provide insights into how individuals in a condition of fused ethnicity decrease individual dissidence between the thick imposed ideal identity and the emerging identity resulting from thinner attachment to the group.

The semiformal nature of the group interviews granted me the freedom to explore topics with participants as they arose, rather than being restricted to a preconceived set of questions. Additional informal interviews were conducted with individuals from the focus groups to clarify issues discussed in the focus group sessions. The primary use of the information gathered in the focus groups and individual interviews was the creation of an analytic narrative. Narrative research is typically undertaken by qualitative researchers in hopes of forming a text or discourse that has a specific focus derived from the stories told by individuals (Creswell, 2007). This approach is ideal for the study at hand in that it relies heavily on the personal experience of respondents. The analytic narrative that I present in this study was generated from the many descriptions of events told to me by the focus group participants. The construction of this narrative has allowed me to discover common themes that can be used to fill in some of the gaps present in the current academic literature. When conducting the focus groups there were two

primary topics that I chose to explore. The first was the idea of symbolic exit, and the second had

to do with the participants' conceptions of their position in society and the culture from which

they departed.

Early on in the process I discovered that if I attempted to conduct a focus group from an

interview guide or a list of topics, the respondents would be less willing to talk freely. Therefore,

with the exception of asking about their perceptions of social position and the events of departure

from the fused identity, I would simply allow the respondents the opportunity to employ *voice* on

any subject that they wanted to talk about. By allowing this the respondents would "play off of

each other" and offer additional stories that would support the account of the other members of

the group. Frequently during the coding process I would encounter material that I was unclear on

the "rough ground" significance to the sample group. When this occurred I would make note of

my questions and either seek clarification in an informal interview with individuals outside of the

group setting or I would find ways to carefully work the topic into a follow-up focus group

interview if appropriate.

In addressing the issue of symbolic exit I was specifically interested in investigating

issues of age and impetus of exit. Underpinning this line of thought is the question of why

participants undertook a symbolic exit instead of a full-scale physical and cultural exit. If

Hammond and Warner (1993) are correct in their assertion that Mormonism is an example of

ethnic fusion, then a clear understanding is needed to explain why these individuals opted to

physically remain and "symbolically exit" by no longer participating in the religious elements of

the culture. Such an understanding would provide insight into how such an exit is achieved and

maintained. I also sought to understand the points at which the members of the focus groups

maintained common ground with the larger group. The idea of symbolic exits would suggest that

some level of affinity to the group would remain intact, if nothing more than as a source of identity.

The second topic that I was interested in dealt with the self-conceptions of those who had exited and their corresponding conceptions of the larger culture from which they departed. One way that I sought to gain insights into these conceptions was to ask questions that deal with stereotypes. Deutscher (1958) asserts that, "strong feelings about issues, personal values, attitudes, motives, etc., when internalized by an individual, become condensed into some sort of stereotype shorthand reference" (55). Deutscher goes on to suggest that addressing the stereotypes held by individuals is an advantageous methodological device for gaining access to the "self-conceptions and conceptions of others" (56). While these stereotypes may reflect distortions of reality, they are an important topic for qualitative researchers to explore in that "those definitions, being real to the definers – become real in terms of their overt behavior in relation to the members of that [group]" (Deutscher, 1958:60). In other words, stereotypes are real in their social consequences and as such should be explored.

Participant Observation

The last of the three methods used in the case study is participant observation. When employing a participant observational methodology a researcher will gather data in a variety of ways. However, the principal source of information comes from observations made about the culture-sharing group while the researcher becomes a participant in the studied cultural setting (Jorgensen, 1989). Living in Utah and interacting with the people provides me with an emic understanding of situations and behaviors. The etic perspective will be presented in historical and social scientific examinations of Mormon social and cultural practices.

This emic understanding of Mormonism in Utah was advantageous in various ways. Primarily, my living and working in the culture has allowed me to converse with a wide range of people who have provided different perspectives on the social phenomena that I studied. The conversations that I have had with people while living in Utah guided many of the questions that I asked in the focus groups and gave me insights into how the fused ethic group views those who opt to physically or symbolically exit. On multiple occasions it was my participation in the culture that helped me to see how what was being explained to me in the focus groups fit into the history of the culture.

Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is not always as straightforward as analysis of quantitative data. Evidence gathered from my participant observation, historical analysis, and interviews were compiled so that they could be sorted and coded. In regards to qualitative data analysis Marshall and Rossman (1990) stated:

> Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data (111).

By bringing order to the mountain of data researchers are able to present a clear chain of ideas related to the author's findings that external observers should be able to logically trace back to initial research questions or from question to conclusion (Yin, 1989). In an attempt to make my process as explicit as possible I will address how the data were gathered and analyzed.

Einstein is reported to have said, "It is the theory that decides what can be observed." I agree with this statement full-heartededly. However, when it comes to data analysis not only does theory illuminate what can be observed, it can also obscure critical social phenomena from

the researcher. To overcome this possible pitfall, I utilized grounded theory as my primary guide for data analysis. Grounded theory is a systematic approach used by many qualitative researchers that emphasizes the discovery of theory from the data as part of research process (Strauss, 1987). In many ways grounded theory woks in a reverse trajectory from the traditional research approaches. Glaser (1992) suggests that the idea behind ground theory is that the first step is to collect data verses the traditional approach that would require a clear working hypothesis (this is an additional reason why I chose not to use an interview guide when conducting the interviews). The grounded theorist will take, for example, transcripts of an interview and indentify common key ideas that emerge from studying the data; this is a process called coding. The coded ideas are then grouped together under similar concepts and categories. The conceptual categories that emerge from the data become the foundation for the creation of a theory, or a hypothesis that has in essence been reverse engineered.

The use of grounded theory allowed me to understand how individuals comprehend complex social concepts, such as *religiosity* and *ethnicity*; in the various social contexts that such phenomena are encountered without becoming overly concerned with preconceived notions of what should or should not be happening. Grounded theory proved to be ideal for the study of situations of fused ethnicity in that it allowed me the freedom to explore the subjective experiences of group members and see how these experiences relate to one another without being biased by a theory that dictates structural confines. Additionally, such an approach allowed me to come to a clearer understanding of (or describe) how historical trends related to particular patterns that surfaced.

Data Analysis: Focus Groups and Interviews

To reiterate, the key to implementing grounded theory is the process of coding in which the researcher identifies themes that are grouped into categories and, ultimately, from the understandings of the categories the researcher will generate a theory. With this in mind, careful, purposeful, data analysis must take place. I will first describe the coding process that I used to understand the focus groups.

All focus groups were conducted at locations chosen by the participants. When the focus groups were conducted I used two digital recorders spaced apart from one another. Immediately after the focus groups concluded I wrote down my impressions about things that had been discussed and notes about my perceptions. I then transcribed the narrative of the interview based on the recording of one the digital recorders. Upon completion of the transcribing of the interview I would then check the legitimacy of the transcript against the other recording and make adjustments if needed. Extensive time spent on this ensured that I had recorded everything exactly as it had been said, including notation in the transcript of laughing and other emotional expressions. This process was repeated for every focus group conducted.

When using a grounded theory methodology the process of coding the gathered data becomes a period of the project when the researcher gets to immerse him/herself in what quickly begins to feel the most treacherous rapids on swiftly flowing river. However with the right mythological tools this river of data, while at times remaining a daunting terrifying image lurking in the conscious mind of the researcher at ALL hours of the day, can become pleasurable experience, as was the case with this study. The coding process differed through the project depending on the purpose and phase of the project. Typically grounded theory data coding is undertaken in three stages: 1) open coding, 2) Axial coding, and 3) selective coding.

Open coding is undertaken in the early stages of the data analysis. This stage of the project involves the conceptualization of categories as emerge from early understanding of the data. This conceptualization focuses on grasping the broad features of the social phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, the conceptualization of categories involves the identification labeling and grouping of variables that appear to be involved with the phenomenon. At this stage in the process I preferred to use index cards and sticky notes which I would attach to large flat surfaces and rearrange as need so that I could construct what I felt to be an accurate representation of how variables related (or didn't relate) to each other along various continuums of possible outcomes. Two examples of the broad categories that I identified during open coding are Positive Statements about Mormonism and Negative Statements about Mormonism,

Following the open coding stage of data analysis I began the axial coding of the data. During the axial coding stage of data analysis researchers take the categories and variables that surfaced from open coding and begin to reconceptualize the relationships between categories. This is done in hopes of identifying the causal relationships between phenomenons of interest. By seeking to identify and make explicit the relationships between categories – and subcategories – researchers are able to begin to construct a model that will foster clearer understanding of how the categories relate to each other and how they relate back to the larger phenomenon that is being studied. During this stage of the coding process I began to have difficulty conceptualizing the relationship of the identified categories with my index cards, sticky notes and flat surfaces. I discovered that the multiplicity of identity sources made it to model the categorical relationships using two-dimensional models. To overcome this I constructed wooden blocks that I could stack on top of each other and move around and begin to visualize the interaction of variables.

My new three-dimensional modeling approach relied heavily on a coding technique that is an extension of both open and axial coding called selective coding. Selective coding is the method "cherry picking" key concepts and ideas and systematically attempting to identify the relationship between the selected concept and other concepts and categories. By employing selective coding in all the stages of coding researchers are able to validate (or invalidate) variable relationships and refine the coding schema as it develops. As the coding schema becomes increasingly refined the categories begin to integrate and eventually a core category emerges that is central to all other categories. From the core category a grounded theory is developed that seeks to explain the interaction between the core category and the surrounding categories. The core category that emerged from this process was a conceptualization of the ideal fused ethnic/religious Mormon identity. With this as an underpinning I was able to relate and track the changes in reported identity patterns along the spectrum of thinning/exit from the ideal identity.

In the coding of data for this project I additional developed a four part process that helped me undertake open, axial and selective coding by hand. This four part process was cyclical and repeated at every stage of the coding process. The process would begin with coding based solely reading the transcript (or a given section of the transcript) straight through. This would be followed by coding based on listening to the recording again. Next I would code while reading and listening to the recording. Finally I would compare the codes from the first three steps and pull copied sections of the transcript into separate files. This process was repeated multiple times throughout the open, axial and selective coding stages.

Data Analysis of Historical Information

A methodical and comprehensive understanding of the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is required to understand the origins of contemporary

practices. The historical data used in this case study came from three sources: 1) the archives of the church, 2) scholarly writings of members of the church, and 3) scholarly writings from outsiders. This historical data were searched out that primarily related to the LDS church and possible changes indicated in the coded themes of the focus groups. Additionally, I constructed a general narrative of historical trends in the United States that correspond to the events described by the respondents. This ensured that the narrative was placed in the appropriate context, and also helped to bring to the surface any possible external trends that could account for changes in the LDS culture or structural patterns which in turn could account for issues addressed in the focus groups.

Data Analysis: Construction of Analytic Narratives

From the themes uncovered during the coding process, the historical analysis, and my personal observations from participating in the larger culture I was able to develop specific theories about what I was observing. With the coded themes and working theories I was then able to begin the construction of an analytic narrative. The theory behind crafting an analytic narrative is that a researcher will be able to move beyond the simple recording of events and analyze the meaning of those events. Such an approach is ideal for qualitative researchers in that it allows them to link institutional origins with events and institutional change today. Levi (2002) suggests that analytic narratives can only be constructed after researchers have arrived at deep knowledge of the phenomena being studied and the development of a theoretical framework. In essence an analytic narrative aids researchers much like a choreographic chart helps dancers and blueprints help construction workers. When constructed properly the analytic narrative of social phenomena illustrates *what* actions are being conducted, *how* these actions are

undertaken, the *origins* of the actions, and the *order* in which actions are undertaken. For this case study I constructed analytic narratives for every coded theme that was identified.

CHAPTER 5: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: DEFINING THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

The Birth of Mormon Identity

The decades between 1890 and 1910 can be viewed as mountainous watershed. A watershed, as the term is used outside of the North American continent, is a line that acts as a drainage divide between adjacent geographical basins. In the case of mountainous watersheds one side of the mountain will receive the majority of rain fall leaving the opposite side virtually barren and desolate, as is the case with the Sierra Nevada mountain range between California and Nevada. In a sense the events at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century produced a watershed from two very different conceptions of what it means to be Mormon. However the 20th century Mormon conception of self, which is of primary concern to the current study, cannot be understood without knowledge of the 19th century Mormon conception.

As a religion that has it roots with a boy born a little over two-hundred years ago, Mormonism has a short but rich history. Keeping in mind that the goals of this study deal with the workings of contemporary Mormon and religious/ethnic identity, it would be inappropriate to give a detailed account of the history of the "Mormon experiment" at this time. For a more detailed account of this history three sources that are exceptional in content: *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture (2007), The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (1992), and *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (1977). In understanding the fundamental elements of the Mormon people this chapter begins with brief explanations of six key features of Mormon history that resulted in the early and contemporary Mormon identities: 1) Joseph's first vision, 2) The Book of Mormon, 3) Joseph's restoration of the gospel, 4) the attempts to exterminate Joseph and his followers, 5) the continuation of Mormonism without Joseph, and 6) the development of what is not Mormon: The Mormon Conception of Jews, Blacks, and Native Americans. This basic

understanding of Mormon history provides the basis for exploring the historical development of the fused ethnic and religious identity of contemporary Mormonism in the next two chapters.

The Birth of Mormon Identity: Joseph's First Vision

What is commonly referred to as "the first vision" is considered to be at the nexus of Mormon religion and culture. As a young New England boy living in the midst of the Second Great Awakening Joseph Smith experienced firsthand what has been dubbed "the democratization of American Christianity" (Hatch, 1991), which had the end result of many new populist religious movements and attempts at establishing utopian communities. Mormonism was one such movement. Most contemporary members of the Church simply refer to Smith as "Joseph" so I follow suit throughout his paper.

The events of the first vision were recorded during Joseph's time in two official accounts, but can also be found in numerous pieces of correspondences as well. The first official account was made in 1832 when Joseph was twenty-six. The second official version of the events was undertaken six years after the first and published in 1838. Both of these presentations have been studied by those in the church and by those out of the church, and the differences at times have been parsed in an attempt to aggrandize the man or expose him as a fraud. While the two accounts differ in various ways, Bushman (2008) asserts that, "they clearly tell the same story" (16).

The story portrays a fourteen year old Joseph perplexed by the events of the Second Great Awakening and what he viewed as the Christian biblical hypocrisy, stating that, "They did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository this was a grief to my soul…."(Smith, 2002:10). In recalling

his life as a fourteen old boy trying to live his life in accordance to the teachings of the Bible, Joseph reported in the 1832 account of the first vision:

> My mind became exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatized from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Chris as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world (Smith, 2002: 11).

The accepted sentiment in the Church is that Joseph came to know that the entire world had gone astray and, therefore, young Joseph was left with no organized religion to which he could turn. With no acceptable organized faith, young Joseph relied on his own interpretation of the Bible.

After reading a passage in the New Testament, which admonished, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (KJB James 1:5), Joseph in desperation retired to a wooded area near his family's home in upstate New York to pray. In the 1832 account of these events, Joseph reports:

> While in the attitude of calling upon the Lord, in the 16th year of my age, a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noonday came down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of God. And the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments. Behold, I am the Lord in glory. I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life. Behold the world lieth in sin at this time, and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me, and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to their ungodliness… (Smith, 2002: 11-12)[2].

Joseph recalls that his vision ended with the Lord telling him, "I come quickly as it is written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father" (Smith, 2002: 12).

Mormon Church history records that following the first vision Joseph told several local ministers, each time being told that what he had experienced was not what Joseph reported it to

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[2] I have corrected for spelling and punctuation.

be and that miracles had ceased with the Apostles. LDS Church history goes on to emphasize

that instead of questioning his experiences, Joseph increasingly lost confidence in the clergy and

churches and, instead, chose to live by his own biblical interpretations and personal revelations.

The Birth of Mormon Identity: The Book of Mormon

Approximately three years after the first vision, in 1823, young Joseph began to feel that

he had fallen "into transgressions and sinned in many things which brought a wound upon [his]

soul" (Smith, 2002: 12). In the 1838 account of the first vision Joseph elaborated that:

> I frequently fell into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and
> the foibles of human nature, which I am sorry to say led me into diverse
> temptations offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need
> suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins: A disposition to commit such
> was never in my nature; but I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with
> jovial company and characters not consistent with the character which ought to be
> maintained by one called of God (Smith, 2002: 233)[3].

In seeking to rectify his "foibles of human nature" in the eyes of God, Joseph once again prayed.

And once again Joseph had a vision; the content of this vision would serve to set the stage for the

future Church. This time, instead of being visited by the almighty, Joseph had what would be the

first of a series of visits from an angel that would later be identified as Moroni. Much transpired

between Joseph and Moroni but in time Moroni gave Joseph a record of a god-fearing people

that had lived in pre-Columbian American4. This record was engraved on what is now

commonly known as "The Gold Plates." Faithful Latter-day Saints believe that the *Book of*

Mormon (1830/1982) to be a direct translation of a section of this record.

The Book of Mormon is a compilation of fifteen books, in the same manner as the Bible,

where the books are named after a series of pre-Columbian prophets. The apex of the book is

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[3] I have corrected for spelling and punctuation.
[4] There has been a great deal of speculation within the Mormon faithful as to the exact location of these peoples, I
will forgo any discussion on this subject in that I fail to see the pertinence of how this would relate to fused ethnic
and religious identity.

found in the book of Third Nephi which contains an account of a resurrected Jesus Christ visiting and establishing a messianic kingdom. This messianic kingdom, according to the Book of Mormon, flourished in peace and righteousness for approximately two centuries until ultimately declining as a result of apostasy and bloodshed. The account of this people ends after the prophets have all been killed and Mormon, a general/prophet who abridged the people's records upon The Gold Plates and whom the book is named after, is killed in a catastrophic final battle. Just prior to his death Mormon entrusts The Gold Plates to his son Moroni who, while be hunted by his enemies, eventually buried them prior to his death (Church historians hold that Moroni buried The Gold Plates around 421 CE). It is this same Moroni that would later appear to Joseph to direct him to recover the plates and now sits atop Mormon temples. The Mormon faithful hold that the *Book of Mormon* is equal in authority to the Bible, so long as the bible is translated correctly.

The Birth of Mormon Identity: Joseph's Restoration of the Gospel

The first element of religion identified in the operational definition of religion was that religion needs to be malleable to the needs of the people and the context in which it exists. In other words, religious participation will be undertaken to fulfill the abstractions of cultural values present in s society. The earliest example of this occurring in Mormon religious identity can be seen with the emergence of Mormonism itself as an extension of the cultural values of the early 1800s in the northeastern United States. That is, Mormonism is an outgrowth of the religious movements of the time. The church refers to its doctrines as "the restored gospel," implying that essential guiding principles and doctrines were lost from Christian teachings. Additionally, many Mormon teachings can be read as acknowledging that some truth is present in most religions, but the passage of history has resulted in incomplete cosmologies for followers of those faiths. The

official name of the largest religious denomination that holds ties to Joseph Smith, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, holds insight into how this entire movement is viewed by the faithful. The words, "Latter-day Saints," in the Church's name are used to differentiate between the "saints" in previous times and the Saints in the latter days. This is done because Mormons see their church as a restoration of all the doctrines and teachings that were lost and needed to be brought back. In essence, Mormons see themselves as renewing the mission that Jesus Christ, along with his apostles, started at the beginning of the Christen era.

Bushman (2008) suggests that the word *restoration* has it roots in the society from which Mormon identity emerged. In fact, there is historical evidence suggesting that Joseph may have borrowed the term from a Reformed Baptist preacher named Walter Scott (Bushman, 2008: 4). Scott was using the word *restoration* to refer to the works of Martin Luther and other reformers. In fact, the Puritans, who had a heavy influence on the culture of New England, viewed themselves as the restorers of the primitive church. Restoration ideas can also be found in the teachings of the Campbellites, a group with whom the Mormons experienced mixed missionary success and uneasy social interaction. Many Campbellites felt that Joseph had taken the restoration to extremes; the Campbellites adhered tightly to the doctrines, organization, and worship styles of the New Testament doctrine, but felt that there was no need to claim revelation and apostolic authority.

While it is true that restoration movements in general provide their adherents with a connection to history, Joseph's restoration was unique. Groups such as the Puritans believed in returning to a "primordium of true Christianity" (Bushmann, 2008: 5) when truth flourished unencumbered. Joseph did not believe that such a time ever existed. Joseph looked back at history and offered a view of many eras, or "dispensations" as he called them, where God had

used prophets to create righteous civilizations. Many Latter-day Saints believe Joseph's conception of dispensations to be unique in that none of the dispensations contained the full truth that God had prepared for humanity; the full truth was to come in the last days, or the "dispensation of the fullness of times." Mormon doctrine holds that each dispensation ends with the work being thwarted, the prophet's departure – by death or by divine translation – and society lapsing into apostasy and debauchery. One such example of apostasy that Joseph offered was the Christian belief in a God that was outside of space and time. Joseph explained that this was a result of obscuring the Bible's "plain meaning" with Greek philosophy. The Mormon Church, therefore, was established to restore what was lost from each dispensation and provide the fullness of God's plan for humanity.

The Bible served as the blueprint used by the early restorationists for reconstructing true religion. Restorationists would study and identify the essential elements needed for Christian worship. Each identified element would in turn be used as a standard to look to as one actively matches and conforms in belief and practices. As I mentioned previously, Joseph used the term restoration to describe his church establishment. The Mormon religious identity that emerges from Joseph's restoration is different from the restorationists in that in the place of intensive academic study and discussion Joseph asserted that his restoration came from God in the form of personal revelation, and revelation that he received for the congregation at large. As a prophet, Joseph claimed the rights to not only interpret scripture to better explain the unknown, but he also asserted that he had the right to write scripture, just as the biblical prophets did.

The Mormon belief that God was instructing Joseph on how to restore the gospel did not completely remove the authority of the Bible as a legitimate source of information to aid in the task of restoration. The Bible was essential to the religious identity of the early Latter-day Saints

to help them understand much of what they were experiencing as new members of a restored church. Recall that I suggested that the restoration that Joseph brought about was not just in form and structure like the Campbellites, but in power as well. Joseph was viewed as a purveyor of guidance and revelation like Peter and Paul had been for the early Christian Church. Furthermore, as discussed previously, Joseph frequently reported to have been visited by angels and endowed with their powers. It has been suggested that "rather than emulating biblical religion, the Mormons in their own eyes reenacted it" (Bushman, 2008: 5). Therefore, in the Mormon religious identity, the Bible served as a blueprint not for the purposes of knowing what to look for, but rather as a guide to explain what they were experiencing.

As purveyor of guidance and revelation Joseph differed from Peter and Paul in a unique and interesting way. The New Testament records multiple occasions in which Christ's disciples would overtly contest the doctrines and rites of different creeds or enter into debates with philosopher theologians, Joseph did neither. While the teachings and doctrines that Joseph introduced were controversial, Joseph himself was not a controversialist (Bushman, 2008). Instead of presenting new doctrines in opposition to the errors of traditional Christian belief, Joseph would just simply announce the new doctrines and proceeded to expound their meaning. It is not uncommon in the Mormon faith to here Joseph's revelations referred to as a flood of knowledge springing forth from heaven to relieve a drought ridden world (see D&C 121).

