“How Firm A Foundation”: California Mormons Negotiating Inclusivity, Politics and Place

Amy E. Flynn-Curran

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Head of Department: Dr. Abdullahi El-Tom

Supervised by Dr. Pauline Garvey and Dr. Chandana Mathur

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Abstract

This thesis is the result of 18 months of fieldwork inside of a Mormon congregation in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Oakland First Ward. It depicts a community of Mormons in "progressive country", as they work to maintain their local ward as a place simultaneously rooted in distinct LDS traditions, but which serves people embedded in their local context. Out west in the radical, urban, and ever-changing Bay Area, this affluent, family-centered, Christian community is working to sustain their local flavor within a large top-down organized religion. Supporting a community of diverse experiences and political leanings often involves pushing for a church-culture that embraces broader social movements, calling for inclusivity, acceptance, and an embrace of new (and sometimes disruptive) ideas about how to move Mormonism into the future. This process of negotiation between change and the maintenance of sacred traditions is predicated on the material and embodied ways that Christian faith evolves in diverse contexts. Framing my analysis in terms of materiality, this research unfolds the story of the First Ward through an investigation into the tangible and objectified ways religion is embodied and lived. Creative engagement with these symbolic boundaries creates the context in which members to negotiate with emergent discourses on tolerance, progress and ritual. During my time in the field, Mormon feminists called for more opportunities for women to lead in the church, and advocates for LGTBQ acceptance inside the LDS church grew their digital networks and increased their visibility. These movements were at the forefront of the progressive/traditional ideological divide, as members wondered in what ways they could promote inclusivity and consider these viewpoints while 'staying the path' of righteousness. These mediations demonstrate the dynamism of religion in a distinctive social context.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the result of long-term fieldwork in a religious community where gratitude was expressed frequently; the setting perhaps magnified my own awareness that it was certainly by the grace of community I have been able to complete this rather substantial project. I have a long list of individuals to whom I am deeply appreciative.

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Maddi, Marin, Sophia, Grá, Linda, Trish – whether it was taking my daughter for an hour, listening to me when I needed to think through my writing, texting me words of inspiration, or literally making a power-point presentation for me – you've all helped me along the way. I am so lucky to have you all. And of course, thank you Ronan. I joked in the early stages of fieldwork that you were my unpaid research assistant, but that wasn't really a joke. You've helped me in every imaginable way; you attended church with me and helped me get to know members of the ward by essentially charming everyone with your accent, you offered unconditional support in order for me to finish what I set out to do, you took on co-parenting-and-then-some when I needed you to, and your steady presence and encouragement have been my foundation.

And finally, I am most grateful to the members of the Oakland First Ward. Many of you know that I came to the community interested in Christianity, but decided on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints because, quite frankly, I thought you seemed like a nice enough bunch to spend 18 months with. I got much more than I could have ever hoped for. You trusted me with your stories; you shared your faith, your sacred spaces and your homes. You made my "fieldwork" fun – between lively book club discussions, low-key volleyball practices, fabulous parties and post-fireside secret meetings, I was never bored (even during those extra long sacrament meetings). Thanks to Greg and Kathryn for welcoming me so warmly and essentially giving me the green light to spend time in your church, especially as you have only asked that in return I be "fair" – it's been really humbling knowing that you support me without an expectation that I write from any perspective besides my own. Thanks to Lindy for popping over to my house and picking me up for every single activity you suspected would help me get to know the community. Thanks to Heather for introducing me to the extended LDS community in the bay, especially for taking me to march with you in Pride and meet members of Ordain Women. And McKay, for both welcoming me to spend time with your family while I was in the field, and helping me with last minute requests to check church records! Thanks to Britta and Shay for spectacularly honest and thoughtful conversations, even though we often acknowledged how different our views were – your insights made my research feel complete. Really – to all who gave interviews, chatted to me at church, and welcomed me into your community, I am indebted. And finally, thanks to Anne, Ashley and Tracy. It is very unusual for an anthropologist's research participants to actively help them finish writing up – the fact that you babysat, brought emergency doughnuts, and sent me off to submit with instructions to "make us proud" overwhelms me with appreciation. I hoped that

my time in your church would provide me wonderful material – but what I gained far exceeded my most hopeful expectations. Dick said during our interview, “Lindy and I have an inestimable amount of gratitude for this ward, and I am not talking about theology or any of that, but for what this ward has done for us. So much of what we are, whatever we are, we can attribute to the people of this area and this church”. I wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment, and thank you all sincerely.

Introduction

“In the world but not of the world”: Mormonism in The Bay Area

Sisters In Zion

On a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon on Temple Hill in Oakland, California, Sacrament Meeting has just concluded at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Women in bright dresses, and men in dark suits and ties, stream out of the chapel doors and into the hallways leading thorough the various corridors of the meetinghouse, a bright concrete building adjacent to the Mormon temple, containing a multitude of corridors and rooms designed for various functions. This is the gathering place of several of the local congregations each Sunday, and as members of Oakland’s ‘First Ward’ exit the chapel, members of the ‘Tongan Ward’, wearing bright printed fabrics, filter in to take their place in the now-unoccupied pews for their own service. It is a scene of hustle and bustle: people greet one another and talk in the hallways, children run through the corridors, the elderly take seats on the sofas in the reception, awaiting assistance to navigate through the commotion. As the crowd organizes themselves, the women break away from the men, turning down a long passage and walking, on clicking heels and swishing in their flowing skirts, into a room where a large oil painting depicting Jesus reaching out to the woman at the well hangs above a piano. Beside the piano a podium, microphone and a chalkboard are arranged in a row. Folding chairs are have been set out; on every other seat is a hymnal. The room buzzes with conversation, ladies of varied ages wave greetings to one another, tucking purses away and excitedly chatting. Mothers with small babies sit in the back row; the noise dies down as Heather, a young woman wearing flat sandals and a hand-knit skirt, sits down at the piano. The babbling of infants can still be heard as Anne stands at the front of the room, tucking her blond bob behind her ear and nodding to Heather to begin. She raises her hand, conducting as the piano begins to play. Every woman in the room sings, sharing hymnals between them, with a volume

and gusto that matches the lively atmosphere.

We have assembled for the meeting of the Relief Society, an auxiliary women's group that gathers for lessons during the second hour of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints weekly services. Women who are over 18 attend Relief Society inside their 'ward', the Mormon term for a congregation, as part of the typical weekly service comprised of three hours of both instruction and worship. I sit beside a church member named Lindy, who in her early 70's is often mistaken for being younger; she is petite, vivacious and very extroverted. She holds our shared hymnal, winks at me, and sings in her low but steady voice, obviously familiar with the song, as I attempt to follow along with the unfamiliar tune. Following the hymn we fold our arms, a member stands and begins a prayer with "Our dear Heavenly Father". She extemporizes, expressing gratitude for the company of all those in the room and asking God to let the lesson be meaningful to everyone, and when she is seated announcements and instruction commence. Each week the Relief Society lesson is lead by a member of the ward who has been called as a teacher, a role the bishop is inspired to offer her. This particular calling is specifically reserved for women, who teach lessons outlined in the church's official handbook (the men are assembled in their own Priesthood meetings during this time). Teachers may creatively adapt the lessons, though the purpose of the circulated manuals and handbooks is to maintain consistency across all churches throughout the world. This week Kathryn is teaching - many members enjoy her instruction, as Kathryn leads with ease, incorporating object lessons and thoughtful discussion topics that always elicit quite a bit of commentary. Kathryn has teaching experience, despite the fact that the calling of 'Relief Society teacher' can go to any worthy and active member of the ward. She stands at the front of the room, a tall woman with a colorful and modern sense of style, wearing bookish thick-rimmed glasses and a touch of pink lipstick, a bright contrast to her salt-and-pepper, shoulder-length hair.

The lesson this week is on the topic of being "in the world but not of the world", a concept taken from the New Testament (John 16:17) to describe the way in which Christians should simultaneously engage in the world while rejecting a number of worldly preoccupations which go against Christianity's broader transcendent purposes. The concept is particularly relevant for Mormons, who believe their time on earth is for the purpose of preparing and becoming worthy of entering the Celestial Kingdom of Heaven, a physical place

where faithful church members will live with God, continuing a divine plan. Mormons believe that part of the preparation for their roles in the Kingdoms of Glory involves abstaining from a number of practices, which they view as creating obstacles in achieving worthiness. Mormon Heaven is a complex system of hierarchies, purpose, continued expansion, missionizing, and organizing of people into their familial tribes. The work Mormons carry out on earth is in aid of this larger project; earthly activities are essential to achieve spiritual growth, but there are many opportunities for distraction that must be avoided and overcome.

Many of the church's leaders have addressed this particular verse at length, and notably Elder Quentin L. Cook, a member of the Twelve Apostles, the highest tier of authority in the church besides their living prophet, is quoted in the Relief Society Handbook from his talk 'Being in the World but Not of the World', saying, "Gospel doctrine makes it clear that we must live in this world to achieve our eternal destination. We must be tried and tested and found worthy of a greater kingdom" (The Ensign, Feb 2006: 53-55). Kathryn acknowledges in her own lesson that, for some, this concept feels alienating, as it tends to emphasize feelings of otherness between Mormons and non-Mormons. Yet, she also wonders how people live in this seemingly challenging predicament of needing to be both present in the world, and focused on transcending the material, social and cultural conditions in which they are enmeshed. In fact, Mormonism offers it's own set of material, social and cultural environments meant to support a specific way of engaging spiritually and morally. I listen with great interest to the discussion as many members expressed ambivalent feelings about the idea. They felt the phrase suggested they be disengaged from the world around them, or it felt judgmental. Though for many in the room, the idea resonated strongly, providing a very succinct description of their experience of living in diverse communities as members of the church.

Often times being LDS can give people a sense of liminality; of existing in multiple social worlds, or between them. Women explained how when they were interacting outside their Mormon communities they weren't always comfortable. Their values are often at odds with mainstream society. The religious standards they uphold require them to abstain from a number of things their non-Mormon acquaintances might partake in, including coffee, drugs, alcohol, profanity, premarital sex, spending money on the Sabbath, and, even things like seeing racy movies (not every single Mormon strictly abides by these things – but anything covered on the temple recommend interview – a series of questions that determine "worthiness" to

enter the temple - is usually not done by active Mormons). There are practices, like regular church attendance, holding a calling, daily prayer, and scripture study, which they integrate into their lives. These things make them feel that they live differently from those around them, it can create tension, but it can also be comforting, empowering and even second nature to many members of the church. The experience of being among a religious minority was not framed as a universally negative predicament during the discussion that day - many women talked about how they much preferred being California-based, rather than residing among a Mormon majority in places like Utah, because they found they liked the experience of being "the Mormon" in their neighborhood, at their work, or among their friends. Some felt more committed to their faith when it felt like a conscious choice they were making, or something that set them apart instead of following the crowd. Specifically, one woman explained, she relished her Mormon identity in contexts where it felt unique to be Mormon, and became less comfortable in settings where Mormon faith was the expectation, as it gave her the opportunity to forge a deeper relationship with her Mormon identity as opposed to "going through the motions". Women described a number of ways that both material things, such as modest dress standards, helped them feel 'set apart', and also elaborated on experiences of loneliness, longing, belonging, purpose, pride and frustration that accompanied living this particular aspect of the faith.

Whether it was described as a positive experience, or a tense and difficult way to move through the world, or, typically, a bit of both, this discussion reinforced what I had been offhandedly observing for a few months, and gave very specific words to summarize a complex situation. Mormons live with a strong sense that their beliefs, and the material conditions that sustain them, set them apart from others. The discussion that day in Relief Society highlighted the many ways Mormonism can simultaneously connect and distance people through tangible means, using space, cloth, language, practices, consumption habits, and rituals to create boundaries between those who are insiders and outsiders to the faith. The observable differences between Mormons and non-Mormons allow them to express themselves in contrast to mainstream society, though the aim is never to be profoundly removed or detached. Sometimes subtle and sometimes apparent, difference is constructed as ways of doing and being which is neither countercultural nor conformist.

While Mormonism isn't merely a dress code, or the experience of staying sober at your

office Christmas party (though that's certainly part of it), it is the linking between the tangible and the intangible. Mormons might say that it is a sense that all of this is done with an aim of being as close to God as possible while living on earth, and alongside others who, for better or worse, can hinder or help in these efforts. Mormonism was never described as something internal or external, collective or individual; it's the process of trying to create harmony between two positions, and of preparing for divinity through actions taken on earth. The Mormon faith must be simultaneously objectified and practiced through material engagement, while also being constructed as transcendent. Birgit Meyer and Dick Houtman assert that religion has been misperceived as an "interior spiritualized experience" where the interiority of "belief" is upheld as the main apparatus by which faith is experienced. Rather, they argue, to describe religion as it is situated in the world is to focus on the "actual material presence and tangibility of religion", integrating belief and culture (2012:1-2). Throughout my time in the ward I listened to church members give language to the complex emotional and spiritual experiences of their faith, though continually these experiences connected to material ways that Mormon faith was expressed, located and lived. Each week the women in Relief Society acted with hymnals, church-dress, soft-spoken prayers, and scripture quotes written in chalk, to create the conditions by which Mormonism would be felt and experienced during that hour. These things at once grounded faith, yet set firm boundaries by which one became a part of it. As my participants worked to reconcile their faith, values, and the things that structured and bound their religious affiliation, I found myself on the periphery, at once emotionally invested, skeptical, critical – yet often able to relate in meaningful ways; an ideal vantage point for learning about how faith is sustained and expanded, in a place where church leaders aim to uphold meaningful traditions in an ever-changing world.

Betwixt and Between: The distinctive culture of the First Ward

The day of this particular lesson, I was in the third month of fieldwork inside the Oakland First Ward, researching the mediums by which social change arrived inside of a relatively conservative Christian church situated in my home-place, a region largely defined by it's liberal values and progressive social movements, along with mild coastal weather, unpredictable earthquakes, and boom-and-bust industries. The topic stuck with me for a time, providing me a good starting point for conversations about how faith is lived. Eventually I began to joke that I was in fact "in the ward but not of the ward" during my fieldwork; a part of

the community, present in church each week and at various church functions, I was still so often set apart through my status as a non-Mormon, particularly observable when I was unable to fully participate in aspects of the faith, such as taking up a calling, visiting the temple, and in the self-conscious moments in which I found myself wearing something sleeveless at church or offering a Mormon guest a cup of coffee. In spite of these small examples of difference, a convert to the faith named Essie said to me one week, "it's funny - I think you seem more Mormon than me", perhaps referring to aspects of my identity that aligned with Mormon cultural norms, or objectified markers that signaled I could blend with ease into the mainstream Mormon world, apparent in my style and cultural sensibilities. I continuously found myself discussing belonging and the meaning of 'shared faith' in the context of these observable, tangible things.

In the 18 months I spent attending the three-hour weekly services with the 'First Ward', comprised of about 210 Oakland and Piedmont church members, I frequently encountered discourse around how Mormon culture was experienced in the larger context of the San Francisco Bay Area. My research provided me the material to tell a very interesting story about how we construct difference, how religious communities are created and maintained, and about how people integrate their faith in God into the most intimate and mundane aspects of their day-to-day life, in ways that shape how they relate to the world around them. I discussed with church members, in particular, how they felt about their place in a city where they encountered so many people involved in progressive social movements, or getting involved in progressive social movements, while belonging to a church that asks its members to hold more conventional and seemingly fixed values in the name of following religious covenants and upholding tradition. What I observed was two ongoing projects in a religious tradition that I will argue is largely predicated on the creation and maintenance of boundaries; upholding those boundaries, or shifting and expanding them, and this observation is what I grounded my research questions in. What emerged through looking at the spectrum of approaches to processes of integration, however, was the place of the ward within broader frameworks, as members tried to place their church in relation to the powerful administrative center of the LDS church.

On the surface the ward appeared to be a totally typical LDS place of worship; from the standard sign at the entrance of the meetinghouse indicating "Visitor's Welcome", to the

respective suits-and-skirts worn, the turns of phrase used during services, and the folded-arms style of prayer, a distinctive visual culture communicated Mormon-ness to anyone familiar enough with the faith. But many members expressed that their ward, and they themselves, belonged to a very unique LDS community, one in which leftist politics, academic enquiries into the doctrine, feminist sensibilities, and micro-rebellions against the status quo were made welcome. Most felt that the community was the only space where Mormon tradition and progressive social values made sense alongside each other, and amid the day-to-day challenges of social life in the sometimes insular community, members felt this was the place to develop a Mormonism that was somewhere between the tightly- regulated mainline church and the flexible and open social possibilities that diverse members sought.

Members wondered, specifically, how the church could accommodate queer people in a region where an estimated 6.2% of the population identifies as LGTB (compared to a national average of 3.6%) (Gallup 2015). They wondered how Berkeley-educated church history buffs and theology scholars could participate in lessons when disagreements emerged with the facts as presented by the administrative church. They worked toward creating a space where non-white members, unmarried people, working mothers, and mixed-faith couples could feel included in a faith that celebrates the nuclear family and traditional, conservative social values informed by the political discourses of the United States. Inclusivity was an imperfect and complicated project, but one that was fundamental to the character of the First Ward. The ways these efforts were made visible was subtle - reordering was favored over revolutionizing, processes of accommodating, integrating and tolerating were superficially very understated, but felt radical to many members, and even precarious to those who were invested in maintaining harmony, traditions and loyalty to their church's leaders.

The Temple Hill Meetinghouse entrance.

'How Firm A Foundation' is one of the popular hymns in the church, and has been used as the theme (and title) of a notable sermon given by one of the church's authorities. Hymns, "Primary" Hymns (LDS children's songs), and scriptural references pepper this thesis, much as they permeated reflections on Mormon faith. These songs and texts provided a sort of platform on which religious traditions and practices are based. The evocation of hymns and scripture is a popular way of connecting narratives of the everyday back to a divine context; and learning to conjure the correct reference from these sources was a bit like learning how to look through a Mormon lens. I gravitated toward this particular line as it seemed to suggest both a spiritual disposition and a physical one; the need for firm foundations to sustain a strong faith is the intended interpretation of the hymn, but amidst earthly tremors, and societal fluctuations that infused life in the Bay Area with a certain unpredictability, there was (as there always is) a much broader significance inherent in the expression. Speaking with the wife of a member of the church about referencing "How Firm A Foundation" as a title she noted, "I love the connection you're suggesting between the needs of buildings in earthquake country and the needs of churches in progressive country" – a sentiment that perfectly summarized the situation. Foundations, of course, are essential for holding buildings in place, as well as fixing human activities in particular places. They are crucial to the process of making physical boundaries; walls, doors, thresholds and undergrounds are all made possible when a

foundation is in place. So here foundations represent the materialized dimensions on which the elusive experience of faith depends.

This research is intended to critically explore how Mormons in the San Francisco Bay Area construct their place that is "in but not of the world", creating boarders and boundaries that designate Mormon space, language, and bodies through material forms; these materials embed Mormon identities in things that can be observed, circulated and embodied, which are intended to prepare Mormons for transcendence, and direct their focus away from worldly concerns. Mormon practices are predicated on this materiality; though objects, language, space and dress members of the church invest in their faith, demonstrate obedience, resistance, express their beliefs, and can act subversively. Focusing on material culture provided a lens through which the Mormon experience in the Bay Area could be described, analyzed and observed. I explore in this research creative engagement Bay Area Mormons utilize to shape their identities in a place that feels suspended between two distinctly different value systems present in their cultural worlds; one which pushes the concept of changing values as progressive, and one which asks them to accept fixed value systems as part of a divine tradition. Rather than focus on the failure or success of boundaries to protect or contain, my concern is with how boundaries are created, maintained and transformed in this specific religious environment. Boundaries, in this context, are as mutable as the forms with which they are made; I argue that as the church aims to create fixed and solid perimeters that designate an inside/outside dichotomy, but in practice I saw church members seek nuanced possibilities.

Demographics & Community

In California, Mormons are religious minorities, and members of the First Ward belong to an established and tight-knit group bound by the camaraderie of belonging to a relatively small faith community in a densely populated region of California. Mormons make up about 1.7% of the total US adult population; in California the LDS are closer to 2%, among a wide range of other religious groups (Religious Landscape Survey 2011). Comparatively, members of evangelical Protestant churches and Catholics each make up roughly a quarter of the adult population (26.3% and 23.9%, respectively), 1% of American's identify as Muslim, and 16.1% of Americans say they are unaffiliated with any particular religion (Pew Research Center

2009). In the Mormon centers of the US, particularly in Utah and surrounding states with Mormon settlements, the culture reflects the influence of predominantly Mormon populations. Latter Day Saints and other Mormons make up 58% of Utah's population (Religious Landscape Study 2011). The church releases it's own statistics in yearly reports, which are published in April to coincide with the Annual General Conference. Conferences are events held in Salt Lake City where church leadership hold "sessions", talks given to LDS audiences and broadcast to members across the world, often concerning church policies and issues of spiritual significance. The 2015 report showed that worldwide the church boasted around 15 million members:

2015 Statistical Report for April 2016 General Conference:

Stakes: 3,174

Missions: 418

Districts: 558

Wards and branches: 30,016

Total membership: 15,634,199

New children of record: 114,550

Converts baptized: 257,402

Full-time missionaries: 74,079

Church-service missionaries: 31,779

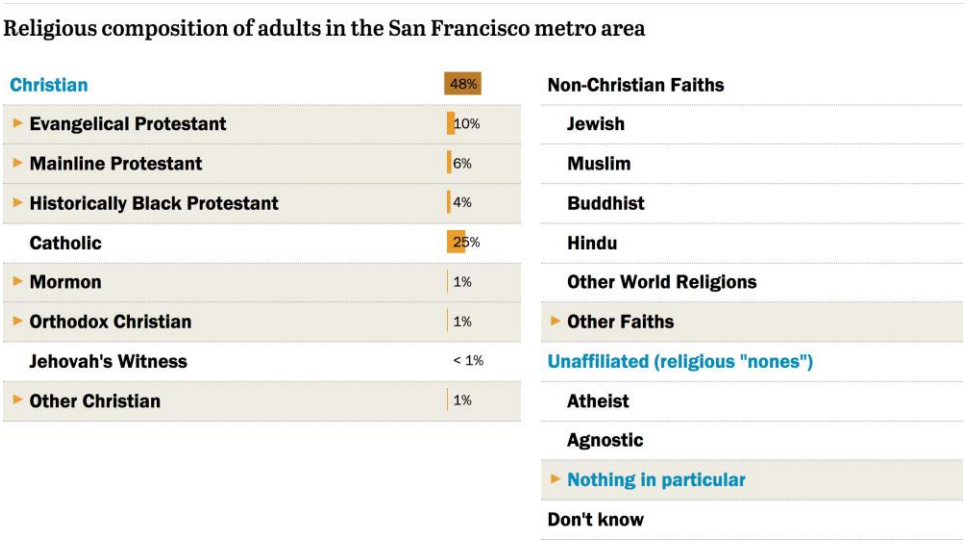
(Mormon Newsroom 2014)

Comparatively, The First Ward's numbers:

Records of affiliated members	900+
Women listed in the Relief Society directory	139
Average Church attendance	212
Max Attendance in 2014	269
Minimum Attendance in 2014	139

The church reports that in the state of California, in addition to the total church membership of 767,301, there are 154 stakes, 1,138 wards and 140 branches, 1278 congregations, 20 missions throughout the state, and a total of 7 temples serving those people. 11% of US-based Mormons reside in California (LDS.org "Membership").

In the San Francisco metropolitan area, referred to hereafter, and more commonly, as The Bay Area, Mormons represent about 1% of the population of approximately 7 million (Bay Area Census 2010).

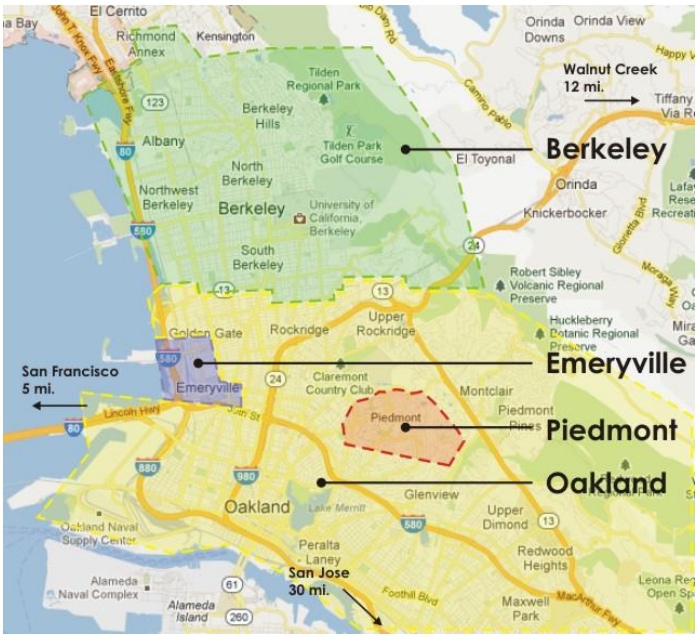


In Oakland, the cityscape reflects a multiplicity of religious communities. A Greek Orthodox temple is situated literally next door to the Mormon's own temple. From the viewing platform on the roof of the LDS temple I was able to spot a prominent Jewish synagogue and an older Catholic Cathedral, both distinctive buildings. Religious buildings across the city where I live and socialize draw many specific faith communities each weekend. On a Sunday afternoon stroll I passed Unitarians, Jehovah Witnesses, and Vietnamese-speaking Catholics departing their places of worship over the space of 5 city blocks. Even some of the local businesses serve these groups, taking the bus home one evening I passed by the Black Muslim Bakery, a Wiccan shop selling tarot cards and crystals, and an Evangelical-owned café aimed at attracting techie hipsters to the faith through Christian messages written on disposable coffee cups. Prominent billboards advertising religious gatherings, meetings, and Christian speaker events are displayed along the main thoroughfares of the city. Mormons belong to this assorted geography; bound together by their own borders and meeting places.

Ward boundaries dictate which congregation Latter Day Saints attend. The First Ward's perimeter ran along the 580 Freeway, the highway that runs east to west through the center of Oakland. The First Ward was comprised of those who lived on the hill-side of this divide within the city limits of Oakland and Piedmont, with neighborhoods named for the trees that line the leafy, shaded streets; Oakmore and Redwood Heights, and neighborhoods famous for their architecture and shopping districts, Rockridge and Montclair. Piedmont itself was entirely enclosed in this perimeter, an anomaly of a city contained entirely within Oakland's boarder. In the Roaring Twenties Piedmont was known as the "City of Millionaires" because there were more millionaires per square mile than in any city in the United States (History of Piedmont). For many residents the appeal of owning property within the boundary of Piedmont is access to the schools, which do not have to share allocated resources with Oakland's overcrowded public schools. The population of Piedmont, where many of the church members and majority of church leaders live, is 78% white and only 1.7% black, whereas the city of Oakland has a 31% white population and 35% black population (Bay Area Census 2010). Members of the Ninth Ward, the other English-speaking Oakland congregation, were located on the bayside of the 580; in neighborhoods such as Oakland's downtown urban center, the industrial and sprawling West Oakland area boarding the shipyards, dense East Oakland neighborhoods, and the predominantly Spanish-speaking areas around Fruitvale, and their ward was a more racially and economically diverse place. Our meetinghouse served, in addition to the First and

Ninth Wards, a Spanish ward, Tongan ward, and Chinese branch. Wards collectively constitute Stakes, which are comprised of five to ten wards. The former being overseen by a local bishop from the congregation and the latter being led by a Stake President.

Map of the Bay Area via Wikipedia



Map of the East Bay cities, via Google Maps

A street in the Laurel District of Oakland, Spanish-style homes are common in residential areas of the city.

A typical Piedmont home and surrounding garden.

During my time in the field, I became familiar with over 100 faces that I encountered each week at church, but would say I had a meaningful acquaintance with around 60 members. I conducted interviews with 24 members that I came to know, though there were other's whose contribution to the wealth of information was significant despite never recording a sit-down interview. I participated in at least four hours of formal church activity each week, three hours of Sacrament every Sunday and usually one or two extracurricular activities, such as Visiting Teaching Group, Quilting Group, or Fireside Talks, often these events took place in members' homes. Additionally, particularly during the second half of my time in the field, I arranged dinners or informal social meet-ups with my participants, to get to know them better and have one-on-one conversations. I attended baptisms, birthday parties, babysat the children of my participants, and similarly invited many of them to attend parties in my home with my family and friends, and maintain social media links with almost everyone who was sociable with me during my time in the field. My participants were all "active" members, a term used by Mormons to designate church members who regularly attend services. Most of my participants were further involved in multiple church activities and typically held callings in the ward.

As church authorities maintained a strong theme of placing the temple at the center of Mormon engagement, and also carefully bounded communities together through geography, my research pointed to incongruities between church narratives about the organization of Mormon life and the lived realities of it. Another way my field site became specific to my personal experience in the field, rather than the geographical or church- mediated perimeters imposed on the community, was the incorporation of participants connected through the internet. I tended not to conduct any purely virtual fieldwork, but found that the internet was connecting individuals to my community, and conversations happening on blogs and social media in particular were incredibly influential. The internet is certainly not "placeless" and my own research in particular pointed to the ways in which virtual and embodied engagements tend to overlap (Miller & Slater 2000). Mormons are very comfortable with technology and integrating the use of new media into much of religious life. Many Mormons would read scriptures from their phones during church, and simultaneously send texts or check facebook. The role of LDS websites and online content was also essential to how many Mormons develop their ideas around faith, doctrine, theology and the church. I read as much LDS media and literature as academic while in the field, as well as blogs and online magazines that were popular with my participants. The type of knowledge allowed me access to the more esoteric conflicts and discourses happening inside Mormonism, and proved invaluable to me.

Participation, Access and Aims

I entered the field with a number of questions relating to, mainly, conflicting political affiliations and religious values, and the means by which Mormons distinguish themselves. Many of my initial questions provided a starting point from which to direct my observations, as I assumed that "religions are not static, but evolving, creative and dynamic subjects of study" (Gregg & Scholefield 2015:1) and remained open to the emergent nature of fieldwork. I sought ideas and themes that came from my participants and our interactions, integrating the concerns of the community with my queries. While I did not share in the LSD faith, I was interested in involving myself as much as possible in ritual practices. I prayed alongside my participants, sang hymns with them, and sometimes took the sacrament. My level of participation was generally predicated upon my own comfort level alongside the invitation to be involved. Knibbe, Van Der Meulen & Versteeg argue that participation in ritual is important

in order to fully engage when carrying out ethnographic research in a religious field. In addition to providing critical insights, participation allows experiences that are non-verbal and often embodied to be "common ground" between participants and researcher (2012:109). For the purpose of complying with my own ethical guidelines, which I will discuss further in this section, I refrained from participating in situations where my own disbelief prevented me from engaging in meaningful ways. Knibbe, Van Der Meulen & Versteeg suggest that the "problem of meaning" in ritual participation should be considered, and I sought to avoid this through disengaging in rituals that did not offer any fluidity in terms of their significance as spiritual practice versus specifically Mormon practice.

I found that participation was critical to my research for many reasons, in particular for being able to share experiences in the field rather than just act as an observer. It should be noted that as a non-member, and a woman, I was not permitted or comfortable in certain spaces that were significant sites to my participants. The Temple, which could be considered a fundamental symbol of Mormonism in the Bay Area, was one such place I could not enter. But I found that in moving from centers to margins, and aiming to "break down assumptions about buildings as the main centers of religious community or power", I was able to uncover the more nuanced ways religious space is constituted and the multifarious use of religious grounds (Gregg & Scholefield 2015:53). I also found that rituals that take place in the Temple were indeed not fundamental to many Mormons, including the many who did not regularly participate, or the few who had never visited the temple themselves.

I also did not attend all-male gatherings, such as Priesthood meetings, Scout meetings, or men's social activities. While I was not expressly asked to stay away from these gatherings, I was neither invited nor made to feel welcome, and felt my own research benefitted from my participation in sites where my presence was not an intrusion. I was included wholly in women's spaces, privy to intimate conversations, and quickly initiated into Mormon feminist circles, but, indeed, I had little to no contact with older conservative men in the ward. Much of the contact I had with men was mediated by the wives of my male participants. There were names mentioned to me who I never became familiar with, and individuals who were not interested in participating in my work, likely because of my candor in presenting myself as a female academic coming from outside of the church, with an interest in progressivism, feminism and LGTBQ experiences in the ward. Here I was capable of seeing how this position

often enhanced experiences with those interested in engaging with these issues, but limited my contact with those who disapproved.

Giving consideration to avoiding common issues associated with power relations in the field was aided strongly by my choice of field site that afforded me opportunities to "study up". The Mormon community in Oakland, despite representing only about 1% of religious affiliations in California, is a highly educated and connected group of individuals. While many of my participants lived similarly to me in smaller apartments in the city, some with young families, the majority were quite obviously more well-off and well-connected than myself, and established both in their church communities and professionally in the local area. I found myself in multimillion-dollar homes for many gatherings, informal or church sanctioned. Those who aided me in being welcomed and accepted in the ward were certainly critically aware of the type of work I was carrying out, and the Bishop invited me to participate in The Bay Area Mormon Studies Council, which he and other Mormon academics had founded. One member requested a copy of my Masters thesis in order to have a sense of my previous work and interests, and it is likely many of my participants will read my work. While my level of access felt significantly enabled and eased by the ward's interest in scholarly research, my access was also predicated upon maintaining good relationships in the field and ensuring I did not intend to produce work that harmed the church in any way.

I maintained as much transparency as possible in order to invite reciprocal affinity, and felt that my criticisms were understood as coming from a place of respect and fairly extensive familiarity. For a time I maintained a blog on which I wrote out reflections while in the field, a site that was read by the Bishop and Stake President, among others, quite regularly. The blog created opportunities to initiate particular conversations, as I reflected on the experience of learning hymns, understanding the theology on which Mormonism was founded, and engaging for the first time in Mormon practices - but after about 6 months I stopped maintaining the space, particularly as my research became much more intertwined with the relationships I developed in the field. The blog, however, was a nice place to begin demonstrating the flexibility I wanted to approach this research with in terms of the ethics of this project, open to ongoing feedback.

The nature of my relationships in the field, lateral and predicated upon many

commonalities, resulted in my often seamless blending into the community, enough that my role as researcher was easily forgotten. The purpose of my interviews evolved into an exercise in reaffirming my participant's consent, as the more formal nature of recorded dialogue created conditions by which my participants could respond to and clarify things I had discussed with them in more casual settings. Interviews generated some surprising results – certain members with whom I'd developed very comfortable friendships seemed to become more inhibited on record; I found that our conversation was much more impersonal and church-promotional. Rather than view this as an inauthentic experience or 'censored' conversation, I saw it as an opportunity to expand my understanding of the relationship I had developed. As our friendships grew and developed I came to see the casual comments and critiques of the church as reflections of their relationship with the church; these interviews, for me, solidified that they were indeed deeply committed to all aspects of the faith, including leadership, structure, standards and missionizing. Other members seemed eager to unload information when the time came, as though they wanted to unburden themselves from thoughts they did not often get to convey, or using me as a neutral sounding-board. These were also moments where I had to consider how to understand the content of my interview in a broader framework. I resolved to use all information I came away with in the field, with the exception of moments when we spoke about other members of the church, which were particularly numerous in 'unburdening' interviews. I spoke at length with many members about strained friendships and intrapersonal conflicts within the ward. I chose not to include any of the details in my ethnographic writing as the specifics of these situations mattered much less than the larger reality they depicted; that disagreement is a part of all communities, even in religious communities that outwardly share very similar values.

Overall much of what became crucial to tune into while in the field were efforts to integrate politics and social values into embodied religious identities in meaningful ways. Through maintenance of traditions, valuing record-keeping, and the building of long-lasting structures in which Mormonism's practices are upheld. These structures make faith something that feels concrete, bounded, solid and tangible. Through dress, movement and the body there is further continuity between boundary-maintenance as preservation, protection and distinction. As the church seeks to make the divine concrete in an ever- changing world, these efforts to integrate were grounded in things that were observable, rather than indefinable. It is of course important to note that observable does not mean obvious, there is an overwhelming

sense of delicacy, negotiation and meaningful silences as these processes play out. As I was situated neither at the center of nor the margins of the faith – a place with perhaps the most freedom to act and ask questions – I sought to understand, in particular, ideas and experiences that pushed up against carefully maintained boundaries, and efforts to decide what should in fact be relegated as outside of Mormonism. Oakland is an ideal landscape to explore the tensions here as well as the ways in which individuals reconcile tradition with a desire to move in new directions.

The Oakland temple from below

Themes and Chapters

In 2013 when I entered the field there was a particular sense that the community had just come through a period of upheaval and change. "The dust is still settling", a ward member explained, in regards to the 2008 passing of Proposition 8, a successful initiative to legally ban same-sex marriage in California that was largely funded by the LDS church. In the years between Prop 8 and my introduction to the ward not only had the laws been overturned, but there had been a major focus on tolerance towards LGTB Mormons, including a website (featuring the stories of some first-ward members) put out by the church which described ways that families could continue to love and support gay members. Other key events that occurred during my fieldwork included the rise of a Mormon feminist movement that

culminated in a highly-publicized excommunication, and the publication of online articles in which church leadership acknowledged historical events, such as the practice of plural marriage by the church's first prophet, and the banning of black men from the priesthood until 1978. Women in the church participated in 'Wear Pants To Church Day' in order to show solidarity to the Mormon feminist movement. The age for female missionaries was also lowered, enabling more young women to serve missions, and a staggering number came forward; a 37% jump in the first year after the age was lowered (Christensen 2017). All of these events were covered by the media, unfolding in the public eye. A general interest in Mormonism even culminated in sold-out shows of the musical 'The Book of Mormon' playing in San Francisco while I was attending the First Ward, a musical that parodied a gay missionary as a punch-line.

Issues related to gender and sexuality seemed to dominate conversations about Mormonism's future within the Oakland First Ward, but the ways in which gender and sexuality have long been understood in a Mormon context seemed to be related to a broader way of being Mormon. The church views both gender and sexuality as fixed, and gender roles are important to how Mormon communities are organized. Similarly space in the church is meant to contain; inside the temple are worthy members of age who have managed to uphold church standards. Standards for Mormons include restrictions on diet, dress, sexual behavior, language, and affiliation with other groups. In order to move through the narrative of events that shaped my time in the field, each chapter is organized in terms of specific forms through which social change and tradition could be materialized.

Following this introductory chapter, chapter one contextualizes this research in terms of Mormonism's peculiar history, cosmology, and the theoretical perspectives, which integrate these contexts with the fundamental questions which this research is grounded in. Chapter three will describe in more detail the physical spaces and buildings that belong to Mormonism, moving from the temple into the home and describing how physical boundaries are manifested and Mormon space is constituted, drawing upon Oskar Verkaaik's work on religious architecture (2014). Chapters four and five will address how Mormon identities are embodied, and in order to continue upon the theme of objectified ways of creating boundaries and peripheries this chapter will draw upon Warnier's *Surfaces and Containers*, viewing the body as a vessel. Clothing and other materials used to mark, protect, gender, decorate, designate,

purify and enable the body to occupy a Mormon identity will be described. In chapter six Mormon language is considered as a potentially harmonizing or disruptive materiality in religious contexts, drawing this argument predominantly from Keane (1997, 2007, 2013) and Susan Harding (2000). This chapter demonstrates the crucial role language plays within Mormonism, again moving from explicitly sacred language to the ways in which Mormon culture is expressed with particular types of narrative, greeting, description and vocabulary that is integrated into everyday conversation, and how these linguistic forms constitute Mormon identity, placing speakers within bounded frameworks. Chapters seven and eight focus on the efforts to bring change to the traditions of the church, creative re-configuring of the materialized boundaries around Mormon identity and practices are at the crux of these movements. These chapters will focus on events transpiring that aim to redress margins; mainly, the Mormon feminist movement and efforts to challenge racial, gendered and heterosexist hierarchies in the institution of the church. These chapters will demonstrate how marginalized Mormon experiences are negotiated from periphery to center, grounding these negotiations in the previously described material forms that both objectify and is embodied in efforts to reimagine what could be enveloped into the boundaries of Mormon identity and practice. Cannell has said of the Latter Day Saint's church, "Mormonism, it sometimes seems, combines Catholicism's focus on sacramental efficacy with Protestantism's attention to sincere interiority and personal agency, although doing so of course in its own unprecedented way" (2017:1). It is a Christianity with multifarious possibilities for describing the way it constitutes and sustains a particular theology and culture. This dissertation will focus on the observable material forms, like language, buildings, objects, clothing and bodies, which make the abstract tenets of the faith tangible.

The view from the roof of the temple, Oakland's skyline in the distance in front of the San Francisco Bay.

Chapter Two

"How Firm A Foundation": Material/historical contexts and embodied faith

Locating Mormons: tracing a history

During my time in the field, I frequently attended church social functions in large, picturesque Piedmont homes - ward members who had the space often volunteered their living and dining rooms for a multitude church gatherings, social club meetings, and celebrations. The most familiar to me was the sprawling Spanish-style residence of Lindy and Dick, a couple in their early 70s. As highly active members of the church, they often hosted book club, dinners with the missionaries, and invited me to come by for church broadcasts whenever I was inclined, and I frequently accepted their invitations. Walking down the entry hall, just beyond the foyer, were numerous framed pictures adorning the walls. Among posed family photos were black and white portraits of ancestors going back through the generations. Just beyond the door to the home-office was the family tree, tracing the family's genealogy, printed on vellum, matted and embellished with gold leaf. Lindy was an avid genealogist; she volunteered in the family history center at the church, helping people research their backgrounds and locate records. Dick, critical-minded and keenly interested in history, especially that of the church, concluded that genealogy was one of the couple's overlapping interests, bridging record-keeping and fact-locating with intimate knowledge of kinship ties. The family tree was a significant piece, and both were enthusiastic to share with me the care they had put into preserving their family history.

Genealogical research and record keeping is a "sacred work" among Mormons (Oaks 2018), so much so that there are 228 family history centers run by the church in California alone. It is a practice which is concerned with fulfilling the impetus to organize Mormons into extended family units on earth, who will then be interconnected in heaven, part of which involves baptizing members of the family into the faith posthumously in order to bring them into these extended networks. It is an undertaking in which history, personal narratives, theology, materiality and Mormon values are enmeshed, and a process that contextualizes the self across these categories. Those who can trace their ancestors to the early Mormon converts, many of whom followed the Mormon trail to Utah, are proud to have this lineage that places them in center of Mormonism's founding. Mormonism is rooted in the United States, and the church teaches that its formation restored the true church of Jesus Christ to the world. With it's publication, *The Book of Mormon* effectively moved the story of Christianity and its origins from the Ancient world and into the New World, both in terms of setting most of it's narrative on the American continent, including a visit from the risen Christ, and ideologically re-contextualizing Christian theology (Krakauer 2003:74). For this reason many church members claim the pioneer converts to the early church as ancestors, either through lineage or through the Mormon history they share – one in which struggle against adversity, and pious devotion amid the rugged terrain of the United States, spurs devotion even amid modern challenges.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was formally established in the United States on April 6, 1830 by Joseph Smith. Smith is known as the first prophet of the church, he is a figure that generates a great deal of historical and religious reverence within the faith. His portrait is recognizable - along with his story, images of Smith are featured in visitors centers, LDS bookstores, church media and even some Mormon homes. Joseph Smith reported his first vision, an occurrence which spurred his founding of the church, as taking place during his adolescence, when he sought a quiet place to pray and implore God for answers about which church was true. According to the accounts, he found a small grove of trees about three miles from his home, a farm in Palmyra, New York. In *The Pearl of Great Price*, part of the canonical standard works of the LDS church, written by Joseph Smith and published after his death, Smith recorded that initially God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him there, telling him that no true church had yet been established (1851). Smith was later visited by other celestial beings throughout his life, and in 1823 the angel Moroni lead him to the Hill of Cumorah, the site where he uncovered a set of golden plates inscribed with the history of a Judeo-Christian

people who settled the Americas and were visited by Christ. Smith translated the plates and published them as *The Book of Mormon*, a companion to the Old and New Testaments, initially printing 600 copies in 1830 shortly before organizing the church (Krakauer 2003).

The first meeting of Smith's church was attended by approximately 50 individuals, but through missionizing efforts and the circulation of *The Book of Mormon*, their numbers quickly grew. In 1837, 2,000 new converts arrived to Smith's Mormon settlement in Kirtland, increasing the Mormon population to 4,900 in a town of 5,000. By the time of Smith's death, that number had more than doubled, to around 10,000 (Groberg 2017). These early Mormon pioneers followed Smith westward across the North American continent in search of a Mormon settlement on what is now referred to as "the Mormon trail", a 1,300-mile route, which operated from 1846 to 1868 (Groberg 2017). In addition to enduring vicious religious persecution, early Mormon's embedded themselves in violent conflicts along the way with fellow settlers and Native Americans. Early Mormons were often at odds with the communities around them, as a separatist group with idiosyncratic practices, such as polygamy, which was abhorred by their critics. Smith was killed by an angry mob in 1844 in Illinois, just outside of Nauvoo, a township purchased and settled by the Mormons after they headed west seeking a Mormon haven. After a period of upheaval, Brigham Young, who succeeded Joseph Smith as prophet, brought the Mormon people into the Salt Lake Desert, which remains the present day headquarters of the faith. Utah is referred to as a central point in the "Mormon Culture Region" (Meinig 1965), and has retained its place as Mormonism's geographical center.

Smith's Revelations & Modern Church Organization

Smith's revelations and teachings added new dimensions to Christian belief and traditions, which has provided the church its distinctive culture and practices. *Doctrine and Covenants*, published in 1835, contains the most significant revelations of Joseph Smith (and as an open canon it has been updated with revelations brought by subsequent prophets). Through revelation, Smith conceived and oversaw the construction of the first two Mormon temples, and instructed his followers in the ordinances which would be carried out within them. Mormon's believe that the work done in the temple, which includes "sealings" (eternal marriage), baptism of the dead, and endowment ceremonies, are essential for preparing members for the afterlife. Smith revealed that time on earth is a preparation and a test, one

undertaken by those who chose to follow Christ and reject Satan in the pre-mortal existence. Followers of Christ, who put their faith in the Mormon Church and participate in these ordinances, have the opportunity to ascend to the Celestial Kingdom and dwell with God after the resurrection. Mormon's believe they will continue to progress in the afterlife, as was taught by President Lorenzo Snow, "As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be" (1982). Whereby those who do not live righteously will be assigned to lesser kingdoms, the Terrestrial or Telestial Kingdoms. In these lesser kingdoms, as was taught to me by the missionaries, inhabitants will not be reunited with their loved ones or continue to "progress", but they will not suffer. This very specific understanding of Heaven and the means through which it could be accessed is one of the key ways that Smith's revelations established a different sort of Christian cosmology.

Alongside this detailed understanding of the fate of man after death and the necessary practices to achieve exhalation, in the early 1840's Smith received a revelation that Latter Day Saints should practice plural marriage. Between 1840 and 1890 Mormon men were often married to multiple wives, women who would be brought with them into the Celestial Kingdom. The church teaches that plural marriage was a true revelation which had purpose, despite the fact it is no longer permitted, believing that the practice increased the number of children "born in the gospel", and gave a boost to the population of early Mormons which helped grow and sustain the church ("Gospel Topics Essays" 2016). Additionally,

> [Plural marriage] shaped 19th-century Mormon society in other ways: marriage became available to virtually all who desired it; per-capita inequality of wealth was diminished as economically disadvantaged women married into more financially stable households; and ethnic intermarriages were increased, which helped to unite a diverse immigrant population. Plural marriage also helped create and strengthen a sense of cohesion and group identification among Latter-day Saints. Church members came to see themselves as a "peculiar people," covenant-bound to carry out the commands of God despite outside opposition, willing to endure ostracism for their principles. ("Gospel Topics Essays" 2016)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints formally ended the practice of polygamy in 1890, under pressure from the United States government, creating some break-away Mormon factions that share their history and dedication to the early prophets. The distinction 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints' is often used in order to distinguish the organized

LDS establishment from unincorporated breakaway Mormon sects. For the purpose of this research, I use terms such as "The Mormon Church", as most Mormons do, interchangeably, and will not make reference to any separatist Mormon groups that do not belong to the mainline LDS church. Mormons, particularly after polygamy had ended, experienced less conflict with American society and began to occupy more prominent social roles.

Finally, through ongoing revelations received by Smith, the LDS church (and early Mormon society) was organized to be an almost self-sustaining system requiring no formally trained clergy. Communities of Mormons participated in creating and running their church very directly. Church leaders were comprised of lay-people fulfilling roles through authority given to initiated members of the faith, referred to as "The Priesthood". Priesthood authority is granted to worthy male members over the age of 12, and church services are presided over by men who hold this authority. They carry out essential ordinances as well as the day-to-day organizational tasks within the church, such as record keeping, collecting tithes, scheduling, preparing sacrament, and other such things. The church established by Smith has developed into a highly structured, robustly funded, and far-reaching organization.

The church's current prophet, Thomas S. Monson, leads the church and is advised by what is collectively (with Monson) referred to as "The First Presidency", the 12 men who are directly under him. Monson is responsible for communing closely with God in order to create and sustain church policy and practices, delivering instruction to all faithful LDS members. The next tier of leadership includes the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy and Presiding Bishopric, and their role is explained thusly on LDS.org, "to preside over selected areas under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve". Leaders are always advised by two counselors. Additionally there is "The General Auxiliary presidencies", which consist of the Primary, Relief Society, and Young Women, the three auxiliaries overseen by women, and Sunday School and Young Men. In watching the General Conference, the biannual event in which these leaders deliver talks, which are broadcast for all members to observe, I became familiar with many of the church's more prominent names.

Communities of Mormons are organized into stakes, wards and branches. A stake is presided over by a "Stake President" and consists of 5-12 congregations. Congregations are referred to as wards or branches, depending on their size and leadership structure, as wards

typically must have between 150-500 members and are overseen by a bishop and two councilors (called a bishopric), and a governing body that reflects the church's, with members who preside over the Axillary and other tasks needed for the ward. The sheer amount of roles and titles assigned in wards is partially dependent on the size and needs of each particular community. Additionally, most stakes have a stake Patriarch, who performs the duties of a high priest in addition to giving patriarchal blessings (*Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders* 2017). Taking up a leadership or organizational role in the church is referred to as a "calling", and responsibilities are given by church leaders, in a top-down system of allotting positions and tasks to an entirely volunteer basis, with the exception of the General Authorities who receive a "stipend".

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Say Saints in The Bay Area

Alongside the formation and growth of Mormonism's center in the state of Utah, California Mormons were also building up robust communities during the later half of the 19th century. Samuel Brannon, a follower of Joseph Smith, in hopes of being named Joseph's successor and moving the Mormon epicenter to California, took a ship of converts from Brooklyn, New York to what is present- day Oakland, California in 1846, establishing a Mormon presence on the west coast. Though his aims were not necessarily fulfilled, Brannon and his followers, who largely settled in San Francisco or set up farms around the Bay Area, created opportunities for continued westward growth and expansion of Mormon communities (Candland 1992). Many of those pioneers made their way towards larger Mormon settlements, but those who remained created a small foothold that would allow Mormonism to later expand.

The site where the temple was to be situated was selected more than half a century later, in 1924, when Elder George Albert Smith, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, visited the East Bay. Smith had a vision of a temple being situated in the hills he viewed from his hotel, stating that it would be "an Ensign to all the world travelers as they said through the Golden Gate into this wonderful harbor" (Hawkins 1971:43). In 1943, the site was purchased by the church, and California Stakes began fundraising for construction (Hawkins 1971:43). The

Oakland Temple was dedicated in 1964 by Church President David O. McKay (Candland 1992). Until 1993 it was one of two temples that served California Mormons (the other located in Los Angeles, about 370 miles south).

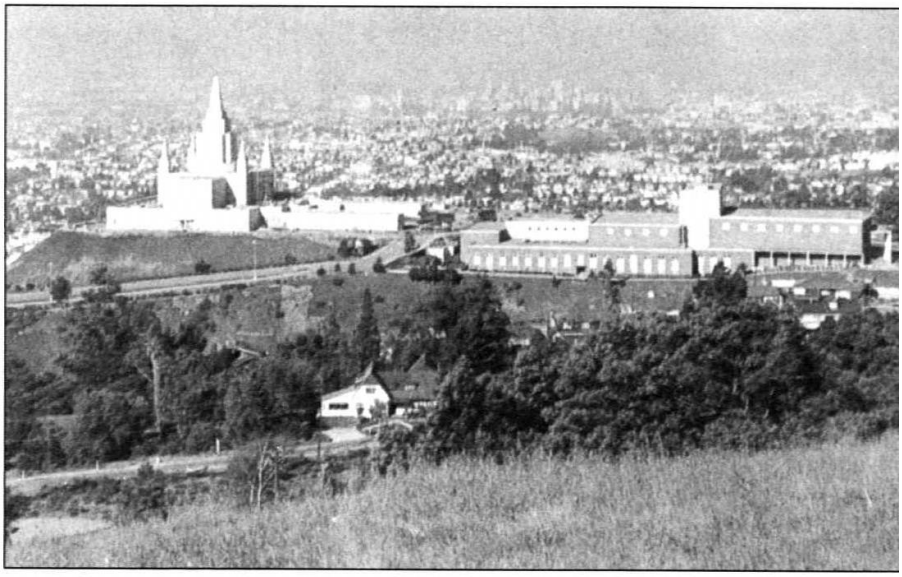


Photo of the Oakland temple in 1964 shortly after it's dedication, via The Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University.

The first time I arrived on Temple Grounds I was astonished with both the views and the pristine nature of the landscaping and buildings. On the west side of the lot stands the visitors center, which accommodates curious outsiders who want to know more, opened in 1992. Operated by missionaries, inside are displays related to the temple, the tenants of the faith, the Mormon family, Mormon artwork, and a theater where films made by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints can be viewed. In the lobby stands a 10-foot-tall statue of Jesus, referred to at the Christis. Above him the ceiling is painted depicting planets in space, a reference to the place Mormons call 'The Celestial Kingdom', where they believe Jesus and God the Father dwell. The Visitor's Center is a concrete symbol of a well-established LDS community in Oakland, and the overall appearance of Temple Hill speaks to the ample resources available to the church.

The Christis in the Oakland Visitors Center, above him is a mural depicting the heavens

Historically, as Mormonism grew and expanded Oakland's LDS community became something quite distinctive; it is neither at the center of nor the margins of the global faith. The community today is known for being slightly unconventional yet influential. Most members have familial or social ties to Utah, though members often boast that the ward neither looks nor functions like a typical Utah Mormon community. Though, Utah's influence over Mormonism is a crucial component of understanding the culture of the LDS and the organization of the church. Mormon scholar Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye describes,

> The potential power of Mormonism's centralized (Utah-based) institutional structure to shape its church-wide doctrines, practices, culture, and even scholarship cannot be ignored. Twice a year, the attention of Mormons all over the world is drawn to Salt Lake City to hear pronouncements of top church leaders with authority to shape church teachings in their role as "prophets, seers, and revelators." Twice a year, Mormons in Tahiti and Taiwan alike view, with the same familiar recognition, broadcast images of leaves rustling in the breeze as people gather at Temple Square. (Wei-Tsing Inouye 2014:70)

Wei-Tsing Inouye focuses here on the material ways in which Utah-Mormonism is established as "mainstream" Mormonism, particularly through the ways in which the images, landscape,

architecture, language and fashions of the Utah LDS are imposed through church produced and circulated media She offers, additionally, "While the administrative center of the LDS Church is unquestionably Salt Lake City, Mormonism has other centers and other peripheries." (Wei-Tsing Inouye 2014:73). The First Ward certainly overlaps at once with values connected to Mormonism's centers and margins. Members pride themselves on belonging to a singular and stand-out community within the Mormon world, and the expression of this manifests in a number of observable ways, connected largely to the ways in which member's seek agency inside of a self-selected faith that pushes conformity, uniformity and obedience.

Beyond Belief: Religion and Materiality

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has an incredibly distinctive material and visual culture. For those familiar with various American Christian traditions, often distinguishing between, for example, Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, is a matter of enquiry. Latter Day Saints, or Mormons, however, operate with traditions that make them easy to identify. Their missionaries, church building, and even specific turns of phrase and expressions mark their faith and distinguish them, aligning with their distinctive theology are the objectified markers of a "peculiar people". Participating and embodying the faith is predicated on these specific material engagements. For this reason my own research, especially in looking at how "progressive" Mormon social movements emerge in a localized context, involves a detailed analysis of those materials, which constitute the church. I argue that these very materials are reordered by Latter Day Saints who wish for progressive social change within the church, which seeks to accommodate shifting social values within Mormon traditions.

Looking at this tightly-regulated, top-down institution, subtle ways that, for instance, a pronoun, the styling of an outfit, or a prayerful request, infiltrate contexts where order prevails, creatively reimagining what belongs to a bounded way of being Mormon. My research was situated in a region associated with liberal politics, progressive institutions and rapid social change. In order to understand how a community can sustain a corresponding "progressive" ward in such a tightly regulated institution, this research provides insight into the contested and complicated ways that individuals negotiate the category of 'Latter-Day Saint' in the Bay Area. Within a church that sustains materialized boundaries around Mormon religious spaces, bodies and language, these progressive movements emerge as and attempt to

expand circumscribed ways of belonging. Progressive Mormon values exist on a spectrum; for some the freedom to choose a style of dress that is not obviously LDS signaled their identification as an "outside the box" member of the faith - for others, radically contesting the church's teaching on gender and sexuality was an essential part of a progressive identity. Regardless of where individuals fell on this spectrum, the ward agreed that the diversity of values in the First Ward set them apart, and as tumultuous changes unfolded within the institutional church, the ward considered their place within a much larger establishment. As I participated in the day-to-day of the community, I experienced how fraught this process of reimagining what could be a part of religious life could be.

Within Anthropology, enquiries into the capacity of belief in the divine as a medium through which we transcend the limitations of place, social organization, and time have become a prominent feature of the study of religion (Robbins 2011, Fennell 2006). Paradoxically, perhaps, it is through the 'here and now' material world which religion is best approach through the anthropological lens (Miller 2005). Defining religion in the context of the social sciences, Tyler (1871) proposed that religion could be understood as simply belief in spiritual beings. Belief, however, is a broad and intangible category for the project of cultural analysis. Durkheim proposed, more specifically, that,

> A religion is 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. (1912: 62).

In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* he argues that religions are not grand falsehoods but rather express "the real", as they are grounded in "the nature of things" (1912). Durkheim's ambitious supposition provides the foundations for a study of religion that begins with the ordering of social worlds through "setting things apart", supposing that the sacred is socially constructed. These earlier anthropological accounts of religion, primarily concerned with the idea of "primitive" beliefs as having the ability to make sense of other realities experienced by social groups in their environments, are the foundations for more grounded approaches. Clifford Geertz, for example, began to move away from the reduction of belief to an explanation in place of a more broad and complete understanding of the world, and attempted to present religion as a symbolic system arguing that "rituals act as metaphors for social life" (1978:8). Geertz's interest in the semiotic properties of faith pushed forward new ways of thinking about

religion, viewing religion as replicative, rather than focusing on its potential to rationalize otherwise unfounded views (Bowie 2000:20). It is worth noting, however, that despite Geertz's separation of religion from essentialized ideas of belief, he was heavily criticized by Talal Asad for his approach. Asad deemed this perspective as too abstract for meaningful analysis (1983). Not only are religious practices historically situated, but also the defining characteristics of religiosity are themselves the outcomes of social, political and historical contingencies (Asad 1983:328).

This foundation, however limited, creates the possibility to see how religion is manifested and lived. Beyond the ability to objectify intentionality and be a fixed thing in an ever-changing world, materials are embodied, worn and felt. With objects, language and stuff, people move, act and communicate. Resulting from this, the emphasis in anthropology is to expand ways of knowing. "Not only has the cultural politics of the study of religions shifted, so too had the object of study and the interpretive frame deployed to scrutinize the object." (Morgan, 2010: 55). To illustrate this concept using one example from this research, I argue that the temple is not only a sacred space because it represents heaven on earth, but because it additionally provides those who enter it an experience that engages the senses, is mediated by the organizational structure of the church, and involves active participation. By design, the building cuts off reminders of the outside world, such as the noise of traffic or children. Individuals move through rooms that involve facilitated ritual activities, donning sacred dress, repeating words and prayers, being anointed and blessed. The final room in the temple is called The Celestial Room. The furniture, walls and carpet in this room are usually plush, ornate, white and gold colors are often used – it feels clean, calm and peaceful (according to many of my participants), particularly in contrast to the more active spaces in the temple. The temple is not just a symbol of Mormonism; it becomes a vital element to the practice of Mormonism.

For my specific aims, to evaluate the processes of change and stabilization within Mormonism, the mediums through which boundaries are formed and transgressed provides the context that directs my analysis. The ways in which embodied individuals consume, move, perform and engage constitute the expression of Mormon faith. The material elements which enable these expressions, including language, cloth, music, food, paper, and architecture, are essential to the ongoing negotiation of agency within a church that requires adherence to a

number of highly specified practices, and has established clear prohibitions on others. These elements objectify ideologies and values, making concepts like *purity* and *sacredness* tangible and accessible. They link individuals with the past, forming traditions, as material is not only preserved, but replicable.

Situating "the work"

In compiling an ethnographic account of the First Ward, this research locates belief and religious experience in time and space, and the constitutive materials essential to being a member of the church, which are acted with and embodied. This particular theoretical grounding provides a cohesive and necessary framework for observing nuanced participating within a particular social structure. Lock and Farquare argue that,

> An anthropology and geography of space and place has combined environmental awareness with critical attention to the structuring powers of built worlds over and within the bodies that live in them" (2007:11).

As embodiment is predicated on material culture and material engagements, an emphasis on geography, objectivity, locating and materializing faith and community requires the lens of material culture as a means of understanding Mormonism – and understanding the ways social change arrives. I will argue that social change is predicated on Mormon material culture manifesting physical and symbolic boundaries, social change, here, involves negotiation within those boundaries.

Mary Douglas poses that the body is a natural symbol, one that inhabits bounded contexts; she argues that symbolic boundaries are manifested in space and inscribed on the body, and are concerned with processes of ritual, order and belief in the divine (1966, 1970). Douglas's work on symbolic boundaries explores ideologies within a religious context, arguing that purity, fortification, and righteousness are materially circumscribed. Particular material engagements constitute limitations and bounded ways of belonging to a belief system. Within this framework, I found it useful to acknowledge the simultaneous importance of tensions located in negotiations between sacred/profane, pure/corrupt, right/wrong, insider/outsider, and the inherent dynamism and nuance that constantly disrupted these points of reference. Douglas's identification of purity as a key theme underpinning the relationship between religious prescriptions and the maintenance of sacredness and order, particularly as these are

expressed on the body and in physical space (1960). Douglas's work here relates much of the symbolic functions of religious ideology to the physical and objectified ways there are manifested and is referenced throughout each chapter.

In unpacking embodied belief as an objectified expression of faith, I draw upon the anthropology of the body, which itself is informed by the study of material culture. Mauss introduces the idea that uses of the body informs social order in "Techniques of The Body" (1973). Assuming that the world is experienced through the body, he analyzes the social dimensions of embodied practices (1973). Bodily behaviors are internalized, introduced through our education in movement and part of human socialization. Bourdieu, drawing on Mauss' theoretical frameworks, argues that habitus, seemingly ingrained ways of being in the world, relates to sociality (1987). Putting forth the idea that everyday life is acted out socially, he observes that the smallest gestures are imbued with cultural significance, and observation that represents a turn from the body/mind divide, and accounts for a more nuanced understanding of how culture is objectified. Situating an anthropology of embodiment alongside these foundational approaches, Lock & Farquhar argue that indeed "[bodies are] social, political, subjective, objective, discursive, narrative and material all at once. They are culturally and historically specific, while at the same time mutable…" (2007:9). In this way the body is understood not simply as a natural symbol, but rather a bundled entity, or an embodied consciousness, "where intention, meaning, and all practice originate" (Lock & Farquhar 2007:6).

I argue, specifically in the case of Bay Area Mormons, that the body is circumscribed in intimate ways that align a person with a group, express autonomy, and allows people to carry their faith as they move through particular environments.

> Seen as contingent formations of space, time and materiality, lived bodies have begun to be comprehended as assemblages of practice, discourses, images, institutional arrangements, and specific places and projects. (Lock & Farquhar 2007:1)

Understanding Mormonism, and in particular, social movements within the faith concerned with social order, a materialist anthropology of embodiment accounts for complimentary ways in which design and materiality are the medium through which both religious and social structures come to be made and remade. These material entities work together as a system

that produces boundaries of varied potency. These aforementioned regulations work similarly to bound and distinguish the body in much the same way, mediating the body and enabling, constraining and aiding individuals as they move through the world. I want to build on this perspectives by demonstrating how this as not a negotiation between fixed binaries, but rather look at varied ways that centers and margins operate, overlap and the ways tensions are reconciled through material engagement.

The Anthropology Christianity and Mormonism: Challenges, contributions, and possibilities

This research, while concerned specifically with material culture, falls under the much broader umbrella of the Anthropology of Christianity. Studies of Christianity and Christian peoples, particularly in a western context, were a once-neglected field of anthropological enquiry, which I will discuss as are pertinent to my own particular interests. Joel Robbins, a predominant voice on the study of Christianity in Anthropology, argues that the discipline is only about 20 years old, and rapidly "maturing" (2014). Bialecki et. all contend that, "Within the past decade, a comparative, self-conscious anthropology of Christianity has begun to come into its own" (2008:1139). Robbins pinpoints the publication of two volumes entitled *The Anthropology of Christianity,* edited by himself in 2003 and by Fenella Cannell in 2006, respectively, as a particular indication that the discipline had formally taken shape.

Cannell, Robbins, and the contributors to these volumes have offered their varied opinions on why Christianity and Anthropology have a somewhat uncomfortable interrelationship. Anthropological encounters with Christian missionaries point to past discomfitures with colonialism, and the perception that Christian missionaries threatened the cultural distinctiveness of field sites. Christian ideologies and impact were therefore only relevant to anthropological findings when related to themes of colonization, resistance and political unrest (Hann 2007, Jean and John Comoroff 1991). These complicated intersections between Christianity and Anthropology, as both reaping the benefits of colonialism, and approaching indigenous groups with inconsistent motivations, has thought to have contributed to a resistance among anthropologists to focusing on Christian faith as an object of enquiry.

Joel Robbins poses, however, that Christianity within Anthropology has an "over-determined history of neglect" (2007:9). In Robbins' view, the main reason Christianity is

overlooked is because of the 'disruption' symbolized by Christian conversion. On the one hand, Christianity is viewed by many anthropologists as "lightly held or as merely a thin veneer overlying deeply meaningful traditional beliefs, a veneer that people often construct for purposes of economic or political gain (Robbins 2007:6). In the case of missionizing forms of Christianity, conversion is often tied to major shifts in all cultural expression has been characterized as a 'complete break with the past' (Meyer 1998). The spread of Christianity, a feature of globalization, is indicative of the destructive nature of Western value systems to indigenous or traditional ideals and religion. In my work I aim to confront, rather, a religion that very much seeks to spread a particular homogenous form of Christianity, one in which belief, dress standards, language, religious artwork, forms of prayer and other mediated religious activities and rituals are standardized and made as identical as possible across global contexts.

Robbins states that anthropology has been a "science of continuity", explaining that, "Christian ideas about change, time, and belief are based on quite different assumptions, ones that are organized around the plausibility of radical discontinuities in personal lives and cultural histories" (2006:6-7). He argues that by accounting for the incoherence of these two ways of thinking about time and belief allows for anthropologists to see how Christianity can take on its own cultural dimensions, specifically by converts. Robbins' views the clear-cut, boundary-marking narratives, particularly of conversion, as a problem for anthropologists who favor "continuity thinking", which "sees change as slow and conservative of the past and rewards those who claim to be examining the complexities of people's enduring cultures" (2007:16). As both accounts of continuity and disruption are fundamental to how cultures move forward, Robbins suggests integrating narratives of discontinuity and continuity. My own work is largely concerned with looking at change in the reverse direction; rather than seeking what changes Christianity brings, I want to see the processes whereby Christianity is altered, made different, or resists movements that occur, largely on the margins of the faith, and which come from sources inside and outside of Mormonism.

These intersections create rich ethnographic contexts for reflexive and timely research. Cannell offers that these conditions provide an ideal context for unpacking both elements of the discipline and the religion that are often taken for granted. Cannell, referring specifically to Mormonism and it's fixation with particularly the concepts of kinship, and the relationship

between the material and the immaterial, states that these "unusual properties" provide opportunities to apply anthropological thinking in new ways (Cannell 2004:337). She additionally suggests that more attention to the field of Christianity, and Mormonism in particular, would help diffuse such narrow categories and stereotypes, Ethnography can "offer one kind of counterweight to the repetition of stereotypes and misrepresentations of particular social groups" (Cannell 2017:4). Drawing together the relatively few sources specific to Mormonism she argues that,

> becoming a member of the LDS Church involves an undue suppression of individuality. For members, the central commitment to human free agency is theoretically reconciled with the equally central commitment to the reality of revelation by the injunction to "choose the right"—but living this reconciliation may be difficult. For anthropologists the topic of orthodoxy resonates in particular ways. (2017:13)

Suggesting that, in particular, this issue with "the limits of human autonomy" in these contexts poses a difficulty for anthropologists who must account for these complicated cultural constraints when describing unfolding social events. Cannell argues that this concern is indicative of an assumption that religion and modernity are irreconcilable, and that there must be more diverse possibilities to be uncovered with ethnographies of Mormonism. So departing from this point, my own work aims to confront processes of reconciliation among Bay Area Mormons, looking at Mormonism as a system that seeks to make their faith concrete in an ever-changing world.

Religion and Material Culture

Drawing on the existing body of work on Christianity and Mormonism, I explore the role of materiality as is relates to sustaining and altering faith traditions. Through maintenance of customs and rituals, the valuing of record-keeping, and building of long- lasting structures in which Mormonism's practices are upheld, the LDS faith can be imagined as something bounded, solid, timeless and tangible. However Mormonism is not static; Mormons inhabit modern, complex and ever-changing social contexts. Mormons grapple with how they can integrate traditions, ideas and experiences in morally responsible ways, as they cross the carefully erected boundaries put in place by the church. My research aims to evaluate social change within a religious context by exploring the tension between fluidity and structure

within Mormonism. I argue that to understand social change within Mormonism it is essential to view the material forms that constitute the church and note the many ways in which these forms are designed to signal permanence and resistance to change, and how individuals engage with these forms and exercise agency.

Finally, in theoretical approaches to religion in which spiritual life is defined by interiorized experiences, Owen Thomas argues that the inner/outer distinction is not an intelligible way of understanding how religion and belief operate (2000:42). Thomas notes that, paradoxically, within Christian traditions, contradictory discourses suggest that faith is a matter of both subjectivity and objectivity, elaborating,

> On the one hand, the biblical tradition seems to emphasize the primacy of the outer – the body, speech and action – while, on the other hand, the Christian tradition under the influences of Stoicism and Neoplatonism via Augustine and Dionysis, among others, tends to emphasize the inner". (Thomas 2000:51*)*

In studies of religion and material culture there is a presumed sincerity in materialized religious expressions, rather than paradoxical, understanding faith involves a holistic understanding in which these elements perform complimentary work. Keane suggests that material culture is particularly useful in finding ways to describe the tangible elements among a community that speaks so often of transcendence. Following Miller (1987), material culture is useful for describing processes by which ideas can be externalized or made concrete. Keane observes that in utilizing material culture as the primary medium through which to analyze religious phenomena, there is tension between "abstract or immaterial entities" and their "semiotic forms". It is precisely this tension that enables mediation, negotiation and social change; the tension between ideologies and manifesting those ideologies is the space of possibility, questioning, transgression and nuance. The task of creating a fixed set of parameters to represent complex, abstracted ways of experiencing belief provides opportunity to contest the forms by which it is expressed.

In Mormonism the emphasis on earthly transcendence tends to focus on making the body and self prepared through designating borders that distinguish clean from unclean, sacred from earthly, female from male, sin from morality, and other such binary distinctions. Mormonism is therefore a choice to select dress, food space, gender roles, sexual practices,

language, activities and politics that are within the parameters of the church, or, to extend the parameters so that new ways of being Mormon are made possible. Moreover in understanding this process, Keane illustrates that semiotic forms (bodily actions, speech and the treatment of objects) have material properties that intercede in social practices. It is not sufficient to understand what dress or architecture 'means' but how physical properties are used in practice. Keane asserts that research can be guided across contexts while also taking seriously the perspective of practitioners when approaching the study of faith through focusing on these semiotic forms (2008: 117). This approach is important for best describing the process of being Mormon within this specific context. Keane proposes that, "…even the most spiritualized of scriptural religions teach doctrines though concrete activities, such as catechisms, sermons, scripture-reading, exegesis…" (2008: 117). Therefore, he suggests a focus that begins with material practices, rather than beliefs. Supporting this he states that traditions themselves have a consistent form, whereas individual belief is elusive. Through looking at the sensorial, observable and active forms that allow Mormonism to be expressed it is possible to present faith as nuanced and complex, without undermining the validity of faith despite a position that does not uphold those beliefs as truth.

This approach is useful as things mediate social agency; they are acted with in order to engage, create identity, invest and manifest values. "Material objects thus embody complex intentionality's and mediate social agency" (Hoskins 2006:75). Hoskins notes that the "equivalence suggested between the agency of persons and things calls into question the boarders of individual persons and collective representations", suggesting that more attention needs to be given to the ways in which we interact with the material world (2006:76). Hoskins suggests that objects can occupy a place as subjects of biographies; they are invested with meaning that lends to collective identity-making – I will present the ways in which bodies are engaged with the material world to not only construct but live out religious identities, extending the body's possibilities, constituting identity, such as gender, and protecting and bounding the body. This medium provides many possibilities for the context of my research in which material culture becomes the conduit for social change, as people seek ways to change the meaning of these bodily engagements and interactions. Keane addresses this saying, "cultures are creative projects as much as they are conservative traditions. Indeed, one of the more useful ways to think of culture is not in terms of sharing or persistence, but rather in terms of a capacity for innovation" (Keane 2008:113).

These theoretical approaches to anthropological research in a religious context, utilizing the lens of material culture, reveal that religion is grounded in specific geographies, buildings, aesthetics, language and things. Building upon that foundation, my aim, broadly, is to incorporate these perspectives with the budding anthropology of Christianity, and more specifically, Mormonism, in order to look at how faith is embodied. In this research I situated Mormonism in a particular geographic and temporal context, which is manifested through perimeters and symbolic boundaries. My insights in the field, particularly those related to feminism, LGTB rights, social change, and inclusivity in the church, can be best understood as enmeshed in these particular historical and geographical contexts, but building on a particular anthropological framework. I organized my work in terms of separating the forms in which change is mediated and contested, and particularly moving from the most visible to the more subtle ways in which Mormonism's boundaries are established and negotiated with. Grounding each chapter in the existing body of work on religion and materiality, each chapter is informed by approaches that are specific to the mediums of architecture, cloth, language, and embodiment, as it relates to the performance of gender, race and sexuality in particular. In effect, each chapter demonstrates how change inside of Mormon socio-religious setting relates to the forms that constitute it. Finding that the experience of belonging to this particular faith-tradition is tied to how one acts with and in relation to a number of material agents.

"And especially their women": Mormon Feminism

My own research looks at efforts to promote equality in relation to gender and sexuality within the church, particularly in the context of Oakland's First Ward. This research is situated as feminist, in terms of the ethnographic data, my reflexive positioning in the field, and the theoretical grounding of this research. I gave consideration to how this approach influenced my relationships in the field. As this explores embodied faith, bodily distinctions, gender, class, and ethnicity, will be viewed as sites where categories materialize, and frame experience. The Relief Society President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, speaking at the 2001 General Relief Society Meeting, notably said, "Motherhood is more than bearing children, it is the essence of who we are as women" (Dew). This oft-referenced talk points to one of the ways Mormon womanhood is socially constructed, claiming motherhood, in particular, as a fundamental component of women's identities. Men are initiated into

authoritative roles in early adolescence; forming the basis for gendered hierarchies in the church and the concrete ways those shape Mormon practice. These binary and hierarchical roles offered to men and women in the church create parameters in which feminist analysis seeks nuance, ambiguity, resistance, and acknowledges the concrete ways gendered bodies are made and remade within Christianity. In the first ward I was introduced to Wallace Stegnar's description of early pioneers; in his prologue to *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of The Mormon Trail,* Stegnar wrote, "That I do not accept the faith that possessed them does not mean I doubt their frequent devotion and heroism in its service. Especially their women. Their women were incredible" (1964:13). I was told by many women involved in this research that this praise and acknowledgement of Mormon women, especially in a historical account, offered insight into the ways in which Mormon women understood themselves to be – a more empowering account than church talks and media pieces might suggest, particularly in a church that is inherently patriarchal.

Sophie Bjork-James proposes that ethnographic research in a Christian institution (her work is concerned with Evangelism) where gendered hierarchies are maintained; gendered analysis is required for understanding the ethical order within a patriarchal institution (2015). Bjork-James argues that

> Recent interest in the study of gender and religion has lead to a number of studies on how men and women engage in religious practices in distinct ways. Yet, gender inflects not just how religion is practiced, but gender itself often becomes the grammar upon which religious ethics are structured. (2015)

As my own research is concerned with objectified ways faith is manifested, "doing gender" indeed becomes a mode of religious practice. Within the church womanhood is framed as prescriptive, gender roles dictate how space is accessed and how one envisions themself participating in the here-and-now, as well as in the afterlife. Bjork-James' simultaneously considers how research into patriarchal religious institutions inherently produces projects that must consider gender, and also how researchers participate in the field. The level of access I was afforded was shaped by my gender; for instance my access to male participants was generally facilitated by their wives, but also I was directed by 'situated knowing'; feminist epistemology that places a researcher in context in relation to power structures, authority, access, and belief. (Gregg & Scholefield 2015:24). In my own experience "feminist approaches…encourage a subject- subject, embodied relation with sacred objects, as well as

people" (Gregg & Scholefield 2015:25). Lila Abu-Lughod stresses that socially locating oneself in a community is with attention to factors such as gender relations, personality and other crucial factors that shape encounters between anthropologist and participants, arguing that it is essential to represent these elements of field research to also counter the "fiction of objectivity and omniscience that mark the ethnographic genre" (2006:10). Abu-Lughod, in undertaking research in a similar context of social relations mediated by gender, stresses that there were particular dynamics to account for in her work that have, at points, paralleled my experience in a very dissimilar context (2006:16-22).

Finally, as gender was both a factor and a central theme of this research, I adapted my defined field site in order to account for the third spaces where Mormon feminist activism was being shaped. The organizing of Mormon feminism so often occurred in cyber- venues, such as blogs and social media. These sites challenged distinctions between "online" sociability and engagement in "the real world", as engagements there transgressed both areas.

> Not only has interaction with the Internet impacted much of social life that is of feminist concern, but the Internet has also created new venues for gender inequalities to be produced and challenged. There is important work for feminist researchers to explore how inequalities are produced or transformed in online venues (Bjork-James 2015:115)

Online activity was especially relevant in the rise of Mormon feminist action while I was in the field, and offered a location for Mormons experiencing marginalization to create alternative communities. In the First Ward the concerns raised by these dissonant voices became central points of contestation and anxiety as members envisioned how the church would be shaped in the coming years.

Foundations

Returning to Lindy's genealogical work, one of the most compelling features of her role in gathering and preserving the family's historical records were the dimensions of that labor which at once fit into, and demonstrated equivalency to, how Mormons order, objectify and creatively engage with their beliefs. As the family matriarch, Lindy's records were wholly inclusive of male and female ancestors in kind. She traced the homes lived in, educations obtained, and imagined the domestic scenes in which the women presided kitchens and

children, and the places of business where men in the family made their livelihoods. Genealogical work "offers to re-make kinship relations with the departed, and to care for the related dead" (Cannell 2011:462). As much as her work entailed locating and recording names, dates, locations and other facts of the lives of those who came before, from a Mormon perspective, Lindy was getting to know the people she would be closely connected to in eternity. In addition to documents, names, and other types of information, she held fast to artifacts and visited landmarks, which further articulated the place her ancestors occupied in the world. In death they could still be seen as whole persons, with past and futures, through the collection of these materials that spoke to their existence, evocative of the people they were (Layne 2000). These people had stories, experiences and hardships, which Lindy searched for details that made them more present to her. This practice, imperative to Latter Day Saints, entangles historical narratives theology, creativity, and materiality in shaping an understanding of the past as it relates to the here- and-now, and what will come after death. The work contextualizes the self both in time and space and in the hereafter. The things which are obtained in order to piece together the story of the past provides a context in which to place the self, the gaps contain expansive possibilities.

Similarly, embodied Mormonism became a project of culling and ordering the materials on which faith is predicated; texts, clothes, structures, geographies, constituted "the church". Through creativity, particular ways of engaging and thinking around these tangible things emerged. Creative processes could produce powerful narratives and connections, many of which transcended the here-and-now, despite being grounded in what could be seen, heard, and felt. In imagining how these materials, constitutive of the church, came to be, how to think with them, and what might be lost or yet-to-be-discovered, many Mormons felt a sense that there was a great deal yet to uncover, and room to expand. Network building, through church membership, joining online groups, involved participation in material contexts, much like mapping ancestors onto a family tree. These efforts to forge and fix the connections between the faithful were mediated by locality, shared traditions, social and familial ties, and were the most important undertaking to the members of the church. The bishop of the ward during my time in the field was Greg. From a large Mormon family, Greg grew up in Salt Lake City Utah and married his wife Cirilla while still a student at BYU. Now entering his 40s, Greg had been living in Oakland for a decade and raising his three children while working for a San Francisco law firm. Greg was not what I expected when I envisioned a Mormon bishop. He was quiet and

unassuming, and rarely spoke in church except to make announcements, but would talk to me at length about my research, his own academic interests, theology, Mormon history, and whatever events were creating buzz on the popular Mormon blogs. When I asked him what drew him not only to participate in the Mormon Church, but, in essence, to dedicate his life to it in his current role, and raise his children as Mormons, despite being perhaps more cerebral than spiritual, Greg paused. Aside from community, he felt Mormonism was "countercultural" – for him, considering a greater purpose, value in the immaterial, belonging to a social context where service to others was respected over financial or personal gain, were all significant alongside his testimony of the church. But, he noted, that community could not be abstracted from any of this. There is no, "besides community", everything in the church is about community. Additionally, he said, perhaps he was just "religious, but not spiritual". For Greg, what was tangible, and before him, seemed a worthwhile project, and one that connected him to a set of values and beliefs that he felt were true.

In terms of the community, I felt that the most striking thing about being a part of the church for nearly two years was the ongoing nature of organizing within the church to provide broad and unlimited support to church members. Between events, meetings, activities, talks and church groups, my entire week was filled with Mormon social activities, these activities connected and buoyed people. In all of these engagements I can to see the welcoming and convivial nature of the community created a little oasis in the wider city – whether moving house, needing to borrow a tent for a camping trip, or hoping for some help with childcare for a doctor's appointment, members used the church email lists to ask for help and respond in kind. I mentioned to a member named Nedra that I was helping a friend put together a classroom library at the inner-city and under-served public high school where she taught. Enlisting the help of the book club, Nedra oversaw a book drive, and I was presented with over 100 donations of new books for the students, all selected from lists of both essential readings for college prep and popular young-adult books. The efficiency by which people organized, and the provision every member reported feeling from the community, evoked a sense of longing in me, as I had never experienced anything like it.

But as with any community there is flux, uncertainty, and frustrations with the numerous expectations, obligations and intrapersonal conflicts that arise. As people are bound together, they can also feel trapped, or locked out. This is, of course, how communities operate.

In this context Jean, another member of the church I became close with in the field, noted that it was good practice for eternity, where "I'll be eternally connected to my family, which will be a great deal more complicated"; this statement was made in all sincerity. The boundaries that constituted community, kinship networks, and the First Ward, were tangible and in a sense forced people to move through the conflicts if they wished to "stay in the boat", as a popular Mormon maxim goes. To stay connected through unrest and sometimes deeply contentious negotiations with the beliefs, which ostensibly brought people to the church in the first place, required these specific materialized boundaries and a willingness to operate within them. Separating sacred from ordinary, female from male, transcendent from earthly, sin from morality, pure from unclean, the church also created categories for "active" and "worthy" members, and outsiders. But always, within these dichotomies, nuance, liminality, and marginality emerged. Explorations into how the material and spiritual can be altered, moved and engaged with in creative ways offered even more "in between" places for people to belong to the church, to be counted.

Chapter Two
"I Love To See The Temple": Locating and containing Mormon beliefs in landscape, architecture and the home

Navigating the field

I felt overwhelmed as I drove onto the busy temple grounds on my first ever Sunday attending services at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Hoping to find Kathryn or one of the missionaries, who had helped facilitate my visit when I initially contacted the church's Visitor's Center, I was unprepared for just how big the crowds would be. Once inside the church meetinghouse, I became immediately lost. The multi-level building accommodated so many groups I could not simply follow the crowd – individuals moved in each direction, and the stairs and maze of hallways was difficult to navigate. With some assistance I was directed to the chapel, and was seated in a pew just in time for Sacrament meeting to begin, the first part of a 3 hour-long weekly ritual. I still felt disoriented, unsure of how to participate and what to expect as we sung the opening hymn. It was then that a young couple hurried into the pew beside me, bringing with them a baby and a toddler, and an overflowing bag of supplies for their charges. The woman, teetering on silver high heels while carrying a car seat in the crook of her arm, beamed at me and whispered an introduction. Her name was Britta, and her husband was Shay, "we are NEVER on time with these two", she lamented to me, gesturing towards her children. Her toddler drove cars along the pews and clambered over my feet as he played throughout the service. A reverent quiet fell over the congregation when bread and water was distributed for the sacrament, at which point I turned to Britta, "I'm not a baptized Mormon", I said, "what should I do?", and she encouraged me to partake. When the service ended she took it upon herself to guide me through the rest of the day, and we commenced a very easy and amicable rapport that extended throughout my time in the field.

A few months later, on a crisp, autumn weekend in November, I stood on the porch at Shay and Britta's home for an afternoon visit. In the months I had gotten to know the couple I learned that they have been members of the ward since they moved to California in 2008. They are a bit younger than me, Shay in his late 20s and Britta is still in her early 20s, from Texas and New Mexico, respectively, and fairly conservative in both the religious and political sense. Shay is forward and eager to missionize to me, I have shared with them that I was raised Catholic and occasionally still participate in religious traditions; Shay is enthusiastic to provide me opportunities to consider my own faith, and the possibilities theirs offers. The Brunson's apartment is located just off of the freeway, and the busy 580 can be seen (and heard) from their street. The area is on the cusp of what is considered the less-desirable part of town, albeit on the north side of the 580, which is "the good side", where the property values are steadily climbing due to the rapid gentrification of the area. While broken glass glints from the cracks in the pavement, the rough edges of the neighborhood are less severe than they were just a few years ago, and their home and several others on the street have been very well maintained, with fresh paint and neat front yards. On the porch steps are carved pumpkins, since Halloween has just passed, decorated by their 3-year-old, Caleb. It is welcoming, and Britta, with her younger baby on her hip, greets me at the door. Inside their home is an inviting scene; things are orderly, sunlight streams in, it's a cozy oasis adorned with modern furniture. On the wall hangs the 'Proclamation on the Family', a significant LDS document, and coloring pages from the church nursery are taped to the refrigerator. The addition of these little touches specific to a Mormon family home stand out to me as I look around.

I spend about an hour in their home recording an interview with Shay, learning quite a lot about the couple and their background. When we are finished I to go downstairs to chat with Caleb, who has been placated with a Disney film and some goldfish crackers for the hour. He turns and grins when I come to the bottom of the stairs. "What are you doing at my house?" Caleb asks me, as I peek my head into the TV room. I produce my phone and demonstrate the recording app, showing him how I have taped a conversation with his dad by pushing the red button on the screen. I ask him if he wants to record his voice and he gives me a toothy grin, climbing into my lap. We push the button and Caleb experiments with it for a while, making sounds and laughing at himself. Shay asks if he wants to do an interview with me. I tell Caleb I was learning about their church from his parents, so I switch on the record button and ask him to tell me his favorite thing about church. Initially he answers with favorite things unrelated to

church, including his brother, his parents, and Halloween candy. Britta prompts him a bit, "What about our church, though?" she says, "she wants to know about that". Caleb thinks for a bit then says he likes singing the song about the temple. He proceeds to sing directly into the phone, a bit shyly at first then with more gusto as he observes the volume scale respond to his voice,

> I love to see the temple.
> I'm going there someday.
> To feel the Holy Spirit,
> to listen and to pray.
> For the temple is a house of God,
> a place of love and beauty.
> I'll prepare myself while I am young;
> this is my sacred duty.
>
> I love to see the temple.
> I'll go inside someday.
> I'll cov'nant with my Father;
> I'll promise to obey.
> For the temple is a holy place
> where we are sealed together.
> As a child of God, I've learned this truth:
> A fam'ly is forever.

The song, a primary standard, was familiar to me. It is one that encourages children to take an active interest in the temple, a space they do not have full access to until they are at least 18 years old and eligible to receive a temple recommend. Caleb's home is nestled in the hills in the shadow of the iconic Oakland Temple, and the building is a familiar site to Caleb, though even children who attend church in buildings that are not adjacent to their temple (which is actually more typical overall) often see photographs of their parents outside the temple on their wedding day displayed, or photos or postcards from temples family member's have visited or where they received ordinances. The buildings become recognizable as they are taught to identify them, and are upheld as spectacular, sacred and transformative spaces that one should yearn for. Entrance into the temple can signify adulthood; often the first temple visit coincides with a young man's mission, or a young woman's wedding day.

The Oakland Temple from just north of the 580, and from the entrance to temple grounds.

Mormon Temples, unlike the more practically designed meetinghouses where church services and classes are held, are ornate, elaborate and imposing buildings. They are surrounded by manicured grounds, set apart from, rather than integrated into their surroundings, particularly in cities; temple grounds are often selected for their high visibility and remoteness (Hawthorn 2002). The Oakland temple, which sits in the Oakland Hills overlooking the San Francisco bay, was designed and built in the early 1960s. It has been updated over the years, a neat iron fence surrounds the grounds, and a security booth sits at the entrance of the parking lot. Palm trees and a man-made stream of water line the pathway to the temple entrance. The façade, constructed from gleaming white granite, contains carved images of Christ descending from Heaven in the Americas and preaching the gospel. On the exterior of the building are stairs, which lead to a viewing area on top of the structure; looking out from this vantage point are some of the best views of the bay area – when it is clear, downtown Oakland, the bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, and many other landmarks can be seen. The temple is one of the most distinctive buildings in the Oakland Hills. It is lit at night, making it appear to glow. Driving on the 580-freeway east, the same one that runs past Britta and Shay's front door, it remains in view for several miles.

Only members of the church in good standing, in possession of "temple recommends", slips of paper granted annually after a standard interview with the bishop to ascertain that one is living righteously, may enter. There are no windows that are visible from these accessible areas around the temple – the building feels solid and impenetrable. Despite the beautiful views afforded by its location, inside the temple there is no area in which to take it in. The visitor's center on the north side of the grounds contains photos on display showing the temple's interior, allowing those who cannot go inside a glimpse into its contents, these images are also useful for helping demystify the temple for non-Mormons. The pictures show a marble baptismal font surrounded by twelve carved oxen, which represent the tribes of Israel. Images of the clean and ornate Celestial Room are also displayed, decorated with white and gold furniture, plush carpet and bright blue decorative stained glass. Finally, an image of the ordinance room used in part of the endowment ceremony is shown, where a tropical mural is painted on the walls and rows of fold-down seats are available for a ritualized performance, which plays on a screen just out of view.

The temple, upheld as the pinnacle example of Mormon architecture and design, is

intended to represent Heaven on earth, as well as serve as a site of transcendence. Inside temples rituals that bind Mormons to God are performed, including sealings, baptisms for the dead, and endowments; the ornateness of its design reflects the sanctity of the activities that take place within. Mormon temples are distinctive and reflective of Mormon architectural traditions, though other equally significant examples of LDS material register, architecture, design is found in the meetinghouses where church activities take place, and integrated into Mormon homes, where religious life plays out daily. These differing registers reflect the varied degrees of sacredness assigned to Mormon space. In different contexts Mormon architecture and design also exemplifies the values that are upheld as distinctly part of Mormonism and are connected to particular design forms; particularly set- apartness, practicality, and homogeneity. The temple, which in it's design and function differs significantly from other places upheld as Mormon, is also imbued with transformative capacities, as it is a site for specific practices and experiences connected to spiritual transcendence. Temple buildings enable engagement with the divine and connect individuals to eternity, and they are imagined as being the most protected and contained spaces. Mormons are taught to envision physical space as having degrees of sacredness, and the next sphere of sacredness are church buildings, which enable community organizing, broadcasting and sharing of beliefs, and particular forms of worship and prayer. In spaces that are more informal, such as the home, the potency of sacredness is considered more dilute on account of secular, everyday and mundane influences that pass more easily over less secure thresholds, and these places are considered the third space of Mormon spiritual life.

Outside of these designated Mormon spaces is neutral space; public spaces, urban landscapes and nature, as well as explicitly non-Mormon places, which are outside of these boundaries that protect and contain Mormon values, but which can be enriched and punctuated by spiritual infiltration. Individuals situated in Mormon spaces, depending on their degree of inviolability, are meant to act and engage in specific ways predicated upon that space, and outside of these spaces remain open to Gods presence. The temple becomes significant not only as a site of transcendence, but as represented by Cal's song the temple also was imagined as having pull and influence as a place one could aspire to, like the highest kingdom of heaven; though not the singular site of religious engagement, it is upheld as central and critical. From the temple individuals quite literally move from subjective experiences, mediated quite directly by the build environment and actors who direct how they engage

within that space, into less formal, everyday forms of engagement; however they carry with them spiritual and material vestiges which connect them with the temple.

Centers and Margins

This chapter is concerned with physical and ideological boundaries as they are manifested in physical space. Boundaries and bounded-ness extends to many features of religious life, and here quite literally ground in fixed places. In different ways church buildings, meeting houses, and domestic domiciles constitute "Mormon space", in shaping and containing diverse Mormon experiences. I argue that architectural space is imagined by Mormons as a system of protected centers and more permeable margins. Moving through the buildings and homes in which my fieldwork took place, whether it was the maze of hallways in the meetinghouse, or up the stairs of a family home on a quiet Oakland street, I was struck by how often places were evoked in contexts that drew them together. In the First Ward, interpreting where these physical boundaries should be placed, who should cross sacred thresholds, and what to make of the environments contained within them, represented the grounding of ideological questions in physical places.

The ward's population was in constant flux as a result of rapidly expanding job prospects in the Bay Area; young couples like Britta and Shay had moved into the ward within the past 5 years as they followed tech industry jobs to the bay area. Many of the older church members recalled when there were significantly fewer babies and small children around – they had prayed for these changes. But each week many of us found ourselves lamenting the cost of living; gentrification had completely shifted neighborhoods, goodbye parties and welcoming talks happened in quick succession, and by the end of my fieldwork Britta and Shay were saying goodbye and returning to Texas so they could buy a place of their own. In Mormon homes, be they rentals in up-and-coming neighborhoods, or established residences, we would gather for church activities, and talk about the temple, which overlooked our city. Often, following church services I'd climb the stairs to the top of that gleaming white building to write down some notes before my drive home, I'd scan the view, looking for landmarks that surrounded my street. I often felt as though I was at the most central point in my field. Mormon congregations are created through the designation of ward boundaries, connecting people to a particular point, their meetinghouse; so much of LDS religious life depends on the creation of

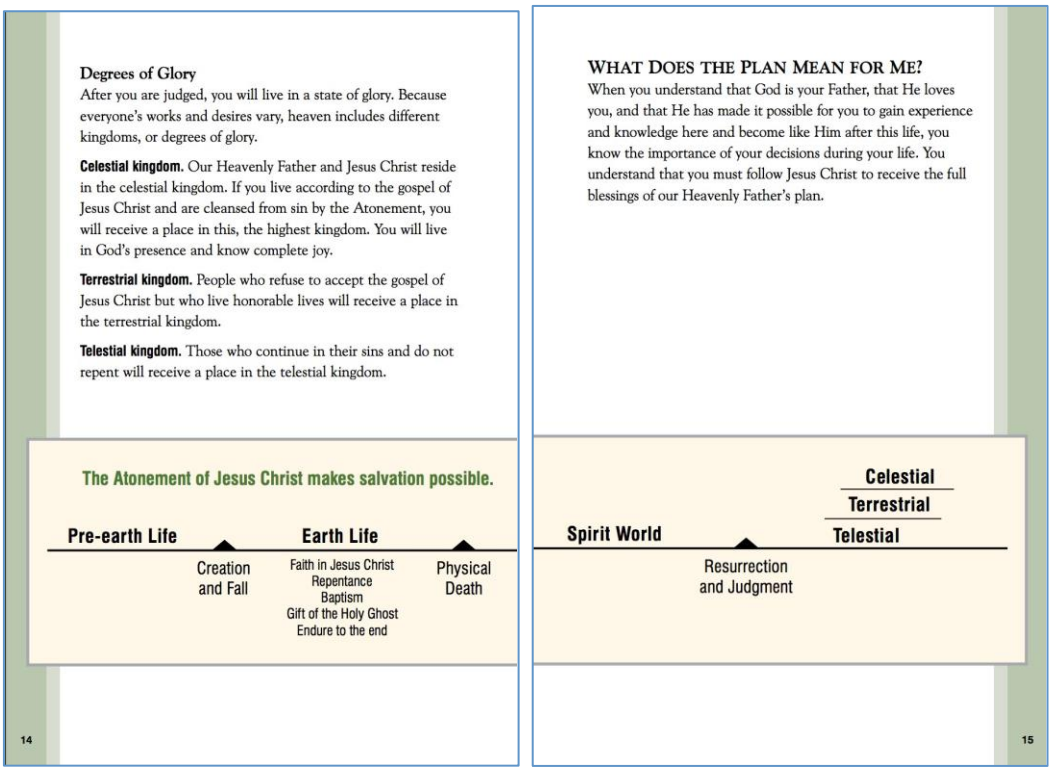
these borders and the built environment that contains religious practice. Homes, churches, administrative offices, temples, and visitor's centers where religious life unfolds quite literally encompass people in multidimensional boundaries, and creates context for forms of marginalization.

Anthropological scholars have focused on boundaries and containment in such contexts, and Mary Douglas's work on symbolic boundaries is amongst the most seminal in describing the processes of collective reasoning that designate the sacred from the profane (1966). Douglas argues that order is predicated upon the idea of place; particular things, practices and rituals have precise locations. These ordered relations are manifested in physical places; essential to upholding sacred space is respecting the established order and reproducing it; in essence, boundary-maintenance. Questions of boundaries, community- building and exclusion have featured in prominent anthropological analyses of community- building and exclusion (Gullestad 1986, Low 2003), in studies of architecture (Buchli (2013) and applied to analyses of religious buildings whereby boundaries are materially and ideologically constructed in opposition to secular space. Oskar Verkaaik, for example, who informs this chapter with his work on religious architecture, offers that, "…religious architecture is not defined by some inherent qualities but by its opposition to secular space and its potential to create spaces of affirmative transgression where the secular is confirmed by the very existence of its opposite" (2013:14). To imagine how space is understood as religious space it is important to look at the material and symbolic dimensions of place as mutually constituting; Mormon space is constructed with walls that reflect a desire to contain what is most sacred, and ideas about the spiritual significance of particular rituals that are based on their carefully regulated containment.

However, while secular/sacred opposition is a crucial component of Mormon space, in terms of how it is both imagined and materializes, I contend that these boundaries hold the potential to be more fluid and multidimensional in terms of how the Latter Day Saints, and especially the First Ward, imagine their community. The movement from sacred to secular is one of degree, not kind. And while Mary Douglas's argument is concerned with binaries and systems of representation, what it lacks is sensitivity to the interactive tensions that I observed in seeing Mormonism as it is distributed across space. Hence, in this chapter architectural boundaries are primarily concerned with maintaining degrees of sacredness assigned to space,

which are imagined by Mormons as a system of protected centers and more permeable margins. The intended flow of spirituality and religious experience from center to margins is envisioned as happening both on a geographical level, from Salt Lake City, to stronghold US-Mormon communities and outward on a global level (particularly through missionizing), and is replicated in the progression from the temple, to church buildings and into the Mormon home, all of this mirroring the organizational structure of the hereafter in Mormon cosmology.

Envisioning Mormonism as a system of centers and peripheries is useful for understanding all other material features of the church, and this system is quite thoroughly realized through looking as how Mormon space is organized. While binary oppositions are powerful and meaningful forces in Christian cosmology (sacred/secular, good/evil, righteous/sinful, male/female), I observed a much more potent emphasis on peripheries and centers rather than these oppositional dynamisms when conceptualizing space. This observation is perfectly represented when looking at religious spaces as physically realized analogies of heaven. Heaven is described as having three kingdoms, each level more protected and simultaneously more sacred, and Mormon physical spaces are similarly imagined on earth, becoming extensions of the imagined hereafter. It is significant to note here that Mormons do not have a particularly strong view of hell; they believe in Satan as God's adversary, as do most Christians, and describe his dwelling in "outer darkness". However, rather than focus on this as an alternative to heaven, Mormons believe in a more complex, complete, and detailed vision of eternity in which almost all people will be brought into Heaven – and their aim is to move into the Kingdom where they will live as Gods, which shifts focus away from the heaven/hell dichotomy. To think about Mormon space it is essential to understand how these intended centers and peripheries are envisioned, maintained and engaged with, Rather than focusing on sacred versus secular space, Mormons rather focus on the degree to which sacredness can be located, bound and maintained.



Missionary brochures on The Kingdoms of Glory

As I focus here on space and symbolic boundaries, the material qualities of built environments will be equally crucial to understanding how boundaries are maintained. Moving away from binary oppositions to the idea of degree and potency, and focusing on the tensions between varied forms of bound Mormon spaces, my aim is to integrate these contexts, looking at how they are at once dynamic yet seemingly-fixed. Mormon temples and the church buildings where my research takes place are set apart, literally atop what is referred to as Temple Hill, and guarded by security, unlike certain church buildings in urban environments that appear more accessible or integrated with their surroundings. Mormon homes, in contrast, are often used for religious and community activities, such as visiting teaching or Relief society activities, and in the first ward all member's addresses are printed in a book that is circulated around the community. The permeation of church materials, activities and images in the home disrupts the notion of the home as a set-apart space, and supports my view that it is contained within the imagined boundaries of church life, albeit in the least controlled sphere. However, even at the center of Mormon ritual, the Temple, the nuanced experiences of church members in these spaces points to the mutable influence of individual agency that moves

through space and time.

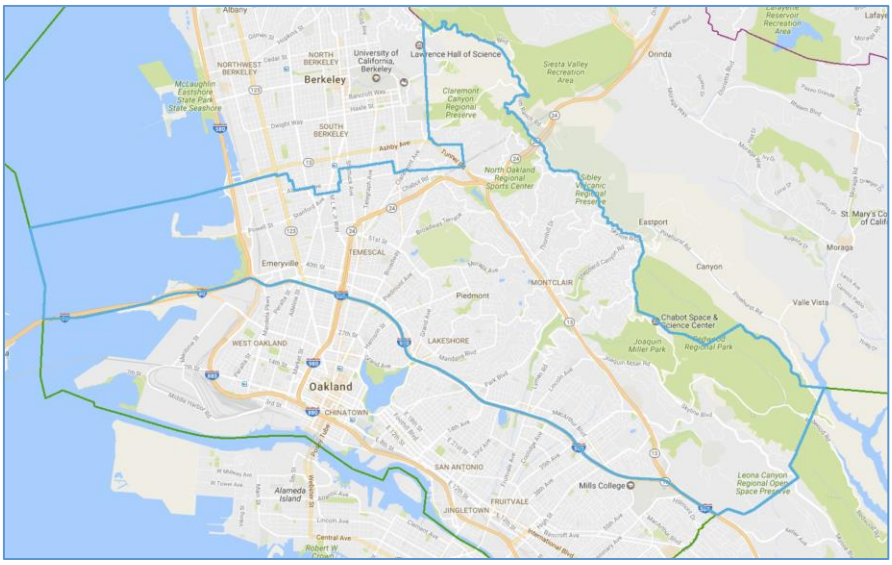
Ward boundaries

The boundary that designated my field was a relatively flexible one, in the sense that I certainly travelled beyond it at many points, physically and figuratively. The designation of the First Ward, however, as my "local congregation", provided me, and the members of the church with a defined location for our community/fieldsite. The missionaries informed me that my address was within the boundary of the First Ward and helped me make contact with the group to which I belonged. In the case of ward boundaries, members rarely select a local congregation by preference (and technically this practice goes against the intent of church leaders), rather local church leaders determine precisely how they will divide Mormons into wards; such administrative decisions underlie almost all facets of Mormon life. This division between Oakland's two English-speaking congregations shaped the culture of the ward, and further points to the complexity of boundaries within Mormonism. I was provided a map, in order to see the ward boundaries, and found that the delineation was the freeway that, broadly, divides privilege from poverty in Oakland, a division marked by racial and economic segregation. The map raised questions in regards to the decision to divide the ward in such a way that so explicitly created a ward with affluence, and a ward apparently so lacking in men with leadership experience that members of the first ward were appointed to serve leadership roles for the Ninth Ward. It appeared strategic, yet many church members suggested this was the most logical division, and that the ward embraced all forms of diversity.

It still seemed difficult to reconcile this narrative with the very telling placement of ward boundaries. Lindy told me that she felt her husband would be willing to give me the details, as he had been a member of the Bishopric at the time of the division, both were affiliated with the ward for over 40 years. Further, Lindy had perhaps fewer reservations about discussing the situation openly, as she had been a member of the church prior to 1978, when the ban that kept black members from having the priesthood authority was lifted. Lindy recalled not only being a vocal critic of the ban, but had made pointed efforts to welcome new black converts to the ward, and felt that continuing to seek ways the church could be more accommodating to members of color was of great importance. Her husband, Dick, a no-nonsense businessman in his 70s, with a particularly warm and congenial personality when it

came to our social interactions, was quite frank with me in describing factors that lead the division of the two wards. He described a somewhat fraught negotiation over where to place the boundary. He was bishop of the ward during a period of growth due to the success of missionaries in Oakland after the 1978 ban, and was present when the decision was made by the then stake-president, David Billeter, to divide the ward into two, creating what was then the Oakland Ninth Branch. As the boundary was discussed it was suggested that the new members, who were predominantly coming from these south- of-the-580 neighborhoods, would benefit from a strategic boundary that largely divided new converts from long-time members. Dick recalled that there was a very vocal convert, Betty, who felt that the division of the wards between established members and new converts would provide opportunities for people from her neighborhood to take on leadership roles in the church, and influence church culture to the benefit the community. Betty's advocated for what was then intended to be a transitional place for new converts to feel they belonged, in essence, that they did not have to content with "the social and cultural differences between the people of East Oakland and the members of the Oakland first ward", and therefore would be more likely to stay active in the church (Candland 1992:110).

When the decision was made there were concerns that such a division would raise "serious charges of discrimination", and Dick recalls that it was very controversial at the time. However, Betty's input challenged some of the dissenting voices, and when the ward boundary was decided upon it was not met with any particular resistance from either side. Dick acknowledged his own feelings that the division allowed the First Ward to maintain its local flavor; he admitted that he personally hoped to maintain the "liberal-stronghold" that made possible through the high concentration of members of a certain kind, who enjoyed debating theology. After moving his family to Utah and returning to Oakland specifically to be back in the ward, he felt hesitant to advocate for a division of the community; for Dick and many of his friends the ward was the only space where Mormonism felt accessible. Interestingly this pointed to an articulated desire among members to maintain their autonomy, disrupting the narrative of the 'cobbled-together' community, it pointed to human social needs that manifested as tensions between the local ward and administrative, global church. In this instance, the community remained in tact.



First ward boundaries

Dick felt that the ward boundary designation was a sensitive decision, and his aim had been unity, in spite of complicated terms. Interestingly, there were later accommodations made to combine the Sunday School classes for the church youth because both wards went through a period of lacking in younger members, so the young people of the church are engaging across racial and socioeconomic groups much more directly than their parents – many parents, including Bishop Call, were openly pleased with their children forming friendships with kids from the Ninth Ward. Ward boundaries are still among the most influential in shaping the Mormon experience in the Bay Area; the ability of these boundaries to contain particular values perhaps has been more effective than many of the measures to exclude particular influences from permeating Mormon spaces. In the case of ward boundaries the relationship between individuals is mediated. The ability of individuals to form a diverse community is often credited to the system of ward boundaries; these are politicized demarcations however, and do not represent, as is suggested by the church, randomized community-formation entirely predicated on the happenstance of geographical location. This particular situation points to the nature of boundaries as contestable and meaningful, relevant as both socially constructed artifacts for consideration, as well as often materially manifested, either on maps or built with stone, brick, iron or wood. These particular features of boundaries, their formation through negotiation, their mediation, the role of decision-makers in placing them, their durability, mutability, and the power imbued in them, is essential in

thinking about many ways Mormon physical space is bounded.

"a place where earth and heaven meet"

Built of heavy materials, imposing in its location, scale and grandeur, the temple presents itself as a "durable monument" which expresses the greatness of God in architectural form (Verkaaik 2013:13). Daniel Miller describes such imposing structures as possessing more claim to their material presence than other things, explaining that, "With monuments some things appear to me more material than others, and their very massivity and gravity becomes their source of power" (2015:16). This "relative materiality" is crucial; the materiality of stone "collapses time, suggesting antiquity, durability, and eternalness. At the same time stone monuments root people in places; they call out for people to stop and engage with them…[they] organize bodies and their movement and reorganize space" (Lewis 2015:274). As noted, I came to think of the Oakland Temple as a central point in the geography of my 'field', this disposition was shaped by material attributes of the temple in addition to the symbolic status. With the meetinghouse and Visitor's Center adjacent, and the homes of my participants roughly surrounding it, it seemed the sacredness of any Mormon space could be measured in relation to its proximity to the temple. Further, the act of passing through the security gates each Sunday and entering temple grounds felt like a passage into a place set-apart. Inside an iron gate, then again inside dense limestone walls from which it is constructed, faithful Mormons carried out rituals that would bring them to a place in Heaven where they would be two stations above the lowest kingdom and all who dwell there. The temple could be read as a physical expression of the Mormon idea of 'set- apartness', a space that links earth and heaven, as well as a solid structure which signals Mormonism as an established and powerful fixture; an unmovable force amidst the ever- changing landscape surrounding it. Further, these buildings connected the ward to the church's administrative center through their materiality; churches and temples, regardless of their location, are decorated with standard textiles and materials manufactured in Utah for LDS buildings (Sonntag Bradley 1981). Though each temple is a unique structure, the style is consistent, further emphasizing the significance of Salt Lake City as a center and a source for Mormonism's spiritual and material prescience.

Historically, the aim of the Latter Day Saints as they brought their church to the western United States was continued expansion through community building, particularly by conversion and the founding of Mormon territories. The construction of the first temples marked the success of Mormons to claim space for themselves, and reflected their growing number of followers. Brigham Young lead Mormon pioneers into the Salt Lake Desert in 1847, where they established a Mormon territory in order to grow their separatist society and escape persecution. The site of the Salt Lake Temple was marked just 4 days after the pioneers arrived. Salt Lake City was founded as Mormonism's center, subsequently today the church leaders, including the prophet, reside there and worship in the most recognizable and iconic of these buildings. During the first 100 years of the church a scant handful of LDS temples existed in the United States; today there are 150 around the world, a physical mark of Mormon's spread across the globe. The history of Mormon temples, as it is bound to narratives of faith, sacrifice, and searching, draws together the material expression of religion and experiential and emotional processed tied to belief. These buildings express religious social identity, and power; but draw them into the affecting narrative of resistance and conviction.