Latter-day saints came to understand that the role of Joseph, and his successors, was to serve as a guide in an ever changing world. The title that is commonly ascribed to the leader of the church is "president," who is "considered by the faithful to have all the rights and powers of an Old Testament prophet, priest, and king" (Flake, 2004: 77). Revelation was not restricted to Joseph but is believed to have continued to this day. Bushman (2008) stresses that contemporary

"church members like the idea of being led by revelation [and] most happily receive the directions of the prophet-president of the church as the will of the Lord in our time" (3). This belief has culminated in a religious identity that is simultaneously conservative and liberal. Conservative in that the identity is based on strict adherence to tradition and calls for a return to values of a previous age, and liberal in that revelation is understood as a tool for managing the affairs of the church in a ever changing world, allowing for change, development, and decline of doctrinal beliefs and practices.

Perhaps the most unique element of Mormon ethnic and religious identity to come out of Joseph's restoration is the way that Mormons view the Godhead. Mormons do not accept the traditional Christian idea of the trinity but rather prefer to view their deity in what is often referred to as "social trinitarianism," implying that "the three beings of the Godhead are blended in heart and mind like extremely close friends but are not one being" (Bushman, 2008: 6). Joseph declared that God, the Father, and Christ had bodies of flesh and bones but that the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost, was a personage of spirit (D&C 130:22). The idea of a corporeal God is not a uniquely Mormon conception. What is interesting about the Mormon perception of God is how, in the words of a Mormon scholar, it "annihilated the sacred distance" (Givens, 2007: 47) between humanity and the divine. In other words, the Mormon conception of God is an available quantifiable deity that, according to Mormon doctrine, exists in the same ontological domain as humanity.

Mormons have been scrutinized a great deal for their conception of a deity that is the same species as mortals. This unique conception of God has provided Mormons with not only a rich underpinning for their religious identity, but also for their ethnic identity, and gives Mormonism a distinctive flavor. In many ways this conception of God is the basis for the

Mormon cosmological order of society and the universe. The Mormon conception of God is a loving father that will do almost anything to help his children, as long as they are willing to be obedient to his dictates. The distinguishing characteristic of 19th century Mormonism, according to Bushman(1988), "was not so much the Gospel Mormons taught…but what they believed had happened – to Joseph Smith, to Book of Mormon characters, and to Moses and Enoch…Mormonism is history, not philosophy" (188-189). Shipps (1985) suggests that, "Mormon history itself took on a sacred character" (64). For Mormons the history of Joseph, and the restored history of the faithful, provided a new cosmological order of direct revelation that was experienced in the everyday lives of the faithful.

Joseph's restored ideas surrounding revelation, prophetical or personal, stands at the center of all Latter-day Saint religious cosmology according to non-LDS scholars Hatch (1991) and Bloom (1992) (see also Flake, 2004). These authors agree that this abundance of revelation in the lives of Mormons is the significant item that differentiates the Latter-day Saint faith from other forms of Christianity. As discussed previously, Mormons believe, by means of miraculous intervention, God has revealed and restored all powers and knowledge that was held in previous dispensations. The miracles of revelation and divine intervention gave Mormonism its original momentum and evidence for the key cosmological element in Mormon theology: God intercedes and is involved in human affairs. This is a highly contested Christian cosmology that has set Mormons apart as a peculiar people.

The Birth of Mormon Identity: Attempts to Expel Joseph and His Followers

Not long after the church was officially established in 1830 the missionary efforts of the faithful began to bear fruit. In 1831 Joseph decided to relocate the church headquarters from New York to Kirtland, Ohio to be nearer to more than a hundred converts residing in northwest

Ohio. In conjunction with this move Joseph reports that he received revelations that directed him to find a suitable location to build a City of Zion, or as Mormons more simply refer to it, Zion. Zion was believed to be a place where the Saints could gather and prepare for the millennial reign of Christ. The theme of gathering will be addressed in greater detail later on.

The remainder of Joseph's life was spent focused on building Zion and establishing a communal order that was based on equality and unity. However, Joseph's hopes were thwarted by the opposition of non-Mormon established residents wherever Mormons settled. This opposition was most likely resulted from fear and misunderstanding of the rudiments of a "handful of religious eccentrics in their communities" (Bushman, 2008: 10) who were now becoming so numerous that they were perceived as a threat to the majority. The established majority had no legal way to expel the Mormons, so they turned to vigilante action which often culminated in actions such as whippings, crop-burnings, and tar and feathering.

In 1833 the Mormon faithful, seeking to escape vigilante violence, sought refuge in largely unoccupied areas of northern Missouri. Initially the Saints were allowed to temporarily settle in Clay County, but tensions once again began to surface between the established residents and the displaced Mormon wanderer. Near the end of 1836 the county of Caldwell was created as a place where the Mormons could settle permanently. The Saints, under the direction of Joseph, once again set out to establish a Zion where the faithful could gather. The hub of this community was in the newly established county seat, Far West. However, animosity continued to be cultivated wherever the Saints settled, and in 1838 the Missouri state government had Joseph arrested, and forced Mormons to sign over their property and leave Missouri or face extermination.

From Far West the Church relocated to Illinois and founded another city in the hopes of establishing Zion. Following his escape from prison Joseph rejoined the Saints and named their fledgling city, Nauvoo, a Hebrew word meaning "beautiful place." Nauvoo served once again as a gathering place for the faithful, now amassing from all over the world. In short time Nauvoo had just as many residents as Chicago (Bushman, 2008). The Nauvoo charter granted an interesting mix of power to the city leaders and, in effect, established an independent theocracy within the boundaries of United States. In hopes of preventing the same calamities that had arisen previously, the Nauvoo City Council codified in law an act that required toleration to be extended to peoples of all faiths.

In spite of the toleration act, unrest once again found the Saints. The unrest in Nauvoo came from both those outside the faith – angered and fearful of the great prosperity that was enjoyed by the Saints – and from within the fold – dissent resulting from the introduction of doctrines that supported in the practice for which Mormons are perhaps best known today; polygamy. In neighboring cities newspapers began to be spattered with writings that called for another Mormon expulsion. Many of these newspapers went so far as to threaten the life of Joseph and other prominent church leaders. Moving to stop the animosity between the groups church officials closed down the *Nauvoo Expositor* after the paper published an unflattering dissenting protest paper. The decision to close the church owned paper proved to be detrimental; citing infringement on the constitutional right of a free press the local population erupted in outrage. Joseph Smith was removed from Nauvoo and taken to Carthage for trial. On June 27, 1844, while awaiting trial, a mob stormed the prison that Joseph and a few of his associates were being held in and shot him and his brother Hyrum to death.

The Birth of Mormon Identity: Continuation of Mormonism without Joseph

It was anticipated by local authorities and citizens that the killing of Joseph would spark an uprising from the Mormon faithful, and preparations were taken to suppress any such action. However, being sensitive to situation in which they found themselves, Mormons did not respond with violence. After several months of debate over who should be the next ecclesiastical leader, Brigham Young claimed the position citing his right as the most senior member of the leading council of church leaders, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, which was established by Joseph. Not everyone agreed that Young should be the new leader, and many "break off" churches were established in time.

Brigham Young expressed hope that opposition to the church would end with the death of Joseph, but his hopes were short lived. In the fall of 1845, just a little over a year after the death of Joseph, the Illinois government requested, in an attempt to prevent a violent offensive by locals who still harbored ill will towards the Mormons, that the Mormons leave. Pressured to leave sooner rather than later, the first group of Mormons crossed the Mississippi in the cold of February, 1846. Deciding that the United States would never grant them the degree of religious freedom that the Mormons craved, Brigham Young decided to relocate beyond the borders of the U.S. in what was then part of Mexico, where they would be able to establish Zion without external interference. After wintering briefly in Winter Quarters (located in present-day North Omaha) during the winter of 1846-1847, the Mormon vanguard company eventually entered the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847.

What Is Not *Mormon*

Historically Mormons have not only crafted a clear conception of what *is* Mormon, but they have also crafted clear conceptions of what *is not* Mormon. Mauss (2008) asserts that

emerging from the social, political, and theological elemental circumstances that have previously been mentioned, the early Latter-day Saints acquired specific doctrines regarding their role in the world as well as doctrines about Jews, Native Americans, and African Americans/Blacks.

What Is Not *Mormon: The Mormon Conception of the Jews*

From many of Joseph's revelations Mormons came to understand themselves as the literal descendents of the scattered Israelite tribe of Ephraim. With this understanding Mormons came to see the Jewish people as cousins. Mormon doctrine holds that the Old Testament's lost tribes of Israel would be gathered in the latter-days to Zion built in North America, while the Jews were to be gathered to Palestine. Mauss (2008) notes an absence of anti-Semitism in official Mormon discourse despite its ties to reformed Christianity. In the place of anti-Semitism Mauss suggests that, "philo-Semitism is far more apparent," noting that many Jews in the western states have often testified to kind and friendly relationship with the Mormon people (912). This connection and affinity to the Jewish people will become increasingly apparent in the discussion of Old Testament underpinnings in the Mormon identity.

What Is Not *Mormon: The Mormon Conception of Native Americans*

The conception of Native Americans by the Mormon people seems to be attached to the level of responsiveness to proselytizing on the part of the American aboriginal peoples (Mauss, 2008). Mormon ideas about the Native Americans are based in the teachings of the *Book of Mormon*. Early church leaders held that the various aboriginal peoples of the Americas were the descendents of an apostate Israelite people known in the *Book of Mormon* as Lamanites. Native Americans were seen by the early church as a collective people that possessed the "divine potential for redemption and destiny as a superior people" (Mauss 2008: 912). However, at the turn of the 20th century Mauss (2008) contends that to Mormons, "the nomadic peoples of the

Americans came to seem less like the redeemable Lamanites of the *Book of Mormon* and more like 'plain old Indians'" (913). While the peoples of the *Book of* Mormon have never been identified conclusively, contemporary folk beliefs among many of the members of the church favor Central America. Mormons who believe this way cite the rapid growth of the church in Central and South America as fulfillment of early church predictions that the "Lamanites" would once again become a delightsome people.

What Is Not *Mormon: The Mormon Conception of African Americans/Blacks*

It is well known by both members and non-members of the LDS faith that prior to 1978 Blacks with African ancestry could not hold the priesthood in the church. What is less known are the origins of this policy. Given that this thesis is about the identity of the Mormon people and not the theological basis for restricting a people for full organizational access I will forgo a detailed probe into the origins of this doctrine. It will serve the needs of this work to note that historians have concluded that Joseph himself ordained at least one man of black African descent in the 1830s. It appears that the restriction of the priesthood from Blacks with African ancestry gradually found a place in church policy in the latter part of the 1840s under the leadership of Brigham Young.

What is clear is that in 1852 Brigham Young, officiating in his civil duties during the opening session of the Utah Territorial Legislature, officially announced the policy restricting the priesthood from Blacks with African ancestry. This, of course, has led to interesting debates over the purpose of the policy: was this a civil policy based on the politics of the time or was this a divinely intuited religious practice. Of course, such debates really only began in vehemence, according to Mauss (2008), following the civil rights moment in the United States in the 1960s.

CHAPTER 6: HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT *IS* A MORMON

What Is a *Mormon*

Following the death of Joseph, the subsequent relocation, and geographic isolation, in the

Great Basin, Brigham Young was able to undertake the establishment of Zion in ways that

Joseph had only dreamed of. Givens (2007) asserts:

> Under [Young's] theocratic leadership, Mormon life was more thoroughly
> pervaded by his temporal and spiritual dictates than was that of any comparable
> group of individuals in American history. Joseph Smith laid the foundations, and
> for the balance of Mormonism's first half-century, Brigham Young shaped the
> Mormon experience. It is on those twin pillars that the Mormon intellectual and
> cultural heritage rests" (xii-xiii).

As the "twin pillars" of Mormonism it is possible, for illustrative purposes, to suggest

that Joseph provided the building blocks of the religious identity and Brigham provided

the building blocks of the cultural identity.

Previously I noted that following the death of Joseph there was several splinter groups

that formed focusing on various teachings of the early Mormon Church. Some have suggested

that the Saints that opted not to follow Brigham and instead reorganize around other early church

leaders were more attached to the identity of Christian Primitivism that can be found in Joseph's

teaching than they were to the neo-Judaic Christianity evidenced in the various rites (i.e., temple

rites and polygamy) of Joseph's political-kingdom concept (May, 1980). In other words, such

people were more attached to the religious identity than they were to the social practices that

Joseph had established.

This split can further be understood by looking at the research of O'Dea (1957) in which

four important elements of early Mormonism are identified: 1) a new definition of God, 2) new

forms of religious expression (the baptism for the dead, endowment rituals, and sealed

marriages), 3) the gathering of Zion, 4) and the practice of polygamy (54-60; see also Gooren,

2008: 378-379). Following the death of Joseph, those who didn't like the more active elements such as polygamy and temple rites, could simply choose to rely on the religious novelties that had emerged from early Mormonism. These conclusions are based on assumptions about the identities of these "break-off" groups as suggested by what has been said of them in history books written about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day saints. This is problematic for obvious reasons and future studies need to be undertaken to compare the religious identity of the Reorganized Church, as well as other churches that trace their heritage to Joseph, to better understand the origins of identity in both groups. The cultural identity which was proffered by Young was established as a concrete mechanism for maintaining, expressing, and experiencing the religious identity established by Joseph in hopes of perpetuating the religious identity. To better understand how this took place I will now discuss the historical development of what *is* Mormon.

What Is *a Mormon: Rites and Rituals*

The earliest conceptions of what *is* Mormon can be traced to the boundaries that were erected around the religious identity. Trice and Beyer (1984) suggest that the structure – and by extension, boundaries – of churches can be better understood by systematically identifying/clarifying the rites and ceremonies of the organization. They suggest the existence of six ideal types of rituals: 1) rites of passage, 2) rites of degradation, 3) rites of enhancement, 4) rites of renewal, 5) rites of conflict reduction, and 6) rites of integration. All six types of rituals serve to help individuals create or maintain their individual identity within the larger context of group identity. All six identified types can be found either in historical Mormonism or in contemporary Mormonism.

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage are undertaken at points in an individual's life to celebrate the process of transition or to bring closure to changes. A prime example of a Mormon rite of passage is the act of baptism to gain membership to the group. Mormon baptisms are performed by immersion in water signifying the death of the previous sinful person, burial, and rebirth through Christ. Additional rites of passage can be seen in primary graduation, priesthood advancement, temple endowment, and missionary farewells. Scholars have noted that most Mormon rites of passage are skewed toward male advancement. Tarjan (1992) notes that in contemporary Mormon culture, "one reason many capable young women may have problems with the church in their late teens is that fewer women go on missions, and then at a later age; the only comparable alternative rite of passage for females is marriage" (37). This may provide insight into the prevalence of women getting married in their late teens or early twenties in Utah. Additionally, it is not uncommon to encounter young adult males in Utah who opted not to serve missions and express frustration about the way they are perceived, and often ostracized, by Mormon society.

With a number of important rites of passage in the life of young Mormon children – again mostly males – an interesting pattern has emerged. This is that "graded rites are almost exclusively performed by fathers" (Phillips, 2001: 37). It is not uncommon to find fathers that just prior to their children undergoing a rite of passage develop an increased desire to be active and worthy to perform such duties. Developing from this tendency for fathers to be the ones to perform the rite of passage is a cultural stigma attached to fathers that are not allowed by ecclesiast leaders to participate in these rites. That some fathers are not allowed to participate is an example of a modern rite of degradation.

Rites of Degradation

Rites of degradation are undertaken to signify that a person had underperformed and, therefore is unworthy of full participation with the group or that the individual has been outright dismissed from the community. In early church history such rites were very public, but have in more recent years become increasingly private. Given the nature of the rite, it is likely that the more private the rite becomes, the less power it will have to convey serious meaning to the group. Early Mormon history is full of examples of people being required to make public confession of their misdoing and, therefore, face social repercussions. A contemporary example of a public statement of misconduct can be found in "An Open Letter to Members of the Church" published in the *Deseret News* in October of 1991. In this letter former general authority Paul H. Dunn stated: ""I confess that I have not always been accurate in my public talks and writings. Furthermore, I have indulged in other activities inconsistent with the high and sacred office which I have held." Elder Dunn goes on to state:

> My brethren of the General Authorities, over a long period of time, have
> conducted in-depth investigations of the charges made against me. They have
> weighed the evidence. They have censured me and placed a heavy penalty upon
> me. I accept their censure and the imposed penalty…

It is unclear what censure and penalty were placed on Elder Dunn. What is publicly known is that he was released from his active church duties as a general authority and called as an emeritus general authority at the age of 65, something that is not typically undertaken until the age of 70. As I have stated such public measures are uncommon today with rites of degradation typically restricted to disfellowshipment (a formal restriction of privileges) or excommunication.

Rites of Enhancement

Rites of enhancement are undertaken to acknowledge a persons' accomplishments or heightened status. Such rites in the Mormon Church can be seen in the young men's Duty to God

award which, according to Elder F. Melvin Hammond, serves to help young men "be better prepared than ever to go to the temple, serve missions, marry in the temple and become good husbands and fathers" (2001). A similar rite of recognition can be found in the Young Woman's Recognition in Womanhood award, which is intended to help young women grow closer to Christ and prepare for temple attendance (Moore, 2008).

Rites of Renewal

Rites of Renewal are undertaken with the intent of helping members maintain or gain greater access to the organization. In the contemporary church there are numerous ways that local leadership monitor the activity level of individuals. This is undertaken to prevent members from slipping into inactivity. One such monitoring device is known as the personal priesthood interview (PPI). A PPI can be undertaken with a bishop or with a father or grandfather. If an individual is found to be included in behaviors that are not becoming of a Latter-day Saint they will be asked to stop and, if needed, seek out the Bishop and begin the "repentance process." Rites of renewal differ from situation to situation, but the end result is greater access to church resources.

Rites of Conflict Reduction

Rites of conflict reduction have all but formally disappeared in the contemporary church. Such rites are in place to help resolve conflicts that arise between members in an official and sanctioned manner. In the days of Deseret church leaders served as both civil and ecclesiastic authority where the "bishop's court" was used to rectify disputes. Interestingly, bishop's court also served as a forum where members could publicly debate the validity of church policy and doctrine. However, with increased emphasis on standardization in the latter half of 20th century the church now seems more apt to deny that such disputes over doctrine and police exist, or if

such disagreements do exist they are not appropriate in a Zionistic community (Tarjan, 1992: 38). In contemporary Utah it is not uncommon to find individuals in the "sorta us" category that explain their presence as a result of church leaders and lay members alike refusing to acknowledge difficult questions and suggesting that such personal expressions have no place among the faithful. If rites of conflict reduction had still been in place it may have been possible for many of these individuals to resolve the issues that troubled them. Later discussions will address the purposes behind the Church's standardization movement.

Rites of Integration

Rites of integration are undertaken by groups for the intent of increasing solidarity and collective group identity. Such rites are rampant in the LDS community. Informally there are ward parties, gatherings arranged among ward members, and service projects undertaken to help the community feel closer. The formal situations of integration can be seen in the abundance of mass meetings that transpire on a regular basis. In addition to weekly three-hour services for neighborhood wards there are "conferences" that are held throughout the year. The conferences of the church increase in size from the stake conference (a collection of wards) to the regional conference (a collection of stakes) to the area conference (a collection of regions) to the General Conference which is a worldwide conference. These meetings are designed to increase unity, strength and dedication in the church. An additional rite of integration can be seen in temple attendance where only the most devoted of Latter-day saints are allowed. Wards also sponsor a monthly "ward temple" night for members in good standing to gather together and worship in a setting beyond weekly church services.

What Is *a Mormon: A Peculiar People*

The Mormon identity has been crafted not only by the Mormons themselves, but by outsiders as well. I recently spoke with a couple that had been visiting Nepal to attend a wedding. They spoke of an individual at the wedding that was greeting everyone and asking about their backgrounds. When this couple was asked where they were from they responded that they are from Utah. The immediate response to hearing that they were from Utah was to ask, "Are you Mormon?" to which they responded in the affirmative. Hearing that the couple was Mormon, this individual gasped with eyes wide and quickly walked away.

Living among Mormons it is not uncommon to hear Mormons tell stories such as this. The pervasiveness of these stories illustrates that Mormons like to talk about how they are perceived as a "peculiar people." Bushman (2008) asserts that:

> Outside observers sometimes react to Mormonism as "nice people, wacky beliefs." Mormons insist that the "wacky" beliefs pull them together as a people and give them the strength and the know-how to succeed in the modern world (15).

It's important to Mormons to be different. In building Zion early church members turned to the Old Testament, frequently using the book of Deuteronomy, to find meaning about who they were as people and about how God viewed them. One verse seems to ring out time and again in the early writings of the people: "For thou art an *holy people* unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be *a peculiar people* unto himself, *above all the nations* that are upon the earth" (Deut 14:2, emphasis added). There is no doubt that Mormons have succeeded in separating themselves from "all nations" as a "peculiar people." Today we can find an entry in the in *Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups* identifying the Mormons as distinct ethnic group. Givens (2007) calls this "a sign of both success and loss in Mormonism" (56). Givens explains:

Success, because any covenant people without the actions of fruits or special character that betoken their status as a 'peculiar people' may be said to have failed in those covenantal practices that are the mark of their distinction from the fallen world. Mormons have certainly succeeded in becoming recognizably distinct. Loss because an evolved cultural identity may be taken to suggest elitism, a gaze and culture more attuned to the self than the other, an impetus toward what is insular and exceptional rather that what is universal and fraternal (56).

The religious history of Mormonism shows that as a group they undertook measures to cultivate and advance a dominant religious identity that has succeeded in making them a "peculiar people" in comparison not only to mainstream secular society, but also from other Christian religions. This "peculiar people" idea has been cultivated to the point that many Mormons don't consider themselves to be Protestants (Johnson and Mullins, 1992). Other scholars have speculated that based on religious identity Mormonism should be seen as a new religion that is separate from Christianity in the same way that Christianity is separate from Judaism (Stark, 1984); that is to say, Mormons share a historical background but are unique in self-perception.

What Is *a Mormon: Gather to Zion*

As Saints of the latter-days, Mormons feel that it is encumbent upon them to bring the world to a full understanding of the moral dictates of the divine. The early church went about accomplishing this by practicing what they called the doctrine of gathering. The doctrine of gathering centered on the idea of building Zion. In a nut shell, the early doctrine of gathering dictated that when an individual joined the church – regardless of where they physically lived – they were required to uproot and move to be with the body of Saints. Or as Phillips (2001) expressed, converts were required to "Sell their belongings and 'come to Zion'" (4). In connection with the doctrine of gathering the church began to utilize a "family of believers" metaphor to illustrate the ideals of closely knit community (Tarjan, 1992). The lasting effects of this metaphor can still be seen today in the way that everyone is referred to as "brother" or

"sister."As more and more Saints gathered from around the world the early Mormon Church began to see an increased tendency for dissent among the leadership in regard to how the affairs of Zion should be undertaken.

Tarjan (1992) believes that the "inevitable power struggles that accompanied Church growth and repeated relocation diminished the feelings of unity and cohesion needed to sustain a Churchwide family atmosphere" (42). Early church leaders such as David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Thomas B. Marsh publicly began to question the validity of a family metaphor resulting from their inability to accept Joseph as "first among many equal brothers" (Tarjan, 1992). This resistance to a hierarchy of power would manifest itself frequently when "the Mormons ran afoul of their neighbors at virtually every turn" (Phillips, 2001: 3) and in heated debates over who should assume the leadership of the church following the death of Joseph.