The temples not only exemplify the success of Mormon missions and the greatness of God, but are also viewed by members of the church as transformative structures where one must pass through before they enter the Kingdom of God. Mormons believe that the sacred ordinances carried out in the temple are essential for them to enter into the most exalted Kingdom of Heaven. As a non-Mormon I found myself frequently thinking about and discussing the significance of the temple with research participants, but with virtually no first-hand experience of the activities that take place within it. The degree to which Mormon's will describe their experience in the temple to non-Mormons is quite varied. Officially many of the rituals are considered "too sacred" to speak of outside the temple walls, particularly details involving the words spoken. Many of my participants spoke expansively about their experiences omitting these details, and others felt that describing any part of the endowment ceremony was too intimate to share. Without these details there is still a rich array of accounts that demonstrate how the temple is situated as a bounded space, a material presence that contains people as they embody their spiritual beliefs. Individuals did describe the rituals that take place inside this building with varying amounts of detail in order to give me a sense of their experiences, particularly to enhance my own understanding of why the temple was such a significant site to the faithful.

Practices inside the temple are at once ritual, necessity for transcendence, and considered the ideal setting for direct engagement with God. Physical movement through the space is directed by material and human intervention, and through these movements, utterances and gestures one is considered best prepared for God's revelations. It is both a fixed physical structure, but belongs simultaneously to heaven and earth.

> Heaven (or hell for that matter) is a negative concept. It is metaphysical and other, the counterpart of the physical here and now. Shrines and temples, however they may be constructed, are "in reality" physical objects within the confines of this world, but they are also "the house of God"; they belong both to this world and to the other world-they are gateways to heaven (or to hell). And equally, of course, the gateways into temples are gateways into gateways, thresholds of thresholds. (Leach 1983:251)

It can be seen as a portal, containing within the walls an other-worldy environment where people cast-off their everyday styles of dress, speech and activity, largely to achieve a heightened spiritual sensitivity and fully participate in Mormon experiences. As a site of ritual the temple certainly brought up complex emotional responses from my participants for a number of reasons. The seeming impermeability of the space, manifested in the strict regulation on gaining entrance, both in the process of obtaining a recommend and in the parameters around dress, gendered roles, language and practice once inside, results in a myriad of reactions in conversation. The Church puts forth the idea that the sacredness of the space is predicated on limited access, as well as the "timelessness" of the experiences within the walls. The temple, as a place of minimal contamination, only open to the most spiritually "pure" members of the church, was imbued with the ability to impart spiritual healing, strengthen ones faith and testimony and affirm or direct their actions outside the space. The healing power of the space was manifested in it's material register; from the ornate, gleaming and flawless presentation of the temple interior, represented to me through photos displayed in the Visitor's Center, the building warded off spiritual impurities (Parrott 2005). To many Mormons, inside the walls of the temple one is contained within liminal space; in fact, by design it is a close depiction of heaven on earth. These tensions in how people experience and speak about the temple often spoke to larger tensions about bounded ways in which faith was contained and regulated by powerful centers.

The rituals inside the temple were described to me as almost meditative experiences in which performance, recitation, and blessings were carried out. Certainly a more formal space, the temple remained relational to the meetinghouse in many ways. 2014 marked the 50-year

anniversary of the Oakland Temple, which was dedicated on November 17th, 1964. In celebration there were a number of events on Temple Hill, and an emphasis on discussing the temple in sacrament meeting. The temple was currently upheld as a point of interest and focus, which further drew me into patterns of thought that placed the temple at the center of Mormon spiritual life, at the very least, as a material form that created parameters, proximities and margins for individuals to occupy. Temples bind Mormons together, physically bringing them through a series of practices in which they are moved, named and identified by one another. As these rituals are carried out Mormons envision how these utterances and gestures will allow them to move from their physical world into the Kingdoms of Heaven. Congruently, however, members are encouraged to use the time to meditate on questions and concerns they have. The temple serves as a bridge between the everyday and the eternal. In November during fast-and-testimony Sunday, in which the Priesthood and Relief Society meet together for the second hour of church, a brief history of the temple was reviewed and members were encouraged to share their experiences of the temple. This discussion allowed members to speak personally about the ways the temple functioned as not only a place to carry out the official 'work' of belonging to the LDS faith, but the potential within the temple to engage personally. Lindy stood and offered her own experience, reflecting on the birth of her twins, both now in their 40's, explaining,

> When Dick and I were first learning about Mandy (their daughter who was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy as a young child) we were seeing doctors and specialists, and I was praying and praying that it would be okay. We were really struggling and I just thought, 'how can this be, is my baby girl going to be okay? Please, please Heavenly Father just make her okay'. We went to the temple because we always went on ward temple night and so it was nothing out of the ordinary, but I knew I needed to go. And then I went back and I said, 'okay, I am ready to talk about this with my Heavenly Father' and I sat inside the temple and I remember knowing 'it's going to be okay, she *is* okay'.

Lindy had experienced spiritual hope, healing and affirmations in times of need by visiting the temple open to receiving messages from Heavenly Father, for her the sacred and serene nature of the temple gave her a chance to find clarity and peace; inside the temple, surrounded by other faithful Mormons in her ward, she was able to seek the affirmation from God that her situation would be okay. Her story was very powerful, particularly as an example of the power of the temple to create a context for individuals to be divinely touched and empowered.

Many narratives were shared in church of the temple providing exactly these enigmatic

and spiritually compelling experiences. Further, the collective reverence for emotions and ideas imparted inside the walls of the temple helped strengthen, encourage and sustain people in very meaningful and real ways. The protective properties provided by strong walls and careful controls over who passed into the space allowed individuals to be vulnerable, open and comfortable; in other words, prepared to receive divine engagement. For Lindy all of this was essential in facilitating her experience of connecting with God. Jean, another member around the same age as Lindy, in her late 60s, but who described herself as "practically Lindy's opposite", referring to her own introversion compared with Lindy's extroverted tendencies, also spoke with me at length about the temple and it's importance to her as a sanctuary. Jean and her husband, both soft-spoken and reserved, were often on the periphery of ward social gatherings. For all Lindy's bubbly energy and quick humor, Jean was thoughtful about her words, and more hesitant to draw attention to herself. I eventually got to know Jean during book group meetings, and outside of busy social gatherings, where Lindy and I always had a great rapport, I got to know Jean as we had opportunities to speak one-on-one. In describing the temple Jean emphasized that these protective elements foster both spiritual and communal connectedness. Jean spoke of her experiences as a temple worker (a volunteer who serves in the temple), and while I anticipated that Jean would have her own narrative of receiving guidance inside the temple, the first anecdote she shared was a slightly different take on the significance of the temple. She described that one of her predominant memories of the temple, since she began her volunteering, occurred when a ward member she did not know well began working alongside her. From seeing the woman at church she described how she'd always noticed her elegant jewelry, her fashion sense, and thought of her as "someone who has everything together" - with her hair and nails done, and a seemingly perfect and glamorous life that matched up. Spending time with her in the temple and talking over lunch she developed a friendship and they shared stories about their lives, discovering particular struggles and heartbreaks that they both shared. Jean described,

> I was so honored that she would share what she shared with the two of us. I mean, before I didn't really know her yet she was willing to go a bit deeper because we see each other every week in the temple.
>
> As somebody who is retired sometimes you're very isolated, and you don't meet people the way you would when you were working. I don't have that, I am still very much plugged into a community of people, and very different people. It's part of the reward of doing that.

Jean stressed that the temple and the church facilitated these opportunities for meaningful conversations, even in her retirement, when so many adults, she felt, don't tend to develop new and important friendships. Both Lindy and Jean, in their temple stories, recounted instances where spiritual and social needs were part of a continuum; the temple had provided them space in which they felt supported materially and spiritually, and community-building was essential in enabling their experiences. In these examples the temple provides the context in which individuals are capable of forging connections, both with others and with God, which they would not have access to otherwise. Through the church's varied discussion topics around the function and importance of temples the opportunities to engage in positive, affirming and transformative experiences was always emphasized, and many members found that inside the temple they were afforded the time and space to transcend the social and emotional limitations experienced in every day life. In these instances the design of the building, sturdy and protective against the distractions of the world outside the walls, the knowledge that others encountered in the temple shared your faith, values and commitment to Mormonism's standards, supported individuals as they practiced openness and vulnerability.

Walls, Gates, and Thresholds: Partitions and the temple

The protective elements in place, such as the fence around Temple Hill and the need to possess a temple recommend to enter the building, are intended to keep out the potentially contaminating influence of unworthy individuals inside sacred space. Often church members explained to me that these restrictions upheld the temple as something one "yearns for", inspiring positive individual growth and work to be a better person; the reward for following the church's standards is entrance into the temple. The barriers also created and maintained hierarchies and divisions in the community; hierarchies that prevented critical engagement, particularly gendered hierarchies. Further, some of the restrictions currently in place are, according to other participants, arguably not based on spiritual engagement, but rather reflected systems of segregation based on, in particular, racial and homophobic proclivities, which extend well beyond Mormon communities. During my time in the field I encountered a number of discourses that were either critical of or questioning the church's policy that anyone participating in a same-sex relationship was not eligible for a temple recommend, as regardless of martial status the church does not recognize same-sex unions or allow sealings between same-sex partners. Members of the ward who were faithful Mormons yet married to same-sex partners did not enter the temple, rendering their experiences invisible in the imagining of Mormon heaven.

The subject of gates as boarder-controls has been explored notably by Buchli (2013), Fainstein (1997) and others, but is central to Setha Low's work on Gated Communities in the United States (1997). Many parallels exist between the gated Oakland Temple and these communities, particularly in how they are maintained and whom they serve, and the mixed responses to their cordoning-off. Low argues that gates enforce isolated communities, in which strict internal controls limit self-determination. Inside gates free expression is traded for security, uniformity and boundedness. I would like to suggest that religious space could be analyzed similarly, particularly in a church where hierarchy and authority are essential for granting members access to opportunities to engage in their religion. The vast majority of my participants felt that inside the temple the conditions created a distinct lack of social hierarchy, and rather sustained Christian principals of being "alike before God". The temple recommend interview, a set of questions that determines that an individual is living by the church's standards, simply guaranteed that entrance was only granted to those committed to maintaining the experience as one of reverence.

Temple recommends are given to members of the Church who have completed the preliminary steps of faith, repentance, baptism, and confirmation. Adult males must also have been ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. Temple recommends are usually issued by a bishop and countersigned by a member of the stake presidency in interviews conducted in private…Questions are asked to ascertain one's faith in God the Eternal Father, in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost; and inquiry is made regarding the person's testimony of the restored gospel and loyalty to the teachings and leaders of the Church. Worthiness requirements include being honest, keeping the commandments, such as chastity-sexual continence before marriage and fidelity within marriage-obeying the laws of tithing and the Word of Wisdom, fulfilling family responsibilities and avoiding affiliation with dissident groups. (Tucker, 1992:1446)

These recommend criteria certainly ensure a particular standard and level of preparedness for those who enter the temple, but particular hierarchical relationships are encoded in these questions; the recommend interview can be read as a socially constructed boundary that separates worthy from unworthy. Setha Low argues that, by design, gated space encodes social hierarchies. Her analysis of built environments describes suburban gated communities, and the fears and anxieties that draw people to these spaces and away from urban public space. In my analysis I found the temple, despite being a religious rather than domestic space, could be similarly critiqued as a site which preserves social hierarchies with the aim of fostering community inside, however creating a very specific community and making invisible many who represent a more vulnerable other. I will note again that many people crucially stated that the temple actually created neutral space, maintaining that the temple is actually a place where social hierarchies are less meaningful – but historic and contemporary experiences of exclusion create a less straightforwardly harmonious narrative. The structures which produce power relations, exemplified in Low's critique of gated communities as segregation-producing, further elevates particular individuals and pushes out others, maintaining uniformity, and detachment from those considered other. Gates implicitly maintained an environment where "timelessness" was symbolically predicated upon a particular visual landscape where men preside in environments where contestation, discrepancy and critique is thrust outside walls that simultaneously maintain 'sacred space'. As an intermediary the temple recommend facilitates a process of establishing difference, and inside the temple hierarchies within the community are stabilized. The gates here do not only

provide an additional boundary to distinguish the temple from the urban environment that surrounds it, but they also enclose the other buildings found on Temple Hill within this system. By contrast the meetinghouse was more accessible, and in describing meetinghouses reactions were often less emotionally wide- ranging.

The protective material elements surrounding the temple, and the experiences which they produced, were not always viewed as faith-affirmative. Boundaries and their effectiveness is certainly predicated on their ability to act as managing tools which preserve a community, which simultaneously creates *others*. Critiques of such boundaries from Marianne Gullestad (1986) and Setha Low (2003) find that often this division between those who belong and those who don't creates conditions where difference begets suspicions; suggesting that inequality and social othering are supported by particular forms of boundary-establishing. For Lindy and Jean the environmental conditions inside the temple enabled sanctuary and created opportunities for intimacy, both spiritual and social, removed from everyday contexts where forms of visibility and distraction were viewed as crucially limiting their freedom to engage in meaningful ways. The feelings of security that they identified there were experienced quite differently by members who found the boundaries to be either impassible, or constraining, feeling they created conditions that lead to a lack of dialogue, restricted freedoms, providing hidden and unexamined experiences that were upsetting. Gullestad notes that the "sharp boundaries" that have physical manifestations work with vague boundaries, predicated on cultural identity or feelings on belonging, these "symbolic fences around the social person" are as significant in creating the conditions for inaccessibility (1986:54), and frequently it is impossible to disentangle territoriality from forms of privilege. By creating distance boundaries implicitly establish groups who preside, and groups who are managed.

Hannah, in particular, spoke of her own experiences struggling with both access to the temple, and subsequently, reconciling her experiences inside with her everyday feelings about faith and spirituality. Hannah, in her early 30s, was one of the more academic-minded participants I came to know. A voracious reader and researcher, she was at once thoughtful and starkly emotional in recounting her disillusionment with the temple, placing the experience within what she knows about ordinances, tradition and church history. Often a woman's first visit to the temple coincides with her wedding day, though I should note that this is slowly shifting, particularly as more women choose to go on missions. In the First Ward

most women reported that their first temple visit usually occurred prior to their sealing in the temple. Hannah, however, hoped to visit the temple long before she was dating her now-husband, and explained that around the age of 23 she began a series of meetings with her bishop seeking a temple recommend, though at the time it was common practice to discourage women from visiting the temple who were young and not yet engaged. Hannah, an ardent feminist (she blogs for a Mormon feminist website), felt strongly that she needed to go. Inclined toward critical analysis, particularly with issues around the role of women in the church, she felt strongly called to make her first visit. Hannah stands out as a very intentional person, guided both by thoughtful consideration and spiritual receptiveness.

When she recalled her desire to enter the temple it was in part fueled by her frustrations that her younger brother was about to go through his endowment ceremony at 18, while she was still combatting a sexist policy. But her motivation also came from a desire to make peace with her faith and deepen her relationship with Mormonism. She recalled "In my patriarchal blessing I was told that in the temple I'd understand my true relationship to God, so I had high expectations for it". Hannah recalled that very little was ever disclosed to her about the temple prior to her first visit. The temple walls that visually obscure the activities that take place inside the temple support the church in preserving these rituals as sacred through maintaining discretion around them. When she finally implored her bishop for a recommend, explaining that her family would be all accompanying her brother for his initiatory visit, he conceded. She recalled being extremely optimistic, especially to experience something her mother loved, and feeling rather blind-sighted when she learned that much of the sexist policies she had pressed against in order to get into the temple were rather extensions of fundamental components of the ceremony she participated in. Hannah explained,

> There are lots of elements that are different that to me add up to an incredibly sexist perspective in which women are essentially subordinate to men. [during the endowment ceremony] the women covenant to harken unto their husbands, but the men do not covenant to harken unto their wives, women veil for the true order of prayer, before a couple gets married the man stands in for God at the veil to pull a woman through...
>
> The bit that is the most devastating to me is that the promises given to men and women are that men will be priests to God and women will be priests to their husbands. So maybe one of these elements alone I could rationalize, but all of these elements in the ceremony together really added up to a vision of… maybe all those sexist elements of the church, maybe those really are how God feels about women.

> …After Adam and Eve leave Eden then God never addresses Eve again. Nobody even ever looks at Eve, she stands around and looks up at Adam, she's got no more lines besides covenanting to obey Adam and the promise that someday 'I'll be a priestess unto my husband as he is a priest unto God' …That's just really, just devastating to me. That's a vision of eternity that I don't want.

For Hannah part of her feelings of shock also stemmed from the fact that the intimacy and safety Jean and Lindy felt in the temple were also part of her experience; she recalled that her initiatory blessing, performed by a woman who states, 'with authority I bless you', with her hands placed firmly on Hannah's head, was one of the most spiritually powerful moments of her life. For her the power of this moment did not square with her eventual helpless feelings that she was suddenly disengaged as she moved through the space. She recalled sobbing on the bathroom floor, and eventually being taken to see the temple matron who tried to ease her pain by taking her to see her husband. Hannah remembered,

> I had actually gone to have a session with her husband and he had said, 'well, men and women, there are things that are different about men and women', and I raised my hand and said, 'so are you saying that because of my biological differences I should be subject to a man for eternity?' and he said 'yes'. So I was not going to talk to her husband, I don't think he's going to be helpful.

For Hannah these experiences were particularly frustrating because confronting inequity inside the temple feels particularly daunting. The material conditions of the temple present a seemingly impenetrable barrier that resists opposition, protecting dialogue and practices that Hannah experienced as oppressive.

Simple, Functional & Familiar: The Meetinghouse

The Oakland meetinghouse.

Wherever you are, anywhere in the world, I heard many times over, *church is the same!* And indeed, on my first visit to church I was struck by the contrast between the elaborate church grounds and ornate temple façade that loomed over the more purposefully-built meetinghouse, and the industrial-grade carpeting and cinderblock walls I encountered inside the sprawling building where Sunday services were held. For first-time visitors to the LDS church The Mormon Newsroom's website describes it's meetinghouses thusly;

> They include classrooms, offices, a font for baptisms, a kitchen and in many cases a cultural hall with an indoor basketball court. Cultural halls in Mormon buildings usually also have a stage, for dramatic and musical productions. And the basketball court doubles for a dance floor or dining area, among other uses.

This is all in addition to a large room that seats 200 to 300, called the chapel, used for Sunday worship services. The word "chapel" is also sometimes used by Mormons to describe the whole building or meetinghouse. These meetinghouses, and the content of the weekly services held there, are materially regulated in order to provide all members across the globe with an analogous experience each Sunday. The alignment of the weekly lessons, themes, songs and

scriptures is intended to convey the universal relevance of the church, and it's ability to meet diverse communities with unambiguous and universally applicable teachings. In congruence with this, the design of Mormon meetinghouses is similarly uniform across a variety of geographical environments and cultural contexts.

The design of these meetinghouses was established in the early 20th century to enable the institution of uniform Sunday worship across the faith, according to historian Martha Bradley. Between 1940-1960 when church membership doubled the Church Building Committee was established in order to oversee the rapid construction of standardized floor plans. Bradley explains that by creating uniformity building plans were streamlined, saving time and money. Further, these buildings helped ensure that people worshiped in the same way, explaining,

> It was felt that if the programs were the same, and the doctrines were the same, the buildings should be the same. The uniformity of design and concept helped to unify different cultures and peoples. Furthermore, for many members the chapel was a symbolic trademark of the Church in their area and therefore their assurance that the Church had indeed arrived (1981: 23)

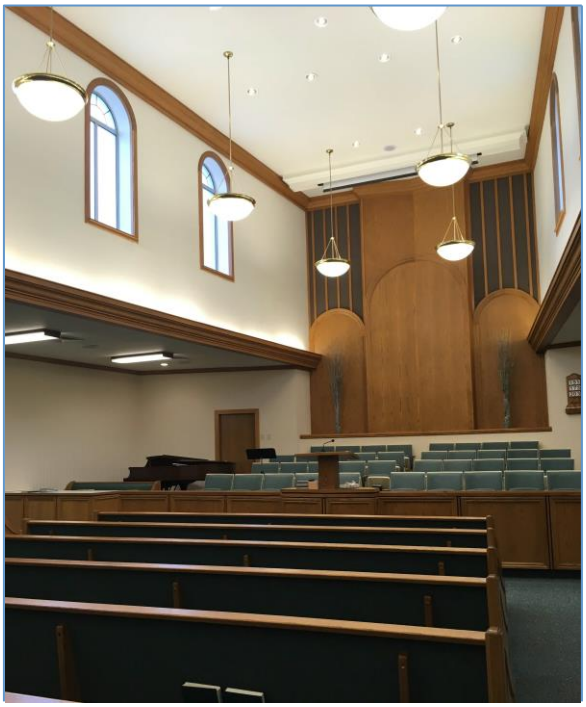
While Mormon temples could be viewed as exemplifying some of the qualities of the Celestial Kingdom; set-apart, hierarchical and aesthetically awe-inspiring, meetinghouses are intended not only to meet the more everyday needs of LDS communities, but also embody the practical spirit of Mormonism. Often the simplicity of meetinghouses is described as a reflection of the simple nature of Mormon culture and spirituality. The social life of Mormons often takes place within meetinghouses; the Oakland meetinghouse indeed held all the amenities necessary for group worship, study, meals, sporting events and performances. I found myself attending all sorts of gatherings at temple hill outside of Sunday services, including yoga classes, volleyball practice, the ward talent show, potlucks and a musical. The meetinghouse enabled sacred ritual to take place alongside everyday and social activity; a conscious infusion of religiously informed values could therefor be integrated into leisure and social activity.

In this section I will focus primarily on The Meetinghouse, and specifically describe the chapel, where Sacrament Meeting is held, as a site of tension and negotiation between personalized expressions of faith and adherence to regulation in bounded space. These spaces, certainly by design, created contexts in which inspired utterances were encouraged under the

careful surveillance of figures of influence and authority, leading to an interesting interplay between performances that both upheld and disrupted the predictability of services each week. Despite the "unscripted" and personalized nature of talks and prayers offered in Sacrament, there were particular styles and tropes that generally prevailed. I quickly familiarized myself with the language and style that were typical, and sought both patterns and instances of departure. Understanding these tensions in a particular built environment, I looked at how hierarchies were sustained through design elements, and how these spaces influenced behavior. As a sacred space, albeit a communal one, the design of the chapel facilitated particular ways of engaging. The position of church authority figures on the chancel, slightly elevated from the congregation and facing them, supported the idea of male leadership in the church, and created a space where congregants could be surveyed. I noted that indeed between the section and facilitation of speakers and their place adjacent to the podium and facing their congregation, the presiding bishopric were positioned both physically and symbolically as having the ability to control and monitor Sacrament Meeting. While prayers were extemporized and talks were technically at the discretion of the speakers, the environment was under a certain degree of control and regulation, aided by the design of the space.

Moving from the chapel into classrooms, the carpets and paint colors maintained a continuity, though florescent lighting and folding chairs replaced wooden pews in small the cinderblock chambers, adorned with paintings depicting Christ and framed photographs of church leaders where we met for other church activities. During the three hours of weekly meeting, humble blessings or tearful testimonies were given, while children would fish snacks out of their mother's handbags and many members texted or played games on their phones, which conveniently could also be used for reading scriptures, so that it was never clear whether people were looking up biblical passages or playing Candy Crush. The decorum of the spaces suggested the ability to be slightly more at-ease, though reverence was always encouraged, and strikingly people often commented on a pronounced sense of familiarity of the weekly ritual of church, even for those relatively new to the ward. Bradley's description of the meetinghouse further elaborates on the layout of these spaces, stating, "buildings are generally economical, flexible, expandable and spacious. It established a basic continuity in architectural types and materials throughout the worldwide church" (1981:31). The "basic continuity" observed supported the church's aims to encourage members to develop not only

corresponding worship practices, but provided a context in which material and ideological values could harmonize across contexts; the built environment ideally is encouraging and accommodating of acceptance of particular dress standards, family structures and social activities. Within the church there is certainly a prescribed ideal for how one lives, grows a family, clothes one's body, and moves through the world; Mormon culture cannot be neatly distinguished from Mormon faith, as Mormon cultural norms are often promoted as means of protecting, preserving and enhancing faith. In meetinghouses, where uniformity and homogeneity are upheld as guiding design principals, these values are manifested in material elements and made concrete. Buildings, in this context, play an active role in not only Mormon worship and social activity, but also in manifesting Mormon beliefs, demonstrating that just as one gospel and set of religious standards is universally applicable across cultures, so is the architecture, which enables religious practice, gathering and worship.



Inside the chapel, where Sacrament Meeting is held

In addition to creating bounded spaces where standardized design elements support synchronized forms of engagement, I found that meetinghouses occupied an interesting position as neither explicitly sacred buildings, nor casual social spaces. The tension between their designation as "informal", compared to the temple, yet their significance as places of

reverence where ideally their design principals aligned with the experience of worship (and, by extension, faith), left room for both fluidity, spontaneity and distinctly personalized and localized dialogues to take place alongside efforts to maintain harmony, appropriateness and a sense of belonging. This tension was most apparent in negotiations around censure, discretion, and personalization, often encountered in negotiations with church authority figures regarding the scope of freedom to "customize" aspects of the first ward's services and structure. Whereas the temple was a place where ritual was scripted, acted in unison and where even particular sections could be played from recordings, the Mormon church very much upholds their Sacrament meetings as opportunities for extemporaneous expressions of faith while simultaneously creating contexts that are carefully regulated.

A number of activities took place during the 3-hour services held each week, which the large building facilitated with various function rooms spread over two levels. While the timing of our meetings, and their order, rotated based on the need to accommodate the needs of 3 wards and one branch using one location (and everyone's desire for the most convenient time-slot!), Sunday school met first, then Relief Society/Priesthood, and finally Sacrament. During the Sacrament meeting all ward members came together in the chapel, a space that, inside, resembled simple reform-protestant churches, with rows of pews facing a raised alter where the bishop and his counselors would be seated alongside, potentially, that week's speakers. Distinctly, the space was lacking crosses (which are not used by Mormons as symbols of Christ) or decoration, apart from a few arrangements of silk flowers. Behind the seating area for these individuals was space for a choir, and flanking this was a piano on the left, and a space to prepare the bread and water (the sacrament) on the right. Sacrament meeting involved opening hymns and prayers, announcements, prayers and hymns preceding the blessing and distribution of sacrament, white bread and small cups of water passed by the Aaronic Priesthood (recently-ordained males 12 and over) to the congregation, which could be taken by anyone while seated in the pews. After Sacrament the bishop would have organized talks or religious musical performances for the week, presented by any members of the ward of his choosing. Generally particular topics or themes were provided, but the speakers had a great deal of autonomy in their planning and execution. The meeting would again close with prayers and hymns.

"A place of refuge": Mormon Homes

Mormon homes, whether they are decorated plentifully with religiously themed objects, or hardly distinguishable as Mormon spaces, are sites of spiritual and religious practice to most active Latter Day Saints; the home is upheld as a site of Mormon experiences and expressions by church authorities, and recommendations for keeping a home that supports Mormon values are regularly discussed in religious talks. This ideological aim plays out as ongoing negotiations of how the home supports engagement with Mormon principles, specifically; service, strengthening of family units, following religious recommendations for the home, commitment to religious standards, and social engagement with the church community. In this final section I want to discuss this feature of Mormonism and look at domestic space as an extension of religious space, exploring the material qualities that distinguish Mormon homes and link them to these other realms of spiritual significance.

Homes are often taken for granted as being situated relationally to other communal spaces, as they are often considered enclaves set apart from the rest of the world. The home has been conceptualized as the private sphere, a social construction that imagines the public and private as two worlds apart. For this reason the home is envisioned as the focal point of most people's lives, where they can freely express themselves (Cieraad 1999:11). I noted in my own work in Mormon homes that this characterization was frequently challenged, not only by emphasis within Mormon culture on the temple as a literal focal point, but also because homes were often experienced as places for communal gatherings, and they shared symbolic and material qualities with places of collective religious worship, though these aforementioned qualities generally associated with the home remained as potent; homes were still very much considered a place of autonomy, and refuge from the outside world. Anthropological interest in domesticity has often privileged homes at the site of intimate expressions of identity and forms of engagement (Buchli 2013), and the intimacy associated with the home was certainly articulated as I went about this research. What I observed, however, was intersection between the home as a place of intimacy and as being integrated into the spheres of church-life. Tensions between public and private are central to how people experience the home, and in this chapter I want to reframe this approach to understanding domestic space in order to explore tensions between a need for autonomy and belonging, in regards to the church. Here I wish to further draw attention to the relational nature of place in Mormon contexts by describing the home as a third site where symbolic boundaries that demarcate religious space

are negotiated.

The material attributes of a place are imbued with the potential of effecting behavior and emotions. These material attributes create an atmosphere, which "manifests itself as a double-sided process: the atmosphere of a room works on an individual, and conversely an individual projects his or her specific mood on the room" (Pennartz 1999:95). Mormon ideology places a lot of significance in behavior being related to the material attributes of place, and the church explicitly teaches that Mormon homes should facilitate clean family living and religious practice, and I should emphasize here that the home is almost always described as the dwelling place of a nuclear family. Church talks in recent years have suggested that this can be achieved through a number of concrete practices, which include placing passages of scripture or images of the temple on display, keeping the family computer in a space where parents can monitor its use, and implementing family meals together around a table. In several Mormon leader's conference talks the home is referred to as a "refuge" (Eran A. Call, October 1997, Boyd K. Packer, October 2006, Elder Gary E. Stevenson, October 2009, By Elder Richard G. Scott, October 2013, etc.), and the integrity of the home should correlate with the integrity of the family. Inside the home families are encouraged to participate in group-prayer, blessings, family-home-evenings and scripture study. The home is tasked with enabling families to engage and uphold strong Mormon values, and is considered a site of significant spiritual work that is essential for all members of the faith. Its contents should be in harmony with Mormon standards. Homes also provide informal settings for social church activities, such as book club or church baby showers and parties, but also more explicitly spiritually fortifying ones, such as visiting teaching or special blessings, and often, church authorities oversee these activities. So integral is the home to enabling these practices that all First Ward members' addresses are printed in books annually and distributed by the Relief Society; in fact, my own address and phone number were added when I commenced my research. This particular scenario demonstrates the disruption of maintaining the home as a private, personal place, as it opens up the possibility of surprise visits or requests from other church members to stay as guests in the home, and largely many church members valued the idea that their home was available in this way.

Materially there were many ways individuals linked their homes to the church, beyond sharing addresses and hosting activities. Maintaining the relational status between these

places, they displayed distributed symbols of the church, sometimes these were symbols they we asked to display in church talks, and at other times these were chosen symbols that reflected a particular way they wanted to express Mormon identity. In the First Ward, tensions between autonomy and belonging were often expressed in how individuals and families applied the recommendations of The Church in regards to material objects, such as "The Proclamation on The Family" or images of the temple. I often noted that church members would ease the strains between desires to distinguish their home as Mormon, yet hesitance at embracing particular recommendations or traditions, with very specific material forms. Many church members expressed that they didn't want their homes to reflect a singularly Mormon identity, and I heard from many participants that rather than decorate with "typical" Mormon aesthetics, they distinguished their spaces as Mormon through collections of Mormon literature, such as books on Mormon history and theology, or a pile of Mormon journals on a coffee table – and the rest of their decorations reflected other interests, such as travel or design. This particular comment, "we keep a lot of books on Mormon history", was quite telling in thinking about the First Ward's place as somewhat idiosyncratic in their relationship to the church.

In the First Ward I also found that many members, however conflicted they felt about church leader's making recommendations about the design aesthetics of their homes, appeared very enthusiastic about hosting church activities and offering their homes as spaces to be utilized by their community. Nearly every week I visited a member's home, dining with the missionaries, attending a church social activity, or joining a visiting teaching group. Members of the ward who owned large homes in Piedmont or the Oakland Hills would host parties for the ward. These homes were the ones I was most familiar with – gathering spots for all sorts of activities, where I had plenty of time to take in my surroundings. The homes, while demonstrating some taste variation, usually included just a few small details that I found more frequent in Mormon homes. I noted that many people had large group family photos – I found that Mormon family sizes were still just a little bit larger than what I was accustomed to. Most homes had a piano, sometimes Mormon hymn books would be open across the sheet music stand, as playing piano was a crucial way that individuals participated at church. Occasionally, in addition to books on Mormon history, or a family copy of the scriptures set out, I'd encounter something framed on the wall that would strike me as quite Mormon – such as a family tree, genealogical records or photos of ancestors.

One particular evening I attended a gathering at Ted and Heidi's home, long time members of the ward who were extremely well liked in the ward. Their house was often used for many of the larger church social events, situated on a main street in Piedmont across from the grassy park, facing redwood-lined trails. One of the ward members, the husband of a member I knew from book club, Anthony, joked about my attendance at these parties. "I thought anthropologists were supposed to be living in huts in little villages and learn to cook things over an open fire – and here you are enjoying a very good meal in one of the nicest homes in Piedmont, you certainly landed on your feet", he remarked, laughing. I told him that indeed I probably had the most comfortable fieldwork site, compared to my many colleagues, and replied jovially, "Someone has to study the Mormon villages, too". Our exchange lead to a group conversation about my chosen field, and Lindy and Dick, who were seated on one side of Anthony, told me that actually they thought the homes of ward members were quite peculiar examples of how Mormons live. The familiar advice that I go to Utah to see "real Mormons" and "real Mormon homes" was brought up, and the group tried to explain to me the material ways I would experience people's homes that were different. Some comments focused on the cultural differences associated with Utah, mentioning that homes there tend to feel more suburban, families tend to be bigger, and land surrounding the homes is more plentiful. Others made joking comments about Mormon aesthetics in Utah, such as a trend towards DIY projects, or decorative items found at Mormon books stores. I was once again caught up in discourses that pointed to material ways the First Ward culturally distinguished itself from the mainline church, as many chimed in on what they either recalled from their homes in Utah or had seen in friend's homes that struck them as more typical or authentic examples of Mormon aesthetics.

In April I finally had the opportunity to see Utah as I drove with Heather and her baby Elena to be present for the General Conference, and these conversations very much heightened my awareness of difference as I watched the landscape and the built environment change as we moved closer to Salt Lake City. The drive from Oakland, California to Mormonism's epicenter, takes roughly 13 hours. The Interstate 80, a highway that runs east to west, took us from the Berkeley Marina into the mountains and forests surrounding Lake Tahoe in the first 4 hours we spent on the road. When the dramatic snow- topped landscape receded into the desert Heather proclaimed we were encroaching on 'Mormon country', the vast and

inhospitable terrain settled by the Mormon pioneers. She sang to Elena a popular primary song about the early Saints who came west, "*pioneer children sang as they walked and walked and walked*…". It was dark by the time we came to the next state-line, the Utah-Nevada boarder, obvious because on the Nevada side were a number of brightly lit casinos and liquor stores, as Utah has some of the most restrictive laws regarding the sale of alcohol in the United States it operates as a 'last chance' for stocking up. We stopped for fast food and the local news was discussing the general conference, and I turned to Heather and said, 'I'm having a "we're not in Kansas anymore" moment'. At midnight we arrived at the home of our hosts, a family Heather knew through blogging on The Exponent II, a website that publishes articles representing Mormon women's perspectives. April met us at the door of their home; her four children and husband were all already sleeping. As we tucked into our guest beds in the finished basement Heather said to me, 'I'm actually so excited for you to see a proper Utah-Mormon home'.

In the morning she explained to April that she wanted to expose me to "true Mormon material culture". April and Heather excitedly lead me through the house, discussing qualities that were particularly Utah-Mormon. The house was certainly more spacious than most middle-class family homes in the bay area (though, as mentioned before much of the first ward members lived in similarly sized homes, and I would categorize many of them as upper or upper-middle class). The downstairs area of April's home was designed to serve as a playroom, where we slept the walls were adorned with kids art projects, and toys were loosely organized in their places on surrounding shelves; the more formal living room was located upstairs and free of children's toys, books or clothing, on the glass coffee table was a copy of the scriptures. In the children's rooms the outfits their wore for their baby-blessings were displayed, and their 'church clothes' were carefully hung in the front of the closet. The large TV downstairs was tuned into the BYU-TV station for the conference from the moment we woke, which broadcasts both Mormon-friendly programming in addition to these special events. Heather and April wanted to demonstrate some of the features that they felt particularly embodied the difference I was seeking, so later when we headed into town they brought me to Deseret Books, a Mormon bookstore that also sells home-décor. The store, for the most part designed and organized like other big American chain-bookstores, also included a large room where paintings depicting scenes from the Bible and The Book of Mormon were sold, mostly reproductions of familiar works by LDS artists. There were crystal figurines of the temples, and bronze statues of Joseph Smith.

Hand-towels, throw pillows and decal-lettering with phrases specific to Mormon scriptures, hymns and primary songs were also sold, such as a large cursive 'Love One Another', which Heather and April told me were perhaps the most quintessential examples of Mormon taste. Framed copies of The Proclamation on the Family were available, exactly as I had spotted in the homes of some of my research participants. Several American flag themed items were also sold, reinforcing the connection between Mormonism and American patriotism.

Posing inside Deseret Books by a statue of Joseph Smith

The Proclamation was the only prominent item in the store that I immediately recognized. Mainly, my memory was jogged due to the somewhat controversial nature of the document. Written largely in response to evolving social views on same-sex marriage, 'The Family: A Proclamation To The World', was presented as part of a talk given by President Hinkley (the prophet of the church at the time), at the General Relief Society Meeting on September 23, 1995, and addressed the significance of "traditional marriage" and prescribed gender roles in

Latter Day Saints families. In 1997 the LDS Church included the text of the Proclamation in an amicus brief to petition the Hawaii supreme court to reject same sex marriage, cementing it's place as a politically charged document. It begins,

> We, The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

Members were encouraged by the church to keep a copy of the proclamation on their wall, like I spotted as Deseret Books. Interestingly, asking individuals about their choice whether or not to display the Proclamation became a particularly effective way of facilitating a conversation about the home and it's relationship to circumscribed ways of belonging to the church. For some church members the integration of religious and cultural signifiers of their faith were crucial in maintaining the home as an environment that supported their Mormon identity; these material objects upheld the home as being something bound in religiosity and obedience, a domain where the beliefs and values clearly articulated in the temple and at church were also integrated. For others, this was at odds with valuing the home as private space, upholding the home as a space where autonomy prevails, and where they could critically evaluate their position on the tenants of The Proclamation. Domestic spaces, imbued with the capacity to represent and contain material manifestations of an individual or family's identity, carried the same potential as other religious spaces to function as sites of contestation in regards to the sometimes-difficult integration of church values and individual ideals, but in domestic spaces the capacity for these fraught negotiations to be made visible were greatly enhanced.

After Hannah had described to me the trauma and anger she felt at the way gender became prescriptive of her subordination in the temple, I presumed she would express similar sentiments about The Proclamation. Her choice not to display a copy was motivated, additionally, by a strong belief that it was not so much a religious document but a political one whose aim was centered much more around relegation of women to supporting roles within their families. I knew that Hannah was particularly disaffected at The Church's recommendations regarding this issue, which she felt certainly encroached on her agency in applying critical thought to her religious beliefs. She explained, without mincing words, "I refuse to hang as iconography something in which I am collateral damage and my life is dismissed as unimportant, thank you very much". Further contextualizing this position,

explaining,

> {The Proclamation} was actually a document intended to insist on why we needed opposite sexes in marriage rather than a document meant to describe gender roles or the dynamics of gender. So I don't think it was actually thinking that hard about the nuanced dynamics of gender. I'm pretty sure it wasn't because it just says 'gender is eternal' and what the hell does that mean – gender is a cultural construct. Besides the fact that no women were involved in its drafting, and that the Relief Society President didn't even have any input into it – I resent the most that the weapon that was meant the most to put me in my place as a woman wasn't even intended for me in the first place and I became collateral damage in someone else's fight.

Hannah's fairly thorough take-down of the document broadly summarized the reasons many felt it was, beyond an act of religious obedience, a political gesture to display The Proclamation. For some, its origins as being connected to The Church's position on gay marriage did nothing to enhance or reduce the value of the statement. I did ask Hannah if she felt her home still felt distinctly Mormon, while also being a space she felt should be off- limits to The Church's ordering of space. She answered emphatically that indeed, her home still reflected the Mormon identity of it's inhabitants; "I have a whole shelf of Mormon history and theology books", and she pointed out many titles visible from where I was seated.

Conclusions

The maintenance of boundaries, both literal and ideological, is essential to manifesting religious space. Built environments, and in particular church buildings, which are tangible and solidly constructed, provide designated places where religiosity is embodied. For Latter Day Saints religious buildings, and temples in particular, are, ideally, central points from which spirituality disseminates. Within the walls of the temple there is a timeless quality to the rituals carried out, creating an environment that feels untouched by the passage of time or cultural and environmental changes that impact society outside its walls. These carefully secured boarders around sacred spaces help to uphold the ideological standpoint of the church that Mormon men and women can be both physically, materially, and spiritually set apart from a world that is dynamic and subject to morally compromising trends, whims and transgressions. The fixed beliefs and practices of the church are congruous with an environment that feels impenetrable. Though, this chapter has explored tensions that arise

from these forms of engagement, predicated by human and material meditation. On the one hand, many Mormons in the First Ward feel that they are able to forge more rooted and committed connections with their communities and with God the more protected their religious environments are by barriers that keep them contained and secure. These protective elements maintain religious practices that are tightly bound in tradition. On the other hand, no environment is static, and many individuals wish that they had more agency and freedom inside the temple, creating more harmony between critical engagements outside the walls and within. These negotiations around space often extend into negotiations around belonging, identity, and subjectivity.

The rituals of the temple are, however, one of many religious practices predicated on place; church activities happen across varied built environments. Rather than being relegated to one specific type of building, religious practices are carried out in environments that support them in different ways; the spiritual significance of the religious activities is enhanced by place, but not contained there. While the most sacred rituals may only occur in the temple, and certain rituals and activities are particular to the Meetinghouse, and others are carried out in church member's homes. Meetinghouses are seen as the appropriate venue for both spiritual and social life to occur in interconnected ways. The meetinghouse assigned to a ward is based on boundaries that draw together groups from particular geographical areas, though these boundaries can also reflect a conscious aim to unite particular groups of people, the church teaches that the drawing of ward boundaries ensures that communities are formed without allowing individuals to self- select a church; one of the aims of this is to ensure a homogenous church culture alongside uniform values and beliefs. Materially this aim is supported through meetinghouses that are designed in uniform styles and appointed with textiles and furnishings produced in Salt Lake City. Church lessons and themes are similarly disseminated from this administrative center and circulate globally. I have challenged the notion, however, that wards themselves are homogenous collectives drawn together through straightforward geographic designations, as the First Ward's history points to more self-conscious efforts to maintain a community of friends, and to let a secondary community of converts develop their own ward culture, with the potential to meet a different set of practical and social needs. The tension between homogeneity and local culture extends across many contexts, with varying margins and centers, but these buildings, provided by the administrative church, provide ideal settings in which many negotiations around belonging

and autonomy play out.

Mormon homes, however, are also significant sites where these same tensions are negotiated. Homes are at once imbued with the qualities of privacy, individuality, and intimacy, but also are an important site of religious activity and engagement, which are both discrete and communal. Though homes can reflect more localized and individualistic systems of identification, they are not disconnected from the church, and often there are material ways in which homes are connected to church buildings. Based on these three specific environments, and their designation as venues that support and enable forms of engagement crucial to living Mormon beliefs and values, I have argued that it is necessary to see boundaries as creating a system of centers and margins, rather than upholding binary oppositions. The varied ways in which tensions and connections occur across physical space is best understood by thinking about degree, potency and marginality being negotiated at differing intersections between public, private, sacred, profane, inside, outside, local and global. So accordingly, as far as the administrative church is concerned, lessons and talks tend to emphasize the flow of spiritual potency moving from these tightly- fortified Mormon spaces into the wider world.

In my time in the First Ward, however, I came to see Mormonism, that is it's cultural features, values and material attributes, is certainly not contained neatly within the boundaries of LDS buildings, and these spaces are not protected from 'contamination' by ever-shifting social and cultural influences either. While spiritually is as likely to emerge in "secular spaces" as cultural change is to arrive, sometimes unwelcome, inside designated "Mormon spaces", the church aims to materially construct environments that protect, contain and preserve a timeless and impervious faith experience through the maintenance of boundaries. Many practitioners of the LDS faith struggled both to align their values with the rigid messages presented inside the walls of the temple, or meetinghouse. For many of my research participants as they moved through the world, both in 'secular' and 'religious' spaces, it felt that they were trying to ideologically stand in two worlds, neither of which were constructed on completely stable foundations.

Chapter Three

"Pure Hearts and Clean Bodies": interiority

The Lord Gave Me A Temple: Maintaining sacred bodies

The songs taught to children in the Mormon Church are referred to as "Primary Hymns"; they are sung weekly as part of the youth church programs and routinely performed by children's choirs. Additionally, they are one of the most succinct and effective ways that the basic tenets of Latter Day Saints beliefs and values are summarized and imparted. Far from exclusively being sung by Mormon children, these songs were referred to recurrently in church talks, conversations about faith, testimonies and descriptions of Mormon history. They can be viewed a sort of shorthand for any particular creeds of Mormonism, and are rooted in so many people's memories, becoming a touchstone for the most stripped-down, nostalgic and fundamental aspects of believing in the church. *The Lord Gave Me A Temple* employs the metaphor of the temple to describe the body, as it is understood as a bounded object that contains, protects and moves a person between earth and heaven; a vessel, which should treated as a gift from God and cared for accordingly:

> The Lord gave me a temple to live within on earth.
> Once in Heaven I was spirit, but I left my home at birth.
> I'll make my temple brighter; I'll keep my spirit free.
> My body is the temple my Father gave to me.
>
> If I keep my body clean and pure and habit-free,
> I may in Father's temple claim blessings promised me.
> On resurrection morning, I'll take my body bright
> And in celestial glory forever live in light.

The message contained in this metaphor succinctly serves as an intermediary between

teachings on the temple and teachings related to the sacredness of bodies, summarizing the overlapping properties of sacred space and the physical self, and relating particular values across these contexts. It allows us to imagine food, substances, and even sexual behaviors, as potentially defiling the pure and consecrated space of the internal body, which is contained by walls constituted by skin and cloth. Dietary restrictions, and the regulations regarding what materials move beyond its thresholds, work to preserve the sanctity of the interior dimensions of the body. This chapter will explore how maintaining this internal core is one crucial dimension of embodying Mormon faith. In negotiating with sacred and profane materials, Bay Area Mormons contend with the notion of "purity", which is informed by both LDS teachings and local, situated knowledge related to nutrition, exercise, health and sexuality.

In maintaining the body as a sacred material entity, the deliberations over what specifically the types of food or substances can or cannot be consumed represent a critical discourse around religious embodiment. The manifestation of a sacred interior of the physical self requires individuals to contend with the categories of divinity and purity, while also considering God's authority and how it is transmuted through church leaders, and God's own ordering of the material world. Further, while Mormons conceptualize the physical self and the spirit as two distinct entities, they locate the essence of the self as being contained in the inner sanctuary of the physical body. While Latter Day Saints theology tells that bodies have eternal and divine properties, far from being a husk cast off after death, Mormons possess a depth ontology, locating "the true core to the self" past the surface of the skin (Miller 2010). Considering how Mormons value and imagine the physical self involves delving into certain contradictory ideologies – but this creates a context in which Bay Area Mormons therefor have space to creatively maintain bodies in a way that integrates multifaceted ideas in locating and maintaining their physical and spiritual selves. On depth ontology, Miller elaborates that,

> There is an underlying principle to be found in most of the religions that dominate recorded history. Wisdom has been accredited to those who claim that materiality represents the merely apparent behind which lies that which is real. (Miller 2005:1)

He argues that, parallel with this cultural understanding of a "true self" being somewhere beneath the surface of the body, is an ongoing contestation between cosmology and practice, as religious teachings stress the "inherent superiority of the immaterial world", yet practitioners rely on things to express the presence of divinity in the world (2005:19). In terms of architecture, these material things can enthrall us with their magnificence, or create a

context in which individuals feel rooted in simplicity and humble values. On the body, rather than treating things like dress and adornments as a mere "façade that masks reality", faith is embodied through these material engagements (Miller 2005:19). In this chapter and the next, I will unpack these paradoxical ways of imagining the physical self, looking specifically at how penetration, ingestion, and even allowing impure thoughts or unclean images to enter the mind are seen as a means of contaminating the physical body in a Mormon context, where great measures are taken to keep the interior, the physical and spiritual core of the body, clean and undefiled.

Food and other substances that can be ingested become the tangible materials by which the body can be made clean and unclean, and practices of eating, fasting and abstaining are charged with the power to transform bodies into religious and cultural ones. Mary Douglas treats food as a natural symbol, arguing that the relationship between diet and conceptual/spiritual concerns with pollution, taboo and purity, especially in a religious context, is particularly useful in understanding the moral dimensions assigned to consumption. Douglas's work on ritual cleanliness and taboo (1968) provides a framework for thinking about the materiality, ingestion, purity and contamination. Here I build on her understanding that the body is a site of religious negotiation, where sacredness is centered on keeping the body clean and pollution-free. Douglas's categories, however, are fixed and immutable. I wish to move beyond this rather inert model and rather account for the varied ways materials can be invested and divested with power across contexts. Rather than search for clarity or immutability, substances, foods, drink and other material forms that are consumed can be analyzed as symbolically linked to how we conceptualize morality through categories related to purity and uncleanliness. Feeley-Harnik proposes that food is not merely a natural symbol; it moves through us and transforms us (1995). Food is a powerful medium for articulating and embodying identity (Dupuis 2002, Farquhar 2006). Further, food marks and communicates social relations (Ohnuki-Tierny 1993), and in this context regulates religious bodies in particular ways (Feeley-Harnik 1995). Food and memory are entangled, and powerful links bind food to ritual, community, self and others (Feeley-Harnik 1995:567). Feasting, fasting, indulging and abstaining are all forms of consumption that literally shape the body into a religious object (or defile it).

Across contexts food is imbued with moral dimensions and capabilities that extend well

beyond sustenance and contamination, the way we eat constitutes our religious and cultural identities. Mormon dietary restrictions are very much in place to uphold what Douglas refers to as, the "normative values of the social body", which emphasizes sacredness, and upholds cleanliness as a symbol of social order (1966: 70-81). Here the body is viewed as a semi-permeable container that must be protected from contamination. Judith Farquhar argues that, every culture operates with traditions, ideologies and rituals based around food, and a geography that distinguishes self from *others* represented by what they eat, and "an embodied understanding of food efficacies" (2006:149). Elaborating,

> All of these rich human archives display a process of slippage: one may start with food, but soon the topic has shifted to psychological agents, social form, cosmic forces, moral precepts, bodily health, or historical memory. (2006:149)

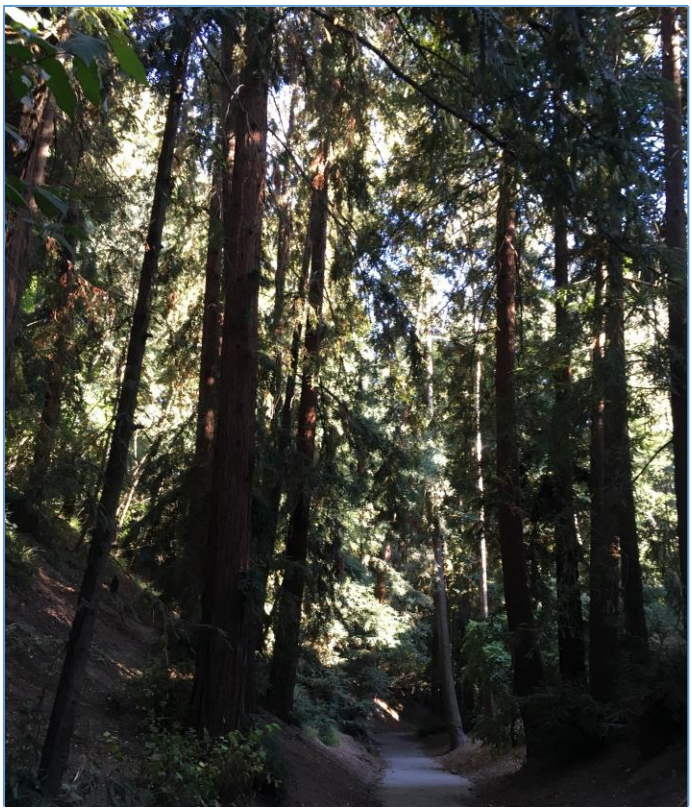
Farquhar states that food is an essential material for the reproduction of social life. Imbued with sensorial qualities, color, taste, texture, scent, and further connected to ideologies of healthiness, nostalgia and sacredness, food allows use to quite literally embody those qualities as it is consumed. Food here can link the physical body to several interconnected ideologies related to consumption; in this context these ideologies are located in local food traditions, cultural food traditions, philosophies related to wellness and eating, and religious dietary restrictions and regulations. The necessity of eating is a small component in the many ways food is envisioned as a tool in maintaining bodily purity, signaling to ones identity in religious and social settings, and integrating sensibilities informed by broad social and cultural worlds. The way food is consumed and it's symbolic properties and effects shift across gendered contexts; women often carry the burden of modeling particular practices of regulation and restraint in regards to food in order to serve as "cultural models of civility" (Feeley-Harnik 1995:577). While women are so often associated with the preparations and serving of food (Caplan, DeVault 1992), the particular ways they make decisions around the foods they serve and eat will be considered, as well as Mormon men's relationship to feeding their families. This chapter will focus on how food is embodied in a Mormon context; it's properties and power, and negotiations around consumption and commensality.

In addition to food and substances, particular sexual behaviors are viewed as being categorically sinful, and are seen as defiling the inner purity of the body. It is worth noting that the ideological framing of food and sex are often closely linked, additionally,

> They are physically linked in the limbic system of the brain, which controls emotional activity generally. It is not surprising that we not only link them but do so emotionally. Good food = good sex. It is this sensuality of eating that spurs the puritan and ascetic rejection of food pleasures. But the link makes sense. To reproduce effectively, a female needs not only insemination but also provisioning. (Fox 2014:11)

As these qualities of food and sex overlap, so too do the powerful taboos assigned to what can and cannot be eaten, and with whom we may or may not have sex (Fox 2014:1), and, particularly in a Mormon context, how certain consumption practices around sex, such as viewing pornography, sexually suggestive media, or fantasizing about sexual scenarios, are a means of contaminating the body. 'Contamination' can be understood as a failure to maintain physical and social distance from elements perceived as dirty, filthy, or connected to a deplorable class (Strallybrass & White 1986). As certain sexual behaviors and materials are often linked with transgression, cleanliness is a matter of distance and aversion, in a very material sense (Strallybrass & White 1986). According to Douglas the body is vulnerable in distinctive ways, and faces dangers specific to "failure to control the quality of what it absorbs through the orifices, fear of poisoning, protection of boundaries, aversion to bodily waste products and medial theory that enjoins frequent purging." (1970:xxxvii). For this reason we protect and filter what enters the body (1970:123). Sexual activity makes the body vulnerable to contamination in particular circumstances, and sexual purity was similarly medicated through abstinence, regulation and ritual.

Girls Camp



In July I drove toward Lake Tahoe in northern California to spend 2 nights at Mormon 'Girls Camp', the weeklong summer camp that young women in the ward attend with others from the entire stake. Tracy invited me to share a tent with her, and she explained that camp would be a fun experience – a chance to see the girls "let loose" with their LDS peers, and to get a sense of what some of the initiatory experiences of Mormon girlhood entail. I came prepared for the main events, a talent show, a 'Women of the Old Testament' presentation, a camp-wide obstacle course race, and the final night's bonfire, in which girl's would bear their testimonies by the light of the flames. These planned activities were the subject of anticipation and excitement among the participants. Once I'd arrived at Camp Liahona I followed a series of handmade wooden signs along a pine-covered dirt road toward the main cabins, once out of my car I could hear the din of voices echoing through the trees along with the faint beat of pop music being played over a speaker. The very first night after my arrival I found myself sitting up late having a planning session that dissolved into playing "Mafia", a camp game in which we were assigned roles and the aim was to determine who was cast as assassins before being eliminated. As midnight gave way to the early morning hours we debated which series was

superior between *Harry Potter, Twilight, Divergent* and *The Hunger Games* (my personal choice), and the girls shared stories about their friendships, crushes, and families. The summer camp attendees were grouped by age in basic plywood cabins on a church-owned plot of land beside Rucker Lake. I was among the 16-17 year olds most days, since Regan, Willow and a few others familiar to me were in this cluster. The girls, giddy with the excitement that comes with being away from home together, were sleeping just a few hours each night and jumping out of their sleeping bags each day to have impromptu "dance-parties", blasting Taylor Swift's *Shake It Off* while loading their breakfast plates.

The camp schedule was structured around our communal meals, with food preparations, dining and tidying drawing campers and volunteers together throughout the day and evenings. Further, hoarding snacks and treats ensured there would be fuel to keep the late night sessions going, and gave some informal structure to socializing after "lights out". Each day began with a breakfast, prepared in the camp kitchen by some of the volunteers, including the male chaperones, wearing aprons and flipping pancakes shoulder- to-shoulder at the industrial-sized grill. I was surprised to see Dean, the Stake President, jovially scooping scrambled eggs. Regan, a high school senior from the First Ward, explained to me that they are required to have a number of priesthood holders and that they "keep themselves busy to avoid our teen girl mayhem". The guidelines for Girls Camp does note that, "an adequate number of adult priesthood leaders should be at camp at all times to assist with security, participate in camp activities, and give blessings when appropriate" ("Girls Camp Policies" LDS.org). It was charming to see a local church authority so wholly embracing his volunteer kitchen duties, out of his suit and tie, serving pajama- clad teem and tween girls. Aside from breakfast I rarely crossed paths with the men, who assisted on hikes, and generally occupied themselves with repairs and maintenance when not on kitchen-duty - Dean and others certainly did not sprawl around the central hub of sheltered picnic tables at the center of camp where most everyone else could be found. Camp was very much a space governed by Young Women's Leaders, and unofficially directed by the girls with big personalities.

The afternoons, for the girls who lingered at base, involved passing around giant bags of potato chips, buckets of red-vines, and various other candies while joking, talking and halfheartedly doing craft projects at the central tables. Each evening hot coco was served with marshmallows, sometimes with popcorn and an accompanying film, and we attempted to get

cozy on the wooden benches. At night, secret stashes of starburst candies emerged from backpacks once everyone had retreated to the floor of the cabin. I attempted to keep up with the Young Women's schedule to maximize my opportunities to observe as much as possible, snacking along with them. I woke up my first morning on the floor of our chaperone tent with a fairly intense headache; recognizing right away that what I needed to combat my sleep-deprivation and sugar-crash was either a long nap on a good mattress, or a strong cup of coffee. Seated at breakfast with a small circle of 16 and 17-year-olds, I rubbed my temples. Tracy asked if I was okay and I explained sheepishly that I was just experiencing mild caffeine withdrawal. One of the teens piped up, "Oh, do you want a Mountain Dew? There is a bunch of soda in the fridge". Puzzled I said, "is that allowed, I thought you weren't supposed to have caffeine?", basing my assumption on the fact that I knew for certain that Mormons do not drink coffee or black tea (my Irish husband had, on numerous occasions, fretted about what to offer Mormon visitors in our home, since tea and coffee was his go-to as a host). The girls explained that Mormons often consider soda and energy drinks okay for consumption, despite the presence of caffeine – they were up for personal deliberation, unlike the hot drinks I was craving. "That doesn't make sense", I told the girls, "I mean, green tea is definitely better for you than Mountain Dew – or any soda really", and having a cold soda with breakfast did not appeal to me in any way after the previous evening's sugary excess.

The girls considered my point, many agreed with me and had deliberated the logic of Mormon dietary restrictions many times before. Lena, who I had met briefly once before at a local East Bay Mormon event, and was from the adjacent Berkeley ward, spoke up with her thoughtful take on The Word of Wisdom, the section of the *Doctrine and Covenants* (*D&C*, hereafter) which forbids 'hot drinks', and its application. "Its not just about health, but it's also about just remembering in everything we do that we keep our standards, which are not supposed to be easy to maintain. It doesn't all have to make perfect sense because the purpose is to learn to go without certain things that we consider worldly. It's just small, everyday tests that keep us focused". I liked her response and told her as much, groggily making notes in my phone and hoping to continue the conversation and see if the other girls felt similarly about the standards. Standards around food did not have the same moral dimensions as clothing or substances like alcohol; caffeine consumption was not viewed as carrying the inherent risk of those choices, often linked to promiscuity or an outright rejection of the faith. No one had articulated the relevance of the coffee and tea restriction as Lena had. "So rather than being a

logical set of rules for good health, you see the Word of Wisdom as being maybe more of a test or exercise of faith?" I asked Lena. Before we could continue another adjacent chaperoning mom spoke up, "No" she bluntly explained, "it is *logical*, tea and coffee are acidic". Effectively shutting down the discussion. I couldn't help but look over at picked-through candy wrappers and wanted to point out the flaws in her reasoning, but took her comment rather to demonstrate one narrative assigned to how choices are made around religious dietary restrictions. While some members sought clearly defined rationalizations, others, like Lena were more comfortable considering the broader possibilities and allowing some mutability in how they interpreted and adopted particular practices. Further, it was an interesting example of the conflict within Mormonism when looking at rules and boundaries; many individuals needed a firm and unquestionable narrative in which to experience faith, whereby others were more comfortable with some permeability and flexibility.

The Word of Wisdom

Linking consumption choices to opportunities to exercise belief, not just a set of possibly arbitrary rules to live by, gave a purposeful meaning to the ways in which Mormons engage with practices of abstinence. Further these practices had connected them as a community, as the girls offered different stories about ways that following The Word of Wisdom had brought them into humorous or difficult social situations with their non- Mormon friends. The conversation absolutely demonstrated the power of communal consumption practices to transform a social group, food creating the parameters for a group to distinguish as a "we" (Ohnuki-Tierny 1993:130), alongside cloth, it was a material way that behavior was shaped and altered, creating a distinguishable and collective Mormon experience. Regardless of the specific motives applied to how individual Mormons follow the Word of Wisdom, found in Section 89 of the *D&C*, it shapes the relationship between faithful LDS and their dietary habits. The Word of Wisdom (1833) advises against the use of "wine, strong drinks, tobacco, and hot drinks", interpreted by the LDS church to include all alcoholic drinks, coffee, caffeinated tea, and extends to the use of recreational drugs, linking these things with healthiness, which is explained on LDS.org thusly;

> When people purposefully take anything harmful into their bodies, they are not living in harmony with the Word of Wisdom. Illegal drugs can especially destroy those who use them. The abuse of prescription drugs is also destructive spiritually and physically"

(https://www.lds.org/topics/word-of-wisdom).

Historically the use of wine was sanctioned in *The Book of Mormon*, and early Mormons did consume alcohol, but revelations came later to Joseph Smith that wine should not be purchased from outsiders, but rather made within the community (D&C; 27, 3-4). In 1833, however, Smith received the aforementioned "Word of Wisdom", and this revelation was broadly interpreted to mean that church members should not consume alcohol, though some Mormons still would imbibe small amounts (Fuller 1995:506). In 1951 at a session of General Conference it was pronounced that the true intent of the Word of Wisdom was to promote total abstinence (Fuller 1995:506-507). Fuller argues that in the United States where an abundance of different religious groups coexist, faith communities are "keenly concerned with forming and preserving distinct identities" (1995:497), deliberations and practices around food allow such groups to distinguish and align themselves. To further contextualize Smith revelations, Fuller points out that a number of 19th century American churches came to object to the consumption of alcohol, including Baptists, Methodists and Disciples of Christ. Abstaining from alcoholic drinks was seen as a protection against "apostate culture, undesirable behaviors and particularly distinguished congregants from unruly immigrants"; abstinence from drink was associated with "disciplined moral living" (Fuller 1995:500-501).

Following the Word of Wisdom is one of the standards for obtaining a temple recommend; it is framed as not only as a prescription for good health (Section 89 includes a recommendation that followers consume seasonal produce and grains), but also as a protection against the harmful effects of addiction and substances that can damage the body. Alcohol and drugs are very clearly categorized as immoral, taboo and unclean within Mormonism; their consumption is equated to weakness and sin. Mormons are encouraged to think about the protective measures that distinguish them, and by extension, the body, from the secular world, as well as the ways they can maintain the body as a worthy and sacred vessel by avoiding pollution. While alcohol and coffee were designated as unequivocally forbidden, other ways of consuming were categorically more flexible depending on the circumstances and ways in which they were consumed. One evening I listened to a group of women debate over whether a vodka piecrust was acceptable or not, as the alcohol cooked off during the baking process, and another member told me they were unsure if coffee ice cream 'counted'. Consequently many substances are inextricably tied to moral failure. At Girls Camp I found these discourses around consumption particularly significant and charged. Like most

Latter Day Saints, girls who identified as faithful were trying to honor both the Word of Wisdom, Smith's broader intentions, and knowledge they had accrued in regards to the effects of caffeine, alcohol and other substances. Young Women were often deliberating these choices, however, alongside a myriad of other concerns born out of both ways they had learned to think about their agency, bodies and consumption choices in their church communities and other social contexts. Most had been committing to their standards and working to keep their bodies "clean" for as long as they had been feeding themselves, and these teachings were assimilated with ideas about their bodies as they transitioned into independence and womanhood.

Food, Body Size and Health

Social and religious factors were ever-present in deliberations around food, diet, healthfulness and purity; food ideologies based in multiple cultural contexts were so entangled, and contradictions built into these ideologies commonplace. Specific to the LDS beyond distinguishing food as acceptable or unacceptable for maintaining bodily purity were also conversations about the ways food consumption, diet, and healthfulness related to the social lives of Mormons. Deliberations around how to consume in ways that honored the Word of Wisdom were linked with conceptions of 'healthful' eating, and in particular, how healthfulness is made tangible through the presentation of the body.

> The human body is the nature at the end of the food production chain (as the nature of soil and sun us at the beginning of the chain). Ideas about how consumers relate to their own bodily natures are just as important as how they conceive the nature around them. (DuPuis 2002:118)

Women, in particular, vocalized a hyper-awareness around how body-size was read in a Mormon context. One week a visiting teacher took over the 'Gospel Principals' lesson to discuss joining the LDS Alcoholics Anonymous program. The church ran it's own version of AA that covered all forms of substance abuse, with an emphasis on scriptures and support that could be found through a commitment to the church. During his 'pitch' the guest teacher explained that all forms of addiction should be addressed by the faithful, including reliance on drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, and food. He described how his involvement in the program had given his wife the opportunity to see that she was addicted to food, and to address her "issues". He described how she had "used food to fill an emotional need", and through her consumption habits food had been transformed, like drugs and alcohol it became categorically linked with

immorality and unhealthful consumption.

The linking of obesity with moral and spiritual weakness demonstrated through the mutability of D&C's recommendations. Mormon choices around food, when understood as a marker of faithfulness and obedience, moralize consumption in ways that extended beyond negotiating what items were forbidden and what were acceptable. Extending the concept of irresponsible or unhealthy consumption habits to cover the more modern issue of the 'obesity epidemic', a concern in American society with overconsumption and the physical body, created even broader discourses around food, health and moral consumption choices. I noted during the course of my fieldwork that these anxieties around food often bridged Mormon religious concerns with larger cultural discourses around the regulation of the body through diet. At social gatherings women often complained that because Mormons abstain from tea, coffee or alcohol they felt they ended up consuming more sweets at parties and social gatherings, and reverted to drinking hot coco so that they could socialize in cafes. These claims are in fact backed by some research, which indicates that Mormon avoidance of substances such as tea, coffee and alcohol could lead to dietary indulgences (e.g., sugar consumption) that serve as substitutes for proscribed substances, and Mormons tend to have higher rates of obesity among women than other Christians (Mason, Xu & Bartkowski 2013). But this tendency towards sweets and casseroles at parties and hot coco at cafes gave way to frustrations and lamentations that in Mormon environments there is a great deal of pressure to be thin, perpetuated by a "shortage" of prospective husbands, as there is a 3:1 ratio of women to men active in the church (Barrat 2015). Compounded by images of Mormon womanhood circulating on social media and put forth by church publications, women felt undermined by a cultural tradition centered on consuming treats.

Thin bodies are understood in a western context to have a high social value; they are viewed as the product of discernment (Bourdieu 1984, Bordo 2003) managed through dieting, a phenomenon that has "emerged out of a theology of the flesh, developed through a moralistic medicine and finally established itself as a science of the efficient body" (Turner 1984:3). Here the body is understood to be "moldable, envisioned as a blank slate subject to interventions" (Gremellion 2002:383). Mormon women's bodies are additionally then tasked with representing a freedom from 'food addiction', demonstrating through slenderness that women are wholly committed to their covenants; slender bodies are understood to be free from

addiction, and associated with righteous consumption practices, and read as the products of a health-conscious lifestyle. Thin bodies are often understood as evidence that foods with a high social value are being chosen, time is being dedicated to exercising and disciplining the body, and a higher social class ensures there is time and resources dedicated to the maintenance of the body; size becomes a marker of social distinction (Bordieu 1983).

I noted that within the ward many church members were savvy to the various dietary trends and habits that were often considered part of the Bay Areas cultural landscape, including 'clean eating', veganism and 'eating local', concerns that resonated with men and women (and some teenagers). Some of the church members even used social media to share recipes and information about their socially-conscious eating habits. When the ward began yoga classes, lead by a member who was an instructor, many members would discuss health and diets during that time. Practices such as the use of homeopathic remedies and essential oils often came up as well. The properties of food and substances are multidimensional and have the potential to take on an assortment of meanings. Kathryn Twiss' archeological work linking food and identity recommends that when assigning foods social value they should not be treated as "mere nutritional resources", nor are they purely symbolic; rather food is at once emblematic of the aforementioned qualities that link our food choices with moral fortitude, but it is also literally embodied as we consume it and becomes part of us, and it is a necessary tool for sustenance. It isn't possible to separate the various motivations involved in consumption, as consumers engage with nutritional sciences, which informs dietary choices along with religious instruction, "the linking of health and food is as much a cultural product as the multiplicity of food taboos and symbolic meanings assigned to foods" (Twiss 2006:4).

Further opportunities I had to consider how LDS dietary choices were informed arose during potlucks and shared meals in the ward, quite literally at the dining tables of the church members. Dining on roast chicken and season vegetables at the home of Kim and Paul, a professional couple with two young children, we talked about memorable meals we'd encountered on travels abroad. Paul's work had allowed the couple to do quite a bit of globe-trotting, both indicated a good knowledge of international cuisine and in discussing the ubiquity of tea around the globe Kim explained that she had become a daily consumer of green tea, explaining that Section 89 (of the *D&C*) was quite clearly meant to be a prescription for responsible consumption, and that it was "well known in many cultures, with research to back

this" that green tea has a multitude of health benefits. Over a bowl of ice cream at Frank and Tina's I goaded Frank about his well-known dependence on energy drinks, resulting from a demanding job which often kept him up through the night working on code. Frank laughingly insisted that technically he followed the rules, but was definitely taking advantage of "loopholes"; though Frank pointed out that he made sure to exercise regularly to make up for his sugar intake. Recalling the often passing remarks made during the interviews I undertook concerning food, health and diet I noted only two church members described having their own 'struggles' with weight, both of whom participated in weight watchers. Most other members made remarks that assumed we all valued particular consumption choices and exercise practices, most spoke of regular exercise routines, and always served lean and fresh meals when I was in their homes. All of these were markers of a shared sensibility informed by our upper-middle-class Bay Area communities, where access to fresh food, centers and parks for exercise, and ample information and public campaigns aiming to encourage wellness, health and active lifestyles abound; here these factors were being integrated with religious parameters for bodily purity.

The 'Progressive Dinner', an annual event whereby certain members volunteer to host ward members for a meal in their home, concluding with a large gathering for the dessert, provided an ideal context to bring up my observations. I was assigned to dine at Kathryn and MJ's home with 3 other couples and the ward missionaries. At Kathryn's we were each served barbequed salmon and salads on the deck outdoors, overlooking sweeping views of the city and a grove of Eucalyptus trees. Kathryn set the table with colorful dishes painted with bright blue animals and fish. The meal, which was comprised of beautifully presented fresh ingredients, ended with a game Kathryn had come up with, whereby we all placed candy in a bowl in the middle then selected something new to try. As Halloween was coming up she wanted us to share a memory we associated with the candy we placed in the dish. The candy, in contrast with the meal, was all plastic-wrapped cheaply produced chocolate, and all the stories shared involved reference to our formative years.

We laughed at stories that highlighted how much simpler those times were. As we discussed what types of food we associated with indulgence from our childhood I was asked if I had yet to try any classic 'Mormon foods'. Much like the cheap Halloween candy in the pile, recipes associated with Mormon culture tend to be inexpensive and appropriate for feeding

large groups of children, and readily available in places like Utah where access to produce is contingent on time of year; these foods are less commonplace among upper-middle-class Bay Area families, particularly in California where so much produce is available year-round and where healthful consumption practice are very much a marker of discernment and status. Many of these dishes are the types of things women with large families could prepare for gathering – simply made, filling and with ingredients that could be stored in a pantry, associated with industrious, working-class and rural childhoods.

I had indeed tried Mormon food at a potluck hosted in Utah by the Mormon feminists. Dishes like 'funeral potatoes', a creamy cheesy potato casserole, 'jello salad', a dessert that involved mixing gelatin and fruit, and 'Chinese Salad', made with crushed up packaged ramen noodles, were all set out to try. The women who contributed to the meal did so with a sense of irony; the dishes were at once nostalgic reminders of their childhoods and considered a bit gauche to anyone who considered herself nutritionally savvy. Much like my first-ward community many of the Mormon feminists were educated, middle-class and selective consumers, wanting to consume foods that had high value socially and nutritionally. These sodium and sugar-laden dishes, however, represented both the unpretentious and practical lifestyle associated with Mormon culture. As food marks the boundary between the "collective self" and "other" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993), these dishes and the 'in-joke' being made as they were served at once connected attendees at the potluck through evoking nostalgia for a shared past, but also provided an opportunity to place some distance between the values associated with the past and the progressive values that both feminist Mormons and Bay Area Mormons pride themselves in.

> Consumed food, then, embodies the biaxial principals of metonymy and metaphor or contiguity and similarity in practice by social actors. Whether a food represents and individual self, a social group, or a people as a whole, this symbolic process renders food as powerful not only conceptually but also psychologically. (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:130).

Through commensality these ideas are reinforced around how consumption choices demonstrate larger values, largely the role of class in discernment around diet.

Funeral Potatoes

12 large potatoes or 1 (32 oz.) bag frozen shredded hash browns
2 (10¾ oz.) cans cream of chicken soup
2 cups sour cream
1 cup grated cheddar cheese
1/2 cup butter, melted
1/3 cup chopped onion
2 cups crushed corn flakes
2 tablespoons butter, melted

Recipe for Funeral Potatoes in The Essential Mormon Cookbook by Julia Badger Jensen

In 2014 The Ensign, the most widely circulated church publication contributed to by many of the top church leaders, published the article 'Nourishing Our Bodies and Our Spirits'. The tagline read "Our attitudes and actions related to food affect both our physical and our spiritual well-being". This article demonstrated a fairly timely new approach to emphasizing LDS teachings as a prescription against obesity, formally connecting church teachings and dietary regulation. The author outlined some suggestions for moving away from "unhealthy" social practices around food, suggesting that visiting teachers, young women's leaders and missionaries should offer healthy foods when serving others and proposed exercise and walks as an appropriate activity or way to spend a visit. This pointed to a new way of understanding LDS consumption practices among a myriad of ways Mormons were distinguishing their bodies through the regulation of diet.

Sexual Purity: Marriage, abstinence and aversion

Discourses around abstinence from particular foods and substances, which equated these consumption practices with "bad habits" and sinfulness, and the suggestion that refining

and controlling the body with exercise and physical activity as a means of achieving purity through the regulation of the body, strongly overlapped with Mormon teachings in relation to sexual purity. These negotiations with material "contaminants" and the internal body applied to the varied ways that First Ward members thoughtfully contended with the church's teachings on sexuality and sexual purity. Sexual purity, in LDS teachings, is perhaps one of the most important covenants to keep as a member of the church. The church teaches "The prophet Alma taught that sexual sins are more serious than other sins except murder or denying the Holy Ghost" ("The Strength of Youth", LDS.org). To contextualize this, Mormon theology imparts that the creation of families, which relies heavily on the types of sexual relationships individuals enter into, is key to creating order in the Mormon afterlife (Sumerau & Cragun 2015). LDS leaders press for sexual restraint, directing their attention to the youth of the church (Sumerau & Cragun 2015:171), and often most pointedly at young women.

In teaching LDS youth about sexual purity the church has been known to utilize provocative object-lessons in order to create strong visual metaphors for contamination. In 2013 Elizabeth Smart, a young LDS woman from Provo, Utah, who was kidnapped and escaped her captors at the age of 17, began a press tour in which she advocated for the church to reframe it's teachings on chastity. Smart recalled that in her own ward, young women were shown a stick of gum, which was then chewed and the wad that remained was offered to the room of teenagers, who, of course, recoiled. The teacher then likened a young woman to that stick of gum, explaining that once a piece of gum has been chewed, "no one wants it" – it no longer has worth and should be thrown away (Hess 2013). During Smart's press tour, many women in the ward shared her message on social media imploring the church to stop these sorts of lessons. Women, in particular, recalled their own lessons as teenagers, involving nails being hammered into a board and then pulled out, or a cupcake with all the frosting licked off, as a visual metaphor for sexual contact ruining someone and making them less whole or desirable. Many explicitly hoped that chastity could be reframed in a way that was sex-positive, a view they had come to in adulthood, particularly as they learned about sex and sexuality outside of Mormon contexts.

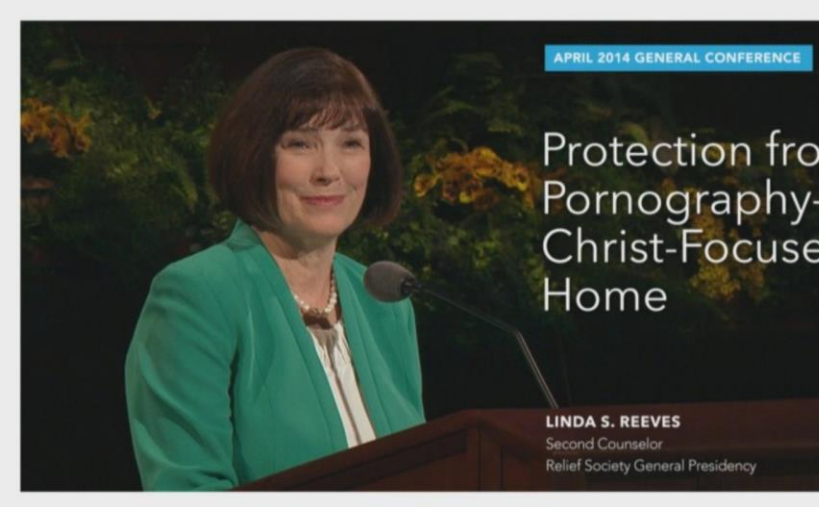
Lindy explained that the First Ward was "already ahead of the curve", in relation to finding better ways to think about chastity. She credited the more "open culture" in the Bay Area, where members were sensitive to how shame and judgment around sexual behaviors

appeared in a broad local context where the sexual revolution and alternative family structures had provided opportunities for a more evolved way of approaching the subject. Further, these shame-based lessons immediately contradicted discourses informed by a more progressive culture, where sexuality was a thing to be celebrated, and risked making chastity (in terms of both abstinence and faithfulness in marriage) seem like a punishment. Lindy explained that as a Young Women's Leader in the First Ward during the 1990s, she had chosen to wholly reject the harmful object lessons recommended in handbooks and created her own metaphor for sexuality, one which she said felt more honest and relevant. Lindy would produce a box of matches and tell the young women that their sexuality was like an unlit match. She would explain that sex was powerful, like a fire. In the right setting it would give light and warmth, but in the wrong setting a lit match would becomes dangerous. The metaphor, she felt, was a good way to open a conversation where sexual relationships inside marriage would not be stigmatized by negative or violent imagery, but also, particularly in the wake of the aids crisis, she was able to stress that sex could be dangerous and harmful outside of marriage, and the religious emphasis on chastity was an important covenant to keep.

Lindy's teaching deliberately deemphasized the focus on purity and contamination, and pointed to certain ways members of the First Ward wished to rethink the implications around standards relating to sexual practice. In the ward I heard members openly state that they believed masturbation to be okay, despite the church teaching that masturbation was categorically impure. LDS leaders maintain that sexual morality is inherent within Mormons, contamination involves a failure to regulate boundaries which keep out "the influence of sexually immoral social elements" (Sumerau, J. E., & Cragun 2015:173). This concerned guarding oneself against temptation, pornography, or other external forces that might defile. The match metaphor, however, suggests that sexuality and sexual impulses are inherent, regulating them, or managing internal desires, creates a context whereby individuals have agency over their desire to remain pure (Sumerau, J. E., & Cragun 2015:173).

In this reframing of purity as a regulation of an inherent desire, Lindy further hoped to create a context in which young men and young women were equally culpable and capable of taking responsibility for their chastity. For Mormon teenaged girls, as pointed out by Elizabeth Smart, the emphasis on defilement affecting vulnerable openings and the internal space of the body, often translates to a cultural notion that young women are the objects of desecration,

and that they must be tasked with guarding their purity and simultaneously protecting young men from being tempted to defile them. This can manifest as a stronger emphasis on modest dressing. For Mormon teenage girls, modesty consciousness is often enforced more stringently, suggesting young women's worth is more tightly bound with their chastity (Harrison 2015). While young women regularly are told to be modest, young men are often reminded not to masturbate and to avoid pornography. This made it all the more meaningful to members in the First Ward, particularly those interested in conversations about parity in regards to how young men and young women were taught to see themselves and their agency, to look for ways to make lessons on chastity and purity more progressive.



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints typically includes talks on The Law of Chastity, which includes avoidance of pornography, in their biannual conference.

Rituals: fasting and sacrament

Total abstinence, and the sacredness of marital relations, suggests strong and potentially contradictory modes of categorizing how one attains internal purity. Practices of fasting and taking sacrament both purified the body and unified the community in the Latter Day Saints church. These particular rituals were intended to most explicitly mediate the body's relationship to sacredness, transcendence and the divine. These events, often connected by practices of monthly fasting before taking sacrament, became a ritualized shorthand in which so many of the above ideologies are manifested: food contradictions, the juxtaposition of sacred and 'ordinary', the texts provided by conspicuous consumption on the bodies and purity of others (who takes, who can take). Further fasting, a distinct period in which members abstained from all food and drink except water, was viewed as a way of preparing the body, providing clarity, opening the self to more spiritual potency through the practice of regulation. Further fasting is often viewed as purifying, "Prepare yourselves, … yea, purify your hearts … that I may make you clean" (D&C 88:74). Fasting and prayer, or fasting before a temple visit, was commonplace when people sought important spiritual help or guidance.

Each Sunday sliced white bread was cut into portions and blessed, alongside tiny plastic cups of water, by the young men in the ward who had been initiated into the priesthood; a initiation into their roles as spiritual leaders and providers, blessing and passing the sacrament is one of the first responsibilities given to boys. The sacrament would then be passed through the pews, while members waited silently, perhaps prayerfully, to take the offerings. More often, of course, a din of restless children provided the ambient background. Sacrament in the LDS church is a medium that is at once sacred and ordinary. The bread is the familiar variety found in most grocery store aisles, and water, of course, is the most ubiquitous drink there is. Yet as these ordinary things are served and eaten they are understood as a transformative medium, providing a distinct group identity to emerge as they are collectively consumed in the reverent quiet of the chapel. I was encouraged to partake, and often considered this gesture one way that converts were encouraged to engage with Mormon rituals, it felt participatory and inclusive to hold the trays that were passed while the person beside me took their portion. Brittany and her husband Jonathan sat beside me during sacrament the only time I was ever discouraged from partaking.

Jonathan's brother was visiting for the week and was introduced to me, my place in the ward was explained to him, and he said he'd love to hear more about my research after church. When the service ended, rather than enquire about my time in the ward, he turned to me and said, "I noticed you took the sacrament". He went on to explain to me that he didn't feel it was appropriate to take the sacrament if I was not a Mormon, explaining that it was meant to be a renewal of one's covenant to God. I was taken aback and embarrassed by the exchange, though Heather, who had overheard took me aside after to clarify that while the sacrament was a renewal of baptismal vows that children were encouraged to take it and visitors were welcome to as well, and that it was not appropriate for him to tell me whether or not I had permission – only those who are unworthy must decide personally not to partake, and excommunicated members are told they may no longer take the sacrament. I went on to read up on the sacrament and found recommendations and guidelines that supported both these views. The church does insist that it should be taken as a renewal of baptismal vows, but can also be given to children "in preparation" for theirs and that visitors should never be prevented from partaking. Much like other issues around consumption and diet, this left quite a lot of room for personal negotiation. This particular moment, however, was a somewhat stark reminder of my awkward place in spiritual settings, and the problem of participation in sacred rituals that held vastly different meanings for me as a non-believer. These material elements, the ways a body could signal belonging, appeared accessible and evident, yet the subtle negotiations over bodies, both in maintaining the individual body and creating a community whose values could be manifested, connective and regulated, provided so many opportunities for drawing individuals to the center of their faith as they engaged and embodied Mormonism, and push others to margins of varied potency as they contested with seemingly fluid boundaries, and their own autonomy.

Monthly the first Sunday was a time to fast prior to taking the sacrament. The act of fasting was much less conspicuous than actually partaking the sacrament, and often seen as an individualized and powerful way to prepare the self for engagement with Heavenly Father. Following this, members would be invited to bear their testimonies during the Sacrament Meeting. Relating to Miller's depth ontology, fasting was often understood to be cleansing, as the internal body would be most pure and free from anything foreign that would be ingested. Feeley-Harnik argues that fasting and eating "are necessary to elucidating such multiple contradictions in American life"; "fasting so intensely expresses both power and

powerlessness" (1995:575). And indeed fasting was understood to both make the body vulnerable, pliable, open – even weak and humbled, as well as required a diligence, control and strength of conviction. The sacrament then, as it is ingested, becomes the only sustenance to cross over the threshold of the mouth and enter the sacred interior of the body. This was often viewed as creating conditions by which the sacrament would be more powerful. As discernment and abstinence in diet played a crucial role in purifying and maintaining the health of the body, and commensality can stabilize, inform and give meaning to foods in larger spiritual cultural contexts.

Conclusions

In a multi-religious context setting oneself apart via consumption matters, and the act of rejecting particular foods and substances, as well as sexual behaviors and sexually suggestive media, had the potential to draw Mormon communities closer and strengthen individual's sense of religiosity; conversely they could also create feelings of distance. When considering Mormon "standards", where attention to details by Church authorities prevails in teachings that very explicitly call for abstinence, chastity, and the regulation of the body, it can appear as though there is little room for interpretation and agency. Though embodied experiences my participants often made choices that reflected their own relationship to the mediation between physical and transformative; negotiating religious teachings, demonstrating their unity, and strengthening their convictions through material engagements. Conversely as these materials give them opportunities to resist and question church policies, teachings, and cultural practices, the specifics of how resistance is manifested on the body will be explored more through in Chapter 6. Here I have established that bodies are essentially connected to the soul within Mormonism, and therefor their regulation is concerned with not only practices of signaling obedience and distinction, but also bodies must be prepared for eternity through efforts to maintain them as pure, particularly so that they may enter the temple and be sanctified. Materials and environments work on both the internal and external dimensions of the body, and bodies are continually imagined as bound in degrees of sacredness. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the external dimensions of the body as the protective exterior that directly engages with the material world in the day-to-day.

In this chapter, the various mechanisms that assign value to our food overlap and

entangle. The intimate ways in which the body acts with food provides numerous opportunities to consider how we take on the qualities of the foods that we eat. In this sense Mormon dietary restrictions are malleable, choices are made based on cultural ideas around health, faith, taboo and economics/environment; yet consumption habits overall contributed to the practice of setting the body apart and purifying it through forms of abstinence and discernment. As communal consumption transforms a social group there are innumerous situations which manifest distinctions both around a shared Mormon identity and which serve to communicate distinction inside of Mormonism. In the First Ward dynamic tensions exist between Mormon teachings, church recommendations and localized and mainstream shifts in the perception of particular materials, largely influenced by certain California sensibilities. For example, religious imperatives to avoid green tea directly conflicted with evidenced health prescriptions in favor of green tea, leaving some ward members to break from the typical Mormon practice of avoiding caffeinated teas. These examples point to ways that symbolic categories shift across contexts. When individuals negotiate within these perimeters how they adhere to authority they connect or distance themselves from ideologies, cultural movements and religious experiences that are mediated through particular types of consumption.

In the First Ward, choices consumption and the body overlapped with negotiations around how to interpret the "Law of Chastity" in a way that accounted for progressive and positive framings of human sexuality. Making choices about the body again became a process of reconciling the Mormon self with the Bay Area, with a myriad of other perspectives shaped by social, cultural and professional investments. The parameters, stated with as much clarity as is possible by church leaders, are often contested on an individual level as faithful Mormons search for logical connections between the linking of "the standards" and "health", and the rigidity to which they follow the advice of church authorities interpreting the somewhat vague language found in D&C, viewing the Word of Wisdom as a directive towards protecting the body from contaminates.

Chapter Four

Fashioning Mormon Selves: bodies, clothing and surface concerns

The Corporeality of God

In the small classroom where we gathered for Gospel Principals, a one-hour class designed to introduce new and potential converts to the core Mormon beliefs and doctrine held as a part of weekly church activities, we sit shoulder-to-shoulder on folding chairs, aware of how much space we occupy in the tiny cinderblock-walled room. Our small group in close proximity is quiet, chairs creak, sniffles and coughs reverberate, and cologne wafts in the air around us. Shay is seated at the front, flanked by a chalkboard and a folding table, reviewing his Gospel Principals Handbook and smiling at each person to enter the room. I had not been in the class very long myself but could tell Shay made a point to learn every name and check-in with each new attendee. He never read from notes, preferring to alternate between passages from the handbook, open-ended questions to the mostly-quiet room, and offering his own, sometimes emotional, testimonies. On this particularly cold November morning the class was slightly more busy than usual, sitting among us was Nancy, the wife of the Stake President, who greeted me when I arrived. Nancy is a retired preschool teacher who has a warm and companionable presence, likely she was in the class likely to connect with some of the newer converts.

Shay opened his lesson on The Holy Ghost by explaining the Godhead to us; though the Mormon conception is distinctive in that Christ and God are identified as having flesh- and-blood bodies. I had heard many iterations of men being created 'in His image', but had not, until that point, considered that Mormons picture God as a human; I said as much. Imagining the divine as both concrete and embodied, Nancy shared her thought on the significance of the physicality of bodies, stating, "We don't pray to a concept or an idea, we pray to Heavenly

Father, a man with a face and a body. One day we'll see him. This has always been important to me, knowing that Heavenly Father is not just a being without a specific form, but He is someone I can picture very clearly when I pray". The idea that God was not a manifestation of divinity, but rather had a familiar form, suggested that while interior of the body, containing the soul, was imbued with spiritual significance, the external body, to Mormons, is sacred, and not a mere wrapping but a consecrated vessel.

Chiming in, Shay detailed how in the atonement we would be reunited with our bodies, made "like Him". He thumbed through his scriptures, one large text bound in a black leather cover containing the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price and Doctrine and Covenants. He found the passage he was seeking and read,

> The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. (Alma 40:23)

Every aspect of our physical being; hair color, sex, expressions and abilities, would be with us for eternity, in their *perfect* adult form, he explained, and each facet of the body was gifted to us by God so that we would have particular talents, gifts and abilities. He added that indeed when we meet Heavenly Father we would see that he was familiar, and we would recognize our families in the spirit world. "One day", he said, "I will see my wife and my sons again, and I will get to see them just how I remembered them – that is the gift of these bodies". This particular discourse around the body was a frequently evoked in church as it was continually emphasized that the body should not be neglected as a site of spiritual significance. Because bodies are understood to be eternal forms, which would indeed move between heaven and earth, attention to the physical body was an integral part of religious life. The integration of material forms had spiritual, moral and subjective dimensions as these forms were essential in order to present the body as a religiously-bound object.

This chapter will describe how Mormons conceptualize and maintain the social body, that is, the bodies that will be familiar in the resurrection. That external surface of the body and the cloth, adornments and other materials that mediate, fashion and produce Mormon selves both constitute LDS identities *and* protect the internal body from violation. Bay Area Latter Day Saints contend with these ways of fashioning Mormon bodies, while moving

through varied local contexts in which they must negotiate how they experience faith through embodiment. While in Western Christianity, spirituality is considered an internalized experience concerning the intangible soul of a person; emphasis is placed on 'interior life as distinct from the outer, bodily, and communal life' (Thomas 2000:41) – though in the context of the Latter Day Saints the dichotomy between surface and interior is more nuanced. Because Latter Day Saints envision the body as having an eternal relationship with the self, beyond protecting the interior of the body, expressed, self- conscious and intentional ways of embodying faith are a central part of being Mormon rather than a background concern. As far as Mormon belief is concerned, bodies are both sacred and eternal because they will carry the spirit into heaven once they are resurrected in their most complete and wholesome iteration. Their physical-ness is an important component beyond containing the spirit, as bodies will continue to function, reproduce, move and engage in eternity. Bodies are linked inalienably with the soul, meaning that faith is expressed as having interior and externalized dimensions. Mormons believe that men's bodies were designed to resemble Heavenly Father, and were given so that men might later become gods after their time on earth; women's bodies are complimentary and will similarly be exalted in the Celestial Kingdom. Far from being an external wrapping of an essentialized entity, bodies are viewed as an expression of truth, they are imparted by God and reveal a great deal about our nature and intended roles both on earth and in the Kingdom of Heaven. "Because we are made in His image (see Moses 2:26; 6:9), we know that our bodies are like His body. His eternal spirit is housed in a tangible body of flesh and bones (see D&C 130:22)" (*Gospel Principals*, 7).

Just as physical space is bounded in such a way that it is designated as sacred, or designed in such a way to support and enable religious life, so too are bodies. The materials that allow Mormons to embody their religious identity are used as boundary-markers, which distinguish the person, setting apart the religiously-marked self. Across contexts these boundary markers are flexible, yet materialized. Boundaries manifested on the body are constitutive of identity; in this context boundaries are at once intimate and collaborative, tangible yet dynamic. These materials are often imbued with significance beyond their ability to align the body with Mormon values; they are simultaneously tasked with stabilizing gender-identity, manifesting social values, such as modesty, and performing work. Circularly these embodied expressions of identity have religious and moral implications. In the context of the Bay Area, church members must contend with how to embody faith through materials that

mediate their social positioning across varied contexts. In doing so they explore notions of culture, faith, gender roles, especially as they engage with the politics of dress.

The Body As a Transcendent Material Entity: Mormon beliefs / the anthropology of the body

While it was imparted often in church lessons that bodies were divine, eternal and god-like, they were also viewed as imperfect in their current iteration, awaiting exaltation when they would be wholly "restored" and made into perfect celestial bodies. Former prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith, described that all deformities and ailments would be relieved from the body, elaborating that,

> There is no reason for any person to be concerned as to the appearance of individuals in the resurrection. Death is a purifying process as far as the body is concerned. We have reason to believe that the appearance of old age will disappear and the body will be restored with the full vigor of manhood and womanhood. Children will arise as children, for there is no growth in the grave. Children will continue to grow until they reach the full stature of their spirits. (1957–66, 4:185).

Initially, the vision of 'restored' bodies struck me as quite a fantastical hope for the afterlife, hearing testimonies of shedding "imperfections" as a means of revealing true versions of the self brought to mind make-overs on daytime television shows. However, a family from the church whose little girl was diagnosed with a degenerative disability hoped that she would be walking and speaking with them in eternity, their faith directed me to explore the hope and nuance in the belief of the restored body, and the implications beyond being good- looking for eternity. Many individuals expressed anticipation that they would be healthy and free in the hereafter, unencumbered by mortal concerns ranging from chronic pain to persistent acne. Some even speculated that mental illness could be relieved, as celestial bodies would not be stricken with "chemical imbalances"; imagining an embodied afterlife where the physical body provided comfort and potential. Certain attributes of the body were fixed in this vision; general appearance was considered an eternal feature, which is why Shay could imagine that his wife and sons would be totally familiar to him. This understanding of the body as simultaneously divine and eternal, yet awaiting the cleansing experience of death and resurrection to stand in it's most "true" form, resulted in discourses that varied in terms of honoring the body as sacred and attending to it's presentation as a tool of divinity and "gift", but also rejecting "superficial"

concerns. All of this came with the understanding that ultimately the soul was not only housed within the body, but also would mediate and determine the final appearance of the resurrected form, as those destined for lesser kingdoms would not receive this perfecting reconfiguration.

This holistic and fluid understanding of the body can be viewed as having parallels with developing approaches to embodiment within the anthropology of the body; the notion that bodies are multidimensional, understood as being both an expression of social "truths", and an instrument with individual and internal components. Anthropological conceptions of embodiment have developed out of evolving and integrative approaches to our bodies as inhabited, subjective and socially informed. Mauss's "Techniques of the Body" (1935) argued that even the most subtle ways our bodies move and carry out functions are culturally mediated, and enhanced by sociological dimensions. Mauss describes the body as a tool, "the first and most natural instrument" (1935:75), which is utilized in ways that are learned rather than inherent. Bourdieu elaborated on the concept of habitus, noting that the socially informed body therefore expressed a multitude, the body could be read as a product of cultural capital, reproducing the social order (1987). Seeing bodies as at once informed by and informing the social worlds they inhabit, subject to experiencing the world as an embodied individual rather than drawing sharp distinctions between inner experience and the external world, the body is at once subject and object. Lock describes this as the phenomenon of people "both having and being bodies" (Lock 1993:136).

Mary Douglas argued that as a natural symbol the body should be read; bodies are expressive of the larger social systems that produce and fashion them (1977). Demonstrating that the natural body is tasked with making dominant value systems appear inherent, Douglas explores the relationship between regulation of bodies, highly-structured environments and cultures of control. Douglas argues that in reading the body as a natural symbol one can read the ways in which the body is modified by sociality.

> The care that is given to it, in grooming, feeding and therapy, the theories about what it needs in the way of sleep and exercise, about the stages it should go through, the pains it can stand, its span of life, all the cultural categories in which it is perceived, must correlate closely with the categories in which society is seen in so far as these also draw upon the same culturally processed idea of the body. (1970:72)

She elaborates that the body is "clothed in its local history and culture" (1970:76). Shifting from techniques, she observes that in attention given to the body's surface a system of boundaries is manifested which directly correlates "relevant patterns of hierarchy" (1970:78). Douglas reads the body therefor as a microcosm of society, and is interested in tensions between the physical body and the social body, that is the body as it is experienced physically and the imposition of social controls which condition it. Scheper-Hughes & Lock (1987) refine Douglas' categories, proposing that bodies rather have three formations from which to build an understanding of embodiment. These are the individual body, concerned with lived experiences, the social body, a natural symbol and tool that mediates social relationships, and finally the body politic, concerned with regulation, surveillance and control, a potential tool of resistance. While these categories are not seen as complete or final in terms of developing an approach to embodiment, they are concerned with broadening anthropological conceptions of the body, which Lock suggests "…is no longer portrayed simply as a template for social organization, nor as a biological black box cut off from "mind," and nature/culture and mind/body dualities are self-consciously interrogated" (1993:136). The integration of attention to sensory experiences and materiality has enhanced our understanding of the body as at once intimate, yet inhabiting specific socio-cultural contexts.

Douglas's attention to the surface of the body as a boundary, and the means by which the body is regulated and attended to as relating to dominant ideologies, provides a framework for thinking about how surface concerns relate to belief systems in which concerns for purity are fundamental. Warnier (2006) asserts that bodies act as containers, with internal, external and interceding openings, providing us with a way of thinking about the body as having symbolic and materialized boundaries; these boundaries, Warnier notes, are not static or impermeable. Flesh and clothing, in this context, are tasked with protecting bodies from contamination, but may also act as an extension of the self (Warnier 2006:186). Turner poses that the skin is the boundary of the social self (1980), and offers a further- developed approach to reading bodies. Turner draws attention to all that pertains to skin and hair, arguing that inscribed onto the body is a multitude of information about how one is culturally situated. From appropriate use of hairstyle, ornamentation, clothing, and cosmetics one is subject to the dominant meanings assigned to the overt and subtle ways in which one is marked, bound, kept and adorned.

Within the Latter Day Saints church guidelines set and imparted by church authorities emphasize that the primary function of clothing and attending to the presentation of the body is to create a distinct Mormon self that is indeed equip with the necessary materials to protect it from contamination while engaged in the world. The ways bodies move and act is always mediated with materials, as "there is hardly any technique of the body that does not incorporate a given materiality" (Warnier 2006:1). The more obvious and self-conscious ways that culture is embodied occurs through engagement with clothing acting as a second skin, mediating the body and providing semiotic properties that can be read, though this is one of many materialities that are intimately acted with. This situated way of understanding the body as not only heightened by materiality, but also symbiotically connected with the materials that constitute the self, underpins my description of making a Mormon self in a Bay Area setting. Integrating these approaches, Mormons embody their faith and the incorporated materials that produce a Mormon social body. Tensions between regulation, subversion, agency and subjectivity provided rich contexts for seeing how Mormons express and experience embodied faith.

Defining Mormon Modest Dress

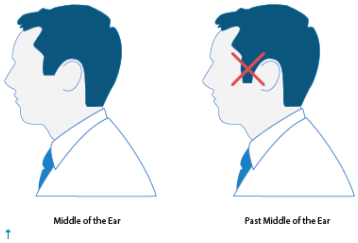
My early encounters with the LDS church involved spending time with the missionaries, primarily inside the visitor's center on Temple Hill, and these visits provided ample opportunities to see Mormon dress in it's most regulated form; with standards coming directly from church-books produced in Mormonism's administrative centers being fastidiously applied. The missionaries, young people comprised from an unexpected variety of nationalities, dressed in uniform styles regulated by 'The Missionary Handbook'. Before I could put names to the rotating faces I encountered there, I took note of the very distinctive dress. The Elders (males initiated into the Priesthood, also the common term for male missionaries) wore simple white-collared shirts, sometimes with short-sleeves on warm days, with black or dark grey slacks and black shoes. They wore solid black ties and black name-badge. I came to learn that 'Sunday Best' for the Elders involves adding a suit jacket to the ensemble. The Sister Missionaries, with whom I spent a great deal more time, wore mid- length skirts or dresses, cap-sleeved blouses, and cardigans. They usually wore flat, close- toed shoes and subtle make-up. Particularly for young men serving a mission, the standard uniform for missionary work is identifiable to anyone familiar with Mormonism. The missionaries' appearance reinforced the

uncanny sense of dislocation I felt when I stepped inside the visitor's center – that is to say the environment felt other-worldly, and the missionaries looked like the images in a church brochure; as though I had crossed over from the landscape of the city into a cleaner, more orderly place inside of a photograph. Always in pairs or groups, and often carrying scripture books or simple black shoulder bags of materials, I eventually developed the ability to spot them from a distance when I encountered them around the city.

The Sister Missionaries in Oakland

The lengthy LDS.org guidelines for missionaries read to me like a school dress code from the 1950s, with attention to any details that could disrupt the homogeneity and conservatism associated with Mormon culture. Elders, for example, are required to wear a tie, but specifically advised against skinny or wide ties. The guidelines further state that colorful socks or footwear are not allowed. Elders are restricted from wearing their hair or sideburns long, or sporting facial hair. There are a few pages online of photographs to scroll through depicting appropriate and inappropriate attire. Women serving missions, referred to as Sister-missionaries, were provided an even more comprehensive guide on style and dress standards. There were dozens of photographs and additional blogs and web pages dedicated to dressing for a mission (and modest Mormon fashion, as well). There were tutorials and examples of hairstyles and make-up choices that flatter "without distracting", for example. The church

guidelines explained that women's hair must be a natural color and cut in a feminine and "classic" style. Women cannot wear pants while on their missions, and generally, do not wear pants to church services even when not serving missions. "Modesty" is brought up more rigorously when applied to women's fashion choices. On the missionary guidelines pages on LDS.org the page for young men contained 2 uses of the word 'modest/modesty' while the page for young women used the phrase 13 times. Young women arguably had considerably more freedom in their dress, but a great deal more to consider, from nail polish to hemlines to the significant difference between leggings and tights in cool weather (leggings are not allowed).



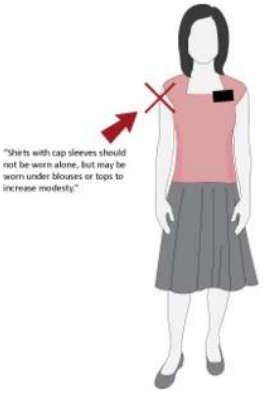
Images from "Dress and Grooming for Elders" on LDS.org

Skirts

Choose skirts with patterns and colors that you can mix and match with a variety of blouses and tops. Skirts should fully cover the entire knee (front and back) when you are standing or sitting. The examples below provide an idea of current styles that are appropriate for various climates and conditions. You may find similar items in stores near you or by shopping online.

View general guidelines

Personal Grooming



Modesty

Maintain a high standard of modesty. Wear clothing that:

- Is neither too tight nor too loose.
- Is not transparent or revealing in any way.
- Does not draw attention to any part of the body.
- Is not casual, wrinkled, sloppy, or faddish.

You should present a dignified, clean, well-groomed appearance and be feminine and professional in style.

Images from "Dress and Grooming for Sisters" on LDS.org

One of the sister-missionaries I became close with, Sister Kiley, told me that following her mission she was relieved to put on jeans again when she returned from her service. Originally from Houston, she had never felt particularly comfortable in her missionary attire and

preferred the more casual and modern styles she associated with her home city – and as a missionary in Oakland felt that she was hyper-aware of her "outsider status", totally disconnected from herself or the type of people she's typically seek out and connect with. "I burned my least favorite skirt from my mission when I got home!", she told me, a common tradition for most sister-missionaries who grow tired of the tedium of painstaking clothing guidelines that often make them feel frumpy and outdated.

The relationship between regulation and choice in 'modest dress' lead to many instances where Sister missionaries in particular found themselves fatigued by the particular standards; at once they desired to embrace religiosity, femininity and tradition, but also wanted to be able to exercise agency over the presentation of their bodies, and to be able to move through the world comfortably. Skirt-burning was an established tradition in which women could both commemorated and punctuated their time in the mission field, but release themselves from the inflexible constraints placed on them during missionary work; the burning was not a rejection of the faith or principals connected to it, but rather a release from the obligation to adhere to such rigorous standards of dress.

Concerning the Surface: clothing and Mormon bodies

Clothing is the most visible and obvious way in which Mormons distinguish their bodies, literally wrapping their bodies in materials that constitute barriers between the self and the environment. Missionary dress explicitly enhanced certain values, such as modesty, gender-roles and American conservative sensibilities. In dealing with clothing one might expect that materiality is deliberately visible, in the case of religious dress surface decoration signals religious adherence, yet it is also true that religious expression relates to a series of negotiations between the body and multiple subjectivities (Tarlo 2008). Clothing is at once intimately connected to the wearer, symbolic, animated, and practical. Cloth transforms the body and identifies a person with particular values. Jane Schneider, in her work on the social value of cloth and clothing, refers to its' "restlessness" as a medium; as the relationship between persons, clothing, and the semiotics assigned to cloth are ever- evolving (2006:203). Moving from the most visible to the most intimate items of clothing worn, from church dress, to choices around how to engage with modesty outside of church, to the decision of whether to wear garments, Mormonism's form of sacred dress which is worn as underclothes, the process

of clothing oneself involves a purposeful integration of aesthetic. Keane observes tensions in how specifically Western Christians relate to their clothing, noting that it has the power to transform as it enables certain practices, such as modesty, aligning coverts, in particular, with their spiritual community, yet there is anxiety around how much the wearer invests in clothing. Keane notes that there is a preoccupation with the notion that clothes "form a material outside that distracts us from a spiritual inside" (2010:1). This dynamic formed the backbone of paradoxical missionary teachings, which assert the necessity of covering the body for modesty, but stresses that too much focus on clothing is a distraction from more important spiritual investments. Clothing choices made by many of the first ward members were informed by balancing religious adherence, interest in fashion, practicality and personal choice; clothing became a medium through which I made particular assumptions in the field, it's cultural, religious and political dimensions were often evident, though the meaningful contestations involved in selecting clothing were not. From tightly-regulated contexts, where missionary dress is supervised by authorities, to personal ways that member's made decisions about their clothes, there were ample opportunities to consider the spiritual properties of cloth and it's capacity "to enhance who we are and deepen our social relationships", as cloth "intensifies sociality" (Schneider 2006:204).

The practice of modest dressing relies very much on the idea of the body as something that can be bordered, with cloth providing that physical barrier between the self and the environment. The surface of the body is adaptable and never discrete; it simultaneously expresses, engages and contains. Warnier emphasizes that the body is inalienable from the senses. Material engagements inform and produce knowledge of the self, there is a distinctive relationship between material culture, the body and identity.

> All such conduits mediate between the material culture of containers, contents, openings and surfaces, on the one hand, and the acting subject, on the other. As a result the concerns of the subject are displaced on to, or extended into, the embodied material culture of containment: health, morality, possession and property rights, safety and security, intrusions, ground belonging, privacy. (Warnier 2006:188).

Human-made, material culture is synthesized as we are incorporated with objects in order to act (Warnier 2006:187), and so in thinking about clothing and other material forms that act with the body, identity is mediated through continuous material engagement. Mormons constitute their religious identities and embody their faith through their engagements with

boundaries on the body. Mormon doctrine views the body as a container for the soul, yet does not envision soul and body as entities that can be disentangled; here they are inalienable, and protecting the body involves protective elements on the surface of the body, regulation of what may pass into the body, and the direct correlation between particular violations of the body and the contamination of the soul. Further, when considering the body a bounded vessel that can be wrapped, regulated, adorned and covered, it's apparent that power and agency are connected to the maintenance of its openings and surfaces (Warnier 2006:193).

Here, cloth is not merely a signaler that can be read as an expression of Mormonism, fashion sensibilities or some other representation of identity, but it's very materiality also matters a great deal for what it physically makes possible. Keane takes into account the linked material and semiotic properties of things as they are situated in context. Here I focus on these "certain sensuous qualities of objects that have a privileged role within a system of value" as they are embodied and moved through specific environments, representative of varied and complicated objectives and intentionalities by the wearer (Norris 2008:182), but also as they are the very substance which modesty is predicated upon. Clothing "makes possible" varied scenarios in which it is simultaneously necessary to interrogate both it's material and practical dimensions along with its semiotic possibilities (Keane 2010:6).