Following the death of Joseph and the acceptance of Brigham Young as the new leader, the Saints expressing contempt towards the United States over what they perceived as a failure to protect their constitutional liberties, began to form wagon trains and head west beyond the nation's border (May, 1980). Brigham Young and other church leaders felt that it would be in the best interest of their people to isolate them as much as possible from the antagonisms and disrupting influences they had historically suffered. It has been noted that, "The Mormons are perhaps the only American ethnic group whose principal migration began as an effort to move out of the United States" (May, 1980: 720). Mormon historians often talk of the amplified importance of the Old Testament in the lives of these early saints following the death of Joseph. At this time Mormons increasingly sought to understand the events of the church as parallel with the followers of Moses as recorded in the Pentateuch (Phillips, 2001). In fact, is not uncommon

to encounter journals of these early Utah Saints with references to Brigham Young as a Moses

that guided them away from captivity and gathered them into a promised land.

What Is *a Mormon: The Kingdom of Deseret*

Having left the United States the Mormons set about establishing a theocratic kingdom

for all Latter-day Saints. In complete isolation the members of the church were free to openly

practice all elements of their faith openly without fear of reprisal. Under the direction of Young

the Saints established hundreds of enclave communities where they could be free from

persecution. Moorman (1992) asserts that the development of dense enclaves became the

primary means of creating and sustaining identity for the Saints. In Deseret, the name given to

Mormon nation by Brigham Young, there was no separation between church and state. Brigham

Young performed the role of religious leader as well as secular leader (Madsen, 1990). In fact,

Brigham also served as the leader of all Deseret military functions.

With Young being seen as a modern day Joshua, the church began to shift away from the

"family of believers" metaphor and opted for a more militaristic one: "the camp of Israel"

(Tarjan, 1992). The camp of Israel metaphor began to flourish during the trek west and was

firmly entrenched in the identity of Mormonism in Deseret. This new metaphor was undertaken

to strengthen the ideas of uniting to fight against all those who were labeled as enemies of Zion.

Tarjan (1992) explains that:

> Just as ancient Israel fought Pharaoh and the Canaanites, the new Camp of Israel
> fought against Illinois mobs and [the U.S.] army. Ancient Israel united to battle its
> way through the Sinai, and Modern Israel battled its way across the plains.
> Ancient Israel followed Joshua into the Promised Land; the Saints followed
> Brigham to a new Promised Land (43).

Mormons began to refer to themselves as the "Children of Israel" and suggested that they

were, in fact, the literal descendents of Abraham called out of the world to gather the

scattered twelve tribes (Mauss 1999; Green 1999). The early Mormons went so far as to refer to anyone that was not a member of their faith, including Jews, as "gentiles," with the rest of society commonly being referred to as "Babylon." While it has now fallen out of style to refer to non-Mormons as "gentiles," this heritage is still widely known and discussed.

The similarities the geography of Deseret served to reinforce the Old Testament parallels. The Saints also sought out scriptural motivation for learning to live in an inhospitable environment; the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah (see appendix A) was often cited to motivate the Saints to be industrious and help the arid desert to "blossom as the rose." This scripture, and others like it, were often used to offer comfort to the struggling Saints who had escaped persecution and were starting all over again. Once the Saints had found refuge in the Salt Lake Valley, pervasive rhetoric of the mountains as "Zion's walls" that function to keep outsiders at bay began to be so common that it even seeped into the non-material culture of the church as is evidenced in such hymns, as "High on a mountain top" and "Ye elders of Israel" (see Hicks, 1989).

Aided by Old Testament metaphors, in connection with isolation from outsiders, the Mormon people began to solidify as a unique people (Phillips, 2001). As the Saints congealed with an increasingly thick identity, previously held American and European identities began to thin out. With a heightened dependence on Deseret leaders for temporal and spiritual guidance, immigrant converts gathering to Zion experienced a rapid assimilation with their native languages rapidly fading away (May, 1980). The strong demands of separation from society at large prompted Mormons to develop common values of self-control and asceticism (Phillips, 2001). Such values were personified in the Deseret symbol of the beehive – which Tajan (1992)

explains, "Signifies the value Latter-day Saints place upon thrift and industry" (41) – which is still a prominent emblem throughout Utah today.

Like bees working for the betterment of the hive, the Saints set about their work with seemingly unified purpose. As the Saints built more and more infrastructure and enclave communities they also developed a heightened sense of territoriality which provided "a distinctive cast to Mormon group consciousness" (May, 1980: 720). May (1980) suggests that this Mormon group consciousness is what differentiates Mormons from other sects. As O'Dea expressed it, Mormonism became the "the clearest example to be found in our national history of the evolution of a native and indigenously developed ethnic minority" (Quoted in May 1980: 720). So strong is this historical Mormon group consciousness that Phillips (2001) asserts that today Mormonism in general holds "a strong attachment to Utah as their religious homeland" (33).

With the purposes of building Zion in mind, 19th century "Mormons went to great lengths to instill this [Mormon group consciousness] identity in new converts" (Phillips, 2001: 28) as they gathered to Deseret. In hope of easing difficulties between converts of different nationalities the leadership of the church instigated policies that would suppress ethnic difference and would publicly chastise any member who asserted their previous ethnic or national identity (Alexander, 1991). What in other social situations would have been seen as unforgiving differences between various nationalities, as well as "old" arrivals and "new" arrivals, were softened by the programs and values instilled in the people (Arrington and Bitton, 1992).

When reports of disharmony reached leaders in Salt Lake City, Mormon leaders were quickly dispatched to end the unrest before it spread. In 1882 Elder Erastus Snow was dispatched

to squelch unrest in a Mormon village established to develop a Deseret iron industry, he reported:

> We found a Scotch party, a Welch party, an English party, and an American party and we turned Iron Masters and undertook to put all these parties through the furnace, and ran out a party of Saints for building up the Kingdom of God (quoted in Arrington, 1986: 249).

What exactly transpired between Elder Snow and the Saints in this village is unknown to me at this time. What can be seen from Elder Snow's account is that actions were taken by Mormon leaders to reduce differences and encourage uniformity. This story illustrates the comment of May (1980) that, "European immigrants were not moving out of their old life into relative freedom, as happened elsewhere in the American west, but rather into tightly structured, hierarchical, closely knit villages where pressures to conform were great" (723).

This discussion should not lead one to think that Deseret Mormons were not allowed any form of creative expression. On the contrary, there are several examples of church sponsored creative outlets in Deseret history. However, it should be noted that these activities did function to help new converts abandon their former social ties and establish new ones within the confines of their newly acquired religion (May, 1980). Mormon creative expressions, from Deseret on, have tended to focus on bolstering group cohesion instead of the aggrandizement of a few individuals (Givens, 2007; May 1980). An example of this can be seen in the pervasive emphasis on singing in choirs and congregations. The world famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir is a prime example of Mormon group cultural expression (Givens, 2007; May, 1980).

Additional difficulties arose in maintaining group cohesion with the California Gold Strike of 1849. Not only did this Gold Strike result in an influx of "gentiles" making their way to the west coast, but the seemingly more hospitable environment and supposed ease of economic success was appealing to many Saint who were carving out an existence in sagebrush and

infertile soil. To combat the desire to flee to California, Brigham Young appealed to the people to remember that Deseret, despite its flaws, was "a good place to make saints" (Journal of Discourses, 4:32). Young went on to talk not just of Mormon piety, but the distinctive values and traditions of the people of Deseret. Young suggested that their distinctiveness has made it so that they should be seen as a separate nation by themselves as well as the rest of the world (May, 1980).

Young's speech served to assuage the concerns of many Saints and kept the exodus to California to a minimum. May (1980) suggests that the distinctiveness that Young spoke of in the late 1840s serves as the foundation for the "present distinctiveness of the Mormon core or culture religion" (723). May continues to assert that, "Brigham Young succeeded in this effort better than he might have expected" (723). In ethnographic work of a Utah Mormon congregation undertaken in the late 1990s, Phillips (2001) suggests that one of the most pervasive elements in the Mormon religious identity in Utah is "a close affinity with their homeland" (33). This should be of little surprise given that members in Utah are generally literal descendants of these early Mormon settlers. Heaton (1998) illustrates that membership in the church in Utah is typically something that you are born into, and that members outnumber converts 5:1. Clearly Brigham's focus on providing group stability and survival has had lasting effects.

What Is *a Mormon: The Principle*

A recent t-shirt seen just off of BYU campus poked fun at the Latter-day Saints for their role in pushing for a "traditional definition of marriage" throughout the 2008 California Proposition 8 campaign – the end results of the vote restricted marriage to heterosexual relationships. The t-shirt read "vote for a traditional definition of marriage! One man and several

women." This shirt provides insight into what has "by far been the most distinctive identity

marker for the Mormons [and] the one by which they are still known: polygamy" (Phillips, 2001:

29). While technically the term *polygamy* (the practice of having more than one spouse at a time)

is an incorrect term in relation to the practice of the early Utah Saints – the more correct term

would be *polygyny* (the practice of have more than one wife) – it is nonetheless the term most

widely used today. It is interesting to note that Van Wagner (1985) has noted a limited use of the

practice of a form of *polyandry* (the practice of having more than one husband) under the

direction of Joseph in Nauvoo. Historically, it has been shown that any Mormon practice of

polyandry never went beyond Nauvoo, and by the time the Saints arrived in Utah the practice

was exclusively polygynous. Regardless of the validity of the label "polygamy," the Saints in

Brigham's time simply used the term "plural marriage" or "the principle" when referring to the

practice (Phillips, 2001).

Once the Saints began to gather to Deseret, as a people they began to practice "the

principle" openly, whereas in Joseph's time they had only practiced it in secrecy (even then only

by a small number of the church faithful) (Hardy, 1992). Shipps (1985) cites polygamous

marriage practices, in connection with theology, as producing a religious identity for Mormons

that is not simply different in *degree* from the Protestant Christian identity, but of a whole

different *nature*. Once again using the Old Testament as their guide, Mormons began to find new

historical sources for their practices. The principle came to be viewed as a restored practice and

as a way for the righteous member of the church to emulate the patriarchs of Old (Tarjan, 1992).

The tradition of using the Old Testament to explain underpinning justifications for practices has

continued to be used by many contemporary Mormon apologists expressing that "the principle"

(which according to church records was stopped in 1890) should be seen by Saints as an Abrahamic trial of faith (England 1987).

At the turn of the 20th century Mormon critic Alfred Henery Lewis (1904) asserted that polygamy "shuts that door of [non-Mormon] sympathy against the Mormon" (11). Lewis goes on to claim that without the practice of the principle Mormonism would "instantly dwindle away" (11). In essence Lewis felt that this practice served as the primary boundary between who *is* Mormon and who *is not* Mormon in the 19th century. The importance of the principle for group identity in the 19th century is also reflected in the words of another Mormon critic:

> Polygamy welds the Mormons together in a solid unity inasmuch as it separates between the Mormons and the rest of the World; and inasmuch as having permeated Mormon society it cannot be condemned without disgrace either in one's self or kinfolks (Johnson, 1905: 30).

So successful was the principle in separating Mormons from the rest of the world that Quinn (1997) asserts that monogamous Mormons soon began to be shunned as less faithful members. Such was the pressure to accept "the principle" that Mormons that were insistent on remaining monogamous were often informed that in order to be promoted in leadership they would need to accept "the principle" or face exclusion. In other words, participating in "the principle" rapidly became a mark of higher status in Deseret (Logue, 1988). Quinn (1997) suggests that an additional latent function of practicing "the principle" to establish a distinct Mormon identity that was with higher status enticing many Mormons into polygamous marriages, the Mormons in Deseret were able to rapidly increase numbers as the result of so many children being born. Church hierarchy, as a result of kinship ties, quickly became a large extended family.

CHAPTER 7: THE AMERICANIZATION OF MORMONISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION
OF THE CONTEMPORARY MORMON IDENTITY

The Americanization of Mormonism

With our contemporary knowledge of the survival and stability of Mormonism it is

interesting to look back and analyzes the formal attempts by outsiders to disrupt the strength of

Mormons as a distinct group. At the dawn of 20th century the Kingdom of Deseret had become

the territory of Utah, and church leaders were anxious to become the state of Utah. To achieve

this goal the Saints increasingly began to submit to demands of the U.S. government and as a

result began to systematically downplay the distinct doctrinal and cultural observances that had

developed in their short history (Mauss, 1994). In a few short decades Mormonism became the

mountainous watershed discussed earlier; the Saints increasingly looked like a church in Utah

instead of the theocratic enclave of Deseret.

The Mormons of Deseret had lived in virtual isolation for more than a decade until

President James Buchanan decided in 1858 to send federal troops to scrutinize the group as a

result of rumors of general insurrection and disloyalty to the United States of America (Phillips,

2001). During the 1860s "gentiles" began to arrive and settle with increasing frequency in hopes

of prospecting for mineral resources (Bliss, 1983). Additionally, the Transcontinental railroad

was completed in 1869 at Promontory Point in upstate Utah. Isolation was no longer a realistic

goal as once again the Saints were in a situation of close proximity with "gentiles." Just as had

happened in the times of Joseph, close proximity with "gentiles" resulted in conflict (Dwyer,

1971).

Conflict continued to increase until, near the end of the century, new federal anti-

polygamy laws such as The Edmunds Act of 1882 and The Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, were

passed that disenfranchised the Church, authorized warrants for the arrest of Church leaders, and

seized most of the assets of the church. Following these anti-polygamy laws most of the

leadership of the church quietly slipped into hiding to avoid arrest, and what little finances the

church had left rapidly fell into disarray (Alexander, 1991). It is interesting to note that leading

historians of Mormonism – both inside and outside the church – agree that the anti-polygamy

laws were passed with just as much disdain for the lack of separation between church and state

as for the practice of plural marriage (Lyman, 1986). This can be seen in the dismantling of the

People's Party, the political party of the church members notorious for bloc voting in the Utah

territory, which was particularly exasperating to "gentiles" living in Utah (Lyman, 1986).

Out of political and economic necessity the leaders of the church were compelled to

temporarily suspend the doctrine of gathering in 1899 (Alexander, 1991). This decision is the

beginning of a transformation of church doctrine shifting from seeing "Zion as a place" to

understanding "Zion as a people." It has been suggested that this transformation is a critical

watershed event in the historical development of Mormonism, and in effect resulted in an

Americanization of Mormonism (Shipps, 1985). Givens, in his book *The Viper on the Hearth*

(2007), studies the construction of ascribed Mormon ethnic identity as response to what the

majority of Americans were increasingly seeing as a "viper on the hearth" of the metaphorical

American home. Givens, in a later work stated:

> The long-running campaign for statehood required that Mormons prove
> themselves to be true-blue Americans, in spite of pervasive journalistic, fictional,
> and political depictions of the Mormons as ethnically distinct. Lumped variously
> with Chinese or Irish immigrants, vaguely 'oriental' people, or a 'new race' bred
> in polygamy, Mormons faced decades of derision as an alien viper on the
> American family hearth (2007: 57).

 After more than half a century of focusing on how they were "different," Mormons now found

themselves being the proponents of how they were the "same" as the larger populace.

This transition from we are "different" to we are the "same" – the Americanization of Mormonism – was less difficult for many of the adult population of Utah at the dawn of the 20th century. With the first Mormon settlers arriving in July 1847, after nearly fifty years the bulk of adult population in Utah were the children and grandchildren of the Saints that had exited the United States to establish Deseret. This generation was raised with the worldview of Mormonism. Thus, for this adult population, Mormon identity was not something that needed to be different in order to supercede a previously existing ethnic or religious identity. Phillips (2001) suggests that at this point in Mormon history "identity was no longer based solely on the religion of Mormonism, but also on the fact that religious and kinship social ties in the region had melded into a unique, ascribed subcultural identity" (31). In other words emerging from isolation the Mormon identity was now underpinned by a social network of church and extended family. Some scholars have suggested that this is the point at which Mormons in Utah become known as a distinct ethnic group (see e.g. Shipps 1985; Limerick 1995).

With the doctrine of gathering temporally suspended, there was an increase in the tendencies for these "home grown" Mormon adults to leave Utah in search of employment. By the 1920s the economic conditions in Utah had not improved and the church finally opted to permanently bring an end to the doctrine of gathering physically to Zion. New converts were invited to stay in their homelands and "build stakes of Zion" wherever they were (Allen and Lenard, 1992). Members in Utah, freed from codified restraints, increasingly left Utah in search of economic opportunities in other areas beyond the region (Phillips, 2001). Historians of Mormonism have referred to this flow of native Utahans out of the state in the early 1920s as the Mormon Diaspora[5].

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[5] May (1987) reports that in 1920, approximately 95,000 native Utahans lives outside the state, but by 1930 this number has increased to approximately 143, 000 (173).

With a history based on solidarity and isolation for group survival, Mormon leaders were frightened and concerned with this Mormon Diaspora. Additionally, it has been suggested that "the dispersion of the Saints posed a powerful threat to Mormons' sense of identity and community" (Phillips, 2001:8). Mormon doctrine is full of references to outside influences corrupting righteous organizations resulting in apostasy; no doubt that there were similar concerns at this time. Isolation and a powerful social majority had been the church's primary way of resisting cultural and religious pluralism. As members of the faith began to increase in numbers beyond the Mormon region, church leaders began to seek out ways of keeping those beyond the social influences of Utah firm in the faith.

To compensate for the lack of social ties and community fellowship that was inherent with the doctrine of gathering, Church leadership began to impose a series of organizational changes that could be imposed on its dispersed members (Phillips, 2001). Leone (1973) asserts that the church leadership desired that there be no regional ritual and theological differences in the church. At this point the Mormons also began to increasingly standardize its social programs to prevent the possibility of local variation in the LDS culture. From the 1920s on the church began to standardize the layout of ward meetinghouses in areas outside Utah to match the layout of those in the heart of Zion (Leone, 1973).

With the church members now spread across the globe the church began to introduce new layers of bureaucracy to alleviate the administrative burden on the church leadership. As the number of "micro-management" leadership positions increased within the church hierarchy, so to did the number of nonecclesiastical employees of the Church (Tarjan, 1992). One department of this increasingly bureaucratically managed organization is known as the "correlation department." The movement for correlation began in the 1960 as a desire to ensure that what is

considered LDS in Malaysia would be seen as LDS in Japan; what is LDS in Texas would still be LDS in Massachusetts. Of course these correlation dictates were all emerging from Salt Lake City. Cleverly (1996) observes, "Today's centralized [Mormon] church, situated in the American Intermountain West, works fastidiously to assure that the gospel message *plus* the church organization is the same everywhere" (70 emphasis in original). Or as the familiar Mormon cliché goes, "The Church is the same wherever you go" and when the church does seem a bit different the cliché goes, "It's The Church, not the people that is true."

Tarjan (1992) draws attention to the fact that the correlation department and the standardization movement of the church in the latter half of 20th century has come under fire from within and outside the ranks of the faithful who are resistant to terms like *efficiency*, *standardization*, and *correlation*. Tarjan states:

> While the Salt Lake Temple will always be a cherished symbol of the Church's presence in the Great Salt Lake Valley, I fear that the Church Office Building has surpassed it as the dominant physical symbol of that presence. Most of our printed material and buildings are now graced by a handsome, standardized logo reminiscent of other corporate logos (45).

It is ironic that an internal movement to help church members from being influenced too much by the "outside" world has resulted in many ways in mirroring that world. Tarjan (1992) points out that the fact that, "Many of [LDS] top leaders not only have business backgrounds but sit on boards of large corporations"(45); in a corporate world the church as an organization doesn't appear to be all that peculiar. Additionally, as Richard Cowan (1985) points out, with the doctrine of gathering abolished the Mormon Diaspora has culminated in the transformation of an esoteric regional subculture to one of the largest religious denominations in the United Sates.

The transformation form peculiar small intermountain "viper on the hearth" to a large and powerful international church has been the focus of much of the scholarly literature on

Mormonism. Cornwall (1996) suggests that, "Social scientists no longer study Utah as a means to understand Mormon culture" (194). While this may be true, I suggest that, conversely social scientists need to seek a clearer understanding of Mormon culture in order to understand the complexities of Utah culture. Furthermore, as is suggested by Phillips (2001), "it may also be true that studying American Mormonism writ large may not be the best way to understanding the saints who still live in Utah" (11). Phillips, in his ethnographic research of a Utah Mormon congregation, found that the member of the congregation he studied "base their religious identity on a close affinity with their homeland, extensive kinship ties within the church, *and a religious subculture that exists independently from the Mormon Church*" (33, emphasis added). While there has been a slight decline in the percentage of Mormons in Utah in the past few years (Church Almanac, 2007; 2008; 2009) there is still a large concentration of Saints in Utah.

This perseverance of Utah's Mormon majority has encouraged social geographers to submit that the Great Basin should be known as Mormon Culture Region (Meinig, 1965). The Mormon Culture Region was clarified by Bennion (1995) as consisting of all of Utah – with the exception of the Native American reservation counties of San Juan and Grand that are located in the extreme southeastern corner of the state, the Star Valley in Southwestern Wyoming, and southeastern Idaho. Bennion also acknowledges that traditional Mormon settlements in Arizona, with their large population of early Mormon descendents, should be included in Mormon Culture Region. It is worth noting that Bennion identifies the "core" of the Mormon Culture Region as a mostly urban strip that geographically runs from the Provo-Orem area in the south to Logan in the North, or as it is commonly referred to in the west as Utah's Wasatch Front.

Phillips (2001) asserts that the existence of this distinct Mormon Culture Region gives credence to the idea that, in spite of the Mormon Church's attempts at standardization during the

second half of the 20th century, there are many cultural differences that can be found between Mormons living in the Mormon Cultural Region and those living in other parts of the world. Such findings would be consistent with community studies that look at the density of acquaintanceship (Freudenberg, 1986), i.e. the proportion of residents that are acquainted with one another. With a high percentage of the population sharing a common religious/ethnic culture, that makes them, at the least, symbolic acquaintances of one another.

When seeking to understand how a community is held together through networks of acquaintances, Freudenburg (1986) stressed the importance of understanding that the d*ensity of acquaintanceship*, or the proportion of a community that is acquainted with one another, isthe "most basic characteristics of a community's social structure" (27). In theory, being acquainted with a higher proportion of the community will result in a higher degree of individual psychological wellbeing. This idea is correlated with Tönnies' (1887/1963) conception of *Gemeinschaft,* a term referring to the level of personal relations individuals have in a community. This view suggests that high levels of acquaintanceship result in greater orientation to the interests of the group than to individual interests. As the density of acquaintanceship in a community decreases, selfish desires rise in importance to the individual while at the same time the sense of loyalty to the group diminishes until "everybody is by himself and isolated" (Tönnies,1887/1963: 74). Tönnies refers to the more impersonal associations in such a society as *Gesellschaft*.

By maintaining a culture with a high density of acquaintanceship Mormons in Utah in many ways resisted the modern tendency for communities to transition from a greater level of Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. By fostering social networks the church, as an organization, ties a community together. May (1980) notes:

The degree to which an individual participates in Mormon culture is influenced partly by length of membership in the church but *is affected more strongly by the amount of interaction with other Mormons. Interaction in turn is determined primarily by commitment to the church and activity in its various programs* (723, emphasis added).