Latter Day Saints Fashion

The dress standards described above, imposed upon missionaries during their time in the field, provided an of example of the administrative church's ideal; the regulation of hemlines, emphasis on gender specificity, and even the sense of a bygone 'Americana' evoked through the circle skirts on women and neat haircuts on the men serving missions seemed to summarize the church's vision for cultural features that would integrate well with spiritually-informed values. The clothing styles I associated with the missionaries were also displayed in church broadcasts and other forms of Mormon media, and had a relationship between the church clothes I encountered in the First Ward, as the LDS wear what they refer to as their 'Sunday Best' for services each week. Sunday Best is defined loosely as suits and ties for men, and modest skirts or dresses for women. In church on Sunday I could see the ways in which individuals engaged with those standards with some leeway in their adoption of them. Regulation of Sunday-Best dress is enforced through indefinite means; it is informally

monitored within church communities, is brought up in the temple recommend interview, but there is enough ambiguity that individuals must exercise their own judgment when deciphering what constitutes appropriate church attire, as well as modest everyday attire. Mormon religious garments are worn as underclothes, so the selection of clothing available to those not in the mission field is limited only to covering the one part of their ensemble that is explicitly Mormon. Despite this flexibility the connections between typical Mormon dress (especially on Sundays) and missionary dress codes were apparent, and the closeness to which those missionary standards as the idealized form of Mormon dress were incorporated into Sunday Best often was indicative of expressing a desire to either show obedience/autonomy in relation to the imposition of standards in church. During a lesson on modesty in Relief Society opinions differed; some felt this was the least important teaching, Kathryn felt the broader implication of modesty should be to defer from dressing in order to flaunt or purposefully display wealth, and it was too narrow to imagine modesty teachings simply meant covering more of the body. Other's felt it was a critical way to prevent "sending the wrong message", and the implication was the more lax dressers in the room were doing just that.

While adhering to the church's standards, many individuals still had room to negotiate the church's recommendations on their attire; in particular, many women in the first ward were also conscious of their desire to integrate their values or challenge assumptions that modesty and particular dress forms, or religiosity and feminine styles were inalienably linked. Women's appearance, much more so than men's, was often viewed as a visual display of religiosity. As I noted before women's dress was at once a much broader category, yet emphasis on modesty by church authorities was directed most emphatically at young women. A woman's appearance could be seen as an indicator to evaluate conformity to socio-religious norms (Arthur 1998). The observance or adaptation of dress codes provides a frame of reference for interpreting the success of informal social regulation, and in the first ward the tensions around conforming often were negotiated and contested with dress. Several of my participants, for example, expressed a desire to avoid looking like 'Utah Mormons', or Mormons whose aesthetics were entirely shaped by their envelopment in Mormon culture, in part because they wanted to feel like their faith was part of a broader system of values that informed their style. I took note of some of the more adventurous, unexpected and stylish dressers in the first ward and often found myself discussing fashion at church. Tracy was a church acquaintance who promptly took me under her wing when I began attending services.

The first Sunday that we were formally introduced, about 3 weeks into my fieldwork, she wore a dusky-rose frock with delicate pearl buttons up the back and a delicate lace collar. Tracy, outgoing, organized, with a perfectionist streak, is a strikingly elegant person – with long, dark-brown hair and the ability to glide along in tall high-heels, her clothes signaled a sophisticated interest in fashion. For Tracy and I, our common ground initiated with conversations about vintage shopping, favorite eras of clothing and design, and the details of her upcoming wedding. That winter she had just become engaged, in her early 40's, a somewhat unusual situation within Mormon culture where early marriage is encouraged. Tracy had been living in San Francisco, perusing a career, and a whirlwind relationship had recently prompted her move to the First Ward. It was clear that I had met Tracy during an extremely eventful period of her life, as she showed off her art-deco-era engagement ring to me, delighted that her fiancé, Jason, had found something so suited to her taste – especially after only a few months of dating.

Tracy was among a number of professional women in the ward working in areas related to fashion and design, and while many women in the ward were sharp dressers, these women were savvy about fashion in ways that expressed more than a passing interest. Tracy worked for a home ware store known for their higher-end furnishings, kitchen tools and appliances, and classic aesthetic. Other women who I informally categorized as having both personal and professional interests in fashion and design included Gabby, a lifestyle blogger and mother of 5 children, who attended church in outfits ranging from a vintage velvet lip-stick red suit, to a striking hound's-tooth printed wool skirt with a bright silk blouse. Gabby's aesthetics tended toward modish; usually wearing classic shapes in saturated colors, she stood out in a crowd. Gabby had lived in New York and Paris with her family before coming to Oakland, and managed to be at once chic and flamboyant. Brittany, a graphic designer, also stood out, wearing her hair in a short and angular style and usually dressing in sleek shift dresses. Standing in the pews after Sacrament service one week with Tracy and Jason, Tracy waved to Brittany and commented on her outfit – she wore a flowing sheer ginger colored skirt, a little bit unusual for her, but paired with a black top and minimalist accessories. "I loved the color", she said, "have you ever shopped at Asos? It's basically like a UK-based Forever 21". Tracy lamented, "I never find things online, I have to try on". Brittany responded that she'd taken to online shops because it was easier to find "church clothes". They agreed that there was a lot more out there now, sleeves and longer hemlines were more trendy, so it

wasn't all just "Shabby Apple stuff". Shabby Apple, it was explained to me, is an online retailer that has a large selection of modest and feminine dresses, and its founder is a Mormon woman. The dresses are bright, flowery and inspired by the hyper-femininity of the 1950's. Both rolled their eyes.

Shabby Apple Dresses, via the Shabby Apple Website, 2014.

The resistance to Utah fashions in the ward extended beyond the professional women with their distinctive styles, cultivating looks that represented their interest in particular designs that happened to be modest, rather than adopting what they viewed as the more modesty-forward styles encapsulated in missionary dress standards and Utah- based fashion blogs and retailers.

Throughout my time in the ward I took note of the array of fashions I encountered, many of which connected women to broader social worlds. Barbara, an African-American ward member who sometimes performed solos during church, often dressed in the large and bouffant hats commonly found in Black-American churches. Kathryn, in her late 50's, writes about landscape and interior design, and often wore layered outfits, linen blouses and silk scarves – a sort of contemporary bohemian look I associated with Northern California. Heather, who described herself as a "crunchy mom", committed to living car-free, kitted herself

with hand-made clothing and accessories she paired with repurposed and found items, coming to church in eclectic ensembles, and often barefoot. Lindy recalled then when she had first moved from Utah, as a newlywed expecting twins, she attended a childbirth class where she stood out in a home-sewn floral maternity dress with a high lace collar, surrounded by liberal feminists and alternative families, she felt like a "Molly Mormon" – her sense of style, she said, had evolved a bit since then. Most women, even when recalling these instances of self-consciously feeling like their "Mormon clothes" set them apart, initially treated their choice of dress as an afterthought – in fact Anne B. exclaimed, "it's amazing you notice – I think generally us women of a certain age are invisible, so we just do what we want". Similarly when I asked Kathryn to discuss fashion at church she demurred from the question, saying, "really clothes don't matter at church". But for those would articulate their thoughts on church clothes, as Tracy had, they overwhelmingly expressed a desire to dress in clothes that happened to be modest, rather than 'modest clothes'. They wanted to feel that their Mormonism was something that they could honor as well as their autonomy, to adhere to Mormonism without letting religion define all of their sensibilities, cultural influences and engagement in the diverse communities in which they were invested. The decision of how modesty as a value should be interpreted was something outside of this particular negotiation; here, most women were concerned with processes of integration and harmony, not necessarily resistance to their church's teachings. Further, they wanted a stronger line drawn between doctrine and Mormon culture, and felt it was important that fitting in did not necessarily demonstrate a stronger testimony.

This rejection of homogeneity associated with Utah Mormonism again pointed to ways that the First Ward viewed itself as having a somewhat adaptable approach to faith; one that incorporates a more complete biography of the self, materially harmonizing the body as it moves between varied religious, professional, local and social contexts. Clothing is a transforming medium, and in the First Ward dress has parallel roles, both covering the body modestly but also signaling a connection to socio-cultural sensibilities that are not mediated by the church. First-ward fashion choices presented a visual intermingling of church standards with the other trends among urban women in the Bay Area, aligning women with broader values and interests, including subcultures, politics and affluence. I came to see Kathryn's interpretation that dress 'didn't matter' as incorporative of both Keane's observation regarding the tensions between dress as a necessity and a distraction from the more essential aspects of

faith, but also, as a way of demonstrating that she and others did not want their dress to isolate themselves from their communities or exclude, but rather expand the ways identity in a religious setting could be expressed. Further, Lindy's recollection of looking like a 'Molly Mormon' when she first relocated to the Bay Area was an anecdote that was connected to a longer narrative about integration into new social groups, growth in her ideas about the world, developing empathy and finding a more authentic way to express her place in her new community. Lindy often spoke about her connection to Mormons on the fringes of the faith and her efforts to draw them into the center, and her friendships outside of the church where the distinctions between Mormon and non-Mormon felt arbitrary in comparison with the various ways she formed meaningful relationships. In this sense again a rejection of a particular type of dress effectively aimed to loosen the boundaries that can be seen as off-putting. Forms of dress that signal such an absolute immersion in Mormonism, both as a culture and a faith, are viewed as distancing; however ways of engaging with 'modesty' that are aesthetically blended with other sartorial sensibilities allowed members to feel that they could be bound in religiosity, and still participate wholly in other meaningful parts of their lives.

First Ward members' fashions.

There were endless opportunities to consider how the fashions I encountered were influenced by religious adherence, and Mormon dress can certainly be treated as symbolic, representational and superficial; but what I found was that dress was rather one component of how the body is regulated, gendered, enabled and contained in a socio- religious context. Dress was incorporated into broad discourses around the materials that go in or on the body; within Mormonism dress is one component of a larger material system that mediates the relationship between Mormon identities and Mormon bodies. For Mormon individuals to be considered "in good standing" with the church, and to retain a temple recommend, they must keep specific covenants and declare their adherence to them during the temple recommend interview. Many

of these covenants explicitly require Mormons to regulate their bodies in a number of ways, through wearing the garments, practicing the 'law of chastity'.

Garments: Religiosity and subtlety

By understanding clothing as a surface decoration which can signal public adherence to religious recommendations, ties to a social group, and practical considerations which take into account the dress requirements of any given situation, undergarments involve similar yet significantly more intimate considerations. As they can be concealed, revealed, or hinted at, but implicitly understood to be an unseen part of the wardrobe, undergarments in any context are imbued with privacy, they express the wearers own predilections, ranging from comfort and sexuality to simply a disconnect from the unseen fabrics with mediate how the body moves through the world. Mormon sacred dress, as I have mentioned, consists of an undergarment. Most adult members of the church wear the Temple Garment, or garments, after they go through what is called the 'endowment ceremony' in the temple. Garments, as they are categorically underclothes and imbued with the same notions of mystery and sensuality, have received a great deal of attention, academic and otherwise (McDannell 1997, Hamilton and Hawley 2013, Powell 2016, Nutt 2015, Avance 2010). Garments are a profoundly multifaceted religious material form,

> Representing the highest order of group loyalty, sacred knowledge, and embodied faithfulness (individual commitment as well as physical purity, for example), the garments often distinguish between varying levels of insiders in addition to separating insider from outsider. …the temple garments are, thus, tangible objects operative within the religious world of Mormonism—specifically tied to the ritual space of the temple (2016:461, Powell)

These plain white underpinnings are intended to be worn against the skin at all times (including to bed), except when engaging in athletic activities such as swimming, where they are not practical. The intention of wearing garments is to wear religious dress as the most intimate apparel on the human body (McDannell 1995). The garments, of which there are two pieces (at one time they were a one-piece but the styles have been updated with very slight modifications and fabric options) feature short sleeves and extend to just above the knee, my participants explained to me that on the garments symbols seen in the temple are embroidered; these symbols are "sacred" and should not be viewed by non-church members.

The church teaches that the garments are the "armor of God", they are to be covered at all times and are imbued with spiritual significance alongside this more effective role in mediating modest dressing habits, they are considered to have supernatural power by some (2016:461 Powell).

> The garment should be treated with respect at all times. It should not be exposed to the view of those who do not understand its significance, and it should not be adjusted to accommodate different styles of clothing. When worn properly, the garment provides protection against temptation and evil. (www.lds.org/topics/garments)

To meaningfully discuss modesty, the material manifestation of boundaries on the body through cloth in the context of the LDS church, it is important here to describe Mormon religious garments and their role in modest dress, though much consideration has already been given to this particular feature of dress, particularly as it is invested with protective capabilities that transmit to the wearer, and can be read as a material indication or reminder of religious adherence. In a 1997 Ensign piece on "The Temple Garments", it was noted that a former church president expressed that "…how one wears the garment is the expression of how the individual feels about the Church and everything that relates to it. It is a measure of one's worthiness and devotion to the gospel" (Asay 1997:19).

Here I would like to rather look at the garment as an intermediary, tasked with regulating surface dress, working on their wearer to establish core values tied to abstinence and regulation of what passes through the bodies openings, and integrating the sacred and the every-day. Warnier suggests that the skin acts as an envelope, providing external and internalized contexts with materials enhancing the skin's potential to envelop and secure vulnerable internal worlds (2001:15-18). Garments, as a boarder between skin and external layers of clothing, are neither totally invisible to others, though they are almost always covered in their entirety under a layer of cloth. In fact, properly wearing the garments is viewed as one component of utilizing them as a crucial layer, which enhances the envelope of the skin. The ways in which the garments are worn matter for their potency, implicitly most faithful LDS understand that the garments should not be altered in order to keep them covered, such as rolling them up at the knees in order to wear shorts. In this way the proper use of the garment can be observed. In addition to this influential position over dress standards, the garment is also viewed as working on the body it contains, strengthening a person's commitment to the

church's teachings.

> At the micro-level, one's sacred dress serves as a constant symbolic reminder to the wearer of personal spiritual commitments he or she has made and as a reminder of social identification (church organization/community)… Mormons are unique in that their faithful adult members literally *clothe* themselves daily in items of apparel that represent their spiritual commitment and organizational affiliation as they engage each day in the external world. (Hamilton and Hawley. 1999: 47)

Marked with sacred symbols and enhanced by the connection to Mormon identity, which "gains vitality from temple rites" (Powell 2016:466), they enable the wearer to feel connected to the rituals of the temple as they move through the world, as their bodies are intimately bound by materials that are integrated into their religious practice.

While church teachings stress their sacredness, the everydayness of garments was a significant component of them. The attention given to them perhaps overstates their place as one of the most basic material components of Mormonism. The LDS.org explanation of garments, a short video designed to respond to outsider curiosity, begins with 2 minutes of footage of religious vestments from other traditions, including Catholicism, Islam and Judaism, and states,

> Some people incorrectly refer to temple garments as magical, or magic underwear, these words are not only inaccurate, but offensive to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. There is nothing magical or mystical about temple garments, and church members as for the same degree of respect and sensitivity that would be afforded to any other faith by people of goodwill."
> (http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/temple-garments)

This sentiment, though it comes across as a bit defensive here, responds to the awkward abundance of interest related to what are quite literally underpants. For my own research I did not ever explicitly ask about garments – it seemed a wholly inappropriate question. The instances when garments were discussed, however, indicated a particular contestation related to concerns by California Mormons over their role in inhibiting particular clothing choices. While their role was indeed sacred, the occasional lamentation over how garments made putting together their outfits more complicated came up, particularly around attempts to avoid the "Shabby-Apple style", or clothing designs with garments in mind. Their place as a intercessor between the body and clothing was often viewed as at once inconvenient,

mundane, intimate and sacred – relationships with garments could fluctuate and evolve over time as much as one's relationship to their body, demonstrating their power as something interactive with the envelope of the skin and the external layer of clothing. Clothing, which could be shed and adopted, changing in totality from day-to-day or year-to-year, differed from the garments, which would remain a constant way that mediate the body through adulthood.

The garments were often imagined as linking the values of timelessness and uniformity found in the temple to the surface of the body. Joy, an exuberant ward member who had joined the church after coming-of-age fully immersed in the rock-and-roll counter- culture of the 1960's and 70s, spent an evening in my home talking about her experience of conversion over dinner. With a shock of cropped red hair and a touch of black mascara, she lamented that her wild youth was far behind her as she was about to start chemotherapy for breast cancer. Joy planned to relocate abroad to be closer to family during her medical care. Perhaps it was just her personality, but it seemed that between her imminent departure and cancer treatments looming Joy was feeling particular free as we spoke, wanting to leave me with as much information as she could. She brought facemasks for us to try, since I had noted she had very nice skin, and was sharing with me colorful and somewhat shocking anecdotes about her past. My husband was washing dishes in the kitchen while we reclined in the living room, talking with out feet up on the coffee table, eating chocolate chip cookies. As she described her conversion to Mormonism, and her initial skepticism when she learned about the church, she brought up the garments, saying that there were so many aspects of the church that seemed odd to her, but she'd come to accept so many of them as relevant. "Are you curious about the garments? Most people are!" she said. I insisted that I had not given them much thought, but she asked me if I had googled them and seen what they look like. Lightheartedly, but with the aim of being helpful and informative, she pulled her blouse over her shoulder and showed me the white sleeve, saying that she could show me all but the symbols on them. Explaining her gesture she went on to say,

> When I was first a convert to the church I couldn't really get over the idea that I needed to wear these weird pioneer underpants. But after all these years I like having them, putting them on and washing them and folding them. It feels like a ritual. And I wanted you to see them on my body – my old woman body – and not as some wacky thing on the internet. They are just very ordinary but very special.

Her intent to show the garments as embodied, as familiar and as a source of comfort around an

aging body about to undergo chemotherapy, was a very personal gesture that expressed the potency of the garments as integrative of the sacred, the everyday and as an invisible boundary market, something that distinguished Mormon bodies without (ideally) being visible to non-member.

Image of temple garments from mormonnewsroom.org video "Sacred Temple Clothes"

In this way garments subtly provide the body with a protective border, allowing these negotiations around modesty, Mormon style and integrative identities to play out on the surface. They provided a sort of narrative, as Joy's body was marked as coming into the faith from a wholly different life, becoming a confortable and commonplace layer that she now related to her body's physical shifts. Garments enabled both a vision of consistently being bound by the church's influence, but offered the flexibility of selecting fashions that did not necessarily express religious identification. Joy's style reflected the mutability of Mormon fashion, which incorporated sensibilities derived outside Mormonism, yet on the skin there was a layer providing access to something categorically and unequivocally related to their religious identity. This mediation, I have pointed out, relates to both the blending of the sacred and the everyday, but also regulates modesty. But as I would like to continually stress there is constant multidimensionality to the ways in which negotiations around the body occur. Far from being a straightforward process of wearing and covering of garments with some fluidity in terms of aesthetic taste, practices of modesty in the church, as I have implied, extended

beyond this. Largely, discourses on modesty comprised a much larger category than simply modest clothing.

Adornments: agency, choice and the body

Modesty is not entirely predicated on wearing garments, and in fact the church's teachings on modesty have broad interpretations. Particular forms of modest dress, especially where the style is influenced by church leader's talks, can be indicative of compliance and respect for church authorities. In the first ward, however, many individuals were critical of deference to church leaders when their advice departed from established covenants, arguing that particular lessons blurred the distinction between doctrine and cultural values. As I noted, first ward members were comfortable studying and debating doctrine and church history, and so particularly in defining modest dress there was a great deal predicated upon study of the gospel and less rooted in listening to conference talks. Church members claimed that following each and every recommendation by church leaders was simply unnecessary; as clothing was far less significant than other issues of religious concern. I noted though that this experience of dress as a non-issue or fluid medium for self- expression, liberally chosen to integrate modesty and personal sensibilities, was simply not universal, particularly for those who felt less authoritative, established or experienced in the ward. Newer members and young members, however, seemed much more apt to find themselves in situations where dress was not so much about choosing how to interpret and adopt modesty standards, but rather involved a much more direct engagement with authority figures in the church.

Interestingly, members of the church who have not been through the temple are instructed by leaders to choose clothing that meets the same standards as when covering garments, much of this is evident in the Young Women's Handbook, a guide for girls between twelve and seventeen who engage with its teachings in their corresponding church classes. Young men are ordained at 12, so they do not participate in teen-specific programs while at church, rather attending meetings with adult men. This creates a discrepancy between how young men and young women experience church teachings, and there is certainly a strong emphasis on teenage girls learning to regulate the presentation of their bodies. Notably, all church-produced media featuring young Mormons depict girls wearing short-sleeved tops under strapless dresses and tank tops, despite the fact that they have not yet gone through

their endowment. These advices, which can be subtle or direct, are indicative of the struggle for authority over impressionable members of the church and a desire to retain particular traditions. Teenaged girls are seemingly inundated with modesty-consciousness, their bodies a site of contestation over the materialization of church values. Young women's bodies are imagined as susceptible and vulnerable spiritual territory. Rebecca J. Lester, in her work on young Catholic nuns, points to a history of women's bodies as sites of miraculous and supernatural spiritual manifestations within Christianity (2005:33). Lester's work relates very strongly to my own observations in the LDS church, despite quite different contexts. She asserts that bodies mediate "worldly and spiritual aspects of the self" (2005:5), but that gendered female bodies are often burdened with additional social and cultural anxieties; women's bodies become "tropes through which these concerns are articulated" (2005:5).

Apprehensions about social change, women's evolving roles and politics are often related back to women's bodies, and how they fit into traditional narratives about gender, authority and religiosity. Young women in particular are asked to give very particular attention to their clothing,

> In addition to the daily act of dressing and undressing, one's clothing requires times and energy in its acquisition and maintenance. Thus, we assert, one chooses it each day, and act of volition that requires one to reflect at some level on ideological commitments made, however rote and fleeting the reflection may be." (Hamilton & Hawley 1999:47)

During my time with the Young Women in the ward I was particularly struck by how fraught their negotiation of modesty, dress standards and decisions about dress were for teenage girls, particularly because their choices were not informed by the practical need to cover garments, but rather by the abundant messages about dress standards to which they were exposed. Many of the girls believed that conservative dress made them appear conservative among their non-Mormon friends and classmates, but that ultimately modest dress served a purpose, helping them maintain their goals of abstinence, for example, by designating their bodies as 'off-limits'. Many of them expressed the opinion that women who did not practice modest dress were advertising particular sexually promiscuous, rebellious or immoral leanings. But still, they were developing their own ideas as they worked inside a context where a very particular type of discourse around dress had been pressed upon them, and sometimes in contexts where Mormonism made them feel like cultural outsiders. Many of them were also learning from their peers in high school to be hyper critical around the presentation of the female body, so

the influence of their faith offered them another angle from which to consider the politics of dress.

During my visit to Tina and Frank's home I recorded a conversation with Willow, their teenage daughter (step-daughter of Frank). I had gotten to know her at Girls Camp during the summer, and among her Mormon friends she had been extroverted, perpetually in motion, dancing, hiking and swimming each day in constant company, and I felt confident we could discuss topics relevant to teenagers fairly openly, since Willow has never struck me as particularly shy. I was eager to hear her take as well, since her mother stood out in her choice of dress – Tina had cultivated a sort of subdued rock-and-roll style, often wearing dark clothing, her petite frame adorned with a few tattoos, obtained during a time when she lived with a non-member (now ex) husband. During our conversation as Willow offered thoughtful and sensitive responses, her mother smiled and said, "how did I get this kid?", their dynamic was supportive and open. I noted that compared to Tina's more relaxed take on faith, Willow was more prone to wanting to make decisions that would fall closely in line with the church's ideals. We talked about her early childhood, involving a few moves after her parent's divorce, and how ultimately she was happy to be in Oakland but it had been difficult to leave behind her home in Oregon initially. Being raised primarily by a single- parent and having started attending church during childhood, rather than from infancy, Willow possessed a certain tolerance and ambiguity about my outsider status that some of the other teens did not, which extended into how she thought about Mormon dress standards compared to some of her church friends. Her father is an Italian-Catholic, and while her commitment to the faith was powerful, Willow seemed un-conflicted about the fact that people living outside her faith were capable of having deeply meaningful lives as well. She described how much she wanted to go on a mission, and how much the church had shaped her and provided her with a space where she felt safe, valued and could find messages that empowered her, but also said that she sometimes knew it was important not to allow faith to cause harm, especially when it came to negotiating a place for her own blended family within LDS beliefs. Changing the tone and topic she joked that being Mormon is difficult mainly because of limited fashion choices. "One pieces!", she exclaimed, "It's so dorky going swimming and everyone is in this cute two piece and I am the Mormon girl going 'yeah one-piece'!".

I asked Willow to tell me a bit more about how her faith shapes choices about how she

dresses and relates to other teens. She described wanting to engage in the same kind of self-expression as other teenagers, but do so within the context of the church's teachings, because she ultimately agreed with the church's linking between personal integrity and modesty in dress. On certain issues though she felt maybe the church was just out of touch. I asked her to be specific and she reddened, and explained that very recently she had had a disagreement with one of her young women's leaders about her style. There had been conference talks in the past, she explained, where church leaders had said that women should have only one piercing in their ears. She did not find this advice relevant, implying that it seemed a bit outdated and overreaching. "Lot's of people are modest with a second hole in their ears", she pointed out, "and it's just more common now, it's not this rebellion like it used to be". She really wanted a second ear piercing, so her mom agreed to take her to get it done. When she excitedly told her friends at church Britta, one of the Young Women's Leaders, advised her against it. Britta sent on an *Ensign* article, in which Elder Ballard makes reference to the former Prophet's teaching on the matter,

> It is significant to remember that President Hinckley petitioned the Lord on behalf of you young people. He said, "I want you to know that I have been on my knees asking the Lord to bless me with the power and the capacity and the language to reach into your hearts" ("A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign,* Jan. 2001, 2).
>
> Have we studied his counsel and identified the things we need to avoid or to do differently?
>
> I know a 17-year-old who, just prior to the prophet's talk, had pierced her ears a second time. She came home from the fireside, took off the second set of earrings, and simply said to her parents, "If President Hinckley says we should only wear one set of earrings, that's good enough for me."
>
> Wearing two pairs of earrings may or may not have eternal consequences for this young woman, but her willingness to obey the prophet will. And if she will obey him now, on something relatively simple, how much easier it will be to follow him when greater issues are at stake. (2010)

Willow considered this, but ultimately felt that the information was dated, and this particular talk even points to the vagueness of the ear-piercing standards. President Hinckley was no longer prophet, and Mormon fashions had become more contemporary. She knew people from her church community who she admired, who were faithful, and who wore things that were much more edgy than you might find in conservative Mormon communities. She didn't think any of it undermined the church's teachings on modesty.

After piercing her ears though her return to church was uncomfortable. Britta expressed disappointment, and withheld her usual warmth that Sunday. Willow became quiet and tearful thinking about it. This brief but significant conflict that she described points to the ways in which women's choices about dress and their bodies, even seemingly moderate choices such as how many piercings are acceptable in the earlobes, are carefully monitored in Mormon culture and relate to women's spiritual success. The choices young women make demonstrate how closely she follows the church's teachings on these matters. Tasteful makeup, outward displays of femininity and the presentation of the body as being clothed in fashionable yet conservative western dress is an essential part of how a woman or girl exhibits her faithfulness, not just an obscurely-located Mormon trend. This particular point of disagreement between Willow and Britta was eventually set aside, however it was one of many small ways that teenage girls, in particular, experienced church in a way that was much different from older and more established members of the ward. In part, with the handbooks assigned to girls and church talks directed at them, and with less experience navigating Mormon identity in the wider world outside their family homes, teenagers often felt the administrative center of the church as a closer presence.

Further, the ward was experiencing rapid growth during my time in the field, and the influx of church members from outside the Bay Area meant that many coming from more conservative traditions were teaching the youth members of the church. Willow, a Bay Area transplant herself, had begun to feel more at home in what she described as a more "accepting and open" community than her former church in Oregon. Britta, however, being both a more socially conservative Texan and a much more mainline Mormon, in cultural terms, had taken on the role of young women's leader and was mentoring girls in such a way that reflected her more traditionalist stance on following the prophet. For Britta these expectations would help bring girls closer to the Prophet, and keep them closer to their faith. The negotiations over young women's bodies, I also observed, likely emerged as a result of less clearly-defined ways of imploring young women to keep their standards.

When young men are initiated into the priesthood they have an unambiguous track to maintaining and increasing their opportunities for leadership in the church. They wear suits at church, which signal their authority and responsibility as suits do in other contexts, and begin

participating in rituals and experiences that are always in preparation for their future in the church. Young women, however, prepare for a much more ambiguous future. Marriage into the Mormon Church was once the event that gave women both a place in Heaven and an opportunity to become endowed in the temple. Currently, women are more likely to serve missions and visit the temple before marriage than they once were. The church estimates that prior to the 2012 changes that lowered the age from 21 to 19 for women serving a mission around 10% of the total missionary force was comprised of sister- missionaries, that percentage has since doubled (PRI.org). Still, the vast majority of young women are not preparing for endowment, and while they are encouraged to plan for a temple marriage one day, their education is emphasized and many young women are aware of many adult women in the ward who have not married. Their clothes reflect their less officious place in the ward, and the tensions around style and modesty that potentially signal obedience or a desire for more autonomy are heightened because young women's personal investment and level of participation in church is the primary anchor that roots her in Mormonism.

Many members of the First Ward, particularly long-time members of the community, remarked that men were much more likely to leave the church than women. They remarked that in the first ward women actually "ran the show". It appeared though that young people experienced a very different reality. Aside from mentors who were often more aligned with conservative values, young women in the first ward were subject to other conditions that shaped their view of Mormonism. Teenagers were the smallest group by far in the ward; in fact, the number of teenagers in the ward was so small that Sunday School, Young Men's and Young Women's classes were merged with teens from the 9th Ward, roughly ten first-ward teens were active each week and attended Youth Sunday School together (participating in either the Aaronic Priesthood quorum /Young Women). Largely this reflected the fact that for a time families were leaving the Bay Area in large numbers due to the high cost of living, and only recently young people were being drawn back to the area by tech industry jobs. While there were approximately 20 babies born during my time in the field, families with teens were not coming into the ward. There were roughly 8 teenagers I saw week-to-week and knew by name, and three moved with their families, who were relocating to more affordable areas, between 2014 and 2016.

A relative minority in their school communities, experiences with other Mormon teens

often involved a major shift from being among much more liberal-leaning peers to suddenly being in the company of more conservative Mormons. Willow, Emmeline, Regan and others reflected on how maintaining a deep commitment to their church helped them resist the social pressures they faced with non-Mormon friends to break their standards. But opportunities to socialize with Mormons from the Stake, such as dances and Girls Camp, brought them in contact with girls from Bay Area suburbs – many of who were less familiar with the realities of being an urban-dwelling teen, and who attended a more diverse Sunday school. In these instances, the differences between young women from the First Ward and from outside could be very pronounced in ways that extended well beyond earrings and style, but often their experiences overlapped in the pressures they faced to engage with standards and maintain their bodies.

Their choices about clothing, adornments and even how their hair would be styled, could align them with their church community or raise questions about their faith, adherence, and compliance. Turner observes that the skin is treated as the tangible boundary between the individual and society, maintaining an appearance that is compatible with the community gives individuals stability, as harmony is achieved through fashion (1980). In the case of young women in the ward the degree to which they felt free to exercise agency in choices around dress was impacted by concerns about its interpretation and the potential to be punished or pushed out for missteps. Surface adornment "is the medium through which we communicate our social status, attitudes, desires, beliefs and ideals (in short, our identities) to others, but also to a large extend constitutes these identities, in ways which we are compelled to conform regardless of our self-consciousness or even our contempt".

Conclusions

Mormons understand bodies to be eternal – rather than conceptualizing the body as an outer shell or husk to be discarded, it is inalienably bound with the soul; soul and physical body will both transcend into heaven. Despite this somewhat distinctive conception of the body (for western Christianity), the interior and exterior dichotomies are still at the forefront of how Mormons conceptualize the body; as with space and built environments, similarly certain degrees of sacredness are imagined as pertaining to bodies, the spiritual potency and vulnerability is viewed as a process by which materials mediate boundaries. Taken for granted

as unambiguous, biologically controlled forms, which move through environments, it is essential rather to see bodies as sites of culture, with a mutually constitutive relationship with their environments. Mormons embody their faith in a number of ways with the aim of protecting and sanctifying the external and internal dimensions of the body, as well as expressing or enhancing their Mormon identities, which can involve an embrace of or resistance to the typical aesthetics associated with Mormon culture. These negotiations often reconcile tensions between a desire for autonomy and an embrace of shared values, or involve considerations over how to be both Mormon and engaged in places or communities that are diverse.

As the body is viewed as having a permanent and significant role in salvation, so do material components, which ready, mark and protect the body as it moves through the world, and mediate the body's transcendence; making these processes of clothing, eating and presenting oneself multidimensional. In this context materials are transformed into an "essential component of the body" (Warnier 2006:187), they act as a second skin, constituting the religious body. In describing the materials that go on the body, religious and spiritual adherence transform these materials into tools that regulate, protect and designate the body as a religious object, which has a surface and vulnerable openings that must be protected and maintained. Clothing protects the self from harm, contamination, temptation and destruction; the body is therefore set apart as it moves through a polluted world.

The ways in which individuals negotiate the 'rules' that concern Mormon dress speaks to the ongoing mediation of a Mormon identity that exists in the context of a wider and ever-changing world, and in the case of the First Ward, much of this concerned embodying both Mormon values and Bay Area sensibilities. Professional women and teenaged girls, in particular, provided critical insights into how fraught these seemingly everyday, individualized acts of developing style were dynamic decisions about faith, truth and finding autonomy. Young women found their bodies became sites of concern and contention as larger debates over modesty, propriety, and adherence to the church's teachings were inscribed through their dress standards. The church's leaders often suggest very precise limitations around how a young woman should dress, yet these "suggestions" are not taken as doctrine and leave quite a bit of room for individuals to choose precisely how to adopt standards and maintain their place of "good standing" in the church. The specific regulations applied to members who are serving

the church in an official capacity, such as in the mission field, give insights into an ideal, which is upheld, but often rejected even by the very faithful. Many members are subtly and consciously working to harmonize their authentic selves with "core values" of the faith, sometimes describing these core values as coming from personal study or prayer, rather than closely following recommendations made in church talks or media. Clothing the body is at once a utilitarian practice, though it also becomes a vehicle for communication, simultaneously being used to identify and connect with other members, signaling belonging, as well as to indicate resistance, or personal agency, that often subverts or show's critique when it comes to the church's teachings on issues around bodies and gender roles.

Chapter Four

"Are My Words True?": Creating Mormon contexts with words and things

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Words and Things

"Did you ever date outside the church?" I asked Tracy, as we were walking together in the Oakland hills in conversation one afternoon. We'd started going for these jaunts together to get exercise, and on this particular excursion we'd gotten onto the topic of our mutual friends in the church who were still single, and her own marriage, which, by Mormon standards, occurred later than most. "I did", she answered, "but at some point the question always sort of came to my mind, 'well, what's the point?' If they weren't interested in the church it could only go so far". Like many women of faith, Tracy waited for a church wedding, and never found herself able to commit to someone who wouldn't be married in the temple. Within the LDS church, beyond the setting, Mormon marriages entail a sacred ceremony that binds couples for "time and eternity", referred to as a sealing. Sealings can only take place inside of a Mormon temple. Non-members cannot be sealed to their partners, as they cannot enter the temple, rendering interfaith marriages as somewhat futile from what Mormons refer to as "an eternal perspective". Mormon marriages are a key examples of ways that Mormon rituals on earth are intended to manifest particular things in the afterlife, in this case reuniting couples in The Celestial Kingdom. These rituals depend very specifically on the bundling of particular words and environments to create sacred contexts.

The visiting daughter of a member shared with me details of her own wedding, however, which provided an interesting and creative interpretation of how a marriage without a temple sealing could still hold promise. She had married a non-member, and shared with me that she felt that particularly with the promise of ongoing revelation, which she took as proof

of God's ability to evolve and enact changes now and in the hereafter, signaled to her that she needn't worry about her eternal future. On her wedding day she broke the family tradition of choosing a temple marriage, but asked her father to provide her with a blessing. She recalled that in the blessing he stated that God would continue to work in their lives, and great things were in store. Using this medium of blessing, she had creatively found a way to rethink the place of her marriage within a larger Mormon context, which satisfied her. Though, without the material contexts such as the temple, her husband's church membership, and even the sacred garments worn on the body during temple sealings, the validity of this blessing is not grounded in anything.

In The First Ward, I often saw parallel instances in which religious language was utilized in ways that provided creative ways of drawing broad parameters to create new Mormon contexts, though these efforts were often called into question or dismissed because they failed to appropriately incorporate essential Mormon material patterns, such as bringing words of blessing inside sacred spaces. If materials manifest Mormon boundaries, they also penetrate them, disorder them, reorder them – Mormon "language" has it's own form, creates it's own contexts, and spoken and written words can also invert and reimagine how Mormons bound, structure and live their faith. Within the Latter Day Saints Church, language is constitutive of particular faithful experiences, it is imbued with transformative powers and consecrates – it is an essential component of rituals and reorders the every-day. Language is entangled with material culture in most contexts; it is not the sole form upon which religious life is carried out but part of a system. Particular speech acts and other material forms and environments co-create conditions in which faith is bound in complimentary ways, but also opens up the potential for one or more forms to disorder the ways in which words, space, bodies are meant to work in harmony to fashion Mormon selves. When these things are not in harmony, tensions arise; words can ease them or elevate these tensions. Language, within this system, is the most flexible and unpredictable medium, disrupting boundaries because it's place as a sort of intermediary between material and immaterial.

Language at once is objectified, it has materialized, realized powers, and performs social work, but it is so much harder to control or regulate than space or dress, it can shift in and instant. Further, religious discourses are difficult to contain. Ward boundaries are seen as essential to containing a community, church buildings regulate how people organize

themselves, dress is understood as a means of enveloping the body in religiosity; I have argued that all of these mediums are dynamic, but imagined as providing a solid and tangible situation for a timeless faith to emerge. Disrupting material boundaries largely depends on creative reinterpretations and subtle reorganizations. This chapter will look very specifically at how language is bundled with other material forms, and, in the context of Oakland's First Ward, becomes a medium for creatively reordering bounded ways of being a Mormon.

Language constitutes it's own boundary, especially when it is used to create sacred context. Specifically, in the Latter Day Saints' Church, prayer, testimony, church talks, and some of the tropes contained within those, are the powerful mediums through which God is made most present on earth, and things are set-apart. Mormon language ideologies are rooted in a specific church history and the teachings; these ideologies are replicated in Church media, and linked to sacred texts. Among them are the belief that through spoken prayers and blessings materials are imbued with holy powers, truth is revealed, healing may occur, people are transformed, and, significantly, the church's doctrines are altered and elaborated upon through revelation. The power of words, therefore, results in a hyper- awareness around how speech occurs inside of the church. Formally and informally, what is said aloud, therefore, must be regulated. Discourses that circulate in other spaces, such the bloggernacle, or the 'Mormon internet', often speak back to these controlled ways in which words can be spoken and received inside of the church or temple. This chapter will focus more on the ways in which boundaries are being shifted and disrupted through language, as a medium that co-creates new material contexts.

Telling It Like A Mormon

I occasionally kept up a blog while I was in the field, writing down entries about my experiences in the church to share with, in particular, my participants and the church leaders who were eager for updates. I would drop in excerpts from my field notes, padded with a little reflective commentary, just to give people a sense of what I was experiencing. While the blog was never something I intended to reference or use outside of the field, written entirely for my LDS audience to make myself more accessible (and ease concerns that I was in the church looking for a salacious story), I later heard myself quoted back in a church talk, and realized

that I was fairly well-read by many of the church members. My writing had gotten away from me and was circulating among church leaders interested in my insights as an outsider in their world. Upon re-examination, the blog also gave me some awareness of my own development in the field, it was peppered with phrases and expressions I picked up the more familiar I became and reflected a gradual settling into the community. Even it's title, "That they might have joy", came from an oft-quoted passage in the Book of Mormon. My very first post, "In which I become and investigator", was somewhat of an introduction after I had officially taken up my place in the church (having gotten approval to stay), and explained how the missionaries had facilitated my insertion to the community. I went on to clarify that while the missionaries had dubbed me an "investigator" in the church, I really should be considered, rather, a "researcher". The phrase investigator, when used in the context of the church, denotes a person investigating Mormon beliefs with a potential interest in joining the faith. I liked the dualistic way the phrase situated me, though; while I wasn't a traditional investigator, I was certainly there investigating, and I often felt like there was a period where my reception and the conversations I had about the church felt like I was being warmly brought in, learning incrementally about how to participate, as an investigator would. The last post on my blog was a copy of my farewell 'church talk' I'd given in Relief Society. The talk replicated the forms I had seen demonstrated by Kathryn, Marielle and Michelle, the Relief Society teachers during my time in the ward; it was a personal narrative, a metaphor for my experience in the church, sentimental, reflective and gracious. I concluded after reading it to the Relief Society, "I just realized I am writing like a Mormon now, even when I don't mean to".

A multitude of phrases, narrative styles, and terms began to infiltrate my vocabulary and reshape my register while in the field, beyond simply learning words that describe particular features of Mormon worship, such as "church talk" or "ward". Learning Mormon lingo was a straightforward process of understanding particular expressions in context, but this shift also involved learning to give my encounters and experiences meaningful conclusions and identify lessons that could be derived from them, a strong feature of Mormon talks and testimonies. Mormon language contains many easy-to-replicate tropes, making it a very potent medium for experiencing faith and constructing a particular Mormon viewpoint. Beyond types of speech being demonstrated week-to-week at Church and in Conference Talks, the substance of lessons was carefully regulated through a circulation of Handbooks published annually, which determined which lessons should be taught-week-to-week at church in the various

meetings (Relief Society Handbook, Gospel Principals Handbook, etc.). This resulted in a global community all focusing on very particular lessons, often abstracted from local contexts. It was up to the ward to negotiate how to ground these lessons to meet the needs of the community and incorporate personal narratives; and as I noted earlier, while materially the church seeks to create homogeneity across wards, through particular negotiations around how to make lessons relevant members of the ward were not always in agreement about the level of personalization applied to lessons.

Within Mormonism there is an emphasis on not speaking about topics that disrupt the church's aim to foster harmony, and not using curse words or gossiping. The varied interpretations of the recommendation to only speak words that are "true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Articles of Faith 1:13) resulted in sometimes conflicting ideas about what should be censored, particularly in sacred spaces. While "culture is localized in concrete, publicly accessible signs, the most important of which are actually occurring instances of discourse" (Urban 1991: 1), here I suggest that the unspoken is critical for understanding Mormon culture in the First Ward. These particular negotiations reflected the ongoing tensions between the ward and the administrative church, as well as between members who regulated their speech with diverging aims. The ways that Mormons speak about the world creates a very specific lens where diverse experiences can be interpreted as part of a divine plan, put in perspective to reflect back something about religious identity, and bring the everyday into narratives of faith and religiosity, and often what is excluded from those narratives reflects a desire to preserve a close adherence to the administrative church's parameters.

Language not only shapes narratives to compliment a Mormon understanding of how the world is ordered, but it also plays a crucial role in establishing group identity; in his work on Protestant language, Simon Coleman argues that sacred words "recreate and extend" the religious self (2006:166). Expressing these entanglements with the divine, using terminology that is specific to the Latter Day Saints, and even addressing one another as Brother, Sister and Elder at church on Sundays creates very perceptible ways which Mormons distinguish themselves as a group. Mormon language, particularly these terms and common devices, is distinctive. Speaking in prayers, giving talks and bearing testimonies were described by my participants as the most effective means of articulating and disseminating the church's ideals -

these particular types of speech were connected to LDS traditions, sacred acts of engagement with the divine, and with bringing about harmony and creating opportunities for "feeling the spirit", a notable feature of how language is understood to function as a conduit for divinity (Keane 2007, Coleman 2006, Robbins 2001, Harding 2000).

Within Christianity, language is an essential tool for locating and disseminating belief; emphasizing Christian language as a tool for conversion, or as a medium that performs work on the listener, focuses on it's potential to perform work (Harding 2008, Coleman.). Language may be transformed into "truth incarnate" in particular religious contexts, and in his work on Christianity Simon Coleman describe religious language almost like a commodity that can be exchanged. Applying Mauss's 'The Gift', Coleman explains "the gift contains some part of the spiritual essence of the donor", elaborating, "as with the gift, words have objectlike qualities that allow them to be removed from the person and retain a semiautonomous existence" (2006:173), largely because in these contexts words are understood to have made a measured difference in the world. Similarly Webb Keane focuses on language as a tool for overcoming ones material and social world within Christianity.

> Language, he explains, is a transcendent medium within these contexts and has the potential to convey the emotions and meaning associated with belief (2007). Language is valued in Mormon largely because of the belief that The Holy Spirit can inspire words, and therefore an individual who is in-tune with the spirit may receive divine inspiration through words; the Holy Spirit can, in essence, "rephrase your life" (Harding 2000:60).

Within Mormonism words are mutually constitutive along with other material forms, such as garments, modest dress, sacred spaces, church buildings, of sacred contexts; all of these things work together to create instances where religious life has a multidimensional and complete boundedness. Moving through the world, Church member's are dressed in modest clothing, making consumption choices that align with their religious identities, inhabiting homes that support their identities, and significantly also regulate their speech to reflect their religious values. At times, explicitly religious speech acts, such as prayer or blessings, are integrated into the everyday. In the church and temple very specific forms of speech, such as religious talks, prayers offered at services, and ritual speech, supports the degree to which a particular place should be inhabited with reverence. Coleman further argues that words demonstrate "affinity" between language and the material world (2006:165), in these contexts the relationship

between faith, and the cultivation of physical, material and social well-being is located in the expressive mediums through which belief is conveyed. Material forms and language are complimentary, not reflective of one another, and in this context we see how things and speech, entangled in context, manifest and contain religiously and enhanced mediated experiences (see also Tilley 2006). Coleman elaborates,

> When sacred words are regarded as thing-like in their autonomous force and their production of tangible results, the identity of the born-again person appears to be pervaded and even constituted by such language. To read and listen to inspired language is seen as means of filling the self with objectified language, even in a physical sense. (Coleman 2006:165)

It's crucial to see language as one vital component of creating context, in my own work, it is constitutive of sacred spaces and Mormon identity, along with other material forms, and is vital in the negotiation of centers and margins of the faith. Language situates individuals inside of their faith; it creates boundaries and margins of its own. In the context of The First Ward it becomes the medium through which members work to assert how wide they wish to draw those margins.

The still, small voice: Mormon Extemporized Prayer & Blessings

Shay and I sit in my living room with my phone between us set to record. My husband serves us snacks, but Shay doesn't take any – he has brought us religious materials and is more interested in sharing with me stories about his mother's conversion, and how faith can be realized. "Before we begin", Shay asks, "can I give a prayer?". I ask if we could start recording right away so I can have the prayer on tape as well. Shay says, "really, I think that's great", so I put on my recording ap. "Without further ado", he says with some bravado, then he folds his arms, takes a moment to regain some solemnity, and we bow our heads.

> Our Father in Heaven, we are grateful for the opportunity we have to sit down and talk a little bit about my experiences in the church and what the gospel means to me, and how it has influence on my life here. I am grateful for Amiee, and her kindness, interest and willingness to understand what makes us tick, things that are important to us, and how we view this life. Father, we ask that the spirit will be with us and that we'll be able to convey ideas truthfully, honestly and with sincerity, and that we'll have common understanding and that we'll both be edified by the interview. Father we are grateful for

> the savior, Jesus Christ, and for what he did which makes possible us to be here on this earth, for having these experiences, meeting, and preparing ourselves to return to thee. We love you very much, and these things we say in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Shay's prayer follows the familiar and typical structure of most Mormon prayers. The address to Heavenly Father and closing "in the name of Jesus Christ" marks the beginning and end, bookending the prayer in language that sets apart the words intended for God to hear as prayerful and carefully considered. His folded arms, the typical way Mormon prays, link the body with the act; this gesture is one that should help a person turn their focus inward. *The Book of Mormon* contains many references to how one should pray, and *The Ensign*, the church's magazine publication, has put out numerous articles discussing prayer, including recommendations for posture, family prayer, and carrying prayer "in your heart" when you cannot speak directly. In the months I have spent listening to prayers, opening and closing each session of weekly sacrament meetings, over meals, with the missionaries before and after lessons, and now have prayed with several of my participants before both recorded and unrecorded interviews, I have grown used to the particular style. The words of thanks, reflections on whatever we are presently occupied with, and the invoking of formal pronouns, such as thee and thou, have become the familiar markers of sacred forms of speech.

Prayers are offered across contexts, and Mormons are encouraged to integrate prayer into their domestic routines as well as church activities. Prayer opens and closes each hour of sacrament meeting, and is given before recreational activities organized by church groups, such as quilting group or before volleyball matches that take place between local wards. Prayers are certainly the central device used to ground any situation in sacredness, and in fact are constitutive of faith, in many situations. They employ traditions that are passed down both by tradition and formal recommendation in church handbooks, though significantly Mormon value extemporized prayer. Shay explains that unlike memorized prayers, it is important to conjure the right words, reflecting on the current moment and to allow the spirit to direct what is said. Often prayers will explicitly invite the spirit or ask for the spirit to be present in a situation. While these prayers certainly have a very specific form they're meant to provide a context in which an individual's speech can be influenced by the divine. Prayer, in this way, is considered a tool for revealing God's expectations, for healing, and as having concrete and real power over the physical world, particularly when employed with "sincere speaker intentionality" (Keane, 2008:122). For Shay, prayer before something like an interview was a

way of directing both him and I to keep our thoughts and words grounded in the values of the Church, meaning, the parameters set by the church, in terms of what is said and how we would engage, would be respected as we spoke.

With prayer the degree of agency attributed to the speaker is relative to the degree to which the spirit is given authority over the situation, largely reflective of a person's success in opening and engaging with the spirit and suspending ego. A popular Mormon hymn refers to 'the still small voice' as the subtle yet crucial way in which The Holy Spirit communicates, and this phrase is oft-repeated in church talks. Keane notes, referring to Goffman's author/animator distinction (1981) that, "One of the stakes in the precise distinction between author and animator is the degree of agency, authority, and responsibility a performer is willing or permitted to assume" (Keane 2008:121), and in particular instances of prayer and blessing the degree to which an individual is in control of the utterances they speak is up for interpretation. The aim is to, "often play down the agency of the living human participants in favor of powers ascribed to other entities" (Keane 2008:122). While prayers may be said in numerous occasions with a multiplicity of aims, prayer is imagined as simultaneously blessing or consecrating a situation, and conversing with God. Responses, which can be direct answers, comforting or challenging feelings, or lessons embedded in concrete things that result from a prayer, are often transformed into testimony, or brought forth by the highest leaders of the church as revelations to be disseminated to the church.

As prayer is central to religious life and all participate in this practice, this open framework assumes at once that all people have access to Heavenly Father; though authority is still recognized. This situation, of course, is complex; the narrative of Mormonism providing all direct communion with the divine without the need for mediation by religious leaders is of course challenged by the fact that particular prayers, and revelations received in prayer, have more authority than others. What the Prophet learns through prayer may transform into policy, what a Bishop or Patriarch learns through prayer might direct a decision about a parishioner, and when individuals feel or hear messages in prayers that challenge these authorities often this is construed as possibly being the result of ego, misinterpretation or the need for more reflection on the scriptures. This of course links authority, which is predicated on gender, place, seniority and class, with a more reliable interpretation when it comes to God's voice. Nonetheless, people are continually urged to pray and honor that process as one of

the most fundamental ways one participates in Mormon faith.

The invitation to lead a prayer can be offered to children and non-members, unlike other roles at formal or informal church gatherings, and prayers are early opportunities for participation and learning to engage in Mormon religious activities. Framing prayers in a particular way creates a very distinct parameter, through prayer individuals practice convening with God and receiving the spirit's promptings; through prayer truth is meant to be conveyed, intentions should be infused with authentic reflections, externalizing intimate and sacred feelings. Prayer is at once spontaneous but contains familiar tropes, it is ritualistic but an activity that requires no authority to engage, and contains both formal and informal utterances. Keane suggests that, "the semiotic properties of religious language commonly help make present what would otherwise, in the course of ordinary experience, be absent or imperceptible" (Keane 2008:120). These prayers, which are structured in particular ways, still operate with a certain level of fluidity and even ambiguity; the ways in which the spirit moves people to express is often interpreted as having degrees of success. In spite of these risks prayers as generally treated with reverence, and as Mormons pray over meals, interviews, social gatherings and church gatherings these prayers also sustain environments as being situated in religiosity. Lindy suggests that at the very least prayer is an opportunity for reflection, explaining that a prayer at the start of a quilting group meeting is a way of "redirecting the energy of the group". Prayer brings faith back into a space, reminding those who offer the prayer or hear it of their commitment to other values, such as kindness, patience, and gratitude for the present. Prayers and blessings are bounded, contextualized through specific utterances, and these parameters are meant to maintain prayer as a speech act that is, at the very least, inspired by piety, at best, the opportunity to allow God to speak through you.

While prayer is upheld as the bread-and-butter of Mormon spiritual practice it is entangled with other forms of 'inspired' language, and in fact, at times prayers and blessings are hardly distinguishable. Prayer emerges in every context and is accessible to all; prayers are said in private and public, ideally they are integrated into family activities, perfunctory acts such as meals and journeys, said in public and formal settings, and are a vital way for the faithful to express gratitude, invite the holy spirit and imagine ways in which divine power can be directed by God to make meaningful change in the world. It's form is distinctive and replicable, it contains particular phrases and is patterned in a specific way; the act of praying

involves voice, language and the body, and often incorporates particular environments. Despite this, prayer is not ridged - it is, rather, unscripted, leaving prayer open to the influence of God through inspired or directed speech. Unscripted prayers are valued as not only creating contexts where agency is suspended and spiritual influence is invited in, but in reflecting humility and genuineness –

> Though not always artistically arresting, simple or unrehearsed speech has been valued historically among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—especially those with New England roots—as a marker both of humility and of authentic spiritual experience; comparative work on genre and language ideologies (including norms of interpretation and "ground rules for performing") can thus shed light on the political efficacy of even "plain" language. (Christensen 2016:40)

Prayer is not the only way the Latter Day Saints use ordinary language to expresses faith or constitute religious practice. Rather, it is the most ubiquitous within a church that values both ritual, reverent speech and the capacity of "plain language" to draw together the sacred and the everyday. Plain language is also used in other contexts bound in religiosity, notably in church sermons, offered by rotating members of the ward and referred to simply as "talks", in performing blessings, and bearing one's testimony, a story that affirms the truth of some aspect of the faith. These instances rely very much on context and these forms of speech similarly have their own patterns and distinctive features, reflecting the way Latter Day Saints value both the integration of personal experiences and reflections with the traditionalism and structure provided by the church and the lens through which experiences can enhance or support belief.

During our time together I asked Shay quite a lot about how prayer, revelation and blessings functioned to shape both day-to-day life and big decisions he made with his family. These forms are often entangled, prayer, along with bearing a testimony and offering a blessing, are all crucial for Mormon men to participate in as part of their standard faith practice. Shay described his commitment to LDS values and how they were particularly strengthened by his experiences in the mission field. A several points in his recollecting of those experiences which drew him closer to the church Shay explicitly pointed to the necessity of language as a medium through which religion occurs and is experienced, and the significance of prayer for making decisions and getting through difficult experiences.

Shay described how in his Spanish-speaking mission field he was struggling to make connections; a companion offered him a blessing that would speed his ability to grasp the language, and to also make him able to speak in tongues, which was immediately effective. Both the power of blessing and the practical need to communicate in a common language were central to the dissemination of faith in this particular anecdote. Shay brought up trials in his life, scenes he encountered that reminded him how faith gave protection from The Adversary, and when I asked him if he had a specific moment he was referring to he said, "none which are appropriate to describe". The careful decisions around what can be said, and what should go unsaid, how language should be structured and how sacred language should be employed, created limitations in Shay's narrative that aligned him with a very adherent application of church teachings regarding language, and cultural practices that fit into his identity as a Mormon. In speaking with Shay and analyzing language among faithful LDS I was aware of a very particular feature of language in this context, a particular heightened consciousness around what is spoken aloud, as language is both a medium through which one manifests values and objectifies invisible aspects of one's identity, as well as directly communicates ideas, in this context, with each other and with God.

Blessings

Blessings, like prayers, involve inspired speech, and are viewed as having the capacity to effect immediate change, as Shay experienced in his mission field. Men give the vast majority of blessings, as particular types of blessings require authority for them to be offered, usually The Priesthood. Significantly, women bless other women inside the sex- segregated areas of the temple, and they may offer public prayers or blessings before a meal, but typically women do not bless others and church authorities explicitly discourage it. During my time in the field I never saw a woman perform a blessing. This fact is somewhat contentious among those who are interested in expanding women's roles in the church, as historically Mormon women were able to perform healing blessings, though according to LDS.org,

> Women's participation in healing blessings gradually declined in the early 20th century as Church leaders taught that it was preferable to follow the New Testament directive to "call for the elders". By 1926, Church President Heber J. Grant affirmed that the First Presidency "do not encourage calling in the sisters to administer to the sick, as the scriptures tell us to call in the Elders, who hold the priesthood of God and have the power and authority to administer to the sick in the name of Jesus Christ." Currently,

> the Church's *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* directs that "only Melchizedek Priesthood holders may administer to the sick or afflicted." ("Joseph Smiths Teachings About the Priesthood", n.d.)

Blessings are offered in both formal church settings, in the home, and can be offered elsewhere; they may be utilized to simply to comfort someone, or to strengthen, or prepare an individual for an event or occasion; one family in the ward explained that they had a tradition of gathering for "back to school blessings", performed by the father in the family, but involving both parents placing their hands on their children, with their eyes closed and heads bowed. In church I always looked forward to "Baby Blessings", small, ceremonial blessings referred formally to as "The Naming and Blessing of a Child", in which a group of men chosen by the family gather to bless a new baby and effectively offer up some hopes or prophecies for that child's future in the church. The baby's father almost always gives these blessings. Children are formally baptized into the church when they turn 8, or at any age after deciding to convert to Mormonism, and following their baptism are giving a blessing in which they receive 'the gift of the holy ghost',

> After people are baptized, they are confirmed members of the Church and given the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. The Lord said, "Whoso having faith you shall confirm in my church, by the laying on of the hands, and I will bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them" (D&C 33:15). (*Gospel Principles* 2011:120)

Teenagers are offered another specific type of blessing referred to as the 'Patriarchal Blessing'. These are particularly special blessings, which serve the purpose of giving the recipient some indication of how their life will unfold; they are explicitly prophetic, can only be given by the Church Patriarch who is viewed as having the authority to receive inspiration from God when performing blessings. The blessings are written down and intended to be studied by the recipient, though the promises made in a Patriarchal Blessing "may not occur in this lifetime" and are considered highly personal.

> It contains personal revelation and instructions from Heavenly Father, who knows our strengths, weaknesses, and eternal potential. Patriarchal blessings may contain promises, admonitions, and warnings. ("Patriarchal Blessings", n.d.)

Overall, whether given at particular milestones or to meet the needs of an individual or as a demonstration of caring or goodwill, blessings are a form of speech that can be seen as having "independent power" (Coleman 2006:174). These utterances are meant to be overwhelmingly driven by the Holy Spirit, and are seen as having the capacity to quite literally effect change. They operate as a gift, transmitting a spiritual essence which is then possessed by the recipiant (Mauss 1950). Harding and Coleman both note that particular forms of religious language assume a passive audience; blessings are object-like in their capacity to contain some essence or power which is given over to the recipient (Coleman: 2006). This particular form of religious speech is seen as having real world impact, preforming work on bodies, redirecting situations or providing insights from the divine.

In the First Ward I noted that blessings, though given in many contexts and with varied purpose, often were utilized to allude to God' authority, or the power of the church, over individuals. While that often meant God's power to heal pain or relieve anxiety, sometimes blessings seemed to more explicitly press upon their recipients the need to "stay the path", as it was often expressed. During baby blessings men would often pray that their children obey his or her parents, and stay faithful and true to the church, keeping all of their covenants with God. These blessings of hope also assumed that divine power and authority would manifest; such authority was often seen as leading people to submit to the will of God, which was seen as being represented in the church's teachings. Successfully receiving such blessings could be viewed as a confirmation of the church's authority or God's presence.

"I know this church is true": church talks

B	I	N	G	O
Utah accent a la "American Fark"	speaker with an accent (not Uchtdorf)	Oxyview glasses	choir sings Primary song	using "even" example: "even the Son of God."
"...a shadow of a doubt"	teary pioneer story	reference to political neutrality	Pres. Eyering cries	speaker mentions grandchildren
speaker wears a red tie	Pres Monson looks bewildered while telling a funny story	FREE SPACE	two people at the organ	photobombing the camera
Pres. Uchtdorf talks about airplanes	"every fiber of my being"	congregation stands up for a song	video cuts to a scripture	women in the Motab wearing pearls
Elder Packer says something controversial	new temple is announced	female speaker wearing a pastel suit jacket	"tender mercies"	camera pans over Alex Boyé

Conference Talk Bingo from 'Rational Faiths'

In the lead-up to the Annual General Conference, held in April, preparations were made for viewing perhaps the pinnacle event in disseminating Mormon language. During conference, church authorities address the faithful at a series of talks in Salt Lake City, which are broadcast around the world. These talks cover topics important to Latter Day Saints; sometimes they announce new revelations or policies, but for the most part are designed to reinforce the values and teachings of the church. On social media a few First Ward members began circulating a popular blog post on the site "Rational Faiths", a Mormon blog that tended to cover progressive topics with humor. The post read:

> With General Conference coming up I thought it would be fun to talk about Mormon vernacular – you know, the quirky language we Mormons slip into whenever we walk through the church doors. So I've compiled 20 common phrases or sayings that Mormons can't get enough of (in no particular order). Some of these may be

> indigenous to Utah, but some of them are surely known worldwide. Maybe you can use them for conference bingo this Sunday. (Pablo 2012)

A reader of the blog went ahead and created downloadable PDFs with selected phrases for playing during the conference talks, the posted on social media suggested a potential gathering with the printed bingo cards. The initial list included several more phrases encountered in church talks, the types of sermons given in Sacrament Meeting, which are structured around a particular assigned doctrine, principal or topic and are typically given by 2-3 lay members of the church each week. Number 18, in particular, caused me to chuckle, as I had indeed heard a church talk open several times over with the line:

> "When the bishop called me last week…" – you will hear this (or something along these lines) at the beginning of a talk in Sacrament meeting 90% of the time. We love to tell the story of how the assignment came about! (Pablo 2012)

The bingo game reflected a very specific way that church members engage with typical "Mormon talk", which reinforces particular values and ideologies. The fact that First Ward members were joking about these tropes demonstrated a sort of self-conscious awareness of these patterns, and a sense of humor about their persistence. The patterned-yet- spontaneous forms of language, found in blessings and prayers, are integrated in church with rehearsed, written or otherwise retold forms of speech that constitute church talks and testimonies; this kind of story-telling and lesson planning is viewed as a way of reinforcing faith, instilling strong traditions and disseminating the crucial lessons contained in the scriptures, bolstering their applicability in new temporal contexts.

While prayers and blessings are structured in particular ways, but intended to be spontaneous (and therefore open to the influence of God), testimonies and talks are fortifying; they vary in how they are structured, but often fashion personal stories into narratives that support a cohesive picture of the role faith plays in lived experiences. Speakers are advised to allow the spirit to direct the talk but to come with a prepared outline. Speakers offer testimonies met with "relatively predictable responses" as a way of upholding established values (Coleman 2006:174), and these are often peppered with very particular phrases distinctive within Mormonism. The declaration, "I know this church is true", for instance, if often the opening or closing of a testimony. Testimonies, specifically, are narratives which confirm the speaker's belief in one facet of the faith – having a testimony of Heavenly Father,

for example, is simply a way to say that the speaker feels they have verification of the existence of an involved God, usually in the form of an overwhelming feeling of faith or seeing some material evidence, such as an answer to a prayer.

Fast and Testimony Meeting, referred to as "Fast Sunday", replaces the sacrament talks with unstructured time for members to come up to the rostrum and bear their testimony on the first Sunday of the month. All members fast until the conclusion of church, a practice that aims to ready the body for particular spiritual experiences, with the exception of anyone who feels physically unable to fast. I always looked forward to these meetings for the opportunity to hear the more unrehearsed (and much shorter) reflections offered by a broader spectrum of church members. Testimonies were typically given as short anecdotes that testify to the faith and its components, demonstrating the relevance, realness and importance of Mormon doctrine and living an LDS identity. Structurally there was a distinct pattern to testimonies, one that in particular emphasized truth and "proof" of the divine, the doctrine and Heavenly Father's direct impact on the lives of the faithful. Further, many of these testimonies were stories, their narrative patterns transformed ordinary experiences, difficulties and coincidences into faith-enhancing or faith-proving experiences, re-contextualizing particular events to understand them as part of a divine plan. Testimony is a speech act that reorders history and every day life, imagining or placing it into a larger depiction of god's design for individual's lives.

Bearing testimony is a speech act that reframes experience, and reflects back Mormon ways of being in and experiencing the world. One of the first instances of a testimony being conveyed to me was in conversation with Jean, a longtime member of the ward in her mid-70s. Jean and her husband Eckhart, a quiet and somewhat reserved couple who spoke to me about classical music and the work they were undertaking on their garden, rarely directly asked me about my take on their faith. Over lunch in Jean's home though, she tearfully offered that she felt God's hand so frequently in the "tender mercies" she had experienced, her testimony of tender mercies held her faith firmly in the church. Jean wondered that people could attribute such things to coincidence; as for her, these instances were absolutely driven by the Holy Spirit working in her life. She recalled, specifically, a day many years ago, picking up groceries at the store. Mindlessly, she found herself loading two watermelons in her cart. By the time she'd checked out, and loaded her car, it occurred to her that her small family could never get

through all the food she'd inexplicably bought. She paused a moment to consider the full trunk, and then drove to a friend's home to offer up the excess for their family. Upon arriving at the doorstep of the friend's home with a watermelon in her arms, the friend confided that her husband had been out of work. The family had been struggling and the delivery was most welcome. In this moment Jean felt absolutely certain that the spirit had guided her actions to help a friend in a time of need. These Mormon stories reflect cycles in which the unexplained becomes part of a broader structuring of our lives, ordered by Heavenly Father; experience becomes lesson, individuals move from uncertainty to clarity, and these patterns are offered as exemplary of God's place in day-to-day life, creating scenarios that lead to personal growth and preparedness for eternity. Phrases such as "tender mercies" are particular to Mormonism as a means of expressing these happenstance instances that feel divinely prompted. These speech acts create order, give a very solid shape to how the world works, giving concrete purpose to incidents, such as illness, hardship or mistakes.

The articulation of this worldview is meant to strengthen other's spirituality, but can also maintain and uphold particular boundaries around how Mormons should engage and identify their experiences as faithful members of the church. Some testimonies spoke of how the world held proof of the gospel; one member concluded after a trip to Mexico that many ruins were proof of Israelites in the Americas. Another member spoke of hearing a child make reference to the pre-mortal realm, where Mormons believe our souls wait for a body. On the converse, a member confided that excess grief at a Mormon funeral suggests a lack of faith, as death is not the end of relationships between the faithful. Some testimonies simply reflected on gratitude and blessings, or opportunities to help or be helped. Testimonies must be given with witness, unlike prayers, so their purpose explicitly goes beyond personal faith practices. To *have* a testimony, I should clarify, is considered an essential part of the faith and involves personally receiving confirmation of the truth or relevance of some aspect of the church – members might declare they have a testimony of the scriptures, or of the temple or patriarchal blessings – the process of bearing one's testimony, particularly in a formal context like in a sacrament talk, at a visiting teaching lesson, in the home of an investigator, as a missionary, or on Fast Sunday, converts a personal experience to something actualized and objectified for a greater purpose.

These speech acts further draw together material components of the LDS faith, connecting together place, the body, and discourse into one bounded system where divinity is entangled. For example, testimony is strengthened by the body and by place – fasting can help one be prepared to gain or deliver a testimony, and many directives from Heavenly Father that are considered particularly potent are received in the Temple. When testimonies are received in places that are not categorically LDS, it brings those spaces into the realm of the sacred, reconstituting these places. For example, many individuals described receiving testimony in nature, or even in quiet moments in their home or cars (much as Joseph Smith's first vision took place in the wilderness). These private spaces then are imagined as also being sites of spiritual practice. Generally, these testimonies support engaging with Mormon material culture and working inside the structures of the church, following leaders and showing reverence for the church as an organization. This is a significant way that testimonies are a reconstituting medium, as individuals continually make their faith objectified through language, and supportive of Mormonism as a belief system. Over my time in the First Ward I began to see the potential for a testimony that contradicted church authorities, and in response, a pointed church talk could express absolute faith and a coded warning against critiques. Push-and-pull negotiations around particular issues in the church were rarely framed as personal disagreements, rather, as opposing "testimonies" of what God was directing people to uphold.

Breaking Script

In all these examples of religious language: prayer, testimony, blessings, and to some extent, church talks, there are many important assumptions embedded in these acts of speech as they occur in sacred contexts. Seeing the potential of words to hold their own power, and to sincerely objectify internal truths and spiritual feelings, is essential for understanding why language is such a potent medium for sustaining faith and affecting change. Keane describes how language ideologies rooted in Christian faith traditions affix particular confidences in words as a medium shaped and informed by divine and moral powers. Words, Keane explains, are understood as "transparent to one's inner thoughts"; when spoken in good faith words are inherently "mediated by the norm of sincerity" (Keane 2008:S123). While clothing, sacralized spaces, carefully maintained family homes and judiciously followed dietary restrictions can

create contexts in which clean spiritual living may occur, and sanctify bodies and spaces, preparing them for The Spirit, words are the medium by which religion occurs. In other words, belief, faith and spirituality emerge through language. Words, in a Mormon context, and inherently more powerful when they are integrated with these material contexts; they rely on and interact with the material and embodied circumstances in which they occur.

As language is imbued with the ability to be inspired by God and affect real change, it is also the medium through which the church introduces change. As blessings and words always come before material adjustments, such as receiving the garments in the temple, being given priesthood, or even before the body is submerged in water for baptism, it is often understood that words beget the concrete actions that follow. Before a patriarchal blessing is received in the mail it is spoken, and similarly the published content on LDS.org typically comes from talks given at General Conference. Before the church instigates a new policy, a testimony must be received by a church leader then conveyed, usually through a talk or announcement at a large church meeting, such as conference. This potential of words to become officious, consequential and the connection between words and a spiritual realm which moves into the every day via language, means that language is never treated lightly as it emerges in these revered and established ways. Harding notes that words spoken in these ritualized and routinized ways in public are central for reproducing religious values; and above I have pointed to the ways in which particular phrases, narrative styles, and words are key to replicating a Mormon point of view in evolving social and temporal contexts. Critically though Harding notes that with replication, comes reconfiguration (2000:129). I have noted that narratives are often reconfigured to fit established Mormon values, but at times a slight shift occurs in which those established values were negotiated. These processes of reconfiguration and creativity inside established traditions involving religious language were where tensions became particularly animated and nuanced.

In many ways, superficially, the church appears to be a space open to dynamic and constant fluctuation; the emphasis on personal testimony, the rotating speakers on Sundays, and the impermanence of leadership roles in the church seem to create an environment where opportunities for reordering and reimagining are endless. Here it is critical to see that while words, testimonies, prayers, inspired speech, blessings and other such extemporized forms of spirituality can emerge and potentially destabilize the strong traditions of the church, the

material forms and structures in place, in many ways, order and regulate speech. Access within Mormonism is granted when an individual consistently vocalizes and demonstrates obedience. But while particular material engagements clearly signal disobedience, speech, particularly as it is inspired, offers more shades of ambiguity. Sometimes members of the church referred to Fast and Testament meeting in-jest as "open mic Sunday". Alternately tedious and unexpected, often the context of testimonies felt predictable, a story about a challenge overcome through prayer with the conclusion "I love my family, I know this church is true", yet when this type of script was broken it often left an impact for some time. Fast and Testament was a rare opportunity for anyone to come forward.

On the verge of retiring from his job as CEO of a Los Angeles- based company, Dick spoke at length with me about events in the church that had 'shaken things up', with a candor indicative of his affectionate-but-critical relationship with the ward he was preparing to say a farewell to after wrapping things up with his job, as he planned to relocate with his family to Utah. Dick, a self-proclaimed liberal, and lifelong Mormon who had served the church in every capacity, was not hesitant to be frank when he spoke of Mormonism. Dick's recollection of events that had brought tensions to the surface throughout his 45 years in the ward generally involved various forms of intervention by Salt Lake City authorities, either shifting ward boundaries, introducing new policies or halting the ward's actions in some way or another. In 2011, Dick recalled, a particular testimony given during Fast Sunday create rifts in the ward unlike anything he'd experienced before. A member of the ward, Mitch, who Lindy and Dick both recalled only came to their church "every six weeks or so", approached the rostrum where he addressed the congregants, introduced himself, and came out as gay. Dick explained that most members either knew or suspected that Mitch was gay, and he believed that his sporadic attendance at the first ward was in part because there was a more tolerant community in Oakland for someone who'd potentially been kept at a distance from the church. Mitch proclaimed his sexuality during his testimony because he had been offered an administrative position in the San Francisco ward to which he was assigned, so would not be attending the First Ward any more, and Dick felt that his coming out was in part because he felt the position was a "watershed moment", but in part occurred because with his departure he could avoid any frictions that result from his testimony.

Dick remembered that he was not by any means close to Mitch, but hoped that the

tolerant nature of the ward would be apparent in the aftermath of this particular moment. Rather, he noted,

> There was a couple in the ward at the time that mid-speech they got up and walked out – stomped out! They were very conservative and they haven't been back since. They're going to another ward that is less tolerant. Generally the ward - I am sure there are people in the ward who are embarrassed and were uncomfortable with that, but by in large I think he received a pleasant reception in terms of 'good for you, Mitch'.

Dick recalled that while Mitch's sexuality was never a secret in the ward, his testimony as a public declaration of his identity in a sacred context was disruptive. Bringing up homosexuality in a public way, bound in a context and format generally reserved for truths that upheld the church's teachings, seemed like an implicit challenge to church (which teaches that heterosexual marriage is essential for reproducing divine order on earth).

While Mitch's testimony replicated standard farewells, it was positive and affirmative of the truth found in the church, his embrace of his gay identity contained in that signaled a departure from the status quo. Mitch himself had chosen to practice celibacy, as per the church's policies those who experience what the church calls "homosexual attraction" may retain their temple recommends and live righteously through abstaining from homosexual relationships (and sex). But many conservative members believe that embracing a gay identity is in and of itself a challenge to their doctrine. This particular issue is significant in the ward, and indeed these instances in which homosexuality is not treated as a bad word have been entwined with progressive efforts to create tolerance in the church.

Largely these discourses of tolerance have not emerged in church talks or prayers offered in these settings. There are, then, moments of tension when sacred words, words spoken in sacred contexts, and words bound in religious language fail to reproduce familiar narratives potentially. Because testimonies are given particular reverence many members upheld these experiences as examples of uncontestable truths; these instances resonated at potential departures from the familiar. Harding suggests that testimony not only is meant to support and uphold particular values of a religious group, but also to "close, suppress and fix" narrative gaps which challenge particular ideologies (2000:86). Harding notes that narratives which "harmonize discrepancies", such as stories in which a life of sin is redeemed through a turn toward arduous faith, a turn which results in blessings materializing, are essential ways

that particular parameters of religion are upheld in spite of ambiguities and uncertainties. The LDS church views heterosexual marriage to be central to living the faith, and the LGTBQ movement towards acceptance, visibility and rights has presented a challenge to the church upholding heterosexual relationships as the only valid partnerships in the eyes of God. Ideally, as the church believes that "homosexual attraction" has no place in The Plan of Salvation, the only logical way that the gap between a gay identity and the necessity of heterosexual marriage is drawn back into a narrative of harmony is when such desires are transformed. Mitch's public announcement and embrace of his sexuality, despite the fact that his behavior was in line with the church's standards, occurred at a critical moment in which many members, including Dick, felt the church had reached a sort of 'tipping point'. External social pressure and internal disharmony could be felt throughout the ward, but the interjection of such a contemporary and loaded narrative in a sacred context (one generally used to continually reaffirm the traditions of the church) brought to the surface emotions and tensions around how to mediate boundaries in the church, starting with the regulation of what could be spoken over the rostrum. The drama of this particular instance was not replicated during my time in the ward, though it reverberated, particularly as new topics began to emerge in sacred spaces, and the church began to address topics once shrouded in silence.

Breaking Silence

During my time in the ward the question of how the church would negotiate the reality of wider social acceptance and support of diverse sexualities was one of the issues at the forefront of many tensions. Alongside this, a parallel struggle was occurring as women in the church were seeking more opportunities for gender equality in the church. These two movements were both generally concerned with the fundamental questions of whether gender roles, particularly in which men preside and women support, were indeed fundamental to Mormon doctrine and faith, or if particular ideas about gender and sexuality were rather evolving social categories that were not relevant to living a righteous life inside the church. The movements were often entangled, and met with a great deal of resistance. Despite the unlikelihood of the administrative church supporting either same-sex marriage or women's ordination, emphasis on testimony and personal revelation gave individuals hope; many people in the church believed these aspects of the church could very well evolve and felt confident in their ability to receive support from God in pushing these issues with the church.

As the church had previously reversed racist policies, this left other possibilities open. Further, many saw those changes implemented when the discourses of racial equality were brought forward in LDS spaces, largely through talk, prayer, appeals to church leadership, outside critique, and eventually a declaration from Salt Lake City that a testimony had been received. Many members sought to begin a new movement to address current issues of exclusion through integrating these issues into church talks, testimonies and prayers, in both a hope to push for radical and more subtle changes inside the church. With this were many other ward members looking for more indirect paths towards promoting tolerance and gender equality in the LDS church without disrupting or questioning policy; these efforts, too, involved a thoughtful approach to the language evoked inside Mormon spaces.

A major tool involved in efforts to effect church culture and policy involved challenging many assumptions about what could be said and what should be censored in sacred settings. This negotiation was largely about reimagining issues such as feminism as a cultural movement that could be in harmony with Mormon values, rather than a challenge to it. The subtlety of how language is regulated, however, in a Mormon context, contained many opportunities for me to nearly miss the significance of any particular comment. Very early in my introduction to Mormon doctrine I learned that Mormons have a unique understanding of God that diverges from other Christians, in particular, they believe that God is married, and Mormons refer to his female counterpart as "Heavenly Mother". It is believed that this model is an example of the necessary configuration for exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom. Heavenly Mother, unlike Heavenly Father, is not considered and appropriate divinity to direct prayer to, in fact officially LDS are taught that they should not pray to nor directly worship Heavenly Mother, "As with many other truths of the gospel, our present knowledge about a Mother in Heaven is limited" (LDS.org/topics/mother-in- heaven), but what is known is that the example set by Jesus suggests that all prayer should be directed only to God, the Heavenly Father, and his son, who is viewed as an extension of him. This has resulted in a somewhat veiled and hushed disposition toward Heavenly Mother, and sometimes the assumption that Heavenly Mother should not be evoked in any prayerful situation. One church member explained to me that praying to or worshiping Heavenly Mother would be like "calling the wife of a bishop for a temple recommend", it was understood that Heavenly Mother's role as a support person mirrored women's relationship with spiritual authority in the church. Others found it offensive to conflate her power with Heavenly Fathers.

It was suggested by several ward members that a crucial step in transforming the church into a more equitable place was to break the tradition of silence around Heavenly Mother, and often a direct recognition of Heavenly Mother's role in creation or the mention of her in a prayer suggested a push towards giving her, and by extension women, more prominence and power in the church. I told Bishop Call that I had not heard her ever mentioned in church talks, but he immediately noted that he referenced 'Heavenly Parents' in his own talk; explaining that by acknowledging their collective role in blessing the members of his church he could give recognition and gratitude to the essential role of women in the faith, while still directing prayer and worship exclusively to Heavenly Father. This particular shift, from expressing gratitude toward a Heavenly Father to Heavenly Parents, had gone over my head – but had been noted by many others more sensitive to the traditions of the church. Connecting this with broader issues around women's prominence in Mormon spaces Greg went on to note that he had also made the decision as bishop to give the young women a role during the sacrament meeting acting as greeters. This way, both deacons (the boys who had been initiated into the Priesthood) and young women could be thanked for their service. Noting,

> I try and thank them each week. The young men get thanked each week, 'thank you for your reverent manner with which you passed the sacrament'. It shouldn't take a young daughter to get you thinking about these issues, but it makes it more poignant. You think, 'how does she feel each week coming to church and her brother gets praised for his role, and there is nothing for them?'.

He also began asking the congregation to sustain young women, a public declaration of support structured like a vote, when they advanced in their programs. Again, this gesture gave language to the process of commencement young women experienced. He added that also he had decided that during Sacrament talks he had started asking new couples in the ward, who are typically asked to give talks as a way of introduction, to decide how to structure their talks and in which order to present. Traditionally, these introductory talks involve wives opening with background on the couple, and the husband following up with a talk based on doctrine. Allowing women to speak to doctrine or men to their domestic situation created more room for women to be seen as more than just a support to their husbands, he felt this example could further help young women like his daughter who were struggling with questions about women's place in the church, saying, "It's a patriarchal church, so I think we need to be

sensitive to that, and do as much as we can to empower the girls as well as the boys". These instances in which visibility, words, and the reorganization of people intersected pointed to the ways that between materiality and language "causes and constraints work in multiple directions" (Keane 2011:160). While Greg's choices fit within Mormonism's structure, the reordering of the familiar, and articulation of the problem of young women's exclusion from public opportunities to serve the congregation alternately eased and heightened concerns around whether traditions were being honored, or the doors were opening to more substantial changes, even as the act of speaking to young women could be construed as ultimately an ambiguous gesture occurring inside of the system.

Greg's careful decisions about acknowledging the role of Heavenly Mother, or find ways to include and acknowledge women without shifting the patriarchal structures of the church, was certainly not radical when compared to others in the church explicitly seeking to challenge the church's system of gender hierarchy and cultivate a divine feminine within Mormonism, but it marked a very particular way the ward distinguished itself. The shift towards an integration of Heavenly Mother and acceptance of women's roles outside the church including leadership had a strong history in the first ward. Jean recalled that even as a young woman she had sought opportunities to uplift women inside Mormon spaces, recalling that one year, at Christmas, she had insisted on proclaiming when she read from the story of the birth of Jesus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men *and women*", and noting that in the First Ward this declaration was met with nods of agreement rather than offense. "This ward has historically been very very good to women", she noted. These efforts to integrate women into familiar expressions of faith, thanking Heavenly Parents or adding feminine pronouns to biblical passages, were creative ways to acknowledge women's influence without completely dismantling boundaries, rather, negotiating within them. Though, the power of language to ease tensions around holding feminist values inside an explicitly patriarchal system was met with concerns about words seemingly infiltrating spaces with disruptive ideas, to press against the status quo, and potentially create pathways for more radical actions. This push and pull suggests that language reflects a particular uncertainty; while the material outcomes were unknowable they still intensified social life in the ward and held a great deal of power in drawing out emotional responses.

Heather explained to me that the inclusion of Heaven Mother's name is prayers and

church talks had some explicit ties to the Mormon feminist movement, and was indeed connected to specific efforts by some First Ward members to create a feminist theology. She recalled that when she first joined the ward she was seeking opportunities to connect with other Mormon Feminists and attended a gathering at Carol Lynn Pearson's home. Pearson is a longtime resident of Walnut Creek, a small city 15 miles east of Oakland. She is a close personal friend of many of the first ward members, and had notoriety for publishing books and plays on a number of topics significant to progressive Mormons. Formerly married to a gay man, Pearson wrote about their life together and his death from AIDs during the epidemic in the 1980s. She has done extensive work on promoting the acceptance of homosexuality within the LDS church. Heather attended Pearson's home and was given a copy of her play, "Mother Wove The Morning", which Pearson describes as "a one-woman play in which I perform sixteen women throughout history in search of the female face of God". Heather described the impact of this book,

> I read it a few months after Isaac was born. So I was really postpartum and probably really emotional. This was the fall, and it just really hit me in December. There were these three days in December where the patriarchy was just so heavy. Basically in Mormon scripture there are no mentions of any angels or other celestial beings who are female, ever, except maybe once in Doctrine and Covenants it refers to Eve on the throne next to Adam. But I think that's it, and the only time in the Doctrine and Covenants where it talks about women in the next life is basically as prizes for men as polygamous wives.
>
> Having read Carol Lynn's book, and feeling such a loss of any female power, and then realizing 'I don't even have scriptural proof that I exist as a person in the next life except as a reward for my husband', was just really really hard. Those three days were dark and, I guess you'd say 'depressed'. The line that my brain would think was 'If I can't be equal in Heaven, in the Celestial Kingdom, and I won't be equal because I guess I'm just a prize for my husband, then I might as well be equal in hell'.
>
> There were old Mormon rhetorics, they don't do this so much now, but there were old rhetorics that people who committed suicide wouldn't get to the Celestial Kingdom. And so I thought I'd rather kill myself and cause that sin and be in hell, or outer darkness or one of the lower kingdoms – I mean, there really is no Mormon hell, I am using that as other Christians would - anyhow, I'd rather be in a lesser kingdom than be unequal in the highest. I never had a plan for suicide, it's not like that - I just was in a really dark place and having these thoughts. So I was driving to pick up McKay at work when the idea came to me that I should start a blog and put Heavenly Mother in the scriptures. Basically, it was for myself to have value I had to insist that Heavenly Mother had value. Because if she didn't have any value than there is absolutely no evidence that women even get to exist after this life.

Heather started her blog called 'With Your Mutual Approbation', the title coming from a hymn composed by Eliza R. Snow, which makes reference to Heavenly Mother. Heather explained that as some Mormons consider their hymns part of LDS doctrine, they have contained some of the most hopeful references to the feminine divine. The simple premise of the blog was to insert Heavenly Mother's name into scriptures and hymns where she was 'missing'. The process was restorative for Heather, reordering her vision of Mormonism and giving her hope that she and her young daughter had a distinct role. Her in-laws, upon reading the blog, accused her of trying to "alter" the sacred word of God. This seemingly minor inclusion of female pronouns read to them as heresy. They contacted her bishop and expressed their concern, insisting he tell her the blog needed to be taken down, or she should face disciplinary actions. Her bishop came to her and expressed support. For Heather the freedom to "seek and see" Heavenly Mother was absolutely essential to her faith, she recalls telling her husband, "I decided that if I didn't live in Oakland I wouldn't go to church at all". While subtle, the very minor freedoms afforded to first ward members to speak out evolved into critical ways the their ward was a distinctive place. But essentially, for Heather, this signaled openness to more substantial changes within the church.

The Bloggernacle: a space for challenging Mormon discourses

B	I	N	G	O
Preside = equal partners + man calls on prayers.	Stacking chairs	You hold the priesthood...in your arms.	Equality doesn't mean being the same.	My wife is happy without the priesthood.
Men need priesthood to keep them active in church.	Steadying the ark	Women in the church are happy without the priesthood.	All callings in the church are equal/prophet no better than nursery	Feminists just want to be men.
Why would anyone want the priesthood? It's so much work!	My wife is in charge in our house!	FREE SPACE	Men don't get to be mothers—that's not fair!	You get all the blessings of the priesthood.
Is not at all like blacks and the priesthood.	Women : Motherhood :: Men : Priesthood	In our ward, the RS president runs everything.	Murmuring	Female Primary President is "over" a male primary teacher
Women are incredible.	I once heard of a female Sunday School presidency member	Wicked take the truth to be hard.	If women had the priesthood, they would take over.	Women are more spiritual.

By Common Consent's 'Mormon Patriarchy Bingo'

Heather's decision to utilize the medium of blogs to begin the process of reimagining women's roles in Mormon theology was part of a new and growing tradition of cultivating Mormon spaces online, in which uncensored mediations of faith could circulate. "Patriarchy Bingo" was introduced around the time of new teachings on the Priesthood Authority, not available to women, were being taught in Relief Society. More biting than simply laughing as typical Mormon language, this particular set of tropes critiqued the rote responses given to questions around gender equality, and found it's audience through online networks. The internet, particularly in the last decade, has fundamentally altered how Mormon discourse occurs. It has facilitated connections between individuals without the mediation of the church's administrative center, and created space for conversations that are not immediately subject to the critique or censorship of church authorities, giving Mormon subcultures a new platform in which they are flourishing.

The catalogue of Mormon blogs online are often referred to as "The Bloggernacle", a play on the word tabernacle, which comes from the Hebrew bible and means dwelling-place

and has been given to one of Salt Lake City's iconic buildings in temple square, anauditorium where church talks and choir performances are held, often open to members of the public. The impact of conversations happening online certainly circulates back to the church and local wards, and the First Ward, is often quite tuned into. Emergent discourses online are as critical a medium for Mormon expression as talks, and often provides a potent counter-perspective to the dominant narrative. Members of the church have indeed been disciplined for online activity, and recently met with efforts by the church to create a substantial cannon online responding to discourses happening primarily in blogs. Dick's interest in church history and theology, once shared only among groups of individuals who passed articles and books back and forth, has essentially expanded with the internet; in many ways online space had expanded the circle of critical-thinking Mormons in the ward.

The connection between online spaces and physical spaces extends beyond this metaphor, and aptly connects the conversations that happen online with their impact on LDS culture. The things being written about, debated, raised and discussed in online spaces are integrated into physical space; they are a continuation, disrupting boundaries. The Internet is not a monolithic or placeless 'cyberspace'; rather, it is numerous new technologies, used by diverse people, in diverse real-world locations (Miller & Slater 200:1), and the church has recently doubled its efforts to acknowledge this new and evolving reality, while there is an increasing awareness that "the internet is not growing apart from the world, but to the contrary is increasingly embedded in it" (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 451). Offline and Online worlds are not separate but rather converge in a number of settings. Hybrid communities in which people interact both on and offline emerge out of this phenomenon (Goodsell and Williamson 2008). Particularly to members of the church with a great deal of familiarity with online spaces, the internet is simply a tertiary space in which Mormons can gather outside of the highly structured organizational spaces provided by the church. Online, taboos about language use, including the invocation of Heavenly Mother or raising questions about LDS culture or belief, have less potency, as there is no immediate structure of authority regulating and overseeing what is being said.

Besides *With Your Mutual Approbation*, Heather began writing for another blog, this one coauthored by a group of Mormon feminists titled *The Exponent II*. The blog's name comes from a publication circulated by members of the Relief Society dating back to 1872. The

publication was revived in the 1970s as a Mormon feminist magazine, from which the blog evolved. Hannah also wrote for a co-authored Mormon blog, *Feminist Mormon Housewives*, a prominent and widely read blog (given coverage by the New York Times) dealing with liberal, feminist and political topics within Mormonism. Beyond the active Mormon feminists in the ward, many other members read blogs concerned with Mormon topics published outside the umbrella of the church, the bishop had in fact sent me links to articles on the blog *By Common Consent*. Gabby was the one member in the ward who had transformed her blog into a full-time career; *Design Mom*, which was focused on the convergence of "design and motherhood", had a much broader audience outside of practicing Mormons, but it occasionally dealt with Mormon-specific topics. Reading blogs, alongside official church publications, were largely responsible for introducing, reproducing and reflecting the fundamentally charged and current topics in Mormonism.

After a Relief Society lesson which very delicately broached the issue of women's ordination, as hymn books were being placed back on the shelf and chairs put away, Nedra turned to me and said "what did you make of that?". We discussed the lesson, which I thought was almost too indirect. "Well," Nedra countered, "I really prefer for some things not to get brought up here. I don't like topics that are divisive; it can make it harder for us to love each other here. And I want to love all my sisters at church.". This tension is precisely the reason I came to see how essential blogs have been in creating space for disruptive Mormon conversations and discourses. However, far from being mere echo chambers for liberal Mormons to express discontent and the church to respond, the internet has crucially also become an organizing space where words have consequence. Discourses have evolved into activism, pressing up against and reordering the materialized boundaries of the faith. This next chapter will expand on the power of online community organization and the way this has impacted the First Ward.

Conclusions

While Mormonism is often presented as a timeless, homogenous and fixed belief system by church leaders, in Oakland's First Ward I encountered not just tension in trying to navigate ridged traditionalism in a progressive, urban environment, but also many Mormons actively

seeking to create meaningful change within their faith. This process involves both subtle and overt efforts to push or break through Mormonism's system of boundaries, binaries and push for homogeneity. Many of these creative attempts to move faith traditions arise through language, as participation in LDS faith is predicated on an understanding of terminology and narrative styles and speech acts that are fundamental to objectifying a Mormon viewpoint. Language is one of the key forms that give structure Mormon religious life, like architecture, language is also used to maintain particular degrees of sacredness. Language enables individuals to perform important rituals, and align their everyday experiences with their Mormon worldview by engaging in narratives that uphold their LDS values and identities. Language is deeply connected to how tradition is maintained in the church. But also, it is a crucial means by which many participants seek to instigate or resist change in the church. Language creates bounded contexts, and is used to disrupt the status quo. Evolving social consciousness within Mormonism is largely predicated upon subtle choices around language, and language is a powerful medium through which one negotiates their faith as they move through the world.

As distinctive language forms emerge in religious settings, the potential of words to not only convey and express spiritual experiences and perspectives, but also enhance contexts and perform social work is apparent. Joel Robbins locates particular qualities of a Christian worldview within the particular language of Christianity, pointing to the emergence and acceptance of certain dominant language ideologies as the mode through which Christianity transforms converted people. Robbins argues that the distinctive ways Christians think about language is one of the central areas of attention within the anthropology of Christianity (2012:7). Language, he argues, is fundamentally constitutive of Christian religion (2001:904), and explores a context where church is actually comprised primarily of talk. The way Robbins' situates and discusses Protestant language ideologies is relevant here; much of Mormon religious life is also contained in speaking. The most perfunctory acts that are constitutive of religious engagement are prayer, bearing ones testimony, giving talks, and offering blessings - and these speech acts are imbued with the potential to have tangible impacts on the world. The effectiveness and significance given to these speech acts often depends on other factors; including environment, the gender of the speaker, and the legitimacy of the speaker provided by materials such as a temple recommend (proving a person's good standing in the faith), or a status of authority conferred and backed up with records. Robbins' argues that Protestantism

is “largely a religion of language”, rather than “patterned ritual action” (2012:15), however in a Mormon context I observed that rather language inherently bundled with other materials in order to constitute religion. This chapter will present this distinctive way in which Mormons experience their faith, and argue that it is through breaking this status quo, in which, for example, prayerful language is used in an unexpected context, that social values shift inside The First Ward.

Chapter Seven

Mormons on the Margins: sexuality, race and belonging

A Bigger Box

On a warm spring day I stepped outside of the church after Sacrament meeting had let out and drifted between groups of ward members in conversation. Even after three hours of services, many members would often stay on church grounds and socialize while their children rolled on the small grass hill adjacent to the meetinghouse entrance. On sunny days, temple hill was extremely inviting, above the city the air felt fresh and cool after spending the morning inside the mostly-windowless building in close proximity with others. Under the awning, which provided shade, I stood chatting with Cirila, the wife of the bishop, when a familiar man approached. I had seen him before, a boyish-faced 30-year-old, with just a bit of stubble and a floral printed tie, but I could not place him. He handed Cirila an article of children's clothing left behind after their families had gotten together on Saturday. She introduced me as "the ward anthropologist". He shook my hand and I said, "I'm sure I have heard your name before but we've never formally met". He smiled and laughingly explained, "You probably have heard of me - I am the gay guy in the ward". With a flush I realized he was correct – people had asked me multiple times over if I was familiar with Emron and his family, upheld as proof positive that their ward was a friendly and accepting space for gay members. He and his husband had two sons, a toddler and an infant, who they were raising in the church. Heather had told me that while Emron was a returned missionary from a large Utah-Mormon family, apparent from his social media pages when we connected on facebook later, his spouse was not a member of the church. They attended on a casual basis, though were wholly claimed by many members. I would see them every few Sundays, usually sitting together in Sacrament, their attention on

the children.

While they attended church and were social with the local LDS community, Emron's marriage disqualified him from holding a temple recommend or a calling in the ward. Church policy dictated that while the family could attend church and be made welcome, they could not function as members with equal status. A member described to me how they had decided to have the children blessed at church, with extended family in attendance – but unlike most new fathers, Emron did not perform the blessing. The member who shared this story presented the information as positive – the family had been included and accommodated, in their view. I spoke with Heather later, wondering her take, since it made me uncomfortable as I envisioned this as removing a father from the very ritual that welcomes a child into his life. As a Mormon feminist advocating for women's ordination, Heather recalled standing just outside the circle of Priesthood Holders and holding a microphone as her husband gave their babies blessings, similarly, trying to find a way to actively participate in a ceremony that excluded her. In the 'Naming and Blessing Ceremony', preventing a parent from speaking the name of the child as part of this ritual strips them of a particular authority. Naming children has the potential to "implicate infants in relations through which they become inserted into and, ultimately will act upon, a social matrix" (Vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006:3), and designating one parent more worthy for this task on the basis of gender, or rendering neither parent worthy on the basis of sexuality, suggests a weakened connection to the child. As giving a name is framed as a political act, one which suggests rights to a child (Layne 2006), exclusion from the ritual carried the same implications as other structural inequalities.

Within a few months of our meeting Emron's attendances at church seemed more sporadic, and then he and his family stopped appearing altogether. I heard through the grapevine that they had decided to stop raising the boys as Mormon, a decision that was finalized after the church officially banned the children of gay couples from being baptized in 2015. It distressed many members to lose the family; some were outraged by the conditions that pushed them out, others reported to me that they were simply disappointed to see them forfeit their faith. Their departure left members talking, speculating and wondering if it could be different. While I did not become close with the family, they were spoken of so often I came to see them of symbolic of hopes and anxieties in the ward about the place of LGTBQ Mormons. Jean, a reserved but opinionated long-time First Ward member in her mid-70's who

maintained a friendship with me after I had left the field, was heartbroken by the policy banning children from baptism. We had discussed Emron prior to his departure and she felt his family was a powerful example, and that their kindness and beautiful children made a strong impression on some of her conservative contemporaries in the ward – she hoped very much that they would inspire more love and tolerant attitudes. Their loss was felt, and Jean was devastated by the church's policy of exclusion.

Throughout my fieldwork, Jean had shared with me her hopes for the expanding culture of acceptance toward LGTBQ-identified members in the church, though she also expressed her support of the mainline church's need to uphold it's "high standards". Jean considers herself progressive, and noted that she was pleased to be involved in a ward that, overall, was known for its tolerance and openness. Jean had explained to me that she wholly believed in the church's teachings, which included the belief that only marriages between men and women were righteous, but she felt that her community could still create space for gay couples to participate in the faith. Jean expressed to me that she didn't need clarity or certainty on these issues because she felt confident that God had a plan that would be revealed later, in regards to gay people. In spite of her empathy towards LGTBQ-identified people, Jean felt that any disruption to the current standards would harm the faith, and rather believed that kindness would do a great deal more than reimagining the existing ways in which Mormonism teaches that people should form unions and start families. The longevity of her faith provided Jean a particular familiarity and confidence that without any policy changes there would always be room for adaptability; that the ward could always provide a relevant support system. After the loss of the ward's only visible gay family it was uncertain whether the church would still be appealing to LGTBQ people, but then a new member arrived who offered hope; he came out in his introductory talk. I had left the field at this point, but Jean emailed to keep me updated, she explained that this new member had perfectly articulated views that she shared, sentiments she had been trying to convey to me over the course of our relationship. In his talk he stated that the ward suited him because it was a place that did not compromise on adherence to doctrine, but was accommodating to his identity. Jean concluded her email saying, "He says Oakland First Ward does not think outside the box - they just have a bigger box. He was witty and most engaging". The metaphor provided a wonderful way to frame my thinking around the ways church members engage with doctrine and policy, and consider their ward in relation to the administrative church.

Ritualism, Securlarism and Adaptation

As I have argued, much of Mormon faith is centered on living within a particular bounded system of standards, bodily practices, prohibitions and social norms. Processes of negotiating boundaries, largely imposed by the administrative church - expanding, maintaining or breaking outside of the box, so to speak, amplified tensions and was the catalyst for the creativity I experienced during my fieldwork. This involved, as I have touched upon, uncompromising hetero-normative values that emphasized specific gender roles in regards to religious and spiritual participation, many of those grounded in marriage. Conformity is a key component of ritualism, and further, ritualism holds social groups together in tight bonds strengthened by this emphasis on cohesiveness (Douglas 1970:14). Douglas views processes of secularization as a "relaxing" of ritualism, arguing that emphasis on individualism slowly weakens communities as they move away from practices that continually reaffirm shared values. By in large, many Mormons, like Jean, experienced anxiety about the relaxing of church standards that very much reflect Douglas's framing of ritualism and community as oppositional to secularism. Jean and others believed that the church was held together by the firmly established and bounded ways that individuals were expected to participate, and without these standards the church would be destabilized.

Douglas's framing of symbolic boundaries is particularly relevant in understanding how the church and many faithful LDS envision regulation of standards, or conforming to tightly controlled practices, as a unifying and strengthening tool. While my own observations pointed to more nuanced possibilities being put forward by those concerned with unity and tradition, envisioning radical new inclusive ways of being LDS, the dichotomy presented is crucial to understanding the tension underlying change in the church. The fear of making the sacred redundant, disobeying an all-powerful God, or simply opening the church to change which could make it unrecognizable in the future were all very real. But possibilities put forth by many members suggest a more dynamic system beyond replacing ritualism with secularism; rather, expanding ritual as a means of preventing traditions from becoming untenable, therefor maintaining them in ever-evolving social contexts. Asad argues that secularism is not simply emancipation from the control mechanisms of religiosity, but rather that "secularism builds on

a particular conception of the world ("natural" and "social") and of the problems generated by that world" (2003:191). While secularism is imagined as a crucial constituent of modernity, modernity itself, he elaborates, "is neither a totally coherent object nor a clearly bounded one" – it's rather "a series of interlinked projects", concerned with moral autonomy, human rights and civil equity (Asad 2003:13). Ideologically, the stripping away of the sacred is understood to be a liberation from oppressive religiosity and the suffering it brings, however Asad notes that the sacred and secular depend on each other and that this "redemptive myth" requires scrutiny (2003: 26). This chapter examines the imagined dualism of sacred/secular and looks at efforts as they are circumscribed as a reordering of ritualism. These creative approaches to inclusivity in the church seek a more integrative approach, rather than liberation from the confines of religion and freedom from the church. In the first ward those who advocate for LGTBQ acceptance want accommodation; they want to reimagine the boundaries of their sacred contexts.

As Jean envisioned a 'bigger box' being something achievable without official policy changes, the bishop, Greg, envisioned cultural changes described earlier that would reflect a sensitivity to feminist sensibilities while still supporting the church's central leadership and teachings, and hoped these sorts of shifts could also be brought forward to accommodate LGTBQ members. Meanwhile, there were several individuals in the ward who sought the explicit policy changes that they felt would modernize the church and allow more concrete and effective strategies for making gender equality and LGTBQ acceptance compatible with Mormon faith. These individuals also did not seek to dismantle the church or the institutional emphasis on continuity and obedience to the will of God; simply reimagine what conforming to religious norms could incorporate. These specific efforts, however, were organized in places outside of the umbrella of the mainline church. In order to create Mormon spaces that accepted and promoted the rights of LGTBQ people, including promoting the idea that a person could be worthy and whole while living outside of a heterosexual union, it was necessary to seek out alternative locations to organize around these aims. While these groups distinctly break from ritualism, outright refusing to accept particular LDS teachings, they did not envision this as a process whereby the church would no longer be an institution. Rather they hoped to expand ritualism in radical new ways, challenging dichotomies that aligned tolerance with secularism, and homogeneity and control with religiosity (Asad 2003).

These efforts to create space in the church for "non-conforming" individuals, particularly LGTBQ-identified people, and women seeking broader roles and representation, facilitated the growth of new communities largely on the margins of the church. These groups, such as Affirmation, Ordain Women and Mama Dragons, created websites and facebook pages to facilitate dialogue, and worked to maintain a relationship with the church through embedding their concerns and experiences within the parameters of the faith. I considered these groups to represent the marginalized in the faith because of their role in maintaining strong Mormon identities in spite of the administrative church's efforts to diffuse and delegitimize particular discourses, and outright excommunicate some of those involved. Drawing on Turner's *Liminality and Communitas,* I imagined these groups as something of an intermediary between the oppositional "church world" and "secular world", not a place outside of religion, but rather a place where discourses and actions are not necessarily approved through the channels of authority necessarily to operate in LDS spaces. These communities largely aim to draw the margins closer to the center. Turner describes ways in which people exist in out-of-place contexts,

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such; their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (Turner 1969:359)

This chapter will speak to processes of marginalization, engaging with Turner's concept of liminality, which provides an appropriate frame when thinking about how Mormons situate themselves in relation to the administrative center of the church when their identities push them outside of the box, and exploring the ways in which this creates broad margins to accommodate those pushed outside of the perimeters of the church.

The Bloggernacle

Crucial to creating and sustaining these communities on the margins of the faith is 'The Bloggernacle', a loosely connected category of online blogs dedicated to Mormon issues, and where Mormon progressive movements are largely developed. The internet, often regarded as placeless, impermanent and set-apart from 'real world' engagements, has facilitated the growth and development of a Mormon community which supports LGTBQ people in pursuing

both relationships and a place in the LDS church. The idea that communities must be rooted in brick and mortar places is not as relevant as it once was (Sassen 2006), and the internet, particularly in relation to the Mormons who participate in blogging, provides an intermediary space between being in the church and outside of it; Blogs have made possible Mormon communities not facilitated by the administrative center and bound by geographical boarders. At once connected to and divergent from the church, these communities actually expand the boundaries of the church through the creation of capacious margins.

Of course, these communities are made up of individuals who often also participate in their wards; the experiences, values and anxieties that emerge in both spaces inform one another and overlap. Miller & Slater's ethnographic approach to the internet (2000) will inform how Mormon blogs are integrated into these next two chapters, as they have observed online activity is "assimilated somewhere in particular", even across complex 'somewheres' that reflect the reality of contact and broad social worlds constituted through the use of new technologies. My aim is to take into consideration these connections grounded in marginalized experiences of faith, focusing here on how these emerging movements contribute to optimism and anxiety in the ward, and fuel tensions between the ward and the administrative church as these discourses come into sacred places.

The Bloggernacle is neither incorporated into the church in any officious way, yet is crucially connected to Mormon experience. As Mormon blogs are introducing and circulating ideas critical to reimage the church as a progressive institution, the church frequently presses back by releasing it's own online publications. Historically, these have been published in church magazines and handbooks, presently, the church primarily relies on its own websites to respond with speed and efficiency. To point to specific ways church publications are instrumental in establishing the boundaries of Mormon identity this chapter will discuss a few publications in particular. These church publications can be read as boundary establishing and affirming, and are essential components to consider as I describe the events and discourses I encountered in the first ward. Church publications, particularly of this variety, have been used to stabilize racial and gender hierarchies, as well as family structures (largely in relation to whether queer Mormons have a place in the religion). While race, gender and sexuality are understood as fluid social constructs, these documents have been tools for stabilizing and reinforcing the meaning of these identity markers in the Mormon context.

Proposition 8

Significant to this chapter is an overview of the church's history with conformity and exclusion, particularly in regards to the church's racist policies of the past, and how they have informed current understandings of how revelation, evolving social norms and expanding acceptance can promote the institutional church's embrace of policy change. Specifically, I will describe the how black members were barred from the Priesthood and from entering the temple until September 30, 1978, when the church released the Official Declaration 2, granting black members equal status to white members. Further, I will focus here quite heavily on Proposition 8, a state initiative in California in which the church became heavily involved in the campaign against marriage equality which took place 5 years before I came to the ward. Proposition 8 was the second initiative brought to ballot in the same decade concerned with defining marriage as between a man and a woman, both supported by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (though today California recognizes same-sex marriage as a result of a supreme court ruling). Throughout both campaigns the Mormon Church was among the highly visible supporters of what they deem 'traditional marriage'. Members of the faith constituted an influential and visible force that has been successful at helping garner support for shutting down same-sex marriage in the state. In 2008 The Mormon Church was not the only religious institution who came out in support of the campaign by any means, however it is estimated that Mormons contributed up to half of the $40 million raised towards the campaign and represented 80-90% of the volunteers who went door-to-door (Johnson & McKinley, 2008). Proposition 8 was the highest funded initiative ever placed on a ballot in the state of California. The campaign's success was popularly attributed to Mormons, it passed narrowly with 52% of the votes. These statistics represent a particular organized effort by the church to get as many members as possible involved in the campaign. First Warders recalled letters read during sacrament meeting reaffirming the church's position, requests to dedicate time, energy and funds to the campaign, and even the appointing of a 'calling' to lead the ward's efforts in supporting Proposition 8. All of which, many recalled, forced them to either become active in the campaign as an act of support toward the church, or take a stand against an institution in which their spiritual selves were rooted.

Prop 8 initiated and intensified discussions on how acceptance should manifest inside

the church, and pushed the church to distinguish between race and sexuality in order to uphold anti-homosexual policies. The linking of race and sexuality is significant here because of the particular way in which the Mormon Church has presented these two components of identity in vastly different ways over the past 3 decades, and further because I observed here that race, in this context, "conditioned the experience of sexuality" (Maskovsky 2002). In the ward many members felt Jean's approach of advocating for kindness and warmth towards LGTBQ individuals, a position that was gradually being integrated into discourses coming out of Salt Lake City, did not go far enough in light of the political efforts by the church, which have fueled sentiments that the church is an anti-gay organization. Others resist expanding the church to accommodate those who do not conform, though many members have recalled the LDS's past teachings regarding race and saw parallels between the shame brought on the church by their inaction on racial equality and the present situation as the church establishes itself as an institution deeply concerned with derailing marriage equality in the United States. Members hoped that the church would restore its reputation through disengaging with political and social movements focused on exclusion. Bishop Greg noted, when I asked him about the future of the church, "the place of gay members in the church is perhaps the biggest thing we will need to address in the coming years". With a Bishop and Stake President who both hoped to increase dialogue in regards to tolerance, inclusivity and empathy towards LGTBQ Mormons, the First Ward could be seen as collectively working to envision and sustain a "bigger box". Often, however, these efforts could not align with policies by the administrative church which aimed to instill firm boundaries around those whom the church accommodated and how. Looking at how policies of racial exclusion were overturned in the past, many hoped that the church would issue more officious policies protecting members from prejudice in the future.

Exclusion: Recounting the past, anxieties for the future

Within the church tolerance was generally promoted as the progressive answer to accommodating LGTBQ-identified Mormons. Tolerance was offered as a solution to the conflict between the church's official teachings on homosexuality and social attitudes in the bay area that LGTBQ people were deserving of full equality, rather than aligning the church and broader society through policy change, the church emphasized kindness as indicative that their

organization was evolving along with the rest of the country. As I observed efforts to promote tolerance inside the first ward I was simultaneously stuck by the genuine effort being made by the community to create harmony, yet, as Wendy Brown observes in her work on tolerance, I also saw the ways in which the emphasis on tolerance contributed to cultural hierarchies that subordinate the tolerated as a social other (2006). Brown elaborates that,

> Tolerance works along both vectors of depoliticization – it personalizes and it naturalizes or culturalizes – and sometimes intertwines them. Tolerance as it is used today tends to cast instances of inequality or social injury as matters of individual or group prejudice. (2006:15)

Throughout my time in the ward the administrative church was slowly embracing tolerance as a way of addressing their LGTBQ-identified members; an approach that involved largely promoting intangible experiences of understanding, and defining the church's position on LGTBQ people as accepting of the identity, something removed from the pursuit of same-sex relationships. Significantly, these efforts were facilitated by the creation of a new church website, MormonsandGays.com, which both clarified the church's official recommendations for members experiencing "same sex attraction", that they chose either celibacy or to enter "traditional" marriages and work continuously to overcome their same-gender attractions. These teachings, while they simultaneously have called for families and church communities to be more accepting, have cemented same-sex relationships as grounds for exclusion, and stigmatized homosexuality as an affliction. Historically the Mormon Church has institutionalized discriminatory practices through embedding these processes in religious doctrine, disconnecting these values from the social conditions in which they emerge.