With a majority population and programs instituted to extend religious affiliations beyond simply church attendance, Mormonism in Utah in many ways remains a vibrant example of a "modern" Gemeinschaft community permeating all aspects of life in Utah.

By understanding the Gemeinschaft aspects of Mormonism within the Mormon Cultural Region, especially in the core, Mormonism is better understood as an ethnic identity than as a religious identity. This is the result of Mormonism influencing not only church settings "but for all aspects of social life within the state" (Phillips, 2001: 33). In her article "Culture Shock" (1995) Barber talks about how often non-Utahan visitors frequently express bewilderment by the preoccupation that Mormons in Utah have, regardless of the length of interaction, with identifying the religious affiliation of visitors. While Utah today boasts many similarities with U.S. society at large, many observers feel that these similarities are superficial (see e.g. Phillips, 2001 and May, 1987) and that Utah culture, as a result of Mormon social and religious influence, is home to several social peculiarities that set it apart. In Utah it is not uncommon to hear people refer to these social peculiarities keeping Utah isolated as the "Zion Curtain."

This realization of separateness for the Mormon faithful in Utah has been shown to be something that the Saints are not only consciously aware of, but proud of (Phillips, 2001). Phillips (2001) identifies this divide between "us" and "not us" as "the single most important way that people are categorized in the state" (43). Poll (1987) agrees, and asserts that the cultural divide that exists between "gentiles" and Mormons – after more than 150 years of living together – is not only apparent and distinct, but both Mormon and "gentile" have developed a strong

sense of who is "us" and "not us." This historical tradition of referring to non-Mormons as "gentiles" has become ironic given that, in exploiting the old testament throughout the 1800s to craft their identity, the Utah Mormon ethnic conception of self relates more to the identity of American Jews than American Protestants (Phillips, 2001).

Thinking of their state a homeland for the gathered tribes of Israel, Utah Mormons have continued to maintain strong geographic ties, despite a larger culture that seems increasingly based on geographic mobility. Heaton (1998) has shown that Mormons living in Utah are less likely than their Mormon counterparts in other states to relocate outside of state boundaries. Furthermore, Heaton has found that in cases where Mormons have moved to another state, Utah Mormons are more likely to return to Utah than their counterparts are to return to their home states.

In a 1995 article titled, "Culture as a Determinant of Reasons for Migration," authors Kontuly, Smith, and Heaton found that within Utah, Mormons of all activity levels are less prone to move out of Utah than Utahans of other faiths. The authors found a positive correlation with higher levels of church activity resulting in a lower likelihood of moving to another state. Additional Mormon migration studies have found that Utah Mormons that are preparing to relocate from their community are seven times less likely to move outside of Utah compared with their "gentile" counterparts. To understand this phenomenon we need to better understand the malleable nature of the Mormon religion for meeting the needs of it people.

Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity

I have previously talked about the vitality of Utah Mormonism that results from residence in a common homeland and the existence of pervasive kinship ties. I now turn to the shared nonmaterial cultural heritage of Utah Mormons. While all cultures have numerous ways

perpetuating themselves – many of which have been alluded to in previous discussions – there is one method that merits a more a detailed account in the Mormon example: the use of folklore. Those outside of Mormonism may simply reduce Mormon folklore to a series of religiously based myths and legends. However, many scholars have found the existence of a well documented quantity of Mormon Folklore which is known and shared with in Mormon Culture Region, but less frequently in areas beyond (Wilson 1981; Swetnam 1991). The pervasiveness of this accumulation and sharing of Mormon folklore in the region has further separated members of the faith within the region from their counterparts beyond.

While some of the stories that are passed among the faithful are fabrications, others are not. In using folklore to gain insight into the identity of a population the validity of the story is irrelevant; sociologically speaking what is important is the message that these stories are perpetuated in the group. In other words, folklore can be seen as a conduit through which fundamental epistemological and metaphysical group propositions are conveyed (Eliasno, 1999).With this understanding sociologists can find the meanings that are communicated, superceding the actual events of the story.

The Mormons themselves seem to have an uneasy awareness of this truth vs. meaning quandary. When former Latter-day Saint general authority Paul H, Dunn admitted to having "not always been accurate in [his] public talks and writings" (1991) by embellishing his personal life experiences for illustrative purposes, many members of the church outright condemned him for his actions. Others felt that the end results, in some small way, justified his embellishments. With a pantheon of historical documents held in the Church's archives constantly being researched, historical folklore, embellished or not, will always be an important part of Mormon culture. The discussion that follows is by no means a comprehensive representation of Mormon folklore. For

a more detained starting point for information concerning Mormon folklore please see Jill

Terry's "Exploring Belief and Custom: The Study of Mormon Folklore" (1989) and William A

Wilson's "A Bibliography of Studies in Mormon Folklore" (1976). What I now present is a brief

overview of three categories of Mormon folklore that I have labeled *Trial by Faith, Iconic*

Heroes, and *The Desert Shall Bloom*. Following the brief account of these three categories I will

then present a more detailed account of two additional categories that seem to be of greater

importance in contemporary Utah Mormon folklore. I have labeled these final two categories

Bring the World his Truth and *Conversion Lore*.

   Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: Trial by Faith

   Previous discussions have shown that the Mormons are a people that have historically

experienced extreme persecutions beginning with the formation of their religion. As previous

discussion have alluded, the persecutions that Mormons experiences were used to develop – with

the help of the Old Testament and other scriptural sources – explanations that in essence

ritualized their hardship and wandering and resulted in a solidified Mormon identity. The stories

that are told about these events have a common theme of the unfaithful being plucked out and the

faithful experiencing delivery under God's hand. Tarjan (1992) feels that this type of folklore

instills the value of "be diligent and avoid temptation" and the "punishment always waits the

sinner" (40).

   Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: Iconic Heroes

   The history of the Latter-day Saints is rife with larger than life individuals that are

revered for their faith and determination. Tarjan (1992) points out that, "Many have argued that

church history has been written with less concern for full historical detail than for making

participants appear larger than life" (40). However, in looking at Mormon history as a form of

folklore the factuality of the personality and traits of these individuals loses importance. What stands paramount is the hero as an attainable standard that signals to the faithful what should or should not be strived for in life. For a detailed look at the collective folk memory the Mormons hold for Joseph, see Bitton, *Images of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1996), specifically chapter 6. One of the primary functions of iconic hero stories is to reassure members that church leaders are both inspiring and inspired.

Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: The Desert Shall Bloom

I have previously spoken in great detail about the Saints gathering to Deseret. There is a plethora of stories that are often recounted about the hardships of these events. The prevalence of these stories serves two purposes: 1) to instill a sense of pride for the physical location that the saints gathered to, and 2) to instill a heightened sense of gratitude for these early settlers. I was privy to retelling of a desert shall bloom type story where the story teller spoke of the importance of building an expansive irrigation system for the early Utah Saints. Not only did the irrigation system provide the needed water for their gardens and farms, but the way in which water was rotated and shared between the Saints instilled a heightened sense of community that was based on balanced reciprocity. This story teller spoke of great difficulties that were experienced by early saints and concluded the story by stressing that if the Saints in Utah today slip into inactivity or turn from the Church they are in essence telling their forebears that the hardships they bore were meaningless.

Additionally, "desert shall bloom" stories help the Saints to see that hardworking, diligent, and obedient Latter-day Saints will be rewarded with temporal and spiritual blessings. These stories also include examples of the faithfulness of members in adverse situations where adhering to the principles (such as tithing and the word of wisdom) were the only ways that

members were able to survive certain destruction. Also included with this type of folklore are stories that express the sentiment of, "We are part of a winning team composed of faithful individuals engaged in a worthwhile cause" (Tarjan, 1992: 40). The emphasis on team success, as I have previously discussed, is held in higher regard than individual success.

Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: Bring the World his Truth

As part of a restoration church all of Mormon folklore, in one way or another, is based on the idea that Mormon religious doctrine will one day encompass the entirety of the globe. From this idea the church has a highly developed missionary religious identity. Wilson (1982) stresses that the reciting of missionary stories – a common occurrence in LDS circles – is undertaken with the intent of conveying several messages. First, sharing of mission stories can be undertaken with the intent of highlighting the importance of following the mission rules, and by extension the rules of church leaders in general. Secondly, such stories are often told to help members know of ultimate success. Thirdly, these stories underpin the ideals of proper Mormon conduct. Additionally, mission stories are shared as a general church narrative that heightens a sense of community. Perhaps dwarfing all of these outcomes is the implication from mission stories that the restoration of the gospel has not concluded, and more and more people are gathering to Zion – symbolically if not physically.

There is a branch of Mormon folklore that is difficult to place in a specific category; that is folklore revolving around the Mormon practice of Genealogy. With the previously discussed importance of the role of kinship in shaping the Mormon identity we can see that many of the "trial by faith," "iconic hero," and "desert shall bloom" stories are extensions of this identity. Many scholars have simply attempted to understand Mormon genealogy as an extension of the temple rite of baptism for the dead. It is for this reason that I have included this discussion under

the heading of "bring the world his truth." For Mormons the ultimate goal is salvation for every man, woman, and child that has ever lived. Therefore, genealogy is an extension of missionary practices.

However with many Utah Mormons today being fourth, fifth and sixth generation members of the church their genealogical research has for the most part been completed as much as it can be at this point in time. For Mormons such as these, genealogy is no longer about finding names in dusty tomes to vicariously perform essential rites in the temples; genealogy for them is way of connecting with and celebrating the religious heritage that their Mormon pioneer ancestors provided them. This should be seen as a form of folklore in that it functions to solidify Mormon identity based more on a connection to lineage and kinship than it does relying on membership in an organization. Many Mormons in Utah love to share their pioneer stories that they have personally uncovered in archives and from reading old journals.

A frequently related pioneer story is of that of Mary Fielding Smith, widow of Hyrum Smith and mother of the sixth president of the church Joseph F. Smith. The story goes that following the death of Joseph and his brother Hyrum, Mary Fielding Smith opted to follow Bingham Young west to seek refuge in the Rocky Mountains. One day on the journey to Deseret one of her oxen suddenly stopped, sank to the ground apparently dying. Mary Fielding Smith desperate to make it to Zion, retrieved a bottle of consecrated oil and blessed her oxen. Following the blessing, the oxen regained their strength and continued on as if nothing had happened. This story is recounted as an example of the faith of one woman who had already overcome much hardship in her life.

It is interesting to note that the story of the oxen has Mary Fielding Smith blessing the oxen, a ritual that is exclusively undertaken by males in the contemporary church. In the

dedication of a building named for Mary Fielding Smith's son, Joseph F. Smith, on the campus

of Brigham Young University, September 20, 2005, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley told

the story a bit differently. Hinckley related that Joseph F. Smith's "mother searched through her

belongings and found a bottle of consecrated oil. *She asked the brethren to anoint and bless the*

oxen. They did so" (emphasis added). The changes in the story are subtle. The story is now

presented as an example of faith, and to support changes to doctrine that have occurred in the

interim relating to who should and should not participate in various acts in the church.   An

extension of genealogy as folklore can be found in the practice of many Utah Mormon men

tracing their "line-of-authority." The line-of-authority for Mormon men is a form of literal and

symbolic patrilineal genealogy tracing the names of priesthood holders who ordained them to the

priesthood. For example, Brigham Young was ordained by Joseph Smith who was ordained by

Peter, James, and John, who were ordained by Jesus Christ. In the literal patrilineal sense a boy

was ordained by his father, who was ordained by the boy's grandfather, who was ordained by the

boy's great-grandfather. However, as a symbolic patrilineal genealogy a line-of-authority will

connect people to pioneer ancestry with no biological ties. This sense of symbolic patrilineal

genealogy is consistent with statements from church authorities:

> **If a priesthood bearer desires to trace his own line of authority, he should
> pursue his current office in the priesthood—not former offices.** Bishops and
> patriarchs should trace their line of authority as high priests. In completing an
> authority line, each step should go back through the office held by the person at
> the time he performed the ordination (General Handbook Supplement, Number 1,
> July 1, 1976).

In this way we can see the line-of-authority as folklore that serves to reify the deeply rooted

fusion of kinship and church ties found in the Mormon community.

Recalling the importance of gathering in church history, this heightened sense of

community that emerges from folktales is use to strengthen and renew the basic tenant of the

restored church and its global goals. "Bring the world his truth" stories help members of the church to "feel good about being Latter-day Saints" (Tarjan, 1992: 40) by emphasizing not just the good that Mormons are doing in the world, but also emphasizing the positive aspects of how the world sees church members collectively. It is not uncommon in Utah to hear someone say, "Hey did you hear [insert famous name] loves Mormons?" Or you may here people speak with great pride about big name corporate recruiters, the CIA, and the FBI coming to BYU to hire because of a deep respect they have for the work ethic of Mormons. Tarjan (1992) points out that, "Church-sponsored periodicals and magazines such as *This People* and *BYU Today* have, over the years, contained glowing stories of many active Latter-day Saints with successful business careers" (45). In essence the "bring the world his truth" stories are told to elucidate that 1) the Church needs to go out into the world at large to spread the gospel, and 2) the world will love you for your distinctiveness, so don't lose it.

Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: Conversion Lore

While it is common to hear conversions stories among the members of the church, Eliason (1999) feels that such stories "constitute an important and overlooked genre at the core of Mormon narrative folklore" (137). Eliason suggests that there is a need to look at these stories in their context, function, meaning, structure, history, performance, and aesthetic features to gain greater insight into the values and customs of the Latter-day Saint people. Utilizing what is known as the "personal experience narrative" (PEN) Eliason asserts the importance of individual experience as it reflects the larger ideological and social context in which the storyteller lives. Eliason contends that looking at the written and orally transmitted conversion stories of the Mormons allows researchers to come to a better "inside" understanding of the beliefs and values of the larger dynamic group.

Mormon culture is saturated by occasions, formal and informal, where conversion-storytelling occurs. Eliason (1999) estimates that with 50,000 worldwide missionaries on average teaching two discussions a day, the missionary force alone relates conversion stories (their personal conversion or the conversion story of Joseph) upwards of a hundred thousand times every day. With the more recent emphasis on "every member a missionary," that number is considerably higher. As the church has experienced a rapid population growth in the past two decades there is a corresponding likelihood that any given member of the Church will be a convert. Heaton (1998) estimates that there are three converts to every Mormon child that is baptized at eight years of age – in the Mormon Culture region the ratio is about one to one. With these remarkable statistics in mind the personal conversion story is likely to be told more frequently among the collective faithful.

With one official sacrament meeting a month set aside for the sharing of testimonies by members of the congregation, the public telling of personal conversion is a frequent occurrence. With additional church encouraged family activities such as family home evening, it is likely that many children learn their parents' stories in a more private and personal setting. Eliasno (1999) suggests that in Utah, "Being blessed with a particularly interesting conversion has put several Latter-day Saints on the fireside-youth conference speaker circuit" (142). There are now a number of websites and blogs where members of the church "publicly" share their conversion stories with the world – well, with the world that has access to the internet.

It is not surprising that after more than a half-century of church fixation with standardization, a pattern for telling a Mormon conversion story has surfaced. Scholars have placed the First Vision at the center of this pattern (see e.g. Eliasno, 1999; Lambert and Cracroft, 1980). Recognizing that Joseph's version of the story, as previously discussed, went through

several different "prototype" versions with various changes depending on the audience and

purpose. These changes can be seen in the way that Mormons share their conversion stories with

one another vs. how they share it with "gentiles." (I will return to the situation telling patterns

later on.) Additionally, the structure of the First Vision can be seen as providing the base

example to emulate when offering a personal conversion narrative (Eliasno, 1999).

To better understand the structure of the conversion narrative Eliasno (1999) applies the

work of Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp (1968) to a Mormon setting to discover the "main

motifs or building blocks" (142) of the conversion story. Eliasno (1999) discovers five such

building blocks:

1. Individual finds self in a situation that raises concerns about a lack of correct religious knowledge….
2. Individual encounters a long, frustrating search for true religion….
3. Individual experiences an epiphany that suggests that the seeker is on the right track….
4. Adversary attempts dissuasive intervention…
5. Individual receives the gift of true religious knowledge and connection with God….(142-143).

A Brigham Young University student researcher found that the conversion stories of

Mormons born into the faith did adhere to this pattern, while those who converted later in

life seemed to speak of their conversion as the end point of a long journey that they didn't

realize they were taking (Ward, 1997).

This "long journey" type of conversion could be better compared with the conversion of

Brigham Young, for example, who spent two years after he first encountered the Mormons

before he converted. Mormon folklore provides a seemingly endless supply of divergent models

of conversion from the pantheon of impeccably devout early Saints. Regardless of the model for

telling the conversion story, there are common themes that surface. Primarily, in rejection of

deist thought, there is a God who has shut himself off from the world; the heavens are still open.

Mormons affirm time and again that if an individual is willing to humbly study the scriptures and pray he/she can receive direct revelation from God to verify the truthfulness of the restored gospel. Conversion stories are told to reaffirm this idea.

There are multiple outcomes from the prevalence of conversion folklore. Functionally we can see an increase in group formation and cohesion. By restating one's story to other members of the group Mormons are able to reaffirm and maintain their position as someone that is "us," and by so doing others will be encouraged to do so as well. Church Apostle L. Tom Perry was cited in a *Salt Lake Tribune* article suggesting that a Latter-day Saint is duty bound to record in some way their conversion story for their posterity. Elder Perry suggests that this record will serve as a conduit for future posterity to gain access to the Mormon community that has come before them (Smart, 1997). Elder Perry is suggesting that the conversion story works not only to reify boundary lines by declaring I am "us," but also to add to the general consciousness of Saints. This idea sustains the work of folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1975) who contends that individuals of a cultural group will deploy the repertoire of lore in hopes of establishing and smoothing relationships with those who are perceived as "us" which whom he/she comes into contact.

Recall that when I mentioned Joseph's First Vision as the standard that Mormon conversion stories follow I mentioned that the way that Joseph would tell his story changed based on the audience and his purpose for sharing the story; this tendency to adjust the story to the audience is known in folklore studies as *performance quality*. This is similar to Goffman's idea of *face preservation* (see Goffman, 1955, 1981), the idea that audiences will judge a speaker's ability to communicate the aesthetic and moral principles of a community based on preconceived ideas. With this in mind, a speaker will choose to adhere to these standards or to

transcend them through some innovative practice. When properly employed face preservation will result in a performer adjusting his/her repertoire, style, language and content as needed to better suit the needs of the audience. The audience will, in turn, if receptive to the adjustments, alter their perception of the performer's story and accept the aesthetic and moral principles being presented.

Examples of the ways that Mormons adjust their story telling abound. Within the Mormon community in Utah there is a phenomenon that frequently occurs when undertaking conversion story telling or the telling of sacred folklore: the story teller will adjust his or her voice and tone to emulate a particular pattern. While this pattern of speech has been given various names three of the most commonly heard are (1) "conference cadence," referring to the pattern of slow, meticulous, planned speech that domiates the talks given by the leadership of church during the General Conferences; (2) "seminary speech," referring to patterns of speech that are commonly heard by seminary teachers where the speakers' tone will start off slightly elevated in volume only to rapidly decrease to the point that speech is just above a whisper, slow and almost broken; and (3) "testimony tone," referring to speech patterns that are sometimes heard during a ward testimony meeting where an individual will be employing "conference cadence" or "seminary speech" only to suddenly stop talking, push their lips tightly together, start to speak only to stop for another moment and then resume the speech with a softer more deliberate tone. While "testimony tone" developed out of people being genuinely overwhelmed by the emotion that emerges from talking about sacred things, it is often falsely deployed by individuals in an attempt to be perceived as being more in the moment than perhaps they really are.

Folklore and the Contemporary Mormon Identity: The "Rough Ground"

Recall the earlier discussion of the works of German philosopher Wittgenstein who suggested in understanding language that there is a need to acknowledge the subjective conceptions of words in the "rough ground" (1953: 107) of ordinary language. To understand the words that a people use is to understand the people themselves. The language that Mormons employ so to speak about themselves and others is an extension of their folklore. A prime example that has already been discussed several times is the reconception of the word "gentile" in a Mormon context to refer to those who are "not us." I now briefly address a few language issues that are evident within the Mormon culture as a result of Mormon folklore.

In the "trial by faith" category of Mormon folklore there are lots of stories about the persecutions of the saints, particularly in Missouri (where the Mormon extermination order was issued). It is interesting that the official Church History of the Latter-day Saints records a document that was produced in Clay County, Missouri in June, 1936 that speaks to Mormon presence; however this document is seldom mentioned in the stories of the persecutions in Missouri. The document states:

> They are eastern men, whose manners, habits, customs, and *even dialect*, are essentially different from our own….The religious tenets of this people are so different from the present churches of the age, that they always have, and always will, excite deep prejudices against them in any populous country where they may locate (Smith, 1951, 2:450, emphasis added).

This document suggests that much of the early difficulties that Mormons encountered at the hands of the "gentiles" was a result of a language of elitism just as much as the differences in cultural backgrounds (Givens, 2007). While the Missouri document doesn't provide specific examples of the language being used, from the previous discussions it is evident that

Mormonism as THE restored church carries the latent implication that everyone else is in some way left wanting.

While Mormon folklore generally negates elitist language, contemporary examples suggest that by employing face preservation strategies Mormons are able to avoid such situations. It is not uncommon to hear stories in which individuals choose in a humorous way to downplay their "Mormonhood" typically when interacting with members of divergent activity levels or with "gentiles." In my participation in the Mormon culture in Utah I have encountered similar situations. One such experience involved a group of five adult males – four members of the church and one "gentile" – who while having a bachelors party went to a bar in Salt Lake to shoot some pool. When asked by a waitress what they would be drinking the Mormons one by one identified themselves as the designated driver for the group until the "gentile" declared to the waitress that he would need several pitchers of beer because he was "drinking for five." In this situation, the four Mormons were able to avoid actually verbally stating their stance against the consumption of alcohol, and thus affirm their social position to everyone; interestingly the "gentile" also employed humor to affirm his position to the group. While these events technically are not folklore, I have on multiple occasions heard every member of the party (including the "gentile") telling others how they were able to skirt the situation.

In offering a final thought on language as folklore in the Mormon culture it is fascinating to note that once they were firmly established in Deseret, Brigham Young with the intent of increasing the gulf that had developed between Deseret and the U.S., developed and implemented a new alphabet for all written communication between the Saints (May, 1980). While Brigham only saw marginal results from the introduction of this alphabet, it is evident that

today members of the church do use some words in a distinctly Mormon way. Tarjan, (1992) suggests:

> As a community, I think we Latter-day Saints are keenly aware that our language sets us apart. No verb form of the 'fellowship' appears in my university edition dictionary, yet 'fellowshipping' has a unique and forceful meaning within the LDS community. 'Morality,' 'correlation,' and 'priesthood' are a few more among many terms with meaning unique to our culture (40).

The sometimes esoteric nature of "Mormon Speak" should be understood as alternate sides to the same coin. On one side there is a history of elitism and isolation and on the other side a deep desire to be able to share their beliefs with the world effectively. Both sides of the coin are in place to protect sacred from being ridiculed by maintaining control over the tone and meaning of the story that is told.

Contemporary Construction of the Mormon Identity in Utah

Utah continues to maintain a majority Mormon population (see e.g. *Church almanac,* 2009; Heaton, 1998). The very layout of Salt Lake City and other Utah cities is a constant reminder of the centrality of Mormonism in Utah history (Phillips, 2001). The unique grid layout of Salt Lake City is based on Joseph's reviled plans for the City of Zion which "emphasized the advantages of living in compact communities rather than on isolated farms" (Jackson, 1992: 283). The navigation of Salt Lake is based on a literal and symbolic relationship to what stands at the center of the community; the Salt Lake Temple. Additionally, Utah is littered with monuments to great moments in LDS history.