The experience of LGTBQ-identified Mormons have parallels with the experiences of black Mormons, who were, until 1978, similarly tolerated in the church without having full access to Mormon spaces and practices. This historical trajectory provides context for many members explicitly interested in highlighting parallels between the movements. For the administrative church it is essential to distinguish the narratives of these two distinct (yet sometimes intersectional) groups. Historically the church's teachings on both the place of Native People and Black African people in the church have developed in response to anti-racist discourses, largely brought to a head by the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Activists and advocates of tolerance who I encountered in the field hoped that a movement toward further inclusivity and equality would similarly progress, following the current political and social discourses in the United States, in regards to LGTBQ-identified people and in relation to expanding social roles for women. The church largely resisted aligning LDS policy with these mainstream developments, and over the time I spent in the ward I saw the church clarify and fix not only it's view of gender and sexuality through a number of publications, but also attempt to disentangle the experience of marginalization within Mormonism based on race, verses the similarly meaningful social constructs of gender and sexuality. As these events took place members of the First Ward negotiated how to respond; criticism, silence, activism, defense, and outright disregard for the word of church authorities in relation to these subjects were all viable paths, though the management of responses was crucial as individuals worked to maintain religious identities predicated on faith in the church's leadership. This movement pushed particular church members and conversations out to the margins of the faith, where new communities formed.

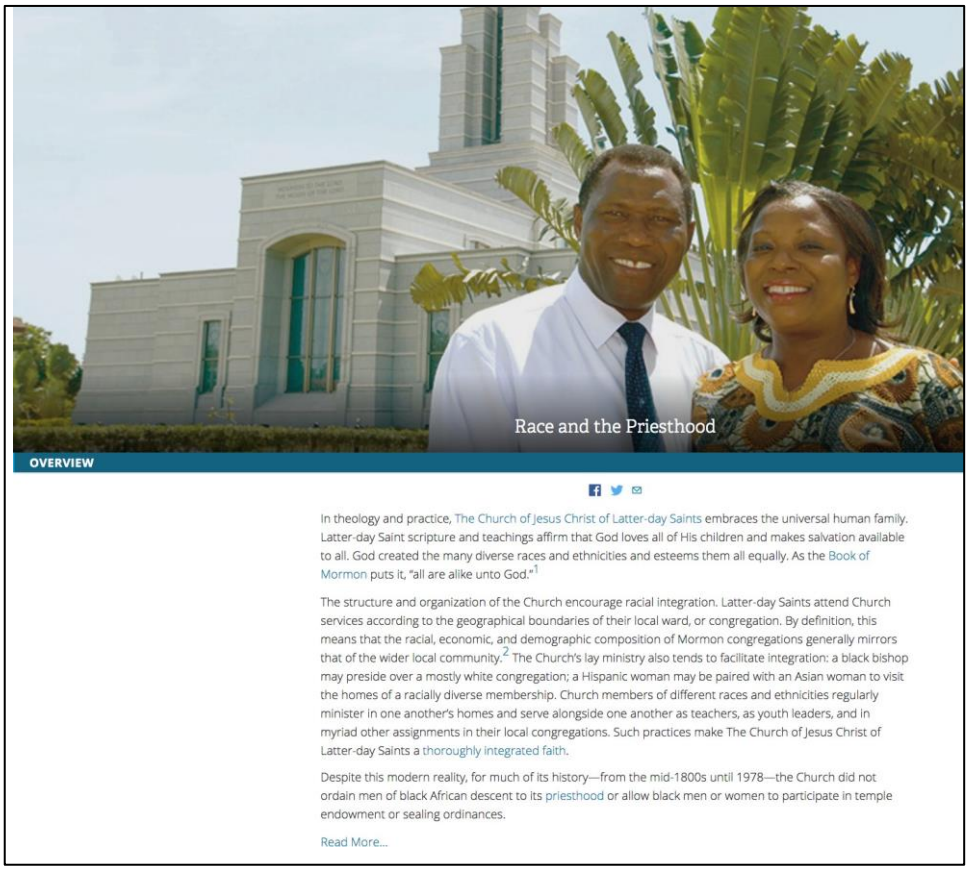
In November of 2013, the Latter Day Saints church quietly began publishing essays about church history on the LDS.org website addressing some of the most controversial aspects of the church, among the first topics covered were gender roles in Mormonism, the priesthood, and race. Many members viewed these essays as a way of addressing the abundance of material now circulating online about the church's history, formerly requiring a more dedicated effort to access. As the essays were published without much initial to-do, photocopies were circulated at church inviting members to attend a "panel discussion" on *Race and The Priesthood* that March. Heather and I attended the event on a Sunday evening, along with many others from the First Ward, the Ninth Ward, and other Bay Area wards. Heather was hopeful that the event would shed light on the positive outcomes of working towards a more inclusive church. As an activist, feminist and blogger, Heather had committed herself to writing about Mormon faith, and advocating for equality in the church. Upon entering the building, where just hours before I had attended Sacrament, I was struck by the make-up of the attendees – after 6 months of fieldwork I had never seen as many people of color at any church event. The predominantly African-American crowd occupied much of the front pews.

The panel gathered at the front, and after an opening prayer and introduction each spoke in turn about the essay, it's relevance, and their own experience in the church and how

they had been impacted by the events outlined in the essay. Heather passed her phone to me, where she had uploaded the document, *Race and the Priesthood*. In the third paragraph of the essay it is acknowledged that, "…for much of its history—from the mid- 1800s until 1978—the Church did not ordain men of black African descent to its priesthood or allow black men or women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances". For the first time I was hearing reference to this inside a formal LDS space. Indeed, it is a relatively well-known fact of the Mormon Church that racial segregation was formalized in both the church's teachings on race and in practice through the barring of African American men from the priesthood, and all members who could trace their family lineage to Africa entrance into the temple, including for the purpose of sealings.

> The curse of Cain was often put forward as justification for the priesthood and temple restrictions. Around the turn of the century, another explanation gained currency: blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the pre-mortal battle against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings. (*Race and The Priesthood*).

In 1978, the church's First Presidency met in the Salt Lake Temple and in prayer received the 'revelation on the priesthood', removing the restrictions in place. One of the authors of the article, Darius Gray, gave an overview of the ways in which Latter Day Saints had merged cultural ideas about race with doctrine, creating a lack of clarity on the issue. He explained that unequivocally now the church acknowledges this was not "of God", and very frankly and painfully explained that even as an African-American man he had experienced uncertainty in the past about his worthiness.



Race and The Priesthood essay on LDS.org.

Darius described his decision to convert to Mormonism before the ban had been lifted. He found out only the night before his baptism about the restrictions from the missionaries who had been teaching him in preparation. They told him this information with seeming reluctance and discomfort, and awaited his decision about whether to continue with his baptism. He prayed and concluded that he would still move forward, then spent the first decade of his church membership exploring, questioning and trying to make sense of his blackness and it's relationship to spiritual worth and potential to serve and lead in the church. As Darius concluded, church members stood to ask further questions of the panel, many wondered about what actions black church members had taken to end segregation in the church. The panel overwhelmingly attributed the revelation to God and to prayer, not to the actions taken by themselves and others in the late 1970s. The essay on 'Race and the Priesthood' acknowledges the civil rights movement and conversions in Africa and Brazil as contributing to the prayerful request made by the First Presidency. At one point an attendee, a man probably in his 60s or 70s wearing casual attire (for church) and a white beard

approached the microphone. Heather and I looked at him and both suspected aloud that he was probably from the Berkeley ward. The man stated that he just wanted to thank Darius and others from the Oakland community, including Doug (from our ward), for the role they had is getting the church to move on the issue of race. He stated plainly that without their actions he does not believe the church authorities would have addressed the issue. Applause broke out at this statement, but Darius was quick to shrug off any credit, denying the implication that activism had borne results, reiterating that faith and prayer and the power of Heavenly Father were behind the revelation.

Parallels with LGTBQ Inequality

Current church leaders have been making very direct statements that misalign the issue of race from the church's position on gender and sexuality. The essay goes on to acknowledge that church records do not indicate a member's race, meaning that unlike gender, race is not deterministic of a person's role in the church, and its concluding paragraph states, "The Church proclaims that redemption through Jesus Christ is available to the entire human family on the conditions God has prescribed". This statement disentangles blackness from the doctrine, categorically dismantling it's ability to stand as a marker or boundary that impacts religious identity, yet uses the term 'conditions', which of course brings to my mind the phrase, "terms and conditions apply". Gender and sexuality still are regarded as inflexible categories that designate one's abilities and roles. Viewing gender, race and sexual identity as material categories that are deterministic features of the body, the church has attempted to create fixed boundaries around socially constructed ideologies. Despite the positioning of these essays as a 'final word' on these issues, discourses pointing to racial inequalities that have not been addressed by the church are still emerging, and many members still believe there is room for further developments. In the First Ward there were efforts to give a platform to individuals working against racism, sexism and homophobia within Mormonism, such as with the panel discussion, but with careful attention at formal church events that the message aligned with the official stance of the administrative church. It was often in informal spaces that more radical discourses circulated – often, as implied by the Berkley ward member, eventually influencing the church's leaders.

As black church members recalled a time when they were unable to enter the temple or

receive particular ordinances, LGTBQ church members grappled with the church's policy that anyone in a non-heterosexual marriage could not enter the temple or receive particular ordinances in the church, or have their children baptized. LGTBQ members therefore could not create Mormon, eternal-families or fully participate in religious life. The 1978 decision to extend the priesthood to men of African descent offered promise that the church leadership could continue to receive revelation that dismantled the restrictions placed on individuals seeking access to particular spaces and roles within the church. On the other hand, race was frequently dismissed as an essential category in relation to the body, whereas sex, sexuality and the performance of gender were upheld as deeply meaningful and fixed categories. Mormons who felt aligned with the plight of queer, black, feminist and trans church members often described their attempts to create and sustain communities where, regardless of the church's official stance, the ward could create room for an array of intersectional Mormon identities; these communities enabled marginalized Mormons to lay claim to some Mormon space. Simultaneously the church doubled-down on efforts to disrupt those parallels, pushing forward with efforts to minimize racial difference, while emphasizing, in particular, that LGTBQ identities could be detangled from the pursuit of same-sex relationships. This narrative of identity having a particularly disparate relationship to engagement largely emerged as a result of the church's involvement in particular political efforts, developing a conditional tolerance in order to ease concerns that the church was again aligning itself with homophobia or hate. Exclusionary practices were reimagined as mediated through kindness, obedience and faith, rather than social values that extended beyond the walls of the church.

Progress Disrupted: The Ongoing Impact of Proposition 8

Overshadowing all discussion concerning the church and tolerance, acceptance, and potential integration of LGTBQ members was the seemingly omnipresent shadow of the church's involvement in political initiatives dedicated to barring same sex marriage in California. The particular events surrounding Proposition 8, a ballot initiative seeking to define marriage as between a man and a woman that was introduced in 2008, as experienced by the ward were at once being processed as a shared cultural memory within the ward; the campaign represented, for many, a point of departure whereby the First Ward was no longer a place where individuals could quietly create support networks for queer Mormons while others looked the other way. The campaign also brought tensions to the surface; both between

the ward and the administrative church, and between members who felt the future of the church was at stake if there was not a collective effort to rein-in the ward. Proposition 8, regardless, was transformed into an event primarily concerning the LDS, as people grieved for the harmony of their congregation, the reputation of the church and the pain brought inside the church by the impetus to participate in the campaign amidst divided groups. I found that much of the present reflections in the ward on tolerance, acceptance and equality were part of a post-Prop-8 reckoning, as the aftermath of the initially-successful campaign was continually being processed and interpreted. On June 29th the following letter was read to all congregations across California;

> Preserving Traditional Marriage and Strengthening Families
>
> In March 2000 California voters overwhelmingly approved a state law providing that "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." The California Supreme Court recently reversed this vote of the people. On November 4, 2 008, Californians will vote on a proposed amendment to the California state constitution that will now restore the March 2000 definition of marriage approved by the voters.
>
> The Church's teachings and position on this moral issue are unequivocal. Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and the formation of families is central to the Creator's plan for His children. Children are entitled to be born within this bond of marriage.
>
> A broad-based coalition of churches and other organizations placed the proposed amendment on the ballot. The Church will participate with this coalition in seeking its passage. Local Church leaders will provide information about how you may become involved in this important cause.
>
> We ask that you do all you can to support the proposed constitutional amendment by donating of your means and time to assure that marriage in California is legally defined as being between a man and a woman. Our best efforts are required to preserve the sacred institution of marriage.

Members recalled that the letter signaled a shift – while most were certainly aware of the church's official stance on same-sex relations, the letter formally engaged them in political efforts, asking them to actively participate in anti-gay activism. While the letter requested members donate time and 'means', First Ward members recalled this as not so much an ask, or a suggestion, but an enormously powerful directive from the Prophet. Some recalled that once the letter had been read they believed they were part of an already in-motion formal effort by

the church to back the campaign. The letter became a catalyst that set off a series of events, from organizing canvassing, to encouraging members to donate, even putting bumper stickers on cars, and many felt like they had been swept up in a flurry of activity and only now were processing what it has meant. For the ward member's I spoke to it appeared that the forefront of these reckonings was the issue of how the campaign impacted the harmony of the ward, and their faith in church leadership. Very few members considered the impact of the passing of Prop 8 on LGTBQ families; rather they were concerned with the long-term effects on their community (although with the overturning of Prop 8 it is possible that concerns for LGTB families no longer felt so pressing).

The institutional church has largely moved on from this particular event, however in Oakland, the memory is still very powerful. Because the Proposition was part of California's ballot, it brought California wards into focus as the administrative church decided to officially back the initiative. The participation of the church in support of Prop 8 meant that Mormons and Proposition-8 protestors often found themselves confronting one another at public demonstrations, or when the LDS began canvassing door-to-door, literally at the threshold of people's homes. Many of the ward members who were Bay Area residents at the time recalled the intensity of pressure to be involved by their church community, and the anger directed at them as a result by neighbors and former friends. Presently many ward members are questioning their involvement, wishing they had not campaigned, while some members claim the campaign was an essential moment to demonstrate commitment to the church. Members across the spectrum have experienced disillusionment; they must now try and reconcile the church's involvement in the campaign with their present realities. The disputed past, combined with the recollection of emotionally traumatic events culminates in particularly effective cultural memories; as a moment in history circulates in discourses, or is strategically left out of particular recounting of history, these events begin to magnify and continue to work on how individuals make sense of the present (Connerton 2006). Distinctively, collective memories are something of an intermediary between memory and history, when memories are understood as something subject to dynamic re- tellings and evolving perspectives, and history as a record that reconstructs the past (Nora 1989). Prop 8 here, as a touchstone, certainly can be attributed with speeding up the process by which many members began to critically examine their feelings on how the church designates insiders and others, full members and second-class members, and in what substantive ways they objectify these

boundaries.

Lindy recalled that prior to Prop 8 she felt that the ward had been making progress developing it's own somewhat quiet ways of accommodating members who were gay, had gay children, or simply "didn't fit the mold". She recalled helping a former member who had become infected with AIDS in the 1980s. His family contacted the church in hopes they could support him as he was succumbing to the illness. Lindy and others readily stepped forward, developing a friendship and providing him care through rotating volunteers. "He was an artist", she recalled, "and his daughter and her baby were living with him at the time, and they really needed more help than they had at home. And we came in and said 'of course, you're all just so wonderful – of course you should call upon the church to help'". Lindy pointed out that he had grown up in the church but departed in order to live his life as an openly gay man, but she felt God had brought him back to see, before he died, that he never was cast out of his faith. She elaborated,

> In a place like the Bay Area with such a strong gay community he was never going to be the only member, there have been others over the years and the church has always been where they are loved unconditionally by Christ, so why shouldn't they expect the rest of us to be loving and kind. The church shouldn't be a different place to different people.

Her husband Dick, provided a more dismal take on Prop 8, recalling how the leaders in the ward responded to pressures to be involved, and the impact on their reputations, explaining,

> Dean was the stake president, and he came under immense pressure to go around and raise money for the 'yes on proposition 8'. Our ward took a vote, it would be close, but I think by-and-large our ward was against that position. We didn't give a lot of money… one member gave $5000 and his name showed up in the paper and he had people wanting him to be kicked off immediately the Paramount Theatre Board. There were people with placards marching outside the Temple.

The Mormon Church really got bruised in that. Whether they should or should not, that's another issue, but we certainly came across as a very conservative, very intolerant group of people.

Dick and Lindy's memory of the ward being split down the middle and damaged by the

fallout from the initiative were echoed continuously. For some though, this was a pivotal moment in having to align themselves with or against the central authorities of the church. Dick and Lindy had no interest in campaigning for Proposition 8, viewing the entire campaign as a blemish on the church's reputation, and which painted the whole organization as intolerant when both had invested quite a lot in moving their community I a different direction.

Image from the SF Gate following Sunday protests at Temple Hill

While Dick and Lindy and other established members had felt comfortable going against the directions of the Prophet and the centralized church, others had felt the decision was complicated by their belief that the Prophet was speaking for God, and that the church was their best resource for moral guidance. This process of negotiating complicated loyalties had proven quite distressing for some. Hannah and I discussed the ways in which Prop 8 lead her to feeling very disheartened by her church. Hannah stated emphatically, "There are people who will try and gloss over it and say the Mormon's were not that involved, but that's bullshit", she recalled, explaining that she never felt that supporting the campaign was the right thing to do, but was surprised when she found herself unable to voice or act upon her opposition.

Despite her desires for the church to be accountable for its involvement, Hannah is still compassionate to those hurt by the campaign and counts herself among those who experienced internal conflict when it came to deciding how to act when The Prophet called on the LDS to support Prop 8. She recalled,

> Among all my liberal Mormon friends this was an endless topic of discussion, and it was interesting to see where we all landed on how we responded to it and how we voted on it as well – endless, endless debates on it, then basically everybody chose to vote a different way with different reasoning… and actually I chose not to vote… despite the fact that obviously I would have really liked to vote 'No', because, for me at the time, the temple had my faith in a fragile enough place that voting no on Prop 8 felt to me like a rejection of Mormonism – which was already the line I was on, and I kind of wanted to do, but I wasn't quite ready to take that step. I think if it came up today I would vote 'No' and be able to reconcile how I can still be a Mormon and vote no on this but at the time it wasn't so.

Hannah's decision happened in a context where her own ideas about how acceptance of Mormon values related to identity were being challenged by patriarchal and authoritarian powers within the church. She explained that even as Bay Area wards served LGTB members, they still followed The Church's instructions to support the campaign and regularly urged their members to get involved. Hannah clarified that her bishop at the time, Ted, among the long-time members of the First Ward, did his best to serve his ward membership while fulfilling his obligations as a church leader to read letters from Salt Lake City and encourage members to support the campaign. She explained that each ward had a 'Prop 8 Coordinator' who was in charge of organizing members to canvass and fundraise.

The Bishop asked that someone volunteer for the calling, since he wanted to make sure that someone who was comfortable with the position filled the role. She felt this was a gracious accommodation, but went on to say,

> The woman who volunteered to be the Prop 8 coordinator has since come out as a lesbian and gotten married. I strongly suspected that was true of her at the time so it was actually difficult to watch. It was sort of her last-ditch effort to reconcile the Mormon identity and the lesbian identity and to do the right thing. She actually confessed to me during the Prop 8 campaign that she was a lesbian and she said 'I guess I really feel the need to act for my faith'. It made it that much harder – nuances upon nuances – I think I would have had the instinct to condescend to or decry the people participating, like the coordinator, to say 'oh this person's a Mormon drone', but then these nuances, like no she was genuinely trying to do the right thing even as it acted against her own self-interest. And a misplaced one I think, and a heartbreaking one I

> think, but it was a good faith-effort in all senses of those words so I couldn't just – I felt like I had to be friendly and supportive to her and the things that she was doing while they still horrified my conscience.

I asked her later to elaborate on the effect it had collectively on her Mormon community, she explained,

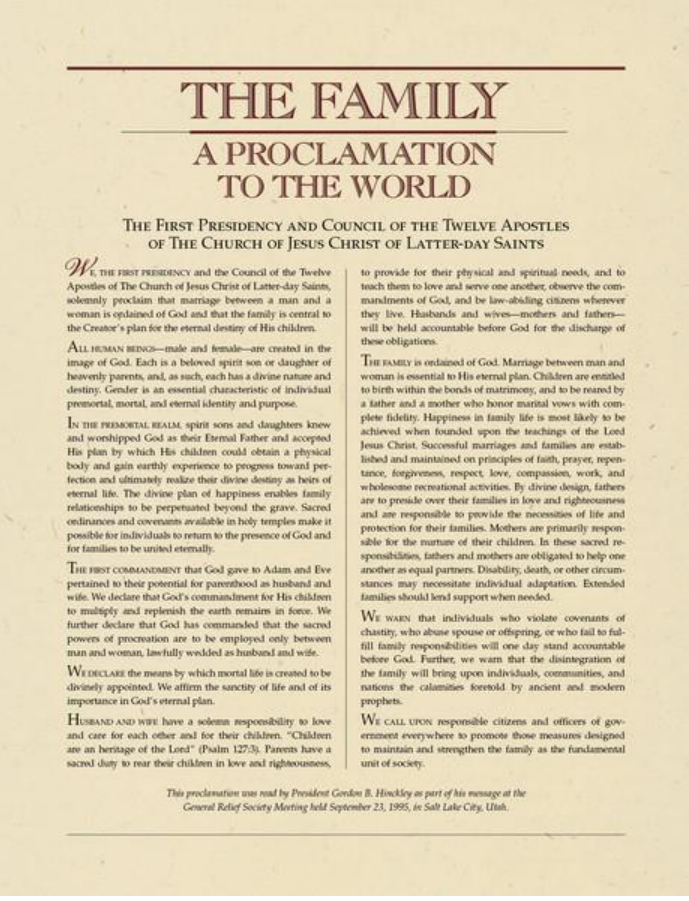
> Even as the bishop tried to be sensitive, and the Prop 8 coordinator tried to be sensitive, there was still kind of the unspoken chasm of those who approved of what the church was doing and were excited to go out canvassing and those who clearly did not approve and for whom this was an enormous faith-trial.

Hannah's depiction of Prop 8 overlapped with many members' recollections. Within the ward, conflicts sometimes arose, but largely as letters were read from the pulpit, members struggled privately with how they would handle the request to serve. The proposition was framed in such a way that to reject it was to disobey The Prophet, and in a sense compromised the integrity of one's faith, which is why even LGTBQ Mormons still felt compelled to be involved. The campaign was distorted into and event that would determine ones commitment to the church, and disconnected participation from the homophobia and heterosexist values it upheld, as church leaders implored their members to stand with their faith. Members recalled that conversations about the campaigned, and official church statements and letters, avoided overtly denouncing homosexuality or LGTBQ people, but rather emphasized an embrace of tradition and a strong united front by the church in celebrating these values. In the wake of Prop 8 many members feel disheartened by the way in which they felt they were asked to choose between acting in good conscience and in good faith, though most said they had never considered leaving. The church has reported that membership was not significantly impacted by Prop 8 (Fair Mormon). Rather, what I observed was that members were only now ready to discuss the impact of the campaign and describe the ways in which it has affected their membership and faith in the church after having time to process the events of 2008.

Recollections and Shifting Values

In early December, I visited Anne's home just a few blocks from mine in North Oakland. I stood in her entry hall regarding a framed copy of the church's 'Proclamation On The Family' as I removed my coat. 'The Proclamation' declares the creation of families within Mormon

marriages is central to God's plan for his people, and was central to clarifying The Church's position on same-sex marriage despite the fact that it does not explicitly refer to LGTB families. The origins of The Proclamation demonstrate its entanglement with the church's efforts to work against same-sex marriage; originally presented by President Hinckley at the General Relief Society meeting in 1995, Hinckley stated that he wanted to "warn and forewarn" the world to the danger of reorganizing traditional family structures. Later, Hinckley's words were developed into an amicus brief sent to Hawaiian supreme courts to petition them to vote down marriage equality (Compton 2016). Despite this historical situating, The Proclamation is currently widely regarded as a succinct summation of the most basic tenants of the faith; yet often the display of it in the home still signals support for the church's efforts against same-sex marriage. It surprised me a bit to see it hanging in Anne's apartment. Entering her home I observed that it was decorated in a style I'd describe as modern and design-y, and in contrast the framed proclamation looked quite traditional and out of place. Further, I had understood Anne to be a more progressive- minded member of the church – I wondered if my assumptions were incorrect.



THE FAMILY

A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

WE, THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Anne and I had always had a friendly relationship, she was easy-going and happy to joke with me about my observations in the church and wave me over when I was standing alone at various events. At 38 Anne was just few years older than I was, but as a single woman, she was one of my few contemporaries without children (along with a couple of others - Hannah, Tracy, Zola and Brittany). I interpreted this as perhaps some indication that Anne was comfortable pursuing a meaningful career and social life despite a church that presses marriage as the most important goal for women. Socially, she was involved in an array of activities in the ward; she mixed with the young moms, retired members of the book club, and played volleyball with a mostly-male church team, with ease in any setting. I often noticed her spending time with more politically-left members. Careful with her words and slightly reserved, Anne had also struck me as having a quiet sense of humor shared only with whom she was close.

As we spoke, Anne explained that growing up she felt she had the 'perfect' Mormon family, and elaborated "in terms of me, spiritually, I was like the straight arrow… never questioned anything, always had a pretty strong sense of faith", I began to see that her personality had emerged in a setting where her expectations for a life in the church had been turned upside down, another iteration of the person I'd come to know. Surprising to me I learned that Anne envisioned her own life would follow a traditional Mormon trajectory, but as she approaches 40, unmarried and finding fulfillment elsewhere, she is rethinking how her Mormon values fit into a more contemporary-feeling lifestyle. Anne told me that despite growing up in a strong Mormon culture, one that she values and cannot see herself ever living outside of, in recent years she has struggled with the church, saying "I feel like I've always had kind of an inherent faith that never really changed that much. But I think life experiences, things getting hard, trials coming - even things going on in politics or society make it hard to stay the same, brought up questions ". As she trailed off I asked her, "Are you referring to anything specific?" and she answered immediately, "Specifically, definitely Prop 8 - all the stuff around Prop 8". She went on to explain,

> I'll be totally honest with you - when it came up I was one of those people who knocked on doors… and at the time I thought I was doing the right thing… then like a year later - and honestly that's probably when my crises of faith came - because I just really was like 'wait - I don't like this!' I think part of it is the more you interact with people who are different than you, or when you start becoming friends with people who - you know my neighbors are a gay couple who've been together for I don't know how long - and

> you just kind of go 'you are good people, there is nothing wrong'...I just did a total 180...it's still sort of a source of questions for me. The church's role during that time as well as to this day, its position taken, I don't know. That was kind of a big issue. At this point I am still kind of embarrassed that I was one of those people who knocked on doors.

Anne, like Hannah, felt there was a dissonance around how the Mormon Church framed Prop 8 and it's reality. As she developed relationships with people identified as gay and lesbian she struggled to maintain that dissonance and gradually her questions emerged. Anne wanted her church to be accountable to the people that it hurt, rather than defensive, a difficult realization for her in light of some of her experiences during the campaign. Anne explained that someone had actually targeted her during Prop 8, contacting her employer at the time to tell them she had given money to the campaign. She was hurt and angry; it was her business what she gave her money to. Gradually, though, she let go of her personal experiences and started thinking more expansively. "This is part of the issue with homosexuality", she explained, "now I think there's no one cookie cutter life. There are many different ways to be a good Mormon".

Months later, after our relationship had grown much more familiar, I asked Anne to explain to me why she continued to hang The Proclamation on her wall when its tenants seemed to directly undermined a multitude of her experiences. "Actually", she began, her face registering maybe a little self-consciousness as we walked, and she recounted to me,

> I took it down, probably within days of your first visit. Honestly I put it up without much thought – like I said, it was just something Mormons have on their wall – like those posters you buy in college, I maybe even got it when I was still in college. I guess it seemed like a very grown up thing to put up. I forgot it was there til I took notice of it and I kind of thought it didn't feel like the kind of thing that fit into my life any more, even aesthetically – it just occurred to me that it didn't have as much meaning for me.

I asked her if in part that was due to some of her post-Prop-8 experiences and she answered affirmatively. Returning to the power of collective recollections, Connerton notes that collective memories are currently dramatically informed by the fact that memory is transmitted with materials, which are evidence of the past (2006:317). The Proclamation, and other substantive reminders of the campaign and the church's ongoing involvement in seemingly anti-LGTBQ efforts, are objects that must be critically negotiated with in order to think about the past. Anne's decision to take down her Proclamation was part of a reckoning

with her relationship to the church, but not an act of stepping away from Mormonism, but rather a rethinking of how she could align her values with her faith.

Heterosexism and the church

While many member's channeled the conflicted emotional experiences of Proposition 8 into dialogue on how to move forward in the church and heal damaged relationships between the church broader communities that had resulted from the campaign, others were motivated to align themselves even more substantially with the church's teachings. Fueled by a commitment to taking a difficult or unpopular stand to uphold the church's teachings, narratives of obedience and faith carefully avoided explicitly addressing homophobia, transforming the story of Prop 8 into one of Mormon persecution and misunderstanding. Members emphasized that while people interpreted their actions as homophobic, they were rather supporting the traditions of their church – therefor accusations of homophobia were described as attacks on their character and faith.

Detangling LGTBQ political interests from narratives of acceptance through a reimaging of sexuality as a proclivity, rather than substantive piece of one's identity. To return to Darius's memories of converting to a church where missionaries sought him, members encouraged him to participate, but he learned that his unequal status was embedded in doctrine and treated as a matter of spiritual precedence, this was described not as outright racism, instead as a phenomenon that impacted relationships versus structural inequity. It was easy to see a parallel in which heterosexism prevailed yet homophobia was denied. Tensions between individuals in the ward arose as part of an imagining of how closely aligned Oakland's First Ward was with the Mormonism's central organization, and were often predicated on these issues surrounding Prop 8 and how members chose to resist or aid the church in efforts related to barring marriage equality. As Dick and Lindy explained, they had previously felt the ward supported these under-the-radar endeavors to build up an inclusive and somewhat radical congregation that distanced itself from the tight regulation of church administration in Salt Lake. Prop 8, they felt, had pushed these efforts to the margins and infiltrated their church with more robust dialogue pushing a tighter alignment with Mormonism's central authorities. I have framed homophobia here as a clear underlying factor in efforts to exclude LGTBQ

Mormons, though as Don Kulick notes homophobia, as a sociocultural trait, is difficult to circumscribe as is operates in varied contexts (2009:viii). Kulick suggests that the term 'heterosexism' is useful for naming how structurally queer individuals are excluded and oppressed in substantial, located contexts. Drawing on a number of other social scientists, most significantly work by Tom Boellstrorff and Eve Sedgewick, he argues that the term homophobia has limited usage, at best, stating that "...homophobia appears to locate the source of prejudice against homosexuals not in social structures but in the individual psyche" (2009:23). Furthermore the term implies that prejudice against queers is a private and atypical phenomenon – not something embedded in institutions. Inserted in the term 'heterosexism' is the implicit understanding that heterosexism promotes "…the belief that heterosexuality is the only natural or moral sexuality" (2009:25).

Kulick's framing of heterosexism, as a tangible expression of prejudice, is useful not because I think it drastically differs from the common way homophobia is understood to function, but because it helps shed light on how Mormons engage with anti-LGTBQ rhetoric, political efforts and exclusion from their church. Locating heterosexism within the doctrine of the church, upholding it as divinely-imparted and detached from any social or cultural attitudes, alleviates many members concerns with prejudice. This framing of heterosexism as distinctive from homophobia provided a lens whereby claims of love for a community which individuals work to marginalize seemed plausible. I still found homophobia, as it is colloquially used, to be barely distinguishable from heterosexism, but here I bring up Kulick to focus on how members engaged with exclusionary practices that built up the Mormon margins.

Britta, a young mother in the ward, a transplant from Texas who I connected with immediately for her unreserved and affectionate personality, identified herself as a conservative member of the church when I broached the subject of Prop 8 with her. Prior to this conversation we'd always been quite at ease with one another, but her usual vivacious and bubbly demeanor became more anxious when I asked her to explain both Prop 8 and how she felt the ward should treat members that identified as LGTBQ. Her voice quavered as we began our conversation, quite uncharacteristic, and we both looked down as we spoke, self-conscious about the fact that we knew it was not a topic we would see in the same light. Britta framed her campaigning as a choice she made not to act against the lesbian and gay community, but rather to act for her church; it was very important to her that I try and understand her involvement

this way. She relayed to me that her first Sunday coming to church in Oakland happened in the midst of the Proposition 8 campaign, and for the first time she heard Mormons expressing dissent. On the way home from church she told her husband "these people are apostate!", a memory she now laughs off. Despite the lighthearted way she recalls that moment she is still concerned for her ward, and the campaign forced her to recognize that within Mormonism there is a growing movement towards expressing opposition to particular values upheld by LDS leaders, and the political policies and laws officially supported by the church. She worries that members who dissent are fulfilling scriptural prophecies that in the last days even the seemingly-faithful will be deceived, and as a result will reject God and their prophet. However, despite her unwavering belief that supporting Proposition 8 was the morally correct action to take, she still experienced trauma through her involvement.

Britta described herself as a "reluctant activist", but has a deep dedication to the Prophet, believing strongly that his instructions came from God. Once called upon to do so in 2008, she made calls, canvassed neighborhoods, and at one point stood with demonstrators in downtown Oakland with a sign in support of Prop 8. Each action was more difficult than the next, and tearfully she described it, saying,

> It was so hard for me. There were so many mean people, there were women who came by and just yelled at me, and people that called me a bigot…it really was horrible. I hated it! I remember so strongly standing there - and the people that supported us were scared, you could tell. Because they would walk past but they wouldn't say anything. They might thumbs up or something but they wouldn't say anything - only the people that hated us were like vocally yelling at us…I went home to Shay and I remember sobbing and he just held me because I was so torn up about it. And I was like 'We are never - if this comes back up on the ballot in 4 years, we are moving!'. But I did it because I felt like that was what the prophet was asking.

In order to make meaning from the experience, Britta evokes the early Mormon pioneers who faced persecution, and felt that in context the abusive nature of her experience working for Prop 8 was a manageable test of her resolve. But for Britta one of the more painful aspects of Prop 8 was feeling that she did not have her church community to turn to when those outside of it were attacking her beliefs. Rather than focus on the effects Prop 8 had on the LGTB communities it was intended to impact, she recalls the way in which it made obedient Mormons targets, inside and outside of their wards. I asked her about her feelings toward the gay community though, wanting to understand how she could extricate them from the

conversation about Prop 8. She considered that for a moment and said,

> I know people were torn though because I would have friends and they would come to me and say '...I just don't feel passionately about gay marriage, I don't care either way, [why is] The Prophet telling me that I need to feel this way?' - a lot of people went through a moment where they needed to figure out where they stood…I had my moment of showing the Lord 'if this is what you ask, I'll do it'…. It's not really the issue for me; it's what The Prophet says. So if the Prophet says 'stand there' I will stand there. And if The Prophet says 'stand here' then I'll go there.
>
> It's not - you see it hurts my feelings so much when people think it's a sheep thing, like, you're just following and you don't have any thoughts, you haven't thought about it - that's where you're going to go, because that's where you're told to go. That's not it at all. It's a recognition - that I recognize my own lack of knowledge compared to a God who knows everything. In my own life I see his hand and experiences where I thought I knew better and in the end I see the lord's hand and I see 'oh he knew me way better than I know myself'.
>
> And I feel that all the time, I feel like I am this person that I was in the eternal world and now come down into this body and this life is like trying to remember who I was. I think I was this incredible woman back then, and yet he knows me, he sees me without all the stuff I am dealing with down here that is distracting me. So he knows me better than I know myself and I want my life in his hands. I am going to ultimately say 'I don't understand this, but I trust that you understand it', so I am going to stay in the boat.

For Britta, making the choice to campaign for Prop 8 was not about intolerance, it was about obedience; for her tolerance is a depoliticized position. In campaigning Britta felt the most significant motivation came from wanting to stand with her prophet and her faith. As Britta experienced the campaign *she* was the target of abuse as a Mormon, a misunderstood religious minority. Britta's recollections were of ways Mormons received vitriol during the campaign, she and other Mormons reimagined Prop 8 as a campaign that ostracized faithful adherents to The Prophet and labeled them as hateful. Britta did not see her efforts to take rights from queer families as an attack, as she emphasized over and over that her church was "*for* traditional marriage", and always conducted themselves with kindness and respect. The bishop at the time, Adam, supported her position by explaining to me that he wished to invite the campaigners into the church so that they could see they were most welcome, "there was no hate!", he assured me, framing love and kindness as a sort of antidote to structural inequality. I struggled to see how Britta, Adam and others could seemingly disconnect the aims of the campaign from the responses to it, but largely this spoke to the ways in which heterosexist values could be rooted wholly within structures in ways that made it seemingly impossible to disentangle anti-homosexual actions from participation in an institution.

Activism is a form of ritual when it is embedded in a religious context, Britta's feelings that her campaigning was part of a larger trial, embedded in historical narratives of hardships faced by morally-righteous underdogs sustained her faith in the virtuous nature of the campaign. Asad views such narratives, whereby agency is transformed through the understanding of obedience as an empowered choice, as one such way secular/ritualist dichotomies are challenged. By asserting the self as incomplete agency can incorporate the surrender to God's authority, notions of responsibility and consciousness become more complicated when exercising autonomy involves a multiplicity of choices (Asad 2003:78). While Britta maintained unwavering faith that Prop 8 was a campaign in which God wanted her to be invested, this choice existed in a context where many church members continued to express concerns that campaigning was morally incorrect.

Intolerance, Resistance and Polarizing Discourses

One member on the forefront of advocating for LGTBQ inclusion in the church, a long-time member named Pam, took me aside and told me on my second visit to church that she considered Prop 8 The Church's "spiritual low point". Pam felt that much like the church's position on black members prior to the revelation in 1978, Mormons would come to see their involvement in anti-gay campaigns and teachings as a stain on the institution. "I want us to hold ourselves to a higher standard if we truly believe we are brothers and sisters", she explained to me, "and Mormon kids are killing themselves, and there is something we can do about it". Pam and other activists advocated publically in part because there is significant evidence that suicidal behavior is more common among LGTB-identified youth in the church, often attributed to both harmful church teachings and subsequent familiar rejection (Gibbs & Goldbach 2015, Bradshaw et. All 2015, Dehlin et. All 2018). The push-and-pull between members like Britta, concerned that slippage away from the institutional church's teaching threatened the integrity of the First Ward, Britta maintained that obedience was an important feature of the faith. Members like Pam placed less emphasis on obedience, interpreting Christ as an example of radical inclusivity, and sought opportunities to meet the needs of LGTBQ Mormons and their families. Both envisioned their approach as that which would sustain cohesive standards and practices, seeking harmonious values whilst following the will of God, both however felt that anti-gay slurs, insults or diatribes had no place in the church.

I had been prepared to confront homophobia as a researcher situated in a relatively conservative Christian church, and found myself rather relieved to find that members like Britta were, at the very least, thoughtfully considering how they could be empathetic while promoting the church's teachings; while not substantively inclusive, the warmth shown to gay couples in the ward did mean that I rarely felt unsafe expressing my outright support of LGTBQ rights and legal protections. Britta and others who supported Prop 8 were mostly delicate and courteous as they discussed their involvement, truly seeking to avoid causing harm (even if, in my opinion, it is not possible to enact homophobic legislation without causing harm). Instances in which outright contempt were expressed took me by surprise and were, thankfully, relatively rare. My first encounter with what I considered hateful speech took place during a Gospel Doctrine class, being lead by a member who was a guest teacher that particular week. Michael bore a testimony, which touched on the story of creation, the theme of the lesson that day. He then asked us, the attendees, to consider the fact that God made a man and a woman from whom we were all descended. He pointed out that it was not 'Adam and Adam', but 'Adam and Eve' that were chosen to come down to earth, and that each had a specific role defined by God. He then addressed us pointedly, saying, "There are many people out there now who are trying to make us accept homosexuality as something normal and natural - but God did not create it, and the Bible tells us that it is wicked and sinful". He continued to discuss attitudes we might encountered in the ward, and warned us that Satan was working "even on our own church". He encouraged us to never accept it, never support it, and "stop the spread of evil". The room was characteristically quiet, though I was deeply uncomfortable in the quiet for the first time and felt confined in the small space.

After the "lesson" I sought out Pam to express my dismay. She was horrified, wondering who had allowed this to happen, since Michael was not a Gospel Principals teacher. "It's not okay", she explained with her brow furrowed, "Even with the mainline church, that goes too far". And she was correct, the lesson departed from the church's stance, promoted on the relatively new website, which largely came about as a result of Prop 8 and concerns by Mormons who had been involved. The website, "Mormons and Gays", reflects the church's belief that LGTBQ sexualities are inherent (the implication is that it's not a chosen lifestyle, therefor natural), stating that,

> The experience of same-sex attraction is a complex reality for many people. The attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is. Even though individuals do not choose to have such attractions, they do choose how to respond to them. (*Ensign*, Sept. 2015, 29)

She then assured me that there were people I would encounter who were involved in an important movement, and that it would be a travesty not to explore and bring these efforts to light. The following week her husband Doug slipped me a manila folder she had sent with him, inside were a number of articles on LGTBQ Mormons, and poems by Carol Lynn Pearson, a well known Bay Area Mormon feminist poet and advocate for gay Mormons (her husband had come out as gay and subsequently died of aids while she provided his care). A note from Pam was included encouraging me to reach out to these groups.

'Mormons and Gays' / 'The Bloggernacle': two approaches to integration

The articles Pam and Doug brought me at church represented an emerging movement towards resolving the turmoil brought on by Proposition 8 through concrete efforts to move the church towards the total acceptance of LGTBQ members. I found many more publications online, and asked Heather to further direct me to places where I could connect with Mormons in the Bay Area connected to these efforts. Heather sent me a Facebook invite to participate in the San Francisco Pride Parade marching with "Mormons For Marriage Equality". In June we gathered on an unusually hot day to walk along market street, everyone but me wearing modest church dress, holding signs proclaiming, "Jesus loves everyone" and "A new command I give you: Love one another". The crowds, decked out with glitter and feathers, with as much flesh as there were rainbows on display, often paused, bewildered by the suit-clad men and women in skirts and cardigans – and then burst into cheers at the sight of Mormons walking cheerily amidst drags queens and biker dykes. Mitch, the member who Dick recalled coming out during a Fast And Testimony Meeting, organized the contingent, and I pushed Heather's stroller while she walked with a sign proclaiming "Brace Yourselves, Mormon Allies Are Coming".

At Pride Heather introduced me to a woman named Victoria, a former member of the church who was very involved in both LGTBQ and Feminist-Mormon groups. Victoria was 35

years old and had recently started dating someone new. She explained to me that despite being out for over a decade, a "raging lipstick femme" who lived with gay roommates and a teacup chihuahua named Charro in Nob Hill, her new girlfriend felt her queer identity was still entangled with self-hatred resulting from her childhood in the church. The girlfriend had given her an ultamaitum, before they got too serious she needed to "deal with this Mormon thing". She had recently sought to build up a queer Mormon community, in hopes of figuring out why she couldn't "let go of the part of me that is still a good Mormon girl" and find people of her faith and connect with them who believed in the spiritual worth of LGTBQ people. She told me that she could never be a member of the church again, but she wanted to be "Mormon" nonetheless. I asked her what part of being Mormon she wanted, and she described a longing to bake casseroles for church members who had just had babies or were recovering from surgery, to sing the hymns and pray for safe car journeys and good weather, and especially to know that she had a group of people she could call upon who would pray with her. She still loved Christ, but she missed church social functions, contexts where she felt she "made sense", and being able to proclaim that she was loved by Jesus, a statement that felt weird to say aloud among her non-Mormon friends. Victoria and I had escaped the heat together to drink ice tea between two buildings as we chatted – admitting in the privacy of the shaded alleyway that we were both hungover from Pride excess the night before. We compared notes, and laughed at the fact that we were sweating out alcohol fumes among our churchy contingent, which Victoria referred to as "rainbow pioneers, God love them!". Victoria pinned up her long bright-red hair, touched up her lipstick, and we made our way back to the group – as we faced them, shading themselves with their signs, cheerily greeting people who walked past, she smiled fondly and proclaimed, "I can't even help myself, those are my people".

Heather at SF Pride

Following the Pride Parade, a Berkeley Ward member sent me a facebook invite to a screening on a film about a Mormon teen coming out to his family. Hosted by a group called The Acceptance Project, whose aim is to promote positive outcomes for Mormon and Catholic LGTBQ people as they come out to their families, the film would be followed by a brief presentation on supporting gay-identified teens. At the screening, I ran into many others from the ward, including the bishop. Victoria arrived, and sat beside me during the film, Heather to the other side of her. As the documentary portrayed the heartbreak of the boy's mother as she tried to envision his future in the church, eventually allowing him to stop attending – but staunchly proclaiming that she knew God still had a plan for him, Victoria dabbed her eyes with a tissue. Afterwards two founders of The Acceptance Project encouraged anyone who wanted to reach out, delicately evading any direct criticism of the church, described how they could support members in a sensitive manner. As we drifted towards the snacks at the back of the room people embraced, reconnected. It appeared that, like Victoria, there was a cluster of people who had left their wards – this was their continued engagement with Mormonism. These events being organized and promoted outside of official church channels were still integrated in Bay Area Mormon experiences. Blogs, social media and online groups were moving forward with meaningful discourses on acceptance, and organizing specific situations for like-minded Mormons to engage without the direct involvement or approval of the administrative church.

This developing reality, whereby progressive Mormonism was beginning to flourish as the internet facilitated crucial connections between like-minded advocates for change in the church, resulted in pushbacks from the church. Far from curtailing these efforts, I found that these exertions simply expanded these movements by aligning more and more people with experiences of marginality and the church presented ridged standards. While the church had launched 'Mormons and Gays' to clarify its' position and create a more accommodating dialogue on how the church should respond to gay members with tolerance, while still standing by teachings embedded with anti-homosexual sentiments, these groups considered broader possibilities that could exist within the LDS church. The website reiterated it's views on homosexual relationships on the site with a section titled "Where the church stands", explaining that while homosexual attraction is currently recognized by the church as an uncontrollable factor of one's biology, that pursuing same- sex relationships is a social choice that can be managed. The church recommends, for those experiencing same-sex attraction, to make a decision to either date and marry someone of the opposite gender while maintaining openness and honesty and support in making that situation manageable, or choosing a life of celibacy in the church. The site contains 3 distinct types of video stories about members of the church who identify as gay; stories profiling people who have chosen to live out one of these two scenarios, and family members telling stories about accepting the fact that a child, grandson, or some other relation has come out as gay, and how the church has helped them accept the situation and continue to love the LGTBQ-identified person.

While the site was obviously intended to present a message of hope; that gay members need not be cast out, that the church was capable to accepting the "born this way" narrative and cease pressuring members to attempt conversion therapy, that family members could continue to keep contact with their gay children and were free to discuss their experiences without shame in church-settings, the site also devastated many people who felt the expectations were cruel. It was expressed to me, and I was certainly in agreement, that asking individuals to live without romantic relationships or to enter marriages where sexual attraction likely would not be present, essentially spending their lives battling a significant component of their identity, felt like an unhealthy request. The expectation that spouses support their lesbian or gay partner, despite the lack of innate attraction that most couples expect from their romantic relationships, seemed like a sentence. One member who had

divorced her gay husband felt that as a result of these new imagined possibilities, touted as more open to radical new forms of authenticity, actually promoted shame for those who did not want to stay with husbands or wives who fundamentally were not sexually interested in them. She, and many members of the First Ward, continued to consider and support alternative ways of belonging to the church, as divorced, single, or part of a same-sex marriage, while the church pressed forward with messages of ridged boundaries.

Therefore activities on the margins evolved to constitute their own communities, particularly as church members became less active in their own wards and sought spiritual fulfillment through their engagement with Mormons elsewhere. Bound by their ambiguous position in relation to the church, it is very useful to consider the implication of this strategic way these groups relate to the church. Returning to Turner's liminality, I want to elaborate here on how his perspective can enhance my argument that these activities are expanding the margins of the church, and imbuing marginal Mormons with particular qualities and powers. Turner grounds his observations in an analysis of rites of passage and rituals; here I want to extend liminality to apply to persons who are at once embedded in a religious institution and outside of it; a person whose practices are at once for and outside of LDS circumscribed ways of being. This is perhaps a liberal use of Turner's analytical frame, but it seems wholly appropriate here. Turner situates his work inside of smaller social networks, using the Latin communitas to distinguish the communal structures inherent in the groups which he basis this work on sacred ritual. While this particular image certainly contrasts with the picture I have painted of a church with formal and bureaucratic structures ordering almost every facet of participation, the ward is certainly at once it's own micro-network, with it's own leadership negotiating how to serve a specific group of people with localized and personal concerns. In a sense, it is not a stretch by any means to engage her with Turners framework, in particular, to see how these engaged communities operating on the fringes of the first ward experience marginality as liminality.

Further, Douglas's framing of symbolic boundaries is reflected in Turner's commentary on how the secular/sacred opposition is upended by liminality. While Douglas's framing is useful in considering how boundaries are manifested and maintained, how they are imagined as distinguishing insider from outsider, when individuals imagine themselves operating in "in-between" places these scenarios become more nuanced and complex. Turner argues that that

framing politics and religion, or the sacred and the secular, as oppositional forces does not account for the ways these operate inside of liminal contexts. As I observed, within these marginalized groups, making diverse choices about how to integrate the seemingly incongruous values informed by the church and by personal and social experiences that "these persons elude or slip through network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (1969:94). In Mormon networks dedicated to radically reimagining that the doctrine of the church could make space for queer unions participants in these discussions were outright communicating in ways that went against church authority, while at the same time identifying themselves as having some claim to a Mormon identity.

These ambiguous ways in which individuals related to Mormonism, negotiating their power as they pressed the church for substantial adaptations, while often being held at a distance, also created conditions by which individuals found themselves fluctuating between persecution and empowerment. As the church imposed regulations often barring individuals from fully participating in their faith, members were further ostracized through mechanisms such as anti-gay lessons depicting homosexuality as "evil", problematizing their identity, and, most often, imposing a silence around the needs of LGTBQ members and their families. Those who chose to align with the plight of LGTBQ Mormons often received similar social treatment. These instances frequently lead to opportunities to further highlight the need for change; Post Prop 8 it was universally agreed that strategies in the past of adapting a ward's culture to the needs of it's people could no longer be a viable solution to the homophobia embedded in Mormonism, largely because Prop 8 had shown that at any moment these efforts could be upended by the central church. As this emboldened many to act (and caused others to leave), these efforts were met with varied responses from Salt Lake City. Turner understands liminality in the context of ritual to be a transitional process by which individuals emerge - for Mormons in these developing and growing progressive communities there was an ongoing narrative that eventually some rupture would occur. For many though, uncertainty as to whether the church would embrace them forced to turn away from the mainline church.

Conclusions

At a social gathering one evening I found myself surrounded by long-time members of the ward who were trying to convey to me what the church had been like decades ago.

Sitting between Lindy and Dick they alternated between Lindy's sincere memories of different members who had passed through, and Dick's jokes about how the ward always ruffled the feathers of Salt Lake City. At one point Dick laughingly recalled that once during his temple recommend renewal he responded to the question, "Do you affiliate with any group or individual whose teachings or practices are contrary to or oppose those accepted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" with, "you mean other than the first ward?". Everyone began laughing at this, including me. Most in the circle were quite proud of their affiliation with the ward. "We've always done things our own way", Lindy added.

Many members of the ward acknowledged firstly that there was room within a highly regulated institution for just enough adaptation to accommodate a congregation where many individuals held progressive social and political viewpoints. Further, as Lindy had detailed, the ward had often been a spiritual home for LGTBQ members and their families. Proposition 8 had disrupted this by upending these processes, causing many members to feel the were obligated to participate in activism that undermined their values, put them at odds with their communities and divided the church. While many hoped these experiences would help rein-in members who had strayed from mainline ways of expressing Mormon values, rather Prop 8 seemed to heighten the tensions between the ward and the central church. In the aftermath of the Proposition 8 campaign there has also been a movement towards discourses of tolerance being pressed by the church that continue to uphold anti-homosexual values. Though the focus on kindness and acceptance towards individuals has marked a softening on the church's former approach. Mormons who believe this is the most accommodating the church can be without compromising it's doctrine express sincere empathy, and deny that homophobia has any place in this negotiation. While Douglas positions these changes as a point of departure from tradition, many First Ward members see sustaining tradition as a process of maintaining relevance while ending suffering. While suffering is perceived as the condition which secular agency will eliminate (Asad 2003:67), embedded in the social spaces we inhabit, a condition brought about by subjugation to religious authority – in negotiating what form tolerance within the church should take my participants sought to eliminate pain and remainin subject to the authority of God and the church. Jean and others stated that the potency of their faith was compromised by bending or dismantling the church's 'standards', they could envision 'expanding' boundaries which still maintained an essential structure, acknowledging that there was still space to creatively imagine how the church could adapt without being weakened.

Mormons organizing themselves through digital networks, however, are beginning to take unprecedented actions towards pushing for equality within the church, and recognizing the legitimacy of lesbian and gay families. These efforts, though small and certainly at the fringes of Mormonism, are having an impact on Bay Area wards. The discourses that happen outside of church are not necessarily invisible to the ward as a whole, and are beginning to shape the ward culture. This influence, however, does not have any bearing on the official dogmas of the church. LGTBQ members are largely functioning within a church that is uncertain of their future and can only offer them a limited role in their ward communities. Unable to partake in essential ordinances and unsure of their place, their presence is often viewed as a testament to the power of the gospel and goodness of the ward. The undefined place of LGTBQ people inside the church has created a somewhat divergent movement, whereby Mormons try and figure out what tolerance and acceptance are meant to encompass, and whether these things should entail action or passivity. Rather than strengthening the boundaries and standards of the faith, the intuitive built up robust margins as many Mormons began seeking out ways to integrate seemingly incongruous facets of their identities, finding a place neither wholly inside or outside the church in which their spiritual beliefs were being informed.

Chapter Seven

The 'Mo-Fems': Mormon feminist activism in the First Ward

In 2014 Mormons were given substantial coverage by the press, this time for events unfolding within the church. Two members of the church, well known to members for their public efforts to promote the ordination of women and total inclusivity of gay Mormons, respectively, had both been summoned to come disciplinary hearings and accused of apostasy. In the First Ward some members had personal ties with Kate Kelly and John Delhin, the two members facing potential excommunication, and nearly every member was following their plight. Kelly, a human rights lawyer and life-long church member who had served a mission and married in the temple, founded the group Ordain Women, a community of church members asking the church to give the priesthood to women. John Delhin was known for his podcast, Mormon Stories, and his research as a doctoral candidate in phycology linking depression and suicidal behavior in gay Mormons to the church's teachings that designated homosexual attraction as an affliction. The fact that both received notice of their hearings within a few weeks of each other (Kelly's hearing took place on June 23rd, 2014, Delhin's on February 10, 2015) signaled to many members of the church that rather than being two isolated incidents, the apostasy charges signaled a clampdown on activism within the church. The New York Times notes in their front-page write up;

> Two Mormons who have gained national attention for pushing their church to ordain women to the priesthood and to accept openly gay members have been notified this week that they face excommunication for apostasy.
>
> It is the first time since 1993, when the church ejected a handful of intellectuals known as the "September Six," that it has moved so forcefully to quash such prominent critical voices. (Goldstein 2014)

The clear message to Mormons engaged with feminism and LGTBQ acceptance efforts was that these activities placed them at-risk for similar charges, and many viewed this as an attempt to reaffirm boundary lines, pushing these marginalized positions firmly outside of the faith. In the First Ward the excommunications reverberated strongly, particularly as many members were participants in the online communities where Delhin and Kelly operated. Those who identified themselves as "Mormon feminists" were particularly concerned, though many felt they would not face similar exclusion from the First Ward, they speculated whether there was a place for them in a church that was moving backwards on progressive issues. For some, the hearings came as an affront, and signaled a greater need for wards to resist by holding fast to the localized ways of operating, disregarding the curtailing efforts of the mainline church; for others, it signaled the need for wards to more firmly align themselves with these efforts. This of course unsettled many members, a potential return to disharmony similar to 2008. These expressions of anxiousness and uncertainty provided me another opportunity to consider the ward's place as something between the margins and the center.