In Phillips' (2001) ethnography of a Utah ward the position of the LDS church as one of the largest employers in Utah draws attention to a concentration of the huge administrative bureaucracy residing in and around the metropolitan areas of Salt Lake and Provo-Orem. Barber (1995) asserts that the LDS church has pervasive influence in all elements of Utah politics.

Phillips (2001) suggests that this pervasiveness of Mormon influences can be seen in most aspects of Utah life. For example, in addition to regular updates of current church happenings on the evening news, there exists a "comprehensive array of services that cater specifically to Mormons" (34). In Utah one can easily find Mormon books, Mormon cinema, Mormon music, Mormon clothing, Mormon crafts, the list could go on and on. The presence of products that are "Mormon" is often offset by products that are "not Mormon." A Recent series of billboards for a local brewing company in Salt Lake City used Mormon slang to draw attention to the differences between the Mormons and non-Mormons. The implications of these advertisements were if you used, or could understand, Mormon slang, then the products that were being sold were not for you. The use of Mormon slang to sell beer is a prime example of the pervasiveness of Mormon culture in Utah.

Other observers have noted a blossoming catalog of Mormon literature as evidence for a distinct Mormon identity (See e.g. Givens, 2007). Limerick (2006) suggests the existence of a "remarkable and impressive flowering of Mormon literature" as evidence, not just of a gifted generation of writers, but for the creation of "*a clear cultural identity*" (199, emphasis added). Limerick goes on to stress that, "The groundedness of the short stories, the novels, even the essays persuade the reader the obituaries for Mormon ethnicity are decidedly premature" (199). Two decades prior to Limerick expressing her enthusiasm for Mormon literature, May (1980) was disappointed in Mormon creative writing. However, May expressed that, "What Mormons may lack in creative writing they make up in technological innovation" (725). He goes on to suggest that it is paradoxical that Mormons, with their history of isolationist policies, would be so embracing of technology.

In the Seminary program of the Church educational System (CES) – a program established to educate high school aged members in the doctrines and history of the Church – the acknowledgement of Mormon fascination with technology is often explained. Church history records a revelation to Joseph that speaks of the restoration and the dispensation of the fullness of times. In the revelation it is recorded that the prophet of the church will hold "the key of knowledge" (D&C 128:14). In CES the key of knowledge is often explained to the youth of the church as the conduit through which God is "pouring down knowledge from heaven" (D&C 121:33). CES instructors often cite the dedicatory prayer of the churches Missionary Training Center (MTC) given by former church president Spencer W. Kimble on September 27, 1976:

> …Father, we are grateful for the inventions of this day. For the airplane, for the train, for the cars, for the televisions, for all of the things that we know thou hast created for us, and found and developed for us to take the gospel to the world. We will permit other people to use these facilities as it seems necessary…

It is often suggested in CES that these were the words of a man that held "the key of knowledge." These suggestions carry the implication that any technology that develops comes only for the purposes of spreading the Mormon Gospel to the rest of the world, and at point he that holds the "key of knowledge" could damn the deluge of knowledge from heaven.

Some members of CES contend that it is unclear what President Kimble meant by "facilities." Such individuals, trying to downplay the piety of claiming that all innovations have come to serve the needs of the Mormon people, suggest that by "facilities" President Kimble was referring to the MTC itself. However, given that the MTC only serves the needs of the Church missionary force these counter claims are quickly dismissed. Regardless of the original intent of "facilities," the use of the MTC dedicatory prayer in CES programs further illustrates the conception of the Mormon identity as a peculiar people, gathered out of the world.

Holding a large majority, Mormons are easily able to socialize with members of their faith in a large array of non-church settings (Phillips, 2001). This has resulted in a normative expectation that people will attend to their religious obligations. When speaking of acquaintances that are of a different faith, it is not uncommon for Mormons in Utah to attach a caveat referring to these persons, for example, "The other day me and my buddy Peter, who is a non-member, were out walking and…." Often when speaking about individuals of other faiths, after attaching the caveat, there will be some sort of response question as to whether or not the individual attends church services of the faith that they do belong to.

Contemporary Construction of the Mormon Identity in Utah: Family Values

Additionally, the malleability of the Mormon identity can be seen in the way church members seeks to align the subjective needs of the family with the objective demands of the organization. Phillips' (2001) ethnographic research in Mormon wards can provide great insight into how this is accomplished. Phillips states that, "A religious identity centered on kinship enhances the religious activity of members" (35). He goes on to illustrate the way that the church, as an institution, has undertaken various actions to bolster the family:

> Participation in all of [age graded] rites is screened and approved by church leaders, so fathers who wish to ordain their children must live their lives in strict adherence to the demands of the church. This often prompts men in the church to maintain high levels of religious activity even if their subjective religious commitment is not particularly high. It is considered an embarrassment not to be able to ordain your son or bless your daughter, and since such rituals occur quite frequently (especially given the large size of some Mormon families) adherence to church strictures is essential (37-38).

In my own participation in the Mormon culture in Utah I have encountered on multiple occasions individuals expressing similar sentiments. It is not rare to find individual who will admit to, in attempts to circumvent embarrassment, participating in church ordinances while attending as visitors to extended family member's wards. Such actions are typically justified as seeing

someone as being a worthy member of the family, even if they are not "worthy" in the eyes of the church to participate. This is a common enough occurrence and yet the church has done little to enforce worthiness standards with visitors to wards.

Contemporary Construction of the Mormon Identity in Utah: "Us" and "Not Us"

The ways that a group can maintain the boundary between "us" and "not us" is a fascinating element of ethnic studies. In Utah people frequently speak of various cues that are used to recognize the "Mormon status" of an individual. While these clues do not always provide 100% accuracy, they do provide insights into how different peoples view each other. In his ethnographic research in Utah Phillips (2001) found that the cue that "immediately gives away membership in the Mormon church is the sight of temple garments" (44). Mormons that have been endowed in the temple are required to wear the sacred garment both day and night. While the garment has undergone considerable change since it was introduced by Joseph Smith – it once extended to the wrists and ankles, it now typically only extends to half-way down the bicep and to just above the knee – it is still visible underneath many contemporary clothing styles. Phillips (2001) suggests that endowed Mormons that no longer wear their garments typically are completely inactive.

The visibility of the garment in Utah has resulted in numerous cultural expressions. Phrases such as "the eternal smile," "the mile smile," or the "Mormon smile" refer to the low-cut neck line of the garment that can frequently be detected even when covered by a shirt. The "Mormon smile" is typically more noticed with males than it is with females. Many inactive and non-Mormon Utahans will sometimes wear white undershirts under their shirts to emulate the presence of the temple garment as a means of avoiding social stigma. The garment not only serves as a way of identifying church membership, but, keeping in mind that not all Mormons are

considered worthy to participate in temple ceremonies, the garment speaks to the devout nature of the individual.

A twenty –year old male member of the church who is a student living along the Wasatch Front told me how difficult is to be a twenty-year active Mormon living in Utah. The assumption of women that he wanted to date was that because he didn't go on a mission (typical male missionaries serve from age 19 to 21), he was "not marriage potential." He found that women would note his lack of temple garments and make assumptions about his character. In order to surmount these assumptions, and get a date or two, he began to wear dark shirts that didn't allow for the presence of the garment to be detected. He then noted that while flirting with girls, if possible they would touch his leg above the knee in an attempt to detect the garment line. In order to surmount this problem he began wearing several patches of masking tape in the location of the garment line. From that point on he reported great success, that is until he had to mention the fact that he had intentionally been deceitful in the early stages of the relationship.

Several researchers have made mention of a particular "Mormon look" that Utahans use to identify who is "us" and "not us" (see e.g. Mauss, 1994; and Philips, 2001). With a preference for clean cut, well mannered, clean shaven appearance, it is indeed possible for many Utahans to correctly guess who is and who is not Mormon. Others will simply say that you can just tell if someone is Mormon based on the way that they carry themselves and the words that they use. A university professor along the Wasatch front made student comments from several classes available for this study. While the comments are overwhelmingly positive with many referring to how uplifting the class had been, a few comments attempted to identity the "Mormonness" of the professor. One such comment identified the professor as "at best an inactive Mormon" whose

inactivity in the church is obvious in "the opinions, comments, and slander" that were presented in class.

While many will simply guess at the Mormon status of individuals, other will be quick to simply ask. One respondent in this study told of a situation in which he went to church after a six-month absence. Waiting for Sunday school to start a child sat down in front of him, turned around, eyed the respondent's beard and earring, than extended his hand and said "Hi, I'm a Mormon." The respondent replied, "Nice to meet you, so am I." At this point the child's eyes narrowed and darted from his earring to the beard and back again before the child said, "Really?" No doubt such questions represent extreme examples. I am confident that most Utahans simply assume that someone is LDS unless there is some evidence to the contrary.

As I have previously noted, the use of "gentile" to refer to the status of non-Mormons has become less common in more recent years. "Gentile" was replaced by "non-Mormon" or "non-LDS" in an attempt to make the designation sound less snippy. However, these terms were quickly seen as being just as pejorative, and there has been a recent push to use such terms as, "friend of another faith." As has been mentioned elsewhere, it is not uncommon for a caveat to be attached when speaking of a "friend of another faith" – "Hey did I tell you about the time me and Jenifer, she's a find of mine with a different faith, went to old saw mill…" The labeling of "us" and "not us" is so rampant that it often emerges with no thought.

"Gentiles" are often heard referring to living in Utah as living behind the "Zion Curtain." This is an overt reference to the overwhelming influence of the LDS people in the everyday life in Utah as a totalitarian influence. I was recently told by an active member of the church that it was "impossible to determine at what point Church stops and social life begins" in Utah. That is all well and good for the members of the church, but it forces "gentiles" into social life that is

based either in participation with or in opposition to everyday Mormonism; whichever it is, this participation results in giving many non-Mormons a heightened awareness of their status as outsiders in the larger community. It is not uncommon to hear "gentiles" lament their minority status.

Most commonly the concern that "gentiles" express in not so much for themselves as it is for their children. Many feel that their children have been treated unfairly by their majority of Mormon playmates (see Barber, 1995). Other researchers have found that non-Mormon children frequently express difficulty fitting in socially in the public schools in Utah and developing deep friendships with Mormon classmates (Poll, 1987). Matters for "gentile" children are complicated greatly during the teenage years and young adulthood in that Mormons are discouraged from dating outside the faith. Many Mormons have even interpreted the doctrines of the church as forbidding marriage with anyone of a different faith.

Additionally, it is not uncommon to hear some Utah Mormons referring to "gentiles" as "guests." Such sentiments, while common, are a minority opinion among the Latter-day Saints in Utah. Those who do express such sentiments are usually a bit more on the fanatical side, often ignoring contemporary counsel to develop friendship with *all* members of the community and opting instead to rely on statements made by Brigham Young in the latter half of the 1800s. Of course, as was shown earlier the statements of Young came at a time when the leadership of the church was still practicing the doctrine of gathering, and felt that maintaining a Mormon majority was crucial to establishing a sustainable Mormon way of life. Phillips (2001) also picked up on this sentiment in his ethnographic work; one of the individuals that he interviewed offered:

> They kicked us [the Mormons] out of every state we've settled in except this one.
> This state is our state and if they don't like our liquor laws or don't like having

[LDS] bishops in the state legislature then that's just tough. We've moved around enough. This time, if they get fed up *they'll* have to leave (35).

In my experience in Utah the "Zion Curtain" is not created by the extreme views of individuals such as the one interviewed by Phillips. Rather I see the social separation emanating from the distinct Mormon conception of who they are as a people. This identity is maintained by pervasive participation in the Mormon community and, unfortunately, this leaves little time to socialize with the "gentiles" in the community. This is complicated by parents, out of a desire for their children to maintain the same standards of the Church, to be leery of allowing their children to spend time in homes where items such as alcohol and coffee may be present (the consumption of which would violate church standards).

Contemporary Construction of the Mormon Identity in Utah: The "Sorta Us" Mormons

Another large cultural population in Utah is the group that is "sorta Mormon." By this I am implying that they have some historical relationships inside the Church, but had since moved away. This group is often referred to as "jack Mormons" or "lapsed Mormons." In Utah they are most often referred to simply as "inactives." Just as with the pejorative use of the phrase "non-Mormon" there has been a recent push for the new term "less active," but this phrase seems to be having difficulty being incorporated into the collective Mormon consciousness in Utah. The "inactives" in Utah are in many ways a subculture of the dominant culture. This tie to the majority group is uneasy and is often called into question, and yet remains a distinct identity in its own right from the "gentiles." In other words, the degree of separation between Mormons and "inactives" is less than the degree of separation between Mormons and "gentiles." Chapter 8 of this thesis will explore the experiences and identities of this group.

Mormon Identity in Utah and Beyond

Mauss (1994) suggests that contemporary Mormonism is a large, international, heterogeneous church with increases in numbers coming largely from conversion. Therefore, Mauss suggests that referring to the collective Mormon people as their own distinct ethnic group is not as accurate as it once was – as we have seen, to label a group as an ethnic group depends on your definition of "ethnicity." Such findings are not surprising given that multiple social researchers have concluded that there are differences between Mormons in Utah and Mormons in other regions of the world. Arguably the best known of these findings comes from May (1980) who suggests that "Deseret Mormons," with their highly developed ties to the vanguard Mormons of the 1800s and their connection with geographic history of the people possess a identity that is distinct not just from the rest of America, but also from the rest of Mormons. May contends that because of this, it is "Deseret Mormons" that can be seen as a separate ethnic group, not Mormons collectively. It is as if having pioneer ancestors in your background makes a Mormon more of a Mormon.

In his ethnographic research into a Utah Mormon ward, Phillips (2001) found the cultural distinction between converts and those whose membership in the church came by way of birthright is often greater than the distance between birthright members and "inactives" who, while they do not participate in church services and functions, nevertheless come from early pioneer stock. Phillips asserts that "inactives" often draw the sharpest distinctions between birthright members and converts. A member of the ward where Phillips conducted his research stated:

> There are members of the church and then there are Mormons. All Mormons are
> members of the church but not all members of the church are Mormons. To be a
> Mormon is to grow up in the church and to live a Mormon life. You really can't
> convert to it. Now converts have all the blessing of the church, but they don't

> have the experience of going to Primary as a little girl, or they can't remember what church was like before the block program or what Spencer W. Kimball's raspy voice sounded like. That's all part of being Mormon (51).

In a recent conversation that I had with a convert member of the church living in Utah, she expressed contempt for a former boyfriend who decided that she would not make a good mother for his future children because she didn't know the Primary songs, and by extension, she was missing the folk knowledge of what it meant to be truly Mormon.

While most converts are able, given time, to be assimilated into their wards in Utah – with many adopting the Utah cultural style – this transition seems to be smoother for those who have lived in Utah than it is for those who have relocated to Utah (Phillips, 2001). This is especially evident in Mormons who relocate to Utah after having constructed their Mormon identity in a ward that has a large percentage of converts. It is not uncommon for converts living in Utah to express the sentiment that they feel like many members of the ward see them as temporary visitors. Many birthright members in Utah express unease at the behavior of these converts, often suggesting that converts are inclined to fanaticism in an attempt to overcompensate for their inability to smoothly navigate Utah society. This overcompensation by converts may be the result of a lack of pioneer ancestors in a ward that is saturated with folklore of iconic hero ancestors of early Mormon history (see Phillips, 2001). The distance between birthright member identity and convert member identity was at one point expressed in Mormon dogma of folk belief. Phillips (2001) points to a Mormon folk tradition that has since fallen out of circulation that expressed that, "The most valiant and righteous in the pre-earth life were rewarded by being born into the true church" (50).

Contemporary Mormon identity in Utah is just as much externally imposed upon Latter-day Saints as it is generated from within. Phillips (2001) asserts:

Utah is often perceived as being a more a traditional homeland for Mormons than just another state by others in the U.S. Thus, for the majority of Americans, being a Mormon connotes a more salient religious identity than for example a "born again" (54).

Mormons are painfully aware of a history of slanderous exaggerations of their peculiar expressions of identity. While some Latter-day Saints attempt to dismiss historical differences as isolated events that have been misunderstood, others will accept no shame for the expression of their identity. Givens (2007) notes that in the Wasatch Valley the "local culture is not some temporary condition to be transcended" (343) to be better accepted by not only the rest of the United States, but also the rest of Mormonism. As a group in Utah, Mormons have a lived experience that pervasively integrates social, intellectual, spiritual, and creative expression in such a way that Mormon culture is imposed on non-Mormon culture far more than the Utah Saints realize.

Additionally, contemporary Utah Mormon identity has been shown to be rooted in the practices and beliefs of Mormonism of the 1800s. Resulting from a strong affinity for kinship, religion, and homeland, Mormons in Utah have emerged as a subculture (distinct from the larger group of LDS members) as well as from U.S. society at large. It has been suggested that this distinct identity of Utah Mormons "interfaces with the official church, but neither wholly proceeds from it nor wholly depends on it for existence" (Phillips, 2001: 55). Mauss (1994) suggests and Phillips (2001) affirms that as such Utah Mormon identity should be compared with Jewish identity given that there is little distinction that can be made between a descendent of the early church trail blazers and actual membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

CHAPTER 8: CONTEMPORARY DYNAMICS OF MORMON

RELIGIOUS/ETHNIC IDENTITY

When people find out that I was interested in learning about Utah Mormonism from the perspective of "inactive" members of the church, I am often chastised for seeking out individuals who will express a "negative view" of the church and culture. Recently, while having breakfast at a local bakery, I was startled by an elderly man who coldly stated, "Jack Mormons can't be trusted to tell the truth." Taken aback by this unsolicited insight I asked for clarification as to what he was insinuating. This man informed me that he had noticed some of the reading materials that I had on the table and had induced that I was interested in learning about Mormonism in Utah. "If you want a good steak you go to the butcher, if your after bread go see the baker. You what to know about the gospel you talk to them that believe, not them that had shut themselves off [from the gospel]." As a result of the historical analysis of this study I have come to understand criticisms, such as the one tossed at me over breakfast, as rising out an innate fear of negative distortions of Mormonism which have repeatedly surfaced over the years. However, such criticisms also carry with them insights into the epistemological orientation of Utah Mormonism. In the minds of many faithful Latter-day saints there is no middle ground. There exists a simple equation: you are with us, or you are against us.

Epistemological orientations such as the one mentioned above should not come as a surprise given the basic understanding of historical Mormonism that has previously been offered. The Americanization of Mormonism, in conjunction with the church's abandonment of the doctrine of gathering and new push for standardization of church message and organization throughout the world, resulted in a powerful and a clear internally crafted ideal of what "is" and what "is not" Mormon. Additionally, external forces have at the same time crafted similar

boundaries. The Mormon meta-structure in Utah includes mechanisms that protect and ensure

the survivability of internally produced Mormon identity in the face of structural ambivalences.

The identifying of individuals as "Jack-Mormons" and stigmatizing the group in a way that the

dominant group will believe them incapable of being "trusted to tell the truth" is a prime

example of how groups use stigma to maintain group boundaries.

Sociologically speaking, *stigma* should be seen as a reputation, behavior, or physical

characteristic that is perceived to discredit an individual in a socially decreed manner (Goffman,

1963). In other words, stigma is a mechanism for disrupting and spoiling "normal" identity. In

Rules of Sociological Method (1895/1982) Durkheim initiated his study of stigma by offering a

hypothetical society that very much sounds like the Utopia the Mormons were attempting to

establish in the Rocky Mountains. Durkheim critiqued such a society by describing the nature of

social discrimination that would persist. Durkheim (1895/1982) wrote:

> Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes or
> deviance, properly so-called, will there be unknown; but faults, which appear
> venial to the layman, will there create the same scandal that the ordinary offense
> does in ordinary consciousnesses. If then, this society has the power to judge and
> punish, it will define these acts as criminal (or deviant) and will treat them as such
> (68-69).

The official power to judge and punish is restricted to the Mormon Meta-Structure and governing

agencies in Utah. However, individuals persist in utilizing stigma as means of judging and

condemning deviant actions and behaviors that are seen as "unbecoming of a saint."

Societal designation of what "is us" and stigmatizing what "is not us" is a necessary

element of establishing group identity and fostering group cohesion which "permits insiders to

draw a line around 'outsiders' in order to demarcate the limits of inclusion in any group" (Falk,

2001: 1). A working knowledge of the functionality of stigma is vital to understanding how the

larger group not only conceptualizes "outsiders" but also for the conceptualization of what

Bauman calls "ambivalence" in the meta-structure (1973). Bauman's conception of "ambivalence" is similar to what I have called the "sorta us" group and can be compared to Simmel's idea of the stranger.

Goffman (1963) warns that the stigmatized stranger sits as an example of what has been deemed "a less desirable kind" who is reduced in the minds of the in-group "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (3). Navigating ambivalence in the meta-structure requires a certain degree of awareness and anticipation of how individuals will be stigmatized for their choices and actions. Goffman (1963) asserts that stigmatizing the "sorta us" individual is a functional way of clarifying their social status with the rest of the group. He states that stigma "causes us to reclassify an individual from one socially anticipated category to a different but equally well-anticipated one, and the kind that causes us to alter our estimation of the individual upward [or downward]" (3). For the current study understanding how individuals are stigmatized (are how they respond to stigma) allows for an understanding of how the forces of fused ethnicity work to maintain group identity.

Understanding the forces of stigma made it possible to construct the contemporary analytic narrative aspect of this study. As discussed previously this narrative was constructed from semiformal and informal interviews with individuals who, in one degree or another, have been viewed as ambivalences in the Utah meta-structure. Such individuals were intentionally chosen for this study, to the chagrin of the man in the bakery, in the spirit of Bauman's (1973) suggestion that human social life can be best understood by acknowledging human praxis as the "idea of creativity, of active assimilation of the universe, of imposing on the chaotic world the ordering structure of human intelligent action" (118). Such an idea requires that human social life, and by extension individual identity, at a micro level not be restricted to structurally

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imposed boundaries, but rather be understood as a critical process by which individuals surpass and transcend structural boundaries. Social structures exist at the macro level, according to Bauman (1968), to establish a meta-order that is used to eliminate any object, individual or group that is structurally viewed to symbolize disorder or ambivalence.

Bauman (1973) warns that the human praxis of structuring that is not questioned can result in the obligation of individuals to accept the meta-structure. If cultural praxis is a disposition to structure then such a propensity will result in exclusionary practices (Marotta, 2002). To this end, understanding the "ambivalent" individual in a culture will provide insights into the structural processes that identify who "is us" and who "is not us." In what follows I will offer explanations for how individuals in a condition of fused ethnicity encounter ambivalent situations in the meta-structure and navigate these "gray areas" to decrease individual dissidence between ambivalence and the meta-structure. This will be followed by insights into the "thick" to "thin" spectrum of both Mormon religious identity and Mormon ethnic identity.

Ambivalence in the Meta-Structure: The Jack-Mormon

> I was always taught that it's all cut and dry, black/white…there was no gray. Well let me tell you, there's ALWAYS gray. – Tom

With the intent of ensuring that the snowball samples included only individuals who were raised LDS but have now become disenfranchised to some extent, one of the first questions I asked was simply whether or not everyone present was raised LDS. The first time I asked this question the immediate response shot back at me came from Mick who questioned back, "Don't you mean crammed down our throat LDS?" While Mick, a 27 year old "second generation Jack-Mormon" whose mother has recently started to attend church again, had a tendency to speak harshly of the role the church had in his upbringing, most tended to speak more critically, if not

fondly, of the church. The overarching sentiment that surfaced from the interviews was, "this is what we were born into; there was no choice."

The meta-structure that has resulted from the Church's goal of spreading its doctrines over the entirety of the world and the dogmatic belief that Mormonism is "the only true and living church" resulted in several amusing anecdotes. Beverley, a 31-year-old mother of three whose father became a Jack-Mormon when her parents divorced, remembered attending the baptism of an extended family member who attended church at a different building she related:

> I remember this clearly, I was concerned for [name removed] salvation, I leaned over to my mom and said, "This church isn't true" you know because it was at a different building, it was at the stake center. You know every testimony meeting from the day you are born everyone is always saying, "I know this church is true." You are raised in your little tiny world, you are kept in a bubble, they control what you are shown from birth, and [the world] is what you are told it is, you don't know any other way.

The responses to this story by two others expressed their jealously that Beverley was at least able to realize that there were other religions. Best friends for the past 18 years Tom (32) and Jack (32) joked:

> Tom: As a kid we never even knew that there were other religions, for years it was this way.
> Jack: Well hold on man, they did talk about other religions. But the only time that they did was in the past tense, you know. The Jews, back in Jesus' time, you know and you only hear it in a historical past sense.
> Tom: Or "the great and abdominal church" you know the Catholics.
> Jack: Once Joseph restored the church that was the end of all other religions.

While it could be said of any belief system that a child will grow up accepting the face validity of the meta-structure which may eventually result in situations such as the ones described above, what is interesting is to look at how children will respond once ambivalence begins to be perceived as a reality. Figure 1 illustrates the intersection of thick Mormon ethnic identity and thick Mormon religious identity that culminates in the formation of the fused ethnic identity.
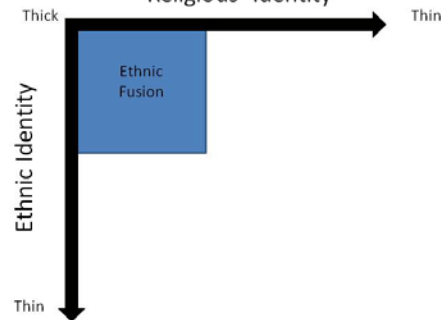
The individuals interviewed offered insight not only into how they first began to encounter ambivalence, but what steps they took to navigate this ambivalence in hopes of alleviating the emotional dissonance that arose from the encounter. Mick recalled that when he was in fifth grade, for the first time, he met an individual that had a different religious background.

Figure 1: Mormon Ethnic Fusion

> I met John. It was funny because I found out that he was Catholic and I went home to my parents and told them that there was this Catholic kid at school. I thought it was really cool. But I thought that it was different, I didn't realize that "Catholic" was a religion, I mean I thought that it meant that the kid was from "Catholic" or somewhere. Wherever the f___ that was. I thought it was just some island somewhere.

It wasn't long before Mick learned that "Catholic" wasn't an island that could be located on a globe. Mick accepted John as a novelty, and the two became close friends. However, when the other students at his grade school discovered John was Catholic they set out to convert him to Mormonism. When John stood strong in his faith he became an outcast who was frequently told he would "go to hell if he didn't read the Book of Mormon."

The harsh social reality of an ambivalence in the meta-structure (John) resulted in Mick starting to question and pull away from the structure in his early teens. Mick explained how his parents required that he and his siblings attend church services every Sunday, when his parents never went to church themselves. "If we don't go to church we couldn't do anything on Sunday with anybody. It was go to church or else." When Mick, standing united with his older brother, told his parents that he would "rather go back to bed," his parents quickly accepted the decision. Mick's departure at such a young age was an anomaly from everyone else interviewed; the others explained that they didn't start to question until their mid to late teens. The difference was

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explained to me simply by suggesting that Mick was "second generation Jack-Mormon," evidenced by his parents inactivity and non-attendance.

I have frequently returned to the statement of the man at the bakery that, "Jack Mormons can't be trusted to tell the truth." The pejorative "Jack Mormon" is a stereotype often applied by the faithful members of the church in Utah to "inactives" living among them. When I asked the members of the focus groups about how they are perceived by the larger LDS population, the instant response was to cite the title "Jack Mormon." When asked for clarification as to what a "Jack Mormon" is, there was great diversity of opinion on who should and who should not be considered a member of this category, many rejecting the title. The definitions offered can be conceptualized in three ideal types: 1) *The Dissident Outsider* 2) *The Inactive*, and 3) *The Hypocrite*.

The Ambivalent Jack Mormon: The Dissident Outsider

Individuals who actively participate in the religion but are critical of the cultural practices that have surfaced from "Mormon values amplified" in Utah are often stigmatized as Jack Mormons. It was explained to me that often such individuals would be likely to personally believe in divine elements of the religion and as such be willing to obey rules believed to be pertinent for individual salvation. However, such individuals are often critical and less willing to comply, with temporal practices such as tithing, family size, political affiliation, and the Mormon health code known as the Word of Wisdom. I offer the title of *Dissident Outsider* for this group. They are *dissidents* for their resistance to conformity of thought and action, and they

Figure 2:
Thinning of Ethnic Identity

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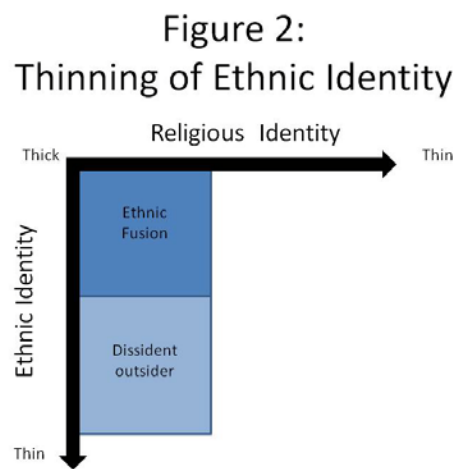
are an *outsider* resulting from a stigma ascribed to them by the larger population for employing what Hirschman (1970) called *voice*. This pattern has been modeled in figure 2.

The Dissident Outsider opting to use voice is the clear result of attempting to vocalize ambivalence in the meta-structure in hopes of inciting positive change to beliefs and practices that will result in a "better" meta-structure. Hirschman holds that of the options of *voice* and *exit, voice* is the most useful to the institution in that the group will actually be provided with information about issues that can be addressed and possibly utilized to assuage the concerns of the individual. However the dissident outsider employing *voice* may experience stigma to such a point that, in the end, he or she experiences increased separation from the larger group. It is interesting to note that all individuals interviewed related stories about exercising voice, to one degree or another, which resulted in just such sanctions, to varying degrees.

In the case of fused ethnic Mormonism in Utah, it is interesting to note that in place of vocalizing concerns, individuals also opt to exercise what I call "symbolic voice." Symbolic voice involves individuals choosing to uses material and non-material culture that the larger group has previously stigmatized to one degree or another in hopes of calling attention to the reasons for stigma. Examples of this could be a simple as a hair style to the music that one chooses to listen to. Taylor, a 30 year old return missionary currently studying philosophy at one of the local universities, recalled a time that he chose to employ symbolic voice:

> For me the strangest thing I find in Utah is the obsession people have with wearing a white shirt to church. The *Book of Mormon* indicates that "God is no respecter of color"…I know that this scripture is suggesting that God doesn't care about the color of a person's skin, but if he doesn't care about race, why the f____ would he give a shit about a shirt. I purposefully made it a point to always wear a colored shirt to church. I'm a good guy; it was my hope that others would start to do the same thing, but in the end all that happened was that the bishop would ask me go home and change. I still can't get my head around this one.

An additional function of symbolic voice is the ability of individuals to readily identify others who may share a similar point of view. In this way symbolic voice can serve to facilitate the formation of new social networks to compensate for faltering ones.

While *symbolic voice* is less threatening to those who comply with boundaries set forth by the meta-structure than the use of *voice*, exercising either one will result in some form of sanction or stigma. The most commonly stigma ascribed to the Dissident Outsider is expressed by calling into question his/her *loyalty*. It is not uncommon to have the more mainstream of the saints suggest that a Dissident Outsider simply "needs more blind faith" (ironically, "blind faith" is typically at the core of the most criticisms volleyed by the Dissident Outsider). An extreme example of such a situation can be found in how Tom was ridiculed at a family party for suggesting that the way many people in Utah act results in a removal of thought on their part.

> My brother turns and starts telling us that if the bishop told him to, and the whole congregation, to "get up take off your clothes and run around the church necked" then he would do it. Without questioning! If it ended up being wrong, then he [the brother] would not be responsible. "God would not chastise someone for obeying their leaders." That's actually what he told us! As long as the bishop said that it is okay, then by all means. His argument is that this man is "called of God" and, therefore, has the best interests of the ward in mind. Such blind obedience could go a lot of bad places **real** fast.

Tom went on to relate that the most disturbing aspect of this story wasn't the belief expressed by his brother, but that most of those present shared a similar adiaphorous attitude towards individual agency. Tom was told that his "lack of faith makes God sad" while the others present added their disapproval by looking at him and slowly shaking their heads from side to side.

An example of the Dissident Outsider being critical of temporal church policies can be found in the policy of giving 10% of one's income to the church or be restricted from full participation in various rites and rituals. The church defends this policy by citing Old Testament practices which they believe God reinstituted in the latter-days as part of the restoration of the

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gospel commenced by Joseph. The funds collected through tithing are used to fund the day-to-

day functions of the church. The criticism that is typically launched at the tithing practices by the

Dissident Outsider appeal to contradictions in church teachings to be self-sufficient, and the

ability for many to pay tithing and put food on the table. Jack offered the following about an

individual that was a common friend to one of the focus groups (his story was added on by all

present).

> To me it's a racket. Honestly, the bottom line, organized religion is just a racket.
> In the LDS church you have to pay to play. You can't go to the temple if your
> tithing is not paid, which I think is total bull shit. We all know people that wanted
> to be married in the temple; they love each other, believed in the church, and were
> so poor that they couldn't afford to pay [tithing], so they couldn't go to the
> temple…Think about Jim, he and Heather [common friends of many in the
> group], man those two wanted to go bad! But they couldn't afford to pay their
> tithing. Years later they still don't have shit of their own, they are living with his
> grandparents. And ah, they wanted to go super bad and they went and talked to
> the bishop, but the bottom line was that they were not paying tithing. That really
> pissed me off, you know. It drives good people away.

Many expressed the need for people to be able to resolve issues such as this. The feeling was that

if people were only aware how the official polices of the highly organized church organization

sometimes hurt people on the individual level then things would change. Ironically what such

people are asking for are rites of conflict reduction that, as was explained perversely, had been in

place in Deseret but have formally disappeared from contemporary church practices.

   With the absence of any sanctioned way of expressing concern the Dissident Outsider

frequently will find subtle ways of publicly making their thoughts known. These are typically

undertaken in one of the many semi-formal opportunities that the church offers for public

speech. The most common of these opportunities that the dissident outsider will use are the

weekly Sunday school classes and the monthly testimony meeting. It is not uncommon to hear

active faithful members of the church talk about "the guy in Sunday school, he just won't shut up

about [insert topic]," or how they always "dread when Brother [insert name] gets up to bear his testimony, he just goes off about [insert topic]." Such expressions were described by marginalized Mormons to be "last-ditch efforts" to resolve apparent disconnects between doctrine and social practice. When such efforts fail, the Dissident Outsider will typically begin a transition of personal religious practice that results in increased inactivity from public religious practice.

The Ambivalent Jack Mormon: The Hypocrite

The second type of Jack Mormon offered by the group can be best summarized by Tom as "not necessarily the one that isn't going but the one that goes but doesn't live it." This type of affiliation is what Bahr and Albrecht (1989), in their study of disaffiliated Mormons, refer to as "ritualist" participation. Figure three illustrates this identity pattern. There was a high level of debate among focus group members as to whether or not this group should be called "Jack Mormons," many preferring to simply call them hypocrites. This type of person was described as being extremely active in all of the church functions, but when no one is looking partakes in activities that are prohibited by the church.

Figure 3: Thinning of Religious Identity

The category of Hypocritical Jack Mormon is the one group that all those interviewed seems to have a common level of contempt and disgust towards. Reminiscent of the man at the bakery, Jack simply declared, "You just can't trust them." The following is an excerpt from a conversation about Tom's step-brother:
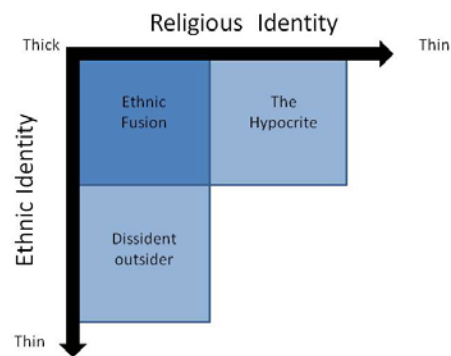
Tom: He and his wife are about the same as us, they drink and what not. They were both raised Mormon, and now they have decided to go back to church so that their kids are accepted.

Mick: THAT IS WRONG!

Tom: I think that kind of sucks

Mick: THAT IS WRONG, THAT IS WAY WRONG. THAT IT THE WRONG REASON TO GO TO CHURCH.

Tom: The sad thing is that as soon as they were back to church their kids have friends. It's true! Friends that would invite them over.

Mick: Yea…but…ahh…I understand what you are saying, but I just have to say that that is f____g stupid.

Tom: I agree. It is f____g stupid! But it is f____g stupid that it works!

Mick: That is my point though; it isn't stupid that they would do something for their kids; it is stupid because it worked! And see whole …I am not going to go to church for my kids' sake, sorry but I can't bring myself to go; I would feel like a hypocrite. I just can't bring myself to do it.

Tom: I know! It's not the right reason to be there.

Mick: I'm not just going to be there to help my kids out; my kids can make friends regardless of the religion, regardless of the race, ethnicity, whatever. And if they what to hang out with those people that is fine with me, I really don't give a shit. But if they want to hang out with a kid that is religious and go to church, that is their decision not mine. And that's what I would rather have, versus me saying no you are going to go to church and then me not go with them.

While the motivation in the above interchange was the benefit of the children, similar stories suggested "family pressure" and "community status." One respondent told me that he remained active as long as he did because his employer was in his ward, and he feared the loss of his job if his boss was ever made aware of his inactivity. The key to understanding the Hypocritical Jack Mormon is not his activity level, but rather the constant concern for public persecution. Such a person cares not for the morality of the meta-structure but rather participates purely for the social elements that arise from being perceived as being "a member in good standing" within the meta-structure.
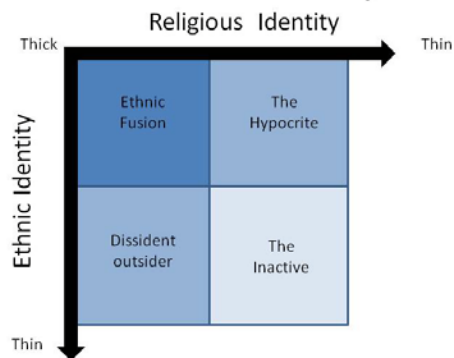
The Ambivalent Jack Mormon: The Inactive

The broadest definition offered for Jack Mormon was a "Mormon that used to go to church but doesn't, for various unknown reasons." Not wanting to accept the pejorative title of

Jack Mormon, those interviewed would offer various ways to explain their religious position in relation to the larger Mormon population. Four examples: "we were raised LDS but we don't go anymore;" "when someone asks, I'm like I don't know, then I usually just say, oh…f___ it, I'm Mormon;" "I'm agnostic with Mormon tendencies;" "I'm an ethnic Mormon, it's like a ethnic-Jew, or a Holy day-Catholic, only with Mormonism." Such statements acknowledge that at some point, despite having Mormonism "crammed down [their] throat" to the point that "there was no choice" when they were younger, there came a time when a choice had to be made. For the purposes of this study *inactivity,* as it is called in Mormonism, can be seen as synonyms with Hirschman's (1970) concept of *exit* or the idea of *symbolic exit*.

Hirschman (1970) holds that individuals participating in meta-structures will opt for *exit*, as a warning of unrest and decline in satisfaction. This pattern is modeled in figure 4. For the current study, the key to understanding why an individual will choose *exit* over *voice* or visa versa is the availability of the option, and the perceived social ramifications of such action. In other words, if it is perceived that the meta-structure of

Figure 4:
Thinning of Both Religious and Ethnic Identity

Utah Mormonism does, in fact, grant ample opportunities for *voice*, then people will be less likely to choose *exit*. Once again, this was seen in the historical Deseret rite of conflict reduction. However, as this option became less available during the Americanization of Mormonism, and as alternative forms of thought seeped into Deseret, individuals began to opt for *exit* more frequently in order to express discontent.

Contemporary Mormonism includes a formalized method through which individuals can

formally remove themselves from affiliation with Church organization. This formalized

procedure is relatively rare, typically only undertaken by individuals who wish to make a

symbolic statement about their dissatisfaction with church policy and practices. This procedure is

locally known as "having your name removed from the records of the church." While discussing

hypocrisies that had been observed, a married couple that I refer to as Mr. and Mrs. Smith, 33

and 32 respectively, who both come from divorced families where the mother remained active in

the church after the divorce and the father opted to exit to one degree or another, related their

story of undertaking just such action.

> Mr. Smith: The hypocrisy drives me insane! You know my dad is inactive, has
> been for years, still holds on to his core beliefs which is great for him, works
> for him. But he will admit it; he is a great fence sitter. I have a hard time
> with the grey area; I'm either one way or the other. And I actually, because
> of the way I feel I actually requested that my name be removed from the
> records of the church.
> Mrs. Smith: We did that together.
> Mr. Smith: Right, to put my money where my mouth was, because the things that
> I believe and the things that I was saying didn't go in line with staying a
> member of the church. I turned in my letter, together we went, turned in our
> letters to our bishop, I think he shredded them when we walked out the door.
> He tried everything he could to talk us out of it. But the fact for me was that
> I did the work, I did what I felt I needed to do to be living whatever side of
> the fence that I feel that I have to be on.
> Mrs. Smith: We never heard back.
> Interviewer: You were supposed to?
> Mrs. Smith: We were supposed to get a conformation letter.
> Interviewer: Did you follow up with that?
> Mr. Smith: Maybe I should, but it gave me peace. That when I talk to some of my
> cousins that were like. "You are always saying this and this but don't you
> think you will go back?" No. I really don't. I never want to go back.
> Mrs. Smith: It gave us closure.
> Mr. Smith: So for me, I want to live as honestly as I can with myself, you know.

The action of having one's name removed from the records of the church is viewed by most

members of the church as apostasy. The only way for a person who has had his or her name

removed from church records to regain full access to the church is to be *re*-baptized. While some might argue that this act is an example of *exit* from the meta-structure I suggest that this is still an example of symbolic exit. Looking at the rough ground interpretation of their actions by those who maintain thick Mormon identities, Mr. and Mrs. Smith are simply viewed as prodigals who, at some future point, will return to the fold. In talking with those in Utah it is still common to hear individuals who have taken the necessary steps to have their names removed from the records of the church referred to as "inactive" not as "former Mormons."

Additionally we can see that the cultural patterns that Mr. and Mrs. Smith were raised with still hold some level of prominence in their identity by looking at the very manner in which they related their story. Mr. and Mrs. Smith's account of the events that led up to asking their bishop to delete their names from church records adhered to the conversion folklore story patterns identified by Eliasno (1999) and Ward (2000), even so far as to include the use of testimony tone. The persistence of the conversion folklore pattern indicates that the identity of Mormonism remains intact to some degree despite individual actions intended to distance one's self from the larger group. Ironically, in understanding Utah Mormonism as an example of ethnic fusion, Mr. and Mrs. Smith's actions to officially exit the church should be understood only as a symbolic exit. In addition to elements of Mormon identity remaining intact, Mr. and Mrs. Smith remain deeply attached to Utah and the culture that they claim "is still a nice place to raise kids." Having one's name removed from the records of the church is seen as moving beyond inactivity into the realm of non-Mormon identity.

Obviously Mr. and Mrs. Smith did not undertake such actions on a whim; in fact, they were adamant that their actions were only undertaken after long and careful consideration. As stated above, taking steps to have one's name removed from the records of the church is a

relatively rare phenomenon, explained as a step that was only undertaken after a period of inactivity. The journey from Mormon to inactive Mormon was consistently described as a slow process of questioning and seeking answers. In coming to understand this process three broad categories of inactivity became apparent: 1) inactivity resulting from preceding failures in social bonds, 2) inactivity resulting from individual detachment from organized religion, and 3) inactivity resulting from resistance to a disciplinary society.

Inactivity Resulting from Preceded Failures in Social Bonds. It is common in Utah to hear faithful Mormons respond to criticisms by responding, "The people aren't perfect, but the church is," or "It's the gospel, not the people." Ironically if Durkheim's definition of religion were to be strictly applied, then a church *is* the people (1915/1965: 62). For Durkheim it is the voluntary bonds that are established as individuals participate in religion that maintain society. In the definition of religion as a source of individual identity offered for this research, I also assert that the people and the teachings are inseparable by pointing to the social nature of religion, one of the three underpinning elements of religion. In the situation of fused ethnicity found with Utah Mormonism more finite definitions of what it means to be "us" emerged resulting in a higher tendency to regulate all aspects of social life beyond religion. Violation of this boundary, to one degree or another, will result in a loss of social connection with the community.

In acknowledging that boundaries are constructed at the points where Mormonism defines what "*is* moral" and what "*is not* moral," it is ironic that when an individual has crossed into the realm of what "is not moral" the resulting stigma from such actions often results in weakening or dissolving the very social network that had previously been constructed to help the individual in times of need. With the loss of social connection to the larger group an individual who has crossed the boundary of what "is not moral" will in turn diminish previously

reciprocated social connection (see figure 5). Beverley was

an active member of the church until she was almost 18.

She describes herself as always being "a good kid, [who] got

into a bit of trouble, but nothing big." She started to date a

fellow classmate, who would later become her husband

(they have been married for almost 16 years now). The two

of them decided that they were destined to be together; for

Figure 5:
Inactivity Resulting From
Disengagement From Social
Connection

the two of them, "nothing else mattered, I wouldn't say that it was a moral breakdown because it

was all about the two of us."
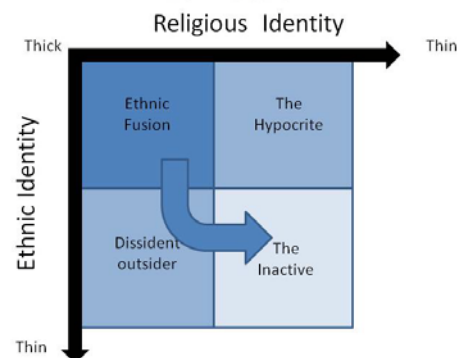
> I had earned my young womanhood recognition award. Okay and I had worked
> my ass off for that thing. And I was on the leadership council for camp, we had
> been working on camp since February, I had earned this medallion, I was just
> going to put together this little program, I hadn't done it yet, and I had graduation
> and everything coming up, and I come up pregnant. As soon as I come up
> pregnant, they took the medallion away from me, they kicked me out of camp
> council, hey it looks wrong to the other girls so that part is understood, no
> question about it. But I was 17 and pregnant and terrified. And all these people
> that were supposed to love and support me weren't anymore. My young women's
> advisors, all these people that I was really close to, all of a sudden I wasn't good
> enough anymore. So that for me, when I was 18, just barely 18, that was when,
> and no I'm not perfect…as long as I was perfect they loved me, and they were all
> so great, and they would help me out with anything, and then the moment that I
> stepped off their little straight and narrow when I <u>needed</u> people, when I actually
> <u>really needed</u> the love and support, I didn't have it. So that for me…they all say
> that "the gospel is perfect, but the people aren't," well that for me didn't matter, I
> needed more from them than I got, so I was done. And to that day I never felt that
> I even needed that to be a part of my life anymore.