This chapter will continue to emphasize the significance of extendable and retractable margins of the First Ward in relation to the plight of women seeking ordination. These margins can extend into cyberspace, and the LDS communities seeking change which form there. Tensions between the administrative church and emergent Mormon social movements impacted social relationships within the ward; much as Proposition 8 created chasms, the administrative church's crackdown on organized Mormon feminist efforts to achieve gender equality in the church created similar strains. The rise of Mormon feminism and LGTBQ-acceptance movements within the church are related, and in many instances are interwoven, particularly as both raise questions about essentialized gender roles in Mormon doctrine. For reasons I will elaborate on below it makes sense to change focus for both clarity and to point to ways that these two movements diverge. The disciplinary hearings were widely covered by national news outlets (NBC News 2014, Reuters 2014, Bustle 2014, Fox News 2014, NY Times 2014), both Delhin and Kelly were excommunicated, but the conditions and reportage surrounding their disciplinary hearings were quite different, and the vitriol directed at Kelly I observed was much more severe. While the church has called for kindness towards LGTBQ people, no such equivalent has been presented for how to deal with Mormon feminists.

Kate Kelly meeting the press to discuss her disciplinary hearing, via NBC News

This chapter will look at events that were critically shaping the future of the church and is concerned with not only giving a complete picture of these themes through continuing with an emphasis on marginality, tensions and the place of the ward, but also to will return to some of the previous discussions of gender, materiality and sacred space presented in chapters 1 and 2 in order to highlight the ways Mormon boundaries are contested through a reordering of the material forms that constitute them. Progressive social movements and traditionalist religious groups have a much more nuanced relationship than is generally acknowledged, and here I have tried to move past the positioning of progressivism and religious tradition as a cultural clash, but rather seeing how the unfolding of progressive ideas inside religious contexts requires distinctive types of negotiations with materialized boundaries. Harding (1991), Cannell (2006), and Robbins (2007) have argued that these types of contestations are not about the religious versus the secular, and that ethnographic investigation can point to new ways of thinking about conflict that represents divergent belief systems, politics and social worlds. As I consider these negotiations of materialized boundaries, it is useful also to consider, as Keane has demonstrated, the ever-shifting ways that material forms are assigned meaning (2003). My aim has been to engage with this critical approach by describing these conflicts as firmly rooted in the struggle for moving a faith into the future, rather than the dismantling of a faith, and largely locating this in tangible experiences of faith. I have found that bringing in Douglas's work on symbolic boundaries (1966, 1970), which very much relies

on oppositional models of cultural ideals, provides a relevant framework when considering why the disordering of symbolic boundaries is so disruptive, particularly where sacredness and ritual are substantially integrated into bounded contexts. This perspective is crucial when considering how Latter Day Saints order their world and make meaning from bounded contexts where their engagement constitutes religious identities. But, essential to framing how Mormon feminism explicitly calling for women's ordination was managed by the ward is understanding the way the administrative church sought to uphold a particularly fixed system of symbolic boundaries, and Mormon feminists believed that disrupting those boundaries was not about pushing for a secular dismantling of religious tradition, but rather creatively reordering tradition in order to fully participate. The ardent faith of the "Mo-Fems", a common colloquialism, and their desire to continue to be wholly integrated into the LDS church, should be considered when pointing to how activism is positioned within the church, rather than against the church.

I have described these processes of creative boundary-negotiation previously, particularly with feminist-identified women in the ward, using fashion, for example, to make their modest church clothes simultaneously express other sensibilities informed by professional, social and local connections while still firmly within Mormon standards. In a ward where this type of creativity was embraced, many unconventional-but-not- unsanctioned approaches to giving women more visibility and leadership opportunities in the church were pioneered. In Chapter Four I gave an overview of the bishop's efforts to specifically provide teenage Mormon girls a participatory role in sacrament meeting, and formally acknowledge their advancements in church programs to parallel the young men's more formal initiations as they obtained priesthood authority. These sorts of efforts happened alongside other distinctive ways the first ward gave women leadership roles, such as the fact that marriage classes were offered by Nedra, a member who was a licensed family and marriage therapist and had assumed responsibility for these classes from the bishop on account of her expertise. A couple from the ward gave a lecture series in lieu of Sunday School classes on Mormon women's history. The bishop asked that when couples spoke in church talks they decide for themselves the content of their talks, rather than adhering to the tradition of asking husbands to speak on the doctrine and wives to speak on the personal. Aside from adaptations such as these, many women in the ward reported that women's voices and visibility was much more prominent than in other wards, and felt the First Ward was an exceptionally good example of modeling

empowerment. Feminism certainly was not considered a bad word in the ward. Many women, however, felt that more meaningful and church-sanctioned changes needed to be introduced in order to achieve true gender equality within Mormonism. Their feelings, expressed most prominently through Mormon feminist blogs, fueled anxieties in the ward about taking a side in wider debates about gender, God, authority and tradition.

There were 6 women in the ward in total who expressed the explicit support for or desire for women to hold the priesthood to me. In addition to these 6 women there were two men who supported women's ordination. Hannah and her husband Mike, and Heather and her husband McKay, were comfortable participating in interviews and going on record as such, other members told me they could not be named as supporters of Ordain Women openly. Outside of the ward, the local Mormon community contained many more members belonging either to other wards or who participated in Mormonism without attending church who participated in public forums calling for women's ordination. In fact, one evening after a "fireside talk", the term for supplementary evening meetings devoted to special topics, a group of Mormon feminists organized a gathering in the basement room of the graduate theological union (somewhat in secret). The fireside was being offered by a Mormon female academic in conjunction with a local conference that had brought visiting Mormon feminists to Berkeley. Following the talk, fireside attendees slowly filtered out of the room until we were left with a small circle of women in an underground meeting space - a very fitting image of how Mormon feminism functioned. Women who openly hoped for the ordination of women overwhelmingly felt that openly expressing these views invited rejection, social exclusion and potentially formal consequences, so there was always the need to maintain discretion around these types of get-togethers. As I witnessed these processes in action I felt very much inclined towards openly acknowledging my support of their organization and critical of efforts to censor, silence or delegitimize their concerns.

While there were a scant few openly gay members of the ward, it often appeared to me more risky to be openly pro-women's ordination. The church was formally teaching that homosexual attraction was an unwanted affliction, whereas a desire for feminine power was viewed as neither innate nor acceptable, and an affront to the church's teachings. Mormon feminists were considered hungry for power and attention, in a church where one passively awaits God's directive in order to accept a calling, explicitly stating a desire for a role of

authority was a cultural taboo. The relationship between Mormon feminists and their critics in the ward was extremely contentious. I was warned by many members that, specifically, Heather and Hannah's participation in this particular brand of feminism and the ideas they shared with me were not representative of Mormonism, and might give me "the wrong impression" of the faith (I should note that Hannah is not actually a member of Ordain Women). I was told by multiple members not to give much weight to their experience of Mormonism as their opinions only represented a tiny, radical, minority. While they were unquestionably in the minority, these anxieties only highlighted just how prickly and impactful these views were in a ward of hundreds of opponents, in a church that discouraged such discourses. These tensions were not only rooted in LDS customs and cultural traditions, but embedded in Mormon doctrine.

From a Mormon theological perspective, men and women are born gendered in a spiritual preexistence as spirit children of Heavenly Father and a Mother in Heaven, and they remain essentially male and female into eternity. The unit of highest exaltation is a man and a woman sealed together for eternity by the priesthood power manifest only in the lay institutional structures of the LDS Church.

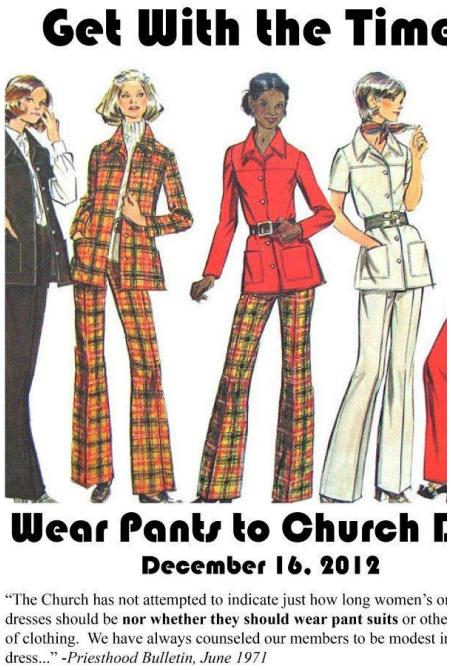
> Gender distinctiveness, therefore, is one of the central engines for eternal progression, even as it offers clear directions on how men and women should go about their daily lives – how they should be a mother and father walking through an airport or department store. (Morrill 2014:64)

In my experience those concerns were reflective also of anxieties about how present tensions would shape the future of the church, many members feared that attitudes shaped by culture were a threat to a sacred ordering and worked to preserve systems they believed were designed by Heavenly Father. However, as the institutional church's response played out over the course of my fieldwork those concerns were transformed; members not only worried about the impact of Mormon feminists on the church, but that punishing those questioning parts of the church was similarly harming the institution by imposing tradition with rigid and oppressive approaches to discontent. As things reached a crescendo in Salt Lake, I saw the First Ward soften, once again setting themselves apart from central authority.

Pants at church: materializing discontent

WEAR PANTS TO CHURCH DAY
SUNDAY
DECEMBER 16, 2012

"Attending church is about worship and learning to be followers of Jesus Christ. Generally church members are encouraged to wear their best clothing as a sign of respect for the Savior, but we don't counsel people beyond that."
-Church Spokesman Scott Trotter



Images from "Wear Pants to Church" on Facebook

Returning to the motif of clothing, women involved in the emergence of the Mormon feminist movement chose to subvert the church's prescriptions around dress and one of their first organized efforts inside of the church to visibly align themselves with the plight for gender equality in church. This example highlights some of the more overt ways women specifically sought to disrupt the church's materialized boundaries, and is one specific example that highlights the mediums through which discontent was expressed. Douglas poses that the body is "a model that can stand for any bounded system" (1976: 115), and here with embodied materials, gender is inscribed on the body, and contestations over gender policing within the church are similarly expressed through the politics of dress. Authorities from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints emphasize the role of women's dress as visual display of modesty, gender distinction, and piety. Clothing which distinguishes gender reaffirms social principals embedded in Mormon faith. Consequently, many Mormon feminists have used strategic clothing choices to resist the church's investment in regulating women's appearance and limiting their roles in religious life, often through subtle negotiations with their fashion. Women involved in Mormon feminist groups, however, have further opted to challenge the church through overt challenges to the status quo predicated on clothing. The last five years has seen a rapid growth of online Mormon feminist communities, and the Mormon feminist movement in general. Blogs such as Feminist Mormon Housewives, The Exponent II, and most notably, Ordain Women, have provided Mormon women space to discuss and organize around their specific form of feminism. "Wear Pants to Church" day was organized as an annual event as a result of women in the bloggernacle seeking a way to express their resistance to sexism embedded in Mormon traditions in 2012. Participants were encouraged to challenge the expectation that women wear dresses or skirts on Sundays while still participating in all church activities in a non-disruptive manner. Pants Day was promoted informally, online and through Facebook, and quickly became a controversial movement.

While men's dress choices are perhaps less closely scrutinized and certainly less likely to be addressed by church authorities in annual talks and Mormon publications, male dress is certainly a narrower category. I observed that the dress standards for men effectively reinforced the place of men as leaders and figures of authority in the church. While women's dress standards created space for fluidity, women's dress at church was almost never standard

professional attire. Men's dark suits, ties and collared shirts had the effect of making the men appear qualified to lead; to me they resembled bosses, politicians, lawyers, CEO's or other professional leaders. In their longer-length flowing skirts and dresses the women at church usually appeared more casual and approachable; in this way, the men's place as church leaders felt innate. Pants Day disrupted this sort of hierarchical symbolism built into Mormon dress standards. On the topic of religious dress Anna-Karina Hermkins states that,

> As clothing is intertwined with gender, social, and ethnic identity, it actually gives material form to social categories and hierarchies…cloth engages beliefs about the creation of the world and of humanity, including social relations between people. (2010:231)

Elaborating that, "Clothing materializes values, ideas, relationships, and identities that are internalized and mediated both within and on the surface of the body" (2010: 232). While at church I observed that the dark suits worn by men lent an air of authority to them, and perhaps legitimized or further constituted them as the leaders in the church.

While suits and ties and other forms of professional dress worn by men at church materialized particular association between male-ness and authority, women's dress, and the cultural emphasis on women's beauty that many of my participants felt was deeply embedded in Mormonism, was considered a materialization of women's subordination. In the last 5 years a particular rise in Mormon lifestyle blogs and instagram accounts has emerged alongside the development of the Bloggernacle. While often dismissed by members of the first ward as representative of the "Utah Mormon experience" and associated cultural and social standards present in Mormon centers, these blogs focusing on beauty, domesticity, and motherhood highlighted the pernicious way femininity was presented to Mormon women in broader contexts. The media took note of the rise of these types of blogs, articles on Mormon "mommy bloggers" have been popping up since the early 2010's and continue to come into publication every few months, with publications from The New York Times, Salon and Deseret News offering profiles and commentary, almost universally correlating the Mormon faith's emphasis on traditional gender-roles with the prevalence of the genre (Matchar 2010, Williams 2011, Belkin 2011, Boskar 2017, Gregory 2017). Despite an array of complex cultural notions, social relations and "idiosyncratic ways to constitute the symbolic medium of bodily adornment" (Turner 1980:502), societal expectations regarding beauty and femininity often correlate with social models of inequality. While concrete realties can diverge, cultural ideals around gender

and dress often replicate patterns of dominance (Turner 1980:203), here, through the linking of women's value to their feminine beauty. Pants Day arose within that broader context, challenging ways that Mormon women experienced patriarchy in multidimensional ways, allowing participants to express dynamic forms of resistance to experiences they felt were embedded in doctrine, Mormon cultural standards, or social expectations. In the first ward, motivations were based on not only a desire to show solidarity, but also for both Heather and Hannah, and a handful of others, to express engagement with a more extensive aim of pressing for gender equality within the church.

Hannah and Heather discussed their participation, though both recall seeing a number of other women wearing pants on the two Sundays they participated. Some women I interviewed appeared apathetic about the event, one pointing out that many women "of a certain age" frequently wear dress-slacks to church and it doesn't need to be a designated event. Lindy, in particular, said "Oh that's a fun idea, but I don't know, I think sometimes I wear pants when it's cold! It's not really a big deal here". For many the event was about asserting solidarity with the issues tied to modest dress for women, rather than making a particular statement within the context of the ward, and Heather and Hannah both felt it was important to continually push the issue. This particular instance was not so much about the ward as it was about addressing how women are situated within the church. They maintained a sense of humor about their participation. Heather noted that she often was given more attention for allowing her children to choose their own church clothes, and as a result her 4-year-old son occasionally came to church in skirts, or, notably, a self-fashioned sarong and array of plastic accessories, and so the pants had hardly been noticed. On the theme of gender-bending dress, Hannah's husband Mike decided that he would attend church with his pants-wearing wife while wearing a pink, modest-length skirt to church.

Hannah says that his outfit drew much more attention than her own. Mike explained, grinning at his own sarcasm, "Well people kept asking why I was wearing a skirt, and so I started saying that I specifically did *not* want to participate in 'Wear Pants to Church' day." Both Hannah and Mike seemed to feel like the event was not necessarily controversial in the First Ward, but a good opportunity to look around and see if other members would turn up in pants – evidence that there were less-vocal Mormon feminists among them.

Mike on Pants Day

Ordain Women & negotiating a place in the church

The level of participation in Pants at Church Day has been pinpointed as a crucial moment in demonstrating the willingness of Mormon Feminists to engage in more public discourses of discontent inside Mormon sacred space. Heather explained to me that while the event had never really ruffled any feathers in the ward, across other wards it had been met with hostility. This motivated many to become more involved in public displays of engagement with Mormon feminism. The next step for many women, including Heather, was to become more forthright in naming difficulties with the administrative church beyond wanting to occasionally come to church in pants, and specifically, women's ordination was placed at the center of issues with inequality. Locating Mormonism's deterministic view of gender in the act

of granting Priesthood Authority to one sex and not the other provided women a focused cause which to rally around. This particular focal point represented something much larger than presiding over the congregation though, the fraught nature over whether these questions could be raised my members in good faith came down to the fact that many members of the church viewed these teachings on gender to be embedded in every facet of the faith, to reiterate;

> Gender is an essential way that LDS leaders and members structure time and space, rituals, and cultural roles. It forms the backbone of the habitus of Mormon cultures. The LSD community is well known for fostering traditional gender and family structures and for being self-consciously patriarchal. (Morrill, 2014:64)

Nonetheless, Ordain Women was launched, a website where women posted their photos and identified themselves publically as either desiring ordination or supporting women's ordination. Heather proudly reported to me that she was the first profile posted.

Immediately Ordain Women was recognized as a departure from attempts to change the "culture" of Mormonism, as it called for a radical reimagining of how people would be organized inside the faith. In 2014 Ordain Women began making public appeals for support at General Conference by asking permission to enter the all-male Priesthood sessions. They were barred from the event, and admonished by church authorities. In spite of this, Ordain Women founder, Kate Kelly, continued to ground the organization's aims in church traditions. Calling on members to prayerfully consider their support of the group, asking church authorities to seek revelation that would align with her own testimonies, and maintaining standards such as modest and gender-distinctive dress for public appeals, Ordain Women firmly situated their plight inside of the faith, not against the church.

In 2015 as the organization prepared for a second public demonstration, referring to this as a "direct action" rather than "protest" or "activism", in order to depoliticize their aims. Heather asked if I would travel with her to Salt Lake when she participated. She planned to stay with a fellow blogger from The Exponent II who was also participating in the event. On the 11-hour journey east we agreed to swap life-stories, and indeed Heather's narrative gave me a powerful sense of how Mormon feminism was an abrupt departure from the traditional narrative of Mormon womanhood. Married her Junior year at Brigham Young University, a private Mormon college located in Provo Utah, Heather was pregnant with her first child by the time she graduated. She recalls 'waddling' across the stage to collect her diploma. Up until this

point in her story Heather has continuously explained to me, "I was a typical Molly-Mormon", meaning that she wholly conformed to mainstream Mormon culture and values, including the rejection of feminism. Since I met her I've known Heather as the church radical – I recalled seeing her biking uphill toward the temple, taking off her helmet to reveal a shaved head, and delivering a church talk equating homophobia and racism with sin on my second visit to church. While she is married with three children at the age of 28, she's certainly marked herself as different from many of the other women at church.

I have often asked Heather how it's possible that she grew up a conservative Mormon, married a quietly-devoted returned-missionary, started and family and then transitioned into someone so progressive and outspoken. She assured me that somewhere between Oakland and Salt Lake she'd try and fill it all in. Her transition, she thinks, began with her first pregnancy. A newlywed, Heather was uncertain whether she and McKay were ready to start a family. She told me that in many ways she was still adjusting to marriage and focused on school and the potential for a career after graduation. Her husband, however, felt strongly that God wanted them to have a baby. She explains to me that she prayed but did not receive similar confirmation. She consulted her husband, who again maintained he had received guidance and knew the time was right. Heather said that unsure what to do, she simply assumed her husband must have a closer connection to God, as a priesthood holder, and that she should go with his guidance on this issue. Heather became pregnant with her oldest right away and was filled with mixed emotions when she received the news. She was elated, but also stunned; she felt odd about the fact that her body was going through changes she had not really felt prepared to undergo. She did not feel that her husband had pressured her, but rather that she had lacked the confidence in her own abilities and autonomy to make the decision *with* him. As the pregnancy progressed, and lacking health insurance, she felt suddenly and overwhelmingly disempowered. "I had been reading this book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, I was actually taking an anthropology class", she explained to me, "and I thought 'if these women can have their babies on their own, without doctors and interventions, I believe I can to'. So I prayed and then I felt the confirmation I had wanted so badly before, and I knew I could do this."

Her husband, McKay, initially hoped she would consider a doctor or midwife, but instead Heather began researching prenatal care and home-birthing. She ordered a fetoscope

and purchased many books of birth stories, and she continued to pray. The initially divisive decision began to bring the couple closer together as they prepared for her delivery, as McKay was very open to dialogue with his wife on their prayerfully-considered (and thoroughly researched) decisions. She described Margaret's birth and remembers most vividly that she asked McKay for a blessing during difficult back labor, and as he placed his hands on her he said "the strength of your foremothers is with you". She felt empowered not only by her faith in her own body's ability, but through his evocation of the generations of female ancestors who had birthed children before her. Her partnership, and her spiritually began to shift through the experience. Heather emphasized to me that the evolution of her spirituality was something she held in common with many of the Ordain Women members, and this deeply resonant experience was something she often felt other 'Mo-fems' could wholly relate to. The community was important to Heather – but she considered and said, "I need the bloggernacle, but I don't think I could still be a member without the First Ward", explaining that the experiences that were shared among Mormon women desiring the Priesthood were vital for keeping Heather in the church, but so too was belonging to a ward where she was never denied a calling or ostracized for her beliefs. While people might disagree, she explained, she'd never felt that she was not welcome, "and that is a huge difference, I know from other wards I have been in. I probably wouldn't have stayed if we had not come to Oakland".

Once we were settled into our host April's guest quarters in Utah I began to see just how significant the ward's welcoming attitude was. Utah news channels were covering the planned 'direct action' with plenty of disapproving and outright enraged comments coming from church members opposed to Ordain Women's mission. April was fielding calls from the press, while also speculating whether she would be able to return to her church the following Sunday after becoming one of the public faces behind organizing the event, negotiating to what extent she should explain to her children the potential fallout. Her 4 young children were certainly aware of her involvement, and her 9-year-old daughter was particularly enthusiastic about her mother's aims and my interest in their faith, asking me many questions, wondering if I would let her mother baptize me if she was given the priesthood. On Friday evening Heather, myself and April, piled into her pickup truck and headed to the Ordain Women training meeting and potluck where women participating in the direct action would prepare for Saturday's events.

I have been to a number of feminist gatherings, and this was so different from anything I'd been to before. Traditional Mormon foods were set out in the foyer when we arriving – loading a plate and donning a nametag we then entered a large auditorium at the University of Utah, where roughly 200 women chatted excitedly, many of them with young children who were running between the rows of fold-down chairs. Many had travelled for the event, introductions were made, old friends embraced, women discovered that they had already been acquainted through various Mormon feminist blogs – Heather noted on her nametag the handles she used online. The organization's leaders took the stage, and a prayer was said and a hymn sung. The unaccompanied hymn, "God Speed The Right", set a tone of gentle persistence that I felt throughout the weekend. As Kate Kelly, Ordain Women's founder, took the stage a number of restless babies and toddlers began climbing up to explore the raised platform, and the room felt very much like a Relief Society social event. We were instructed that the gathering on Saturday was a "direct action" and not a "protest". We were told that we would "walk" to Temple Square, not "march". It was explained to me that indeed "no one wants this to get called a protest because we're not protesting the church - we are the church!". A slide outlined our code of conduct,

- No anti-church diatribes
- No signs or banners
- Sunday best dress

From the food, to the careful negotiations around language and vocabulary, the event was carefully framed in such a way to contain it firmly within Mormon boundaries, while simultaneously seeking a momentous shift. Concerns for respectability prevailed, as did an overwhelming desire to embed the direct action within familiar signalers of Mormon experiences, pointing to the dynamic role of materials in shifting contexts.

Dress Transformed: clothing as a dynamic material

Looking specifically at clothing in the context of the Direct Action, it is apparent that a shift had occurred from the initial aims presented in 'Pants at Church Day'. In this context though the fluid ways that dress at once connects women to Mormon traditions, though is also a medium by which sexism is visually challenged, provided a fraught context in which

engagement and disengagement were balanced with other aims and objectives. Keane observes that in utilizing material culture as the primary medium through which to analyze religious phenomena, there is tension between "abstract or immaterial entities" and their "semiotic forms" (2005). It is precisely this tension that enables mediation, negotiation and social change; the tension between ideologies and manifesting those ideologies is the space of possibility, questioning, transgression, and nuance.

Clothing in particular, among a myriad of other materials that are acted with, can be embodied with wide-ranging intentionalities, as well as un-intentionalities. As it is embodied clothing enables Mormon women to live their real Mormon identities, even as they critically work to negotiate nuanced expressions of respectability, in addition to self, solidarity, religiosity, modesty, feminism and individualism. Respectability politics played an obvious and critical role in the establishment of Ordain Women's dress standards for the action, and this is significant to recognize and include in this analysis, however respectability provides an incomplete assessment of the situation. Embodied materialities are neither, as Webb Keane succinctly puts, reduced "…either to being only vehicles of meaning, on the one hand, or ultimate determinants, on the other" (2003:411), in part because of the fact that things act with people to perform social work, and in part because the qualities of materials are always bound to a number of other qualities which constitute them. Keane refers to this as "bundling", whereby all observable qualities exist with a number of "co-present factors", allowing meanings to shift across contexts (2008:414). "Clothing presents a prime example of the bundling together of various material qualities that have contextual value" (Norris 2005:182), and I would like to suggest that not only are their material qualities bundled together, but that clothes are bundled with people performing social work at any given moment, and the diverse intentions of the wearer.

Initially I interpreted the dress code that day to be entirely concerned with enabling this seamless integration, bound within the respectability politics that framed the event as a whole. Legitimizing the Mormon identities of the participants seemed to take priority over the comfort level of individuals in skirts and dresses, temporarily suspending one activist endeavor for another. It appeared that a great deal of effort was made to align the group identity with Mormon cultural touchstones that would signal the group's desire to work within the church rather than against it; particularly with a courteous demeanor and absence of

paraphernalia. Along with advocating for cautious use of language by participants, the dress code helped frame the event as wholly integrated with mainstream LDS values. Ordain Women organizers collectively requested that the change they proposed be fulfilled through a church-sanctioned and historically-supported sequence of events. Particularly, as they implored leaders to pray over their request and listen to the veracity of their own revelations, it was made clear that they sought to ground their aims more substantially in Mormon doctrine, rather than a feminist revolution. I read dress as a signaler of compliance in this context, a marker of piety and therefore acceptability, and as a medium through which to communicate a desire to be recognized as familiars entitled to such claims of personal revelation.

Heather and I spoke about my interpretation of the dress standards. She pointed out that respectability was indeed an issue which she unselfconsciously considered in all aspects of her involvement in more public forms of Mormon feminist engagements, though inside contexts where she was more familiar she was much more willing to explore Mormon feminist issues without concern for substantiating her faithfulness. Heather, at the precise moment we travelled to Utah together, was sporting a shaved head, motorcycle boots and a purple scarf to represent her feminist solidarity; at church her personal style presented a challenge to the idea that piety and traditional displays of ultra-femininity were fundamentally linked inside Mormonism, as she was fully active in her home ward and certainly a devout member of the church, yet often played with her personal style and used her dress to reflect a plethora of dimensions of her identity. We talked about the pressure on LDS women, particularly young women, to visibly demonstrate faith through subtle and overt fashion choices that largely designated them as ladylike and conservative. For her Ordain Women profile photo, however, she had chosen a picture that represented her as very much aligned with Mormon signalers of traditional femininity. In her profile photo she holds a smaller, rounder version of Elena, her youngest child. She smiles demurely at her cherubic baby, in a pale yellow cap-sleeved dress, sitting in the sunshine with a grassy field extending behind her. “You are the picture of young Mormon motherhood”, I tell her laughingly when she shows me the photo, and she responds, “But I am the picture of young Mormon motherhood, it’s actually who I am”, she responded.

Heather's Ordain Woman profile

Viewing clothing in this way, as having mutability across contexts, is particularly useful when thinking about the role of dress in Mormon feminist activism. The meaning of clothing is not fixed, nor is clothing's role limited to signifying. Thinking this way provided new insight into the role of "Sunday Best" at the Direct Action event. Speaking more at length with Heather we discussed not only what clothing physically would make possible; for example, if the women were granted entrance into the priesthood event they would be expected to move reverently in the space, as fully-participating members of the church, which involves wearing garments and appropriately covering clothing. It was believed that the appropriate dress would make slow progress in the church more possible. But beyond this practical view was the fact that clothing could express that Mormon culture belongs also to those who desire change. Fully engaging with Mormon style, even for those who feel there should be more flexibility in what exists under that definition, could also be an essential component of self-expression – which is what Heather was directing me to see. Participation in Pants Day, as well as participation in traditionally defined Sunday Best, were not actions at odds with one another, but rather integrated processes of working with clothing's mutable properties to embody complicated facets of LDS values.

Rejection & Liminality: Placeless women

The morning of the Direct Action, Heather and I joined April's family in watching the opening of the General Conference on a big screen TV in the downstairs family room. After we had watched the first few speakers we gathered our things and decided to head into the city, April's daughter waved to us and called, "I hope they let you in, mom!" as we pulled out of the driveway. We all wore mid-length skirts, April touched up her lipstick in the rearview mirror. As we pulled into downtown Salt Lake City I was overwhelmed with the sight of literally hundreds of Mormon families walking the streets together in long skirts and suits and ties. After a stroll around Temple Square and a search for a coffee for me in the heartland of Mormonism on Conference weekend (a challenge, but we eventually found a coffee station inside of a large department store!), we made our way towards a small park where participants were gathering. As we approached a number of protestors of the church, not the Ordain Women organization, stood holding anti-Mormon signs, stating things like "Joseph Smith: Liar and Pervert", and shouting at women as they walked past on their way to the park. Some protesters identified themselves as Evangelical Christians who believed that *The Book of Mormon* was heresy. April, who was an organizer of the event, explained that the church requested that Ordain Women gather with them in what was deemed, "The Free Speech Zone", rather than proceed to Temple Square. "How can they think we belong with those people?", she wondered aloud. We rounded a corner to find that along the other side of the street LDS men stood in a line protecting one of the entrances to temple square watching women pass by and singing hymns; these appeared to be Mormon men taking a stand against Ordain Women. A man on a bicycle approached us screaming, "Show us your temple recommends! You don't have them! You're not worthy to go in that temple!". The atmosphere was tense, to say the least.

Once at the park, April joined Kate Kelly and other Ordain Women board members to field questions with a group of reporters – the reporters had been asked to stay off of Temple Square, and were taking statements before the group departed. While waiting I stepped to a quiet corner of the park to rock Elena to sleep and jot notes into my phone while Heather

networked with others. A young woman and her husband had chosen the same quiet corner, beside a pond, and were holding hands and seemingly watching a row of baby ducks paddling behind their mother across the still surface of the water. I greeted them and then realized the woman was crying, she appeared to be very young, in her early 20s, and her husband stood silently as she blew her nose. I gave her a nod and asked "you okay?" and she responded that the cameras had made her realize the "reality of being here". She and her husband had driven from Indiana, she explained, she felt called by God to join Ordain Women, but came from a conservative ward back home. She had told no one about her support of the group or the fact that she felt called to be a priest. She and I spoke briefly until she took a shutter breath and assured me she'd be fine, and she and her husband returned to the crowd. Elena had dozed off while we spoke so I went to locate Heather, who ushered me towards a circle of her acquaintances – the direct action was officially commencing. After opening hymns and prayers roughly 500 women processed towards the tabernacle. I walked alongside still carrying the baby in a sling and taking in the scene. The procession was halted by a locked gate around Temple Square, and anti-Mormon protesters behind the group started to close in, continuing to shout sexist and anti-Mormon comments, likely unaware of the aims of the group, assuming we were headed to a women's session.

When the dark sky eventually erupted with hailstones in quick succession the protestors retreated and a woman in a skirt and suit-jacket, and official church name-badge, flanked by two suited men, rushed to the gate to let the women in. At least three people said aloud, "it's a blessing!", seeing this dramatic change in weather, spurring action in all directions, as a message from God. We were lead to the side entrance of the tabernacle where the group silently fell into one long line. As the hail slowed, in eerily quiet slow-motion, women begin approaching the doors one-by-one asking to be admitted to the priesthood session, explaining that they wish to have the priesthood, or that they wish women could be included. As the hours passed the tension subsided, the line became more relaxed and jovial, each person waiting for his or her moment nervously. In turn, they were each turned away, and walked away in clusters as quiet spectators look on.

The direct action read to me like a ritual; as each woman had prepared for this moment with prayer, and come dressed in carefully-selected clothing for the event, long skirts and many touches of purple, a color that signals feminism, then went through a collective practice.

The procession, our group suspended somewhere between anti-Mormon protestors and representatives from the LDS church, walking across religious grounds but on the threshold of religious buildings, and ultimately seeking radical transformation and acceptance into the church's sacred traditions. The scene is evocative of themes explored in prior chapters, the group negotiates with physical boundaries manifested in sacred space, wrap their bodies in cloth that allows them to embody nuanced expressions of identity, and engage in prayer which connects them to Mormon practice: these ritualized practices draw them into the liminal experience of being "betwixt and between" experiences of subversion and emersion in Mormon religious customs, as they stand literally inside the gates that surround temple square but outside the buildings where critical engagements occur.

All of this, however, is framed by the politics of gender, and for that reason more complex intentions and expectations frame the experience as a whole. In response to Turner's *Liminality and Communitas*, critical voices have expressed that gender, when taken into consideration reorders ritual and undermines many of the crucial aims involved in rites of passage (Richards 1956, Lincoln 1981). Bruce Lincoln argues that while Turner poses that liminal phases in ritual provide space for individuals to prepare to socially advance, women's rituals are concerned with other aims. While the purpose of rituals is ultimately to transform, either through "replacing old roles, statuses, identities with new ones", either through initiation, healing or preparation (1981:6), women's initiations rarely encompass any form of social advancement. Lincoln offers that these rituals can mark a public acknowledgement of women's significance within a culture (1981:90), but in contexts where patriarchal models of power prevail, often women going through these initiatory or ritual phases "becomes to a certain extent the field on which the battle of the sexes in enacted" (1981:93). Further reading into the performance of rituals centered on women Lincoln asserts, that tensions inherent in these social performances are however "never resolved nor pushed to conclusion" arguing rather that ritual cloaks social conflicts, creating rather the outcome of social agreement to move forward, these rituals produce social stability rather than pursuing the interests of women (1981:93-94).

Lincoln's reading of how gender reorders ritual processes here provides a very salient lens through which to understand the somewhat ambiguous aims of the participants. As I experienced the direct action I distinctly did not feel that Heather, April, nor any one else

involved, was seeking the typical outcomes of 'activist' participation. As Kelly and others had stressed to me not to call the event a protest, it became clear that this was not only connected to the group's aim of achieving respectability and rooting their actions within their church, but also spoke to the nature of Ordain Women's actions, which felt ritualistic and ultimately, were not intended to produce concrete change. As I asked women that day about their involvement many discussed a desire for visibility, for demonstrating to their church that divergent viewpoints were held by faithful members, and for giving support to sisters. Their actions ultimately reaffirmed their place, and did not grant them more power.

Following the turning away of women from the event we retreated to a nearby hotel to listen to the conference session, as the Priesthood session is televised. Elder Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, addressed the priesthood holders and in his talk suggested that the women were wrong in their actions. I watched with April and Heather in defeated silence, then we piled back into April's truck to go home. As we pulled into the driveway April's little girl ran out of the house, excitedly greeting her mother. She shouted as the car doors opened, "did they let you in?", "No, no they didn't" April replied, "they never do!" her daughter declared as her face fell with disappointment. We gathered around the table with April's husband to discuss the day, and I prepared herbal tea for everyone, which now included an additional guest who'd be sleeping downstairs, a member of Ordain Women who had met us at the Direct Action. The women discussed not only their defeat, but the risk that the following week they could face disciplinary measures from their bishops after her face turned up on the television. When we finally dragged ourselves downstairs to bed Heather reflected, "I am so lucky really - our ward is not like that", she did not share any of the concerns about formal rebuttals, but that did not ease her anxieties in regards to how the administrative church would respond, or what would happen to her friends. In that precise moment I saw that the First Ward's distinctive, "progressive", tolerant approach to faith extended beyond their sometimes-boastful musings and into meaningful ways the church created space for opposing expressions of faith.

Ordain Women members heading toward the Tabernacle after we'd passed through the unlocked gates

A Vigil: The First Ward and soft boundaries

Two and a half months after our trip to Utah there were still tremors resonating from the event. A series of lessons on The Priesthood were scheduled in the handbook to be taught in Relief Society, and the first of those shifted the atmosphere in the room; the usual bustling and jovial din was replace with an apprehensive stiffness and Kim, usually very relaxed, seemed nervous and hurried as she very methodically presented a lesson on what the priesthood meant and the roles of priesthood holders. It seemed that many women were actively trying to prevent anyone from mentioning Ordain Women, or expressing any views supporting women's ordination. Members who knew about my trip to Utah asked me questions about the food, if I went to the visitor's center, if I saw sessions of conference – but never addressed the known reason I was there. April, our host and an organizer of the event, posted on The Exponent II blog that she had been denied a temple recommend from her bishop on the condition that she remove all of her online postings about her affiliation with and support of Ordain Women. In June Kate Kelly, founder of Ordain Women, was informed that a hearing was scheduled to determine if she should be excommunicated.

Hannah, who had been friends with Kelly at BYU, expressed to me her frustration over the unfolding events, despite the fact she was not a member of Ordain Women (as she was critical of their approach, and not totally comfortable with participating, she supported their aims nonetheless). She pressed upon me that her faith was at a point of crises – momentarily grounded only in her local congregation.

> Fundamentally I don't think getting the priesthood solves everything, but fundamentally I don't think we can have true equality and justice for women in the church unless they do have the priesthood. I think that needs to be one step of many as we rectify the situation. I can't really see a paradigm of equality in which women don't share that. Watching the church operate in respect to Ordain Women has just been infuriating on every level and has really made it feel like the institution actively doesn't want me, and people like me. Most of my life it has felt like the institution isn't super enthusiastic about me and people like me but 'eh you can come if you want to we won't push you away', but the past year it feels like their pushing me away…
>
> Here in Oakland there seems to be a place for me in the ward if I want it. Honestly Greg calling me to Young Women's – I've enjoyed the calling so there's that – is a really powerful symbol of 'oh I am wanted!'. The fact that Greg trusts someone like me, and what my model of what womanhood is to be an example to the youth of the ward is really meaningful and wonderful to me. There have been several things happening this fall that seem to say, 'Oh the Oakland First Ward has a place for me and wants me', so watching the institutional church deal with Ordain Women – I mean they might as well be taking a bull horn and saying, "feminists, get out".

Ultimately though, as Heather, Hannah and other Mormon Feminists were subject to more clear signals of their unwanted presence within the church by Salt Lake authorities, I began to notice, particularly as Kelly awaited her disciplinary hearing, a softening in the First Ward.

Kathryn lead the second lesson on the priesthood in the Relief Society, just a week before the hearing, and chose to address the unspoken tensions with a fairly direct call for empathy. She opened her lesson with a personal narrative, describing her upbringing on a farm in Idaho. Born into a small, rural community in the late 1950's Kathryn's family adhered to traditional gender roles, and accordingly they raised Kathryn's brother to eventually takeover the farm. Kathryn recalled having conflicting emotional responses to the situation, expressing frustration that her abilities were never viewed as equal to her brother, but coming to appreciate the relative freedom she had been granted with those expectations lifted. Her brother, she explained, had inherited a very difficult job and did not have an easy path. Her life,

she felt, had been one of opportunity and adventure. However, she posed the question of whether it seemed fair to designate such ridged paths and responsibilities based on whether one was born a boy or a girl, and then moved on to the only explicit reference to Ordain Women that I ever encountered in church. Kathryn explained that this fundamental question was worth exploring, even inside of the church. Even if people's views differed it was important that the church not be a place where anyone was removed for asking questions – and she noted that Kelly was facing a disciplinary hearing for doing just that.

Women tentatively offered up opinions. Barbara, an African-American LDS-convert in her 60s, stood to give her response, pausing to consider her words. From an Evangelical background, Barbara sometimes gave gospel-style performances of Mormon hymns at church - her vivacious demeanor and booming voice ensured everyone listened. She pointedly explained that in Mormon homes sometimes men are not present, and so when there is a crises sometimes women "just have to do what they have to do for their children". There was no further explanation of this, though she seemed to imply that she would give blessings in the event a man was not present – it did not seem to raise any concern. Heather brought up that healing blessings were once done by women, and wondered why this was no longer the case. In the midst of this one woman stood and identified herself as a visitor to the ward and expressed that the church is perfect as is, created by God and run by God's prophet, and noted, "I am so lucky to be in this perfect church". Hannah, sitting beside me, whispered, "the mainline Mormons are horrified", a few women offered smiles, and then the rest of the room seemed to move onward with the discussion. Nedra leaned in when the session had ended with an up-tempo hymn and said, "this discussion would only happen in our ward".

In the days leading up to Kelly's hearing Heather emailed that she wanted to arrange a vigil. She later told me the bishop had offered his support. She hoped to gather on church grounds, but fearing that there was no way the gathering would be approved, and not wanting to cause any trouble for Greg, she decided that instead anyone interested should meet for a prayer vigil in Joaquin Miller Park. The point in the park she chose was a small clearing on top of a hill, on one side was a stone fireplace with a chimney, on the other a sweeping view of Oakland, with the temple as a central point, physically closer than anything else on the horizon. She disseminated plans via email to members of the ward she felt would be open to the event, and the night of, roughly 25 people filed into the park and posed for a photo together before

we made our way up the hill. Small white candles were passed out; I took notice that in addition to the bishop other faces had turned up whom I hadn't expected to see. As the sun began to set we opened with prayer and hymns, and then Heather bore her testimony of wanting the priesthood. Lights twinkled in the distance, the temple seemed to glow against the backdrop of the bay, and we took a moment to silently pray for the church and for Kelly. Between the temple and the backdrop of overgrown hills, looking out at the city skyline and the candle-lit faces of ward members, the group anticipated the news in the morning with dread or optimism, and prepared for the next steps.

Members of the ward gathered in Joaquin Miller Park

Conclusions

The Mormon Feminist community, largely connected through engagement in online social networks and through the Bloggernacle, experienced a particularly intense period of growth, attention and push-back from the church during my time in the field (2013-15). Through challenging the church via material engagements; subverting dress norms, expressing their discontent on sacred grounds, rather than limiting those critiques to the bloggernacle, and by explicitly calling for women's ordination, Mormon Feminists caused ripples and brought up tensions, namely that manifested between church authorities and Mo-Fem groups. Those tensions also arose within the First Ward, as members negotiated where they stood in regards to the conflicts between central administration and feminist critics of the patriarchal

church; many of those frictions were connected to determining what traditions should be considered sacred and what traditions were mutable. Gender, in the context of the church, is considered a deterministic and essential feature that is connected to both identity and roles in eternity. As Mormon feminist groups challenged this static view of gender numerous church members felt these conversations went "too far". Yet, as the central church went forward with the excommunication of Kate Kelly many in the ward, regardless on whether they supported the aims of the Ordain Women community, felt that ultimately pushing people out of the church was not the right way to handle expressions of discontent. Several members in the ward resolved to maintain a community that accepted, or at least tolerated, diverse viewpoints.

In addition to exploring how the ward responded to the Mormon Feminist movement, this chapter also explored the ways that materials, used to express both resistance and belonging, shifted across contexts. I drew on examples in which meanings affixed to clothing were inconsistent; in particular, comparing Mormon feminist messages regarding pants at church, and the aforementioned dress code recommended for the April 5th Direct Action. Seemingly oppositional messages about the significance of church-defined 'Sunday Best' dress gave the impression that clothing choices were being made at part of a process to appease authority and concede certain values with the aim of being granted validity. Rather, a more comprehensive analysis, which integrates Keane's work on materiality and embodiment, points to the fluidity of meanings bound in clothing, providing a more complete representation of Mormon activist's engagement with "religious" dress and the shifting implications of clothing through contexts. I carried out this work alongside women who desire a more inclusive church, where women may obtain leadership roles and equally valid spiritual authority. The negotiation between keeping these aims wholly bound within mainstream Mormonism, and resisting Mormon cultural standards which undermine women's equity, is often embodied with material elements that make these nuanced expressions possible.

Mormon feminists, once a loose collective organized through online network, have evolved into a more formalized group through the Ordain Women website, which connects efforts for gender equality within the church to the initiation of women into the priesthood. The term "Mormon feminist" is used to by women seeking change within the church that reflect their aims for women to have the opportunity to fully participate in the church. In recent years,

particularly through the OW website, Mormon feminists are embracing their aims publically, despite the church's efforts to silence and discourage these efforts. In all instances of Mormon feminist "activism" efforts were made to ground all these varied practices firmly within Mormonism. Through material engagements and particular speech acts; wearing standard dress, using prayers and hymns to open and close gatherings, keeping Mormon buildings in sight, and serving Mormon dishes at events, Mormon women sought to keep their aims within the boundaries of their faith, even as they sought to expand those boundaries.

Conclusions

Arguments and context

During my time in the Oakland First Ward, deliberations over tolerance versus acceptance, expression versus disruption, following the recommendations of church authorities versus following personal revelations, and what opportunities existed between suggestions and doctrine, were all predication upon members embodying their faith in particular ways. Ultimately, these negotiations related back to how the First Ward would be situated in relation to the church's administrative center. Many members were anxious about the future of the ward, wondering if their community would continue to be a place where a vocal majority of members prided themselves on maintaining a different kind of institution, one where dissenting views could be expressed alongside sentiments that acknowledge the deep emotional, spiritual and personal ties individuals felt to their church. While the hymnbooks and lessons were opened to the same pages as all other wards across the globe week-to-week, and the carpets and folding chairs created a familiar atmosphere to anyone who regularly attended Mormon Church, many of the church members in the First Ward hoped to maintain in the midst of all this conventionality a local tradition of having a ward that served a broad community, but catered to particular sensibilities rooted in bay area progressivism. Leaders in the church tried to respond to the specific needs of the congregation. Greg, the bishop, noted,

I read about and think a lot about our religion – what it is, what it ought to be, what it does great and what it can do better. So [as bishop] one aspect I really looked forward to, and still look forward to, is that I can help shape in some small way what the church is here for this congregation, and that's rewarding and challenging and the best part of it… Ultimately, I would like the church to be as welcoming as possible without walking away from the core. This fundamental aim – to stick to a core while evolving the church on a local level, underpinned how members experienced the first ward, and presented questions and debates in regards to what that process should look like. As long-time liberal members boasted about their resistance to conformity, others wondered at what point non- conformity gave way to

disharmony. These tensions were foundational to the way the ward operated; they manifested in a constant push-and-pull, and a continuous flux between margins and centers.

In this dissertation I have addressed these tensions as a central question; how do First Ward members locate themselves in relation to a large global church with a highly organized administrative center? This question, of course, requires and understanding of many overlapping contexts which account for place, culture, history, politics and their materialized dimensions. The Mormon Church, a top-down institution with a powerful administrative center in Salt Lake City, Utah, has positioned itself as the source from which faith disseminates across the globe, and models a corresponding LDS culture to all followers of the faith. This is upheld by a system of regulating all material aspects of churches around the world, from their lesson manuals to the paintings that hang on the walls. Historically, California Mormons have always answered to Utah-leaders, but often considered ways that the far west could maintain itself as an influential margin – some of my participants even pointed to a historic moment in which Samuel Brannan envisioned San Francisco, California as an alternative LDS center. Regardless, Mormons have a long history and deep roots in the state and in the bay area, in particular, having arrived in Oakland as pioneers, some on ships that landed in the Brooklyn Basin, a continuous flow of influence has long moved through Oakland and across varied Mormon contexts since the very early days of the church. Today, the convergence of progressive political movements with traditions located within the church has created a distinctive culture in the local ward; for many members the collective effort to support tolerance and diverse viewpoints in is deeply important, for some, it is even essential to their continued embrace of LDS faith.

I have argued in this thesis that negotiations over the local traditions of the first ward are predicated primarily on material engagements. Demonstrating difference, diversity and even subversion and resistance, are contingent upon objectifying complicated ideologies. I have also argued that this process is connected to the bounded ways that one is engaged in the LDS faith. Belonging and marginality both depend on how one is able to engage with boundaries; being inside or outside of Mormon space, clothing the body in Mormon attire and adornments, regulating what goes in the body in order to retain symbolic purity, and using language to participate in essential Mormon rituals, such as blessing and prayers, are all essential to belonging inside the faith. Here though, I have looked at how robust margins are

sustained by members of the church who want to both belong to the church and push back against what they see as narrow parameters that are untenable. While many first ward members are concerned with creating an adaptable and open culture firmly within LDS borderlines, particular discourses, particularly which are evolving in online spaces, are providing insights into what creative ways the church as an institution could continue to expand, accept and adapt to accommodate diverse Mormons; and for the first ward, the people of this community must determine how much these conversations should influence how things are done.

Themes

In looking at the manifestation of boundaries, and their significance in upholding religious tradition, an investigation of geographical boundaries and built environments has helped illuminate the ways Mormons quite literally situate themselves. In chapter two I explored both the symbolic and materialized dimensions of Mormon environments, particularly looking at Temple Hill, where the Oakland temple and first ward meetinghouse are located, as a central point in my field. I argued that these built environments represent protected centers and more permeable margins; and that the temple, with requisite processes by which one is worthy to enter, represents a contested and sometimes problematic space of limited access for many members. Larger contexts within the Mormon faith where individuals are excluded or feel unable to exercise autonomy are often related back to the temple, where the imposition of mediating factors and limited opportunities for individual expression at once bind a community together and create an unsympathetic environment for those who crave more autonomy. Integrating studies of community- building and exclusion in order to explore the nuances of carefully-protected spaces (Gullestad 1986, Low 2003), this discussion, of course, accounted for other places where Mormon practices are contained; including church buildings, domestic spaces, and geographies. And here I have highlighted how creative re-imaginings of where faith is rooted, or how sacred space can support an a-typical faith experience and expressions of that, has provided some context by which the first ward maintains a distinctive and integrative culture within a very homogenous church.

Bodies, I argued in chapter three, are yet another geography on which boundaries can

manifest. In an LDS context bodies are circumscribed in ways that maintain religious purity; materials that go in or on the body mark a religious self and offer protection. Bodies are imagined as having a surface that acts as a perimeter, that surface protects an interior where flesh and soul are inalienably connected. This is a distinctive feature of LDS theology as Mormons believe the physical body is eternally linked to the soul, therefore maintaining the body as a sacred vessel is an important aspect of embodying religiosity. Mary Douglas has argued that bodies are a symbol of society (1966, 1970), and drawing on theorists who account for the nuanced ways that bodies express religious ideologies, or rather, how individuals embody their faith, this chapter demonstrated how bodies express particular social values embedded in Mormonism, and specifically, how those values are grounded in the context of the first ward. In order to carry this out, chapter 3 explored the many dimensions of how individuals in the ward negotiate with Mormon standards in regards to maintaining the inviolability of the physical self. Mormons tend to abstain from caffeinated tea, coffee, alcohol, tobacco and drugs; beyond this, excess and obesity are also moralized, and considered signifiers of weakness. Mormons are also taught to abstain from premarital sex, homosexual sex and masturbation. Bodies should be clothed, in adulthood, in the temple garments, which are then covered by modest clothing, which should be gender distinctive. Individuals in the ward grappled with their own agency in adopting the church's standards; some members considered green tea or caffeinated soda to be okay based on their interpretation of The Word of Wisdom, or the doctrine outlining dietary restrictions. Others believed that the church's views on homosexual relationships needed to evolve. Others negotiated with modest dress by selecting clothing that they felt met standards without overtly signaling their "Mormon-ness"; this was part of a process of expressing their investment in diverse social worlds, including their church. Just as physical space is bordered in such a way that it is designated as sacred, or designed in such a way to support and enable religious life, so too are bodies; yet in both contexts these boundaries are flexible, creating space for these negotiations.

Along with bodies and physical space I also identified language as a crucial medium that designates and separates the sacred from the everyday. I argued that language, bodies and space are mutually constitutive, acting together to construct Mormon environments, perspectives, and selves; the ways bodies, language and place compliment each other is crucial to how Mormonism is manifested. Focusing on how the church upholds particular language ideologies, imagining that particular types of speech can be inspired by the divine and express

truth, I sought to demonstrate the particularities of language as it emerges in religious contexts. I also argued that particular utterances constitute parameters, designating specific speech acts as sacred; particular speech acts that are set apart in this way, such as prayers and blessings, are some of the most fundamental yet fluid ways that the Mormon religion is practiced. Language, therefore, must be carefully regulated; yet the administrative church must contend with the fact that language is difficult to control. In this way language is often the first tool that is used to disrupt the status quo.

The final two chapters of this thesis explored the way the first ward has responded to expanding communities of 'marginal Mormons', specifically LGTBQ-identified Mormons and Mormon Feminists. I argued here that the internet has provided a place for individuals who feel pushed outside of their church, and these robust margins have enabled a liminal experience of Mormonism; neither wholly in or wholly outside, with neither claim to the church, nor powerless to influence the future of the faith, marginalized Mormons are negotiating how they can fit into the first ward, a place which has tried to uphold more flexible boundaries in terms of who is welcomed wholly into the fold. I presented here a great deal of context which is shaping current discourses; largely relating back to both the exclusion of black men from the priesthood and the involvement of the LDS church in the campaign against marriage equality. I posed that these issues of the past are highly influential in individual's anxieties about the future. Mormon Feminists desiring the priesthood are currently contending with both the potential promise of revelation and the relative inflexibility of the church on matters related to gender and sexuality. I discussed these unfolding events in order to highlight the efforts by the first ward to create more space, more flexibility and more nuance alongside the maintenance of tradition.

Conclusions

This dissertation has emphasized the significance of observable material forms, like language, buildings, objects, clothing and bodies, in making the abstract tenets of faith tangible. These materials circumscribe, they designate boarders, boundaries and create margins; separating sacred from ordinary, female from male, transcendent from earthly, sin from morality, pure from unclean. Rather than focus on oppositions, I have looked at the emergence of nuance and in-betweeness, experiences which disrupt social order and invite tensions to be

expressed between polarized dispositions. Often times being LDS can give people a sense of liminality; of existing in multiple social worlds, or between them. Uncertainties and marginality continued to underpin tensions in the ward, particularly as substantial shifts were occurring related to the administrative church responding to discontent.

As I was preparing to leave the field the excommunication of Kate Kelly took place, and the ward worked to moved forward. Alongside events making national news, shifts happened on a local level; callings in the church were shuffled, several members I had grown close with, including Lindy and Dick and Britta and Shay, prepared to leave the Bay Area for more affordable locals, and new members (some very conservative young couples, I have been told) filtered in. The traditions and standardized carpets and handbooks help people maintain a sense of familiarity; but the people, fundamentally, were always changing. But, out west it seems many people embraced this dynamic reality, and prided themselves on their willingness to critique the status quo. Somewhere between Utah and the Mormon peripheries, somewhere between the most radical bay area enclaves and the conservative traditions of Christianity, somewhere between tradition-following and tradition-shifting, is the notorious Oakland First Ward.

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