Without the social support that she had previously gained from her years of participating within

the boundaries of the meta-structure, Beverley and others like her sought out alternative social

networks where people would offer the love and support that she needed.

The case of Beverley involved boundaries based on the religious teachings of the group, and others related similar stories. Tom recalled that when he was in his mid-teens, he spent two months living with his aunt in California.

> I went to church with her family, and it was a totally different experience. They are good, loving, decent people. I felt like everyone that was there wanted to be there. They didn't do it because they had to. I think that because they had to rally, stand up for what they believe, because they face the real world, where as here in Utah it is easy to just go with it because it is what EVERYONE is doing. There it's not what they have to be, it's what they want to be. I don't think every Mormon out of state is, you know, having their calling and election or anything like that. I just felt like I was accepted more for who I was. I had long hair; no one made a big deal about that, whereas here all my friends turned on me. Here, when I grew my hair long, all the kids that I had been through primary with turned their backs on me, and suddenly I was an asshole because I listen to heavy metal and had long hair, but out there it didn't matter.

The stories of both Tom and Beverley illustrate how the larger group will withdraw social networks from those who are perceived as violating the fundamental distinctions of group identity. Without the social networks in place, active participation in the organized elements of the culture seemed to be pointless. For others the transition into inactivity didn't start with the group pulling away from the individual, but rather the individual pulled away from the group.

Inactivity Resulting from Individual Detachment from Organized Religion. The reasons that one chose to actively participate in organized religion was a topic that many could just not agree on. Some expressed that the larger organization is in place to provide extra strength for those who need it. Hanna, 30, mother of two and married to Mick, offered that many of her family members needed to participate:

> All five of my siblings went on missions, and I went to every one of their homecomings and farewells…I have gone to all the baby blessings that we have been invited to… I really make it a point to support them. If you were to go and talk with them, ask them about their lives, I think they all, especially my brothers, would tell you that they needed the mission. For them, they participate because it gives them some strength or whatever.

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Such views are consistent with the social nature of religion providing a basis of morality in society. If an individual is experiencing a state of anomie, then active participation in organized functions of the group can provide the necessary underpinnings to overcome the sense of normlessness. The same could be said of active participation as a preemptive step to deter the onset of anomie.

Whatever function active participation serves the Mormon faithful, as was pointed out by Taylor, mandatory church attendance is a relatively new development in Mormonism. Taylor expressed:

> Brigham [Young] made fun of those who attended church every week, and he was the man that would talk with God *mano-a-mano* in the temple. If he goes to heaven and was inactive by today's standards, and I end up in hell, then God is a hypocrite. He and I will definitely have words over that one.

Many of the criticisms of contemporary Mormon Church organization are based on the historical knowledge such as this that has been passed on in folklore. Such historically based criticisms point to clear discrepancies in how the iconic heroes of Mormon lore lived their religion as an extension of the self, viewing church attendance as choice not as an obligation.

The inactive Jack Mormon often expresses the sentiment that the obligations that arise out of highly organized religion remove God from the equation, focusing on devotion to the meta-structure rather than the divine. Such sentiment was expressed by Hannah:

> I think the problem comes when you get into organized religion, because my experience growing up LDS was that everyone went to church to prove to everybody else how good they were. With their callings, everything was just a show. That's what it looked like to me anyway. It was a big competition. Organized religion, I think, is where religion went WRONG! I think that the spirituality, that is supposed to be behind religion, got lost when they organized it. It's supposed to be between you and god, not you and your wallet, or you and your neighbor. If someone in your family doesn't want to be spiritual, or religious, for whatever reason, that's their business, leave them the f___ alone. They shouldn't be ridiculed or cast out or however you want to say it, just because they don't do it the same way that you do.

This interview quote acknowledges the difficulty of forcing religions expression into a neatly organized system of thought. For individuals such as these, religion becomes a personal expression that is not easily defined. This detachment from the organized meta-structural practices is illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6:
Inactivity Resulting From Disengagement From Organized Religion
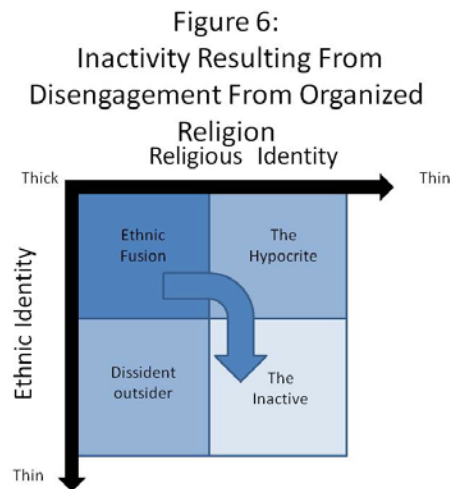
Looking at religion as a personal expression of one's faith in God that doesn't rely on pre-arranged and structured conceptions of the divine allows for more freedom for the individual to give meaning to that which transcends human comprehension. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985) suggested the existence of a type of personal religion which was named "Sheilaism" after Sheila Larson. Bellah et al offer:

> Sheila Larson is a young nurse who has received a good deal of therapy and describes her faith as "Sheilaism." This suggests the logical possibility of more than 235 million American religions, one for each of us. "I believe in God," Sheila says. "I am not a religious fanatic. [Notice at once that in our culture any strong statement of belief seems to imply fanaticism so you have to offset that.] I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." Sheila's faith has some tenets beyond belief in God, though not many. In defining what she calls "my own Sheilaism," she said: "It's just try to love yourself and be gentle with yourself. You know, I guess, take care of each other. I think God would want us to take care of each other." Like many others, Sheila would be willing to endorse few more specific points (221).

Many of the sentiments offered by the inactive Jack Mormon may set them apart from mainstream Mormonism, but would firmly plant them within the boundaries of "Sheilaism." Tom offered:

> I would say religion for me is more of a personal thing, just between me and whatever I think is higher than me. Which I wouldn't even put a specific; you

know is there one god or is there many gods whatever. But I believe there is something. I'd like to believe there is something. I'm open to both ways though. My ex-brother absolutely believes you would be dirt after this, which I have a hard time with. However, I also think that maybe it's because of some sort of self preservation, being human that we want to think that there is more than just this. You know, I don't know how to express it. Sure, I think there is a higher power; and that's good enough for me.

The portal of inactive Jack Mormons in Utah offers the stereotype of a nihilistic atheist who has turned his/her back on family. However, the insights offered by these few examples suggest an individual who has lost faith in temporal constructs and looks for a better approach for expressions of that which transcends human comprehension. However, when such a sentiment is expressed, pressure from the meta-structure can often force the individual to become further removed from any aspect of the group that one had good feeling towards.

Inactivity Resulting from Resistance to a Disciplinary Society. The boundaries between "us" and "not us" are essential for the maintenance of group identity. Therefore, the meta-structure must be constructed in such a way that it encourages conformity in thought and action. The meta-structure need for conformity can be understood with thoughtful consideration of what Foucault (1975/1995) called the disciplinary society. The disciplinary society is constructed by a large meta-structure that is seen as liberating. The Meta-Structure of Utah Mormonism was described to be like Orwell's (1949) "Big Brother." In his novel 1984 Orwell describes a disciplinary society where the power resides in an oligarchy that uses constant surveillance and propaganda to maintain cultural values and boundaries. The disciplinary society works much like Orwell's conception of "Big Brother" who is watching the masses for their benefit, correcting them when they stray, and maintaining the boundaries between what is moral and what is not moral.

Foucault (1975/1995) suggests that meta-structure of such a society can be compared to the Panopticon designed by Bentham. The Panopticon is a circular prison constructed so that all the cells face inwards to a central tower where the authorities are able to subject the prisoners to constant surveillance and management. Foucault believed that the *idea* of constant surveillance and management is far more effective than *actual* surveillance and management; if the prisoners assume that they are being watched then they will be more apt to stay in line. Foucault (1975/1995) states:

> This kind of control, where no physical force is necessary and yet in which the subject submit themselves to discipline, is ideal. "It arranges things in such a way that the exercise of power is not added on from the outside, like a rigid, heavy constraint," but controls through a subtle conformity to the norm (or even conformity to the deviance) (206).

Those research participants interviewed offered insights into what happens when the disciplinary society fails to encourage individuals to subject themselves and heavy constraint is used instead.

Many suggested that their current inactivity is a result of pressure they felt from those attending church. One described it as being "pushed, with great force, away from my heritage." Others expressed that they "just couldn't take the pressure anymore, no one can be that perfect." I have illustrated this pattern of thinning of ideal identity in figure 7. Ironically, many of the incidents described to me, from the perspective of the

Figure 7:
Inactivity Resulting From Resistance to a Disciplinary Society

active faithful would be seen as a way of helping people to be more fully accepted by the larger group, but to the Jack Mormon such pressures pushed them further away from the mainstream core identity. I have encountered many stories of teenagers expressing a desire to not attend
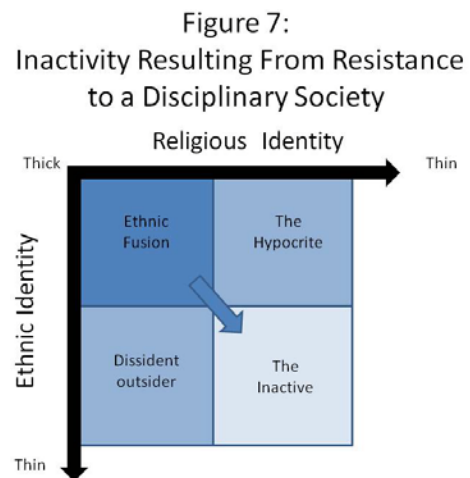
church and their parents simply stating that they would attend or be punished. Many continued to attend out of fear of the punishment or as Jack expressed, "I pretty much kept going as long as I did because it was kind of the rules of the house." Others joked about how they worked hard so that they could be prepared for the imminent punishments. Taylor recalls:

> I remember blowing up at my Dad [who was the ward bishop at the time, and would later become a mission president] one Sunday morning telling him that "I don't fu____g believe it" [*laughing from the group*]…well, that didn't go over very well [*more laughing from the group*] and he actually looks at me, man I can still see it, he looked like I had stabbed him in the back. Well, he looks at me and says, "Well there will come a time when you will have to decide for yourself, I guess you could stay in your room all day." I said, "Oh that is supposed to help me decide?" At this point I hear Mom yelling down the hall, "Don't give him that option, he will take it." [*Laughing*] I mean I had been working since I was ten. At this point I had my own TV. I had my Nintendo. I had a VCR. I had almost unlimited videos, and it was winter time so in my window well. I kept soda and ice cream, I was like "Okay, fine, ohhh, ground me to my room." It was conform or face the consequences. I'll take the consequences, thank you very much!

The irony of this story comes from what happened to Taylor later in the day after church was over. Taylor laughed and told us about how that evening his friends all came over to see if he was feeling okay, suggesting that it was their responsibility to "visit the sick and afflicted" on Sunday:

> This one girl, I'll just call her Jezebel. [*Laughing*] Man she was so fine. She was like, "I reeeeally missed you today, I hope I'll see you next week." Man, it worked; I'm a bit ashamed to say. I don't think I missed a day of church until after I got home from my mission.

The more subtle pressures to conform worked in this case, where as the example of hair length stigma placed on Tom previously mentioned drove him away.

The structural pressures to conform to church attendance in Utah exist beyond simply ecclesiastically dictated mandates. Many talked about how when they were growing up there simply was nothing to do on Sunday. "All of the stores were closed, the movie was closed, and if

you went hiking everyone gave you shit for it." Because of the lack of options for Sunday fun,

many said they would randomly attend church just to be with their friends.

> I had this friend, he was a complete ass-hole to everybody, but his parents still made him go to church on Sunday. I would go with him every now and then. So I went a couple of times, and this one Sunday one of his, I don't know if it was his priesthood leader or something, told me flat out, "Why don't you go to church all the time?" I was like, "I just don't. I just go so that [name removed] can go and do stuff after church." And honestly that is the only reason that I went with him. Anyway this teacher guy said that, "It is better to not go at all than to go every once in a while." He flat out told me that, so I was like whoa, I'm never going to go to church again. I was like, whoa you just cut your own throat you dumb ass. And I haven't been back since.

While the intentions of this priesthood leader can be assumed to be to encourage a heightened

level of participation and commitment to the church, the result was a knee-jerk reaction to

external coercion pushing the individual further from the mainstream conception of what "is" a

Mormon.

Navigating Ambivalence

The very descriptions of the different categories of Jack Mormon have themselves

provided insight into how the fused ethnic culture in Utah has responded to ambivalence in the

meta-structure. From this understanding emerges a pattern of individuals using both voice

(including symbolic voice) and exit (including symbolic exit) to alleviate the dissonance arising

from conflicting personal ideals and the meta-structure. Hirschman's argument suggests that as

social actors attempt to optimize their satisfaction with elements of the meta-narrative,

sometimes a sense of *loyalty* can overpower desires for *voice* or *exit*. In the case of the Mormon

pattern of ethnic fusion, this sense of *loyalty* is the main force utilized to keep an individual tied

to the ethnic traditions, even after a *symbolic exit* from the religious traditions. An historical

understanding of how Mormonism intentionally established organizations that would bolster

social ties and networks shows how a heightened sense of *loyalty* was fostered that, in turn, offset desires for *exit* and *voice*.

Navigating Ambivalence: Loyalty

One frequently recurring theme in the interviews was how parents appeared to be more attached to the church than they were to the family. Mr. and Mrs. Smith recalled advice from their bishop on their wedding day:

> Mr. Smith: The Bishop told us that, plainly, that it should be *first* God *than* each other
> Mrs. Smith: Also something that we DID NOT agree with.
> Mr. Smith: This was something that we both laughed at when we got home. I said "you know, it's not going to happen that way."

The need to put church affairs before family affairs was also criticized by Hanna, whose father had been involved in local church leadership positions all of her young life, when she recalled that, "Doesn't the church say that you should always put the family before the church? Well, my dad always put the church before the family. And it weighed heavy on us." Others simply told stories about how the church had become everything for various people that they knew. For such individuals all that mattered was the church.

Navigating Ambivalence: Loyalty, Voice and Exit

When addressed together, Hirschman's concepts of *exit, voice* and *loyalty* as they appear in the Mormon ethnic fusion pattern appear to continually cycle from *loyalty* to *voice* to *exit*. This status of "sorta us" was not ascribed by birth, but rather was ascribed by the larger group during some part of what Taylor called "the strange journey of the ostracized." With the exception of Mick who is, as precisely stated, a "second generation Jack Mormon," all of the individuals interviewed had active parents during their childhood. As was previously described, all participates described their adolescence as a time in which they experienced intense loyalty to

the meta-structure and were incapable of questioning group boundaries. The ability to question

group boundaries only emerged when individuals encountered situations that could not be

explained given the ontological assumptions of the individual. When such questions would arise

interview participants often related that they sought advice from a parent who would often

respond by stating something like, "Interesting thought, I just try not to think about things like

that," or "You need to have a little more blind faith." Such was the loyalty of authority figures to

the meta-structure.

Finding the admonishment "to have more blind faith" inadequate to resolve voiced

concerns, individuals began an *exit* of sorts. This was not an exit that rapidly removed one's self

from the body at large, rather it was an exit that was slow and methodical. The same question

would be asked until an individual that was willing to answer such question was located.

Ironically the person willing to answer such questions was often a grandparent. Tom recalls:

> I actually got more honest answers out of my grandparents than I did out of my
> own parents. I mean like they would just flat talk about things. I don't know if it
> was because of the different time that they lived in, ya know, the life they
> experienced, the differences between then and now, but they were just more
> willing to talk about things. And just be…I guess what I mean by 'honest' is what
> they would actually confess to. Tell you about; share with you their experiences,
> whereas my mom, I know things she's done because I know people that know her.
> But my mom won't talk about them. She didn't want to harm the reputation of the
> church. My grandparents felt that hiding information was harming the church.

When new knowledge was gained individuals became loyal to the new episteme (see figure

8). As new questions would arise, the grandparent or other willing individual would continue

to offer advice and answers. However, eventually the grandparent, or other individual that was

located to answer questions, would no longer be willing or able to adequately respond to

inquiries.

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With the loss of sources of information new help was sought and located until they also were unable or unwilling to answer questions. The cycle was repeated over and over. Taylor recalls:

Figure 8:
Voice, Exit, loyalty Cycle

> I kept finding people that would be willing to question…to debate, ya know. I don't know how long this went on, years I guess. In hind sight every time I found someone that would be willing to go at it with me I moved one step away from the mainstream. The funny thing is, this realization came to me one night as I was getting advice from the bartender. [*Group laughter.*] Such is the strange journey of the ostracized.

The pattern that was described to me is voice and exit as tandem action. Every time a question was poised, to gain a satisfying response required a level of detachment from the group collective.

The pattern described can be understood as the process by which an individual comes to possess the *pluralized identity,* described by Berger and Zinjderveld (2009) as finding an alternative episteme for the construction of identity. In essence identity that emerges from ethnic fusion in Utah exists along two spectrums that can be described using Cornell and Hartman's (2007) descriptors of *thick* comprehensive identity – indicating high adherence to the orthodox beliefs and practices – and *thin* more pluralized identity – indicating low levels of orthodoxy and acceptance of an alternative episteme. Where both the spectrum of Mormon religious identity and Mormon ethnic identity is *thick* an individual is firmly rooted within a social pattern of ethnic fusion. However, the various categories of Jack Mormons that emerged from individuals employing voice and exit illustrate what happens as an individual begins to thin out one or both of the episteme.
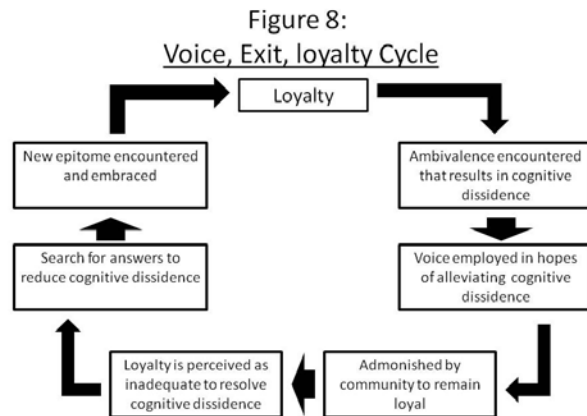
When pulling away from the ideal religious standards set forth by the Mormon meta-structure in Utah, an individual slowly thins out his or her religious identity and begins to look increasingly like the Hypocritical Jack Mormon who, while not believing the divine rudiments, is still willing to participate in various rituals for the purposes of maintaining strong social networks. Along the ethnic spectrum, as the individual pulls away from the fused identity he/she transitions to the thinned ethnic Jack Mormon identity of the dissident outsider. A thinning of both identities will result in some degree of exit from the meta-structure, placing distance between oneself and the episteme of both religious and ethnic practices.

Exit can only occur as the individual increasingly experiences a thinner attachment to the meta-structure. Being born into a situation of ethnic fusion will make it increasingly difficult to separate oneself from all acceptable sources of identity. In the case of Utah Mormonism, interview data showed that even individuals who have opted for more extreme forms of exit still have requisite influences from the fused identity that continue to maintain some level influence over their ontological assumptions. Those interviewed all continue to maintain a high level of attachment to Utah. Taylor went so far as to echo the words of Brigham Young who declared that Utah to be "the place" to build the kingdom of god, Taylor expressed:

> It's funny, I have my differences with the way things are in Utah, but the thought of leaving is awful. Living the life I live in Utah, man, I wade though a river of shit – daily! But I know this shit. Somewhere else it's a whole new pile of shit. For me, this is *still* the place, or should I say "this is the shit." [*Laughing*] I like it here. I'd miss the Jell-O and funeral potatoes.

Beyond Utah: The "Sorta Us" Perspective

While those interviewed currently all reside in Utah, they have all had brief experiences with Mormon life beyond the Mormon cultural region. Some had served in the military; others have lived in other states for brief episodes. There seemed to be a greater degree of respect for

Mormons who live outside of Utah. This respect came from the perception that in Utah Mormonism is just a given; as one moves beyond the state one is forced to choose who he or she is and what he or she believes. They spoke of the active non-Utah Latter-day Saint as persons who have had to make tough decisions about their religiosity and, as such, are stronger in their faith. According to those interviewed, when Mormonism is examined beyond Utah one will find a greater degree of openness to alternative ways of being actively Mormon, suggesting that many of the ideas that initially resulted in the stigma of the dissident Jack Mormon in Utah would be seen as a less controversial subject matter.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This thesis began by asserting that for the majority of human existence the social position that one was born into provided an identity that fuses all aspects of ecclesiastical and social life into one unquestionable group identity. However, the foundations of such identity were shaken, bent, and broken as the modern mindset increasingly found a prominent place in society. With the onset of modernity, communities devised methods to guard against encroaching diversity of thought and identity by maintaining clear conceptions of what "is" and "is not" acceptable within community boundaries. As humanity entered the post-modern era individual identity increasingly has become an unending project constructed from seemingly unlimited sources.

This research has looked at how individuals respond to and navigate the powerful identity sources of religion and ethnicity. In addressing Utah Mormonism I have been able to gain insight into not only how identity formation functions today, but given the brief history of the group I have been able to gain insight into the historical development of meta-structures erected to protect and foster such identities. The first half of Mormon history shows how a fused ethnic/religious identity developed in isolation, the group having opted to exit from a society in which they had suffered severe stigma and persecution. In isolation the Deseret Mormons established a meta-structure that was used to instill a thick, all-encompassing identity. Much like pre-modern societies, the foundations of the Deseret Mormon identity were shaken and bent as the group was re-assimilated into mainstream U.S. society. The Americanization of Mormonism presented opportunities for the influx of alternative epitome and plurality of belief.

In seeking to understand how such novelties of thought were perceived by the Mormon faithful, the analysis drew on Hirschman's concepts of *exit, voice,* and *loyalty.* The emerging pattern is that *loyalty* to the meta-structure is often used to deter challenges to ontological

assumptions essential to individual identity. When *loyalty* is insufficient to enable individuals to maintain an identity that is not in conflict with boundaries of structured group identity, alternative strategies are sought out. Individuals who opt to *voice* concerns about perceived discrepancies in the meta-structure are often stigmatized for their actions. The ascribed stigma can result in an increased level of separation from the idealized identity provided by the meta-structure. When dissonance between individual identity and the idealized identity becomes too great, individuals have little recourse but to *exit*.

The individualized practice of *exit* and *voice* should be understood as tandem instruments used to alleviate discord between newly found ontological perceptions and the precisely adhered ontology. As such, *exit* and *voice* are used to thin out the identity ascribed by the meta-structure. *Voice* need not be audible and *exit* need not be physical, but rather both can be expressed symbolically. *Symbolic voice* can be undertaken by embracing material and nonmaterial cultural elements that the larger group has deemed "unbecoming." *Symbolic Exit* involves disengagement from social custom **or** from religious rite. As such, *symbolic* exit could be something as simple as disengagement from essential social functions or opting to participate in church rites and rituals on a more irregular basis. Hirschman's concept of *exit,* as it applies to patterns of ethnic fusion, would be more appropriately understood as physical removal from both ethnic culture *and* religious practice.

The Eight Dimensional Identity Transmission Approach (8-ITA)

In seeking to better understand Mormon identity patterns in Utah I have developed a theoretical model to demonstrate the interaction between ethnic and religious identity. The model is based on the different conceptions of Jack-Mormons that emerged from this research and the relationship each of these categories has to ideal identity ascribed by the meta-structure. This

model is predicated on the separation of identity into eight ideal types. With these eight ideal types serving as the foundation for the modal I have named this theoretical model *The Eight Dimensional Identity Transmission Approach* (8-ITA).

Prior to presenting 8-ITA a few words of caution are in order. It is imperative to remember that Weber's (1947) conception of an ideal type is nothing more than a tool used to describe, in abstract form, vastly complex social phenomena. Weber eloquently described the need for ideal types for the analysis of society:

> …sociological analysis both abstracts from reality and at the same time helps us to understand it, in that it shows with what degree of approximation a concrete historical phenomenon may be in one aspect 'feudal', in another 'bureaucratic', and in still another 'charismatic'. In order to give a precise meaning to these terms, it is necessary for the sociologist to formulate pure ideal types of the corresponding forms of action which in each case involve the highest possible degree of logical integration by virtue of their complete adequacy on the level of meaning. But precisely because this is true, it is probably seldom if ever that a real phenomenon can be found which corresponds exactly to any one of these ideally constructed ideal types. (1947: 110).

Ideal types are good for thinking about vastly complex social phenomena as if they were empirical social reality to be tested and disproven. Bauman (2007) suggests that using ideal types is a "safe" way of cautiously understanding "'pure constructs' in our struggle to make intelligible and understand admittedly 'impure' reality" (27-28). The use of these eight ideal types in 8-ITA model is "safe" insofar as it is remembered that the "pure ideal type" is not a conception of "real phenomena."

8-ITA Within the Mormon Cultural Region

8-ITA is used to conceptualize three "thick to thin" identity spectrums present in Utah Mormonism. The first two of these spectrums are Mormon religious identity and Mormon ethnic identity. The third spectrum seeks to capture the Mormon geographical attachment to Utah (see figure 9). This attachment to place has persisted thanks the iconic hero folklore story of Brigham

Young surveying the Salt Lake Valley and declaring "this is the place." Given that this study is primarily based in "place," I will now present an explanation of the how these three spectrums function to provide a rich and powerful identity construction site.

Figure 9:
8-ITA: Three Sources of Identity

8-ITA: Ideal Identity. It is appropriate to begin the construction of the 8-ITA model by providing an understanding of ethnic function identity construction geographically in place. The history of Mormonism has shown that the unique circumstances that arose in isolation allowed for Utah Mormonism to develop the all encompassing meta-structure consistent with a pattern of ethnic fusion. When an individual has a thick attachment to place, a thick religious identity, and a thick ethnic identity he/she experiences the *Ideal Identity* set forth by the meta-structure (see figure 10).

Figure 10:
8-ITA: Ideal Identity

The ideal identity historically developed to compensate for the lack of pre-existing services offered from established structures. In the case of Mormonism, finding the United States to be an inhospitable environment the early Saints had to develop formal and informal services that would help converts develop and maintain thick attachment to new identity sources and by so doing allow the convert to be integrated into Mormon society. The development of the ideal identity is supported by Breton's (1964) theory of "institutional completeness." The idea behind institutional completeness is that a group with a highly developed meta-structure will possess a
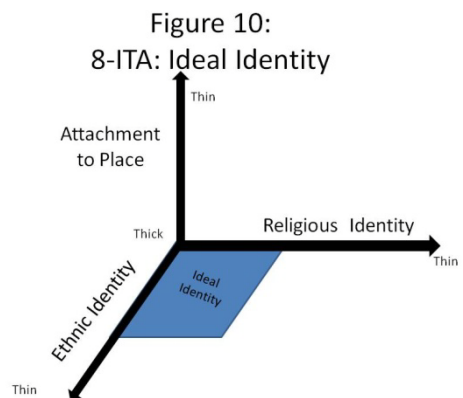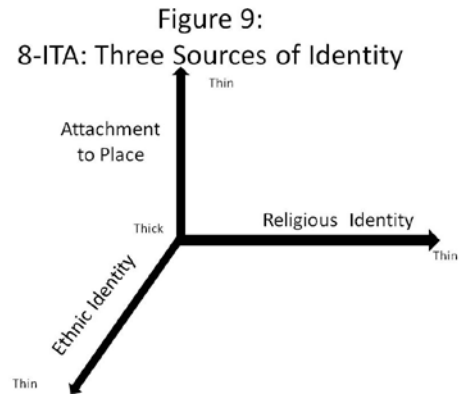
higher likelihood of fostering thick attachments to the group while latently thinning out attachments to alternative episteme.

In seeking to establish institutional completeness the meta-structure of many groups will develop into what Goffman (1989, 1961) termed a "total institution." Goffman holds that the total institution is a meta-structure where all aspects of an individual's life is subordinated to the institution and as such is reliant the hegemony of the organizational hierarchy. Such groups, in addition to controlling behavior, will extend opportunities for work, education, worship, recreation, social interaction, and entertainment insofar that such activities do not conflict with the desire of the hegemonic hierarchy. Such methods of social organization will tend foster high levels of loyalty to group identity and restrict opportunity for both voice and exit.

In understanding the workings of a total institution to foster institutional completeness it becomes apparent that the 8-ITA model conceptualization of the *Ideal Identity* is the only one of the eight ideal types that could be perceived to emulate the pattern of ethnic fusion suggested by Hammond and Warner (1993). All identity conceptualizations in the 8-ITA model involve a degree of thinning of the ideal identity and corresponding exit from the fused identity fostered by the total institution. Therefore, I will use the *Ideal Identity* as the "baseline" identity in describing the effects of thinning out of any of these fused sources of identity. As the individual experiences a thinning of any of the three spectrums he/she slowly experiences a *exit* that provides them with an identity that will be increasing stigmatized by the meta-structure – the more detached (thinner) from the *Ideal Identity* the more severe the stigma.

8-ITA: Ritualistic Identity. If the individual remains loyal to thick identities that come from place and ethnic traditions but experiences a thinning of the religious identity he/she will begin to exit the *Ideal Identity* and shift towards a *Ritualistic Identity* (see figure 11). The

Ritualistic Identity in Utah is characterized by Hypocritical Jack-Mormon who Tom describes as someone who "goes [to church] but doesn't live it." The *Ritualistic Identity* will allow an individual to remain active in all of the church functions, but when no one is looking partakes in activities that are prohibited by the

Figure 11:
8-ITA: Ritualistic Identity

church. Stigmatized actives are undertaken in secrecy out of fear of sanctioning resulting in the loss of social networks. Additionally, such individuals unwilling exercise voice out of fear of sanction and corresponding loss of social standing.
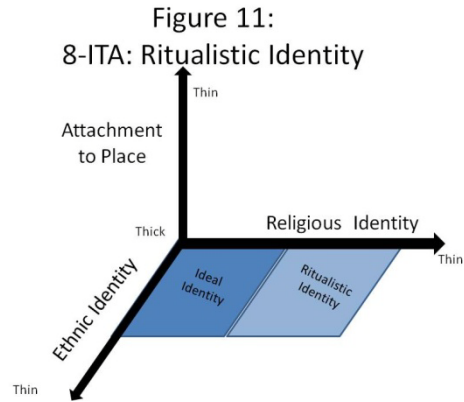
8-ITA: Dissident Identity. An individual who persists in maintaining loyalties to thick attachment to place as well as thick religious identity, but increasingly experiences a thinning and corresponding exit from ethnic identity will be stigmatized by the larger group and therefore begin to experience a *Dissident Identity* (see figure 12). This ideal type is exemplified by the

Dissident Outsider Jack-Mormon. In the case of the Dissident Outsider Jack-Mormon they were stigmatized as dissidents resulting from their use of *voice* to draw attention to social customs that they alleged to be contrary to the doctrines of the church. The more extreme the allegations expressed by individuals with a


Figure 12:
8-ITA: Dissident Identity
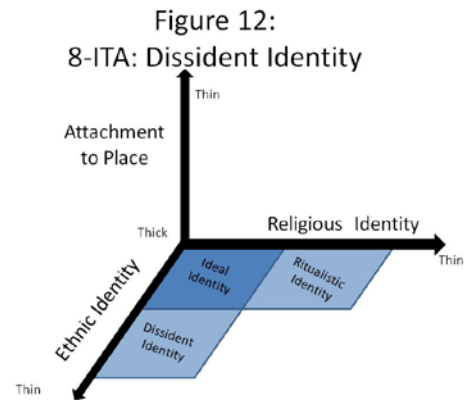
Dissident Identity, the more likely they are to ostracized by those exhibiting an *Ideal Identity*. Additional ostracism will come from those with a *Ritualistic Identity* – even though there is a possibility that both are participating in similar stigmatized behaviors – for two reasons: 1) if

he/she fails to voice condemnation of dissidence there is a risk of being "outed" as a hypocrite which would result in a corresponding loss of social connection, or 2) many of the criticisms

voiced by Dissidents are the very social practices to which those with *Ritualistic Identities* are loyal.

8-ITA: Detached Identity. When an individual experiences simultaneous thinning of religious and ethnic loyalties, and yet continues to experience loyalty to a thick attachment to place he/she will begin to convey a *Detached Identity* (see figure 13). Such a person would be more willing to use symbolic exit as a means of voicing discontent with the meta-structure and to alleviate personal discord from expectations of the *Ideal Identity*. The *Detached Identity* can be understood in terms of the Inactive Jack-Mormon, who "used to go to church but doesn't, for various unknown reasons." The current

Figure 13:
8-ITA: Detached Identity

research illustrated three different paths to inactivity, each one revealing a thinning of different loyalties: 1) inactivity resulting from preceded failures in social bonds, 2) inactivity resulting from individual detachment from organized religion, and 3) inactivity resulting from resistance to a disciplinary society. Each of these three courses correspond to a shifting from one of the above ideal types in the 8-ITA model. Detachment directly from the *Ideal Identity* can be construed as disengagement from the disciplinary society. Inactivity resulting from preceded failures in social bonds corresponds to a thinning of *Ritualistic Identities*. Finally, as the individual experiencing a *Dissident Identity* experiences a thinning of the need for organized religion he/she will transition into a *Detached Identity*.
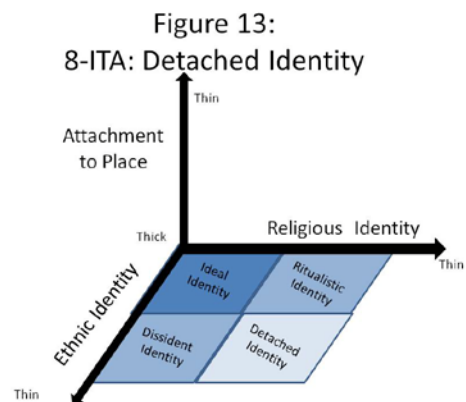
8-ITA Beyond the Mormon Cultural Region

While it has been suggested that "social scientists no longer study Utah as a means to understand Mormon culture" (Cornwall, 1996: 194), I assert that in understanding Mormon identity it remains essential to maintain a working knowledge of Utah Culture. The Americanization of Mormonism was successful to the degree that boundaries between what "is" and "is not" a Latter-day Saint and what "is" and "is not" American became more fluid resulting in Mormonism being increasingly viewed as solely a religious identity. However the persistence of unique religious/ethnic cultural differences in Utah, where policies for the world wide church organization are made, would suggest that Utah culture continues affect Mormonism beyond the Mormon Cultural Region.

Phillips (2001) found that many Utah Mormons expressed that "to be a Mormon is to grow up in the church and to live a Mormon life. You really can't convert to it" (51). Individuals who express this concern would acknowledge that converts to the church should not be excluded from any rite or "blessing" that comes from membership in the organization, but as a convert they will never truly know what it means to be a Mormon due to a lack of participatory cultural know-how that is "all part of being Mormon" (Phillips, 2001: 51). In my participation with the Utah Mormon culture I have encountered many people who expressed the same sentiment about non-Utah Mormons.

In explaining to me the differences between Utah Mormonism and non-Utah Mormonism, A freshman BYU student, who was born and raised along the Wasatch front, voiced how sad it was that her roommate, who was raised a member of the church in California, "doesn't understand Mormon culture." This freshman would go on to describe her roommate as "a wonderful member of the church" who "is fantastic, and SOOO spiritual." Despite the praise

offered about the roommate, the freshman maintained that this California born saint simply "doesn't understand Mormon culture." It is not uncommon to hear similar stories up and down the Mormon corridor demonstrating a Mormon identity emerging from the ideal identity loyal to place. The persistence of such stories suggests an acknowledgment of diversity in Mormon thought and practice beyond Utah. However, out of a fear of cognitive contamination the Mormon meta-structure maintains an unwillingness to acknowledge the validity of alternative expressions of Mormon identity. This inability to allow for group variation is the root cause behind exit and symbolic exit from the group.
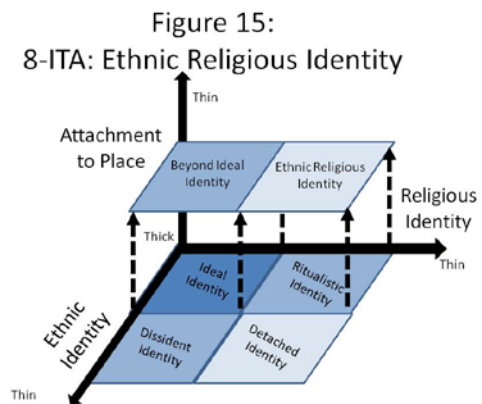
The 8-ITA model includes conceptualizations of how the Utah meta-structure and subculture that exists independently from the meta-structure continue to stand as powerful sources of identity that influence identity construction of the Mormon faithful residing beyond the Mormon Cultural Region. The remaining four ideal types seek to explain just how this occurs. These ideal types are based on a combination of anecdotal stories told to me by the individuals that I interviewed, personal observations in Utah, and intellectual inferences from exploring Mormon history and sociological literature. Future studies will be required to develop a more precise conceptualization of these remaining categories.

8-ITA: Beyond Ideal Identity. Individuals with thin attachment to geographical place and maintain thick loyalties to religious and social attachment experience an identity that is *Beyond Ideal Identity* (see figure 14). Such individuals in many ways appear similar to the *Ideal Identity* in religious practice and will participate in the social practices that historically developed in tandem with the religious identity.

Figure 14:
8-ITA: Beyond Ideal Identity

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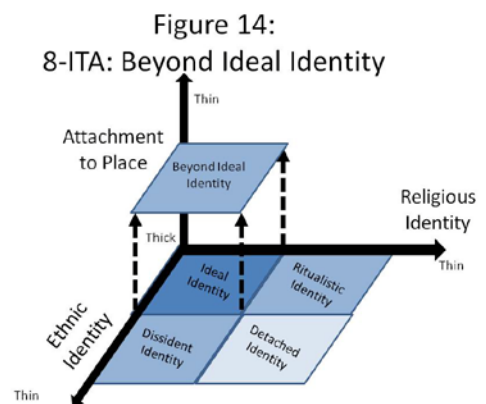
However, the *Beyond Ideal Identity* has a higher tendency for pluralistic identity given an increased density of acquaintanceship with non-members. Latter-day Saints experiencing a *Beyond Ideal Identity* are typically active members in good standing with the meta-structure based in Utah.

   8-ITA: Ethnic Religious Identity. An individual who is opting for exit resulting from thin attachment to geographical place and religious identity yet remain loyal to a thick connection to the ethnic social practices will be likely to express an *Ethnic Religious Identity* (see figure 15). Much like the *Ritualistic Identity* these individuals participate in rituals not for religious reasons, but rather for social purposes. However, a person with an *Ethnic Religious Identity* existing beyond "place," is more pluralistic and less fearful of being stigmatized a hypocrite, and therefore more willing to use voice when he/she

Figure 15:
8-ITA: Ethnic Religious Identity

deems it necessary. Additional comparisons could be made to Hammond and Warner's (1993) category of *Religious ethnicity* that occurs when religious practices of a group extend beyond just one ethnic group. Detachment from place allows an individual to "cherry pick" social rituals that he/she maintain loyalties to and undertake them in a non-institutionalized manner where additional participants may come from different ethnic groups. In other words, the ethnicity of an individual within this group will include a particular religious ideology that upholds various elements of the several ethnic cultures. Examples of this could include adherence to traditionally Mormon funeral practices, health code, or weekly family night activities.

   8-ITA: Religious Ethnic Identity. Individuals experiencing thin attachment and corresponding loss of loyalty to place and ethnic traditions while remaining loyal to a thick

attachment to religious custom may experience a

Religious Ethnic Identity (see figure 16). Such an identity

is comparable to the *Dissident Identity.* However, having

exited from the influence of the total institution he/she is

likely to be abiding in a more pluralistic culture an

individual with a *Religious Ethnic Identity* is less likely

Figure 16:
8-ITA: Religious Ethnic Identity

to face ostracism for opting to voice distain for social practices. Hammond and Warner (1993)

suggest that such a person participates in an *ethnic religion*, where cultural practices uphold

religious ideology. Hammond and Warner (1993) suggest that, "ethnicity in [such a] pattern

extends beyond religion in the sense that ethnic identification can be claimed without claiming

the religious identification, but the reverse is rare" (59). Many individuals have offered

anecdotes of "un-baptized Mormons" who attend church and are accepted as "Mormon" even

though they have not undertaken the steps to be officially recognized by the meta-structure as

members.

     8-ITA: Exit Identity. As the loyalty to the identities

that come from a thick attachment to place, religion and

ethnicity all thin out, an individual will experience an *Exit*

Identity (see figure 17). Once *Exit Identity* has developed,

the individual is free to embrace any alternative episteme

that he/she may choose without fear of stigma or sanction.

Figure 17:
8-ITA: Exit Identity

An individual with a thin *Exit Identity* (i.e. one who may still have weak attachments to the three

identity sources) will likely still possess mannerisms and character traits that will allow for

members of the other seven ideal types in the 8-ITA model to identify them as "sorta us."
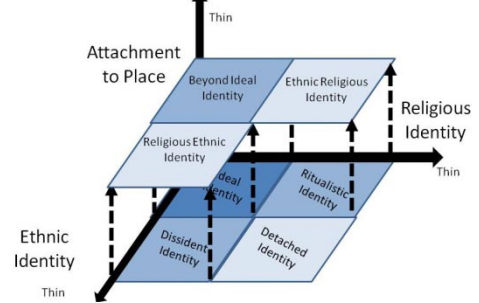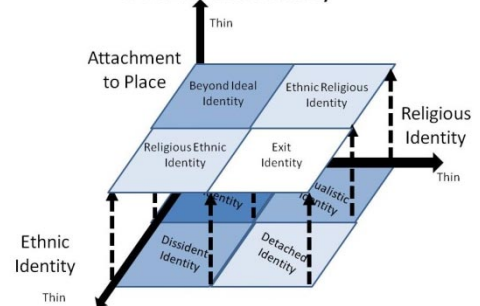
However, the more entrenched the *Exit Identity,* the less likely he/she will be to be classified as a member of the group.

It is interesting to note that historically ethnic Mormonism was only able to develop in a situation where the faithful embraced an *Exit Identity* from previously held loyal attachments to place (i.e., exit Babylon and gather to Zion), Religion (i.e., exit fallen church and join the "true" church), and Ethnicity (i.e., become saints). This would suggest that *Exit Identity* should be understood as more than simply an identity that has rejected previous attachments. If logically followed through, *Exit Identity* can be used to conceptualize and instigate social change and the formation of new groups. If an individual experiencing *Exit Identity* has sufficient charisma, he/she will be able to gather those with thinning sources of identity and offer new conceptualizations for the construction of the self.

Conceptual Limitations of the 8-ITA model

As previously mentioned, part of the model was constructed without direct observation from some approximations of Mormon identity formation beyond the Mormon Cultural Region. While these ideal types are theoretically consistent with observed phenomena and current sociological understanding, additional knowledge is needed to further develop a more accurate picture of the sources of identity for such individuals. Additionally, information should be collected to more accurately capture the perspective of the Mormon faithful in an attempt to validate the "in place" level of the 8-ITA model. I have currently begun to gather additional information from the Mormon faithful in Utah and from Mormons of all types beyond the Mormon Cultural Region. I believe that with the information that is currently being gathered, these limitations can be alleviated.

Additional limitations to the current study and the conceptualization of the 8-ITA model can be found in the small size of the focus groups. While great care was taken to ensure that the information presented in this thesis is consistent with the lives and experiences related to me, it is important to remember that informant groups were constructed by using snowball sampling. All members of the focus groups had a preexisting social connection to one another and were relatively close to one another in age. Therefore, the possibility of cohort effect is probable. In other words, the analysis of this group's experience may be specific to this group, located in Utah County at this time. Additional cross-sectional research is needed to ascertain if the patterns of exit and identity construction that were identified and used in the construction of the 8-ITA model hold true across time and place.

The methodological foundations of this study had an inherent bias towards marginalized members of the meta-structure located in suburban areas of Utah who, by virtue of their length of residence in the state, hold a level of attachment to place. Therefore, in future studies efforts should be undertaken to gather additional information from rural areas of the Mormon Cultural Region and from rural and urban residents beyond the region. These future studies should also seek to find informants occupying diverse levels of socioeconomic status to create cleaner conceptualizations of the ideal types that constitute the 8-ITA model.

Future Research and the 8-ITA Model

By constructing the 8-ITA model using an ethnic group that has only existed for a relatively brief period of time I was able to more clearly conceptualize not only how an ethnic identity is formed, maintained and diversified, but also the manner in which individuals navigate cognitive contamination from social forces in their lives. The constructionist approach in ethnic studies does a good job of showing that much of contemporary ethnic identity is a personal

choice. However, the constructionist approach fails to provide a detailed account of how individuals navigate the choices placed before them in the construction of their identity. It should be noted, however, that the 8-ITA model on the base level still operates from the assumption that ethnic identity is ascribed. Only after an individual has exited from the total institution can ethnic identity become a choice. Therefore, the current study will be useful in overcoming this shortcoming of the constructionist approach.

Additionally, as a basic conceptualization of how various social forces affect an individual's conception of self, the 8-ITA model transcends strictly applying this conceptualization to addressing ethnic fusion. The 8-ITA model can be used in analyzing a vast array of social, political, and economic forces. Additionally, I believe that the 8-ITA model will be useful in addressing how individuals adjust personal conceptions of morality based on perceived situational needs. Accepting Bauman's conception of liquid modernity as a world where social actors must navigate "constant pressure to be *someone else*...Changing identity, discarding the past and seeking new beginning, struggling to be born again" (2007: 100, emphasis in original), the 8-ITA model offers a unique conceptualization for understanding liquid modern social forces.

